

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## Development Corporation of Richmond

### Introduction

The Board of Directors of the Development Corporation of Richmond (DCR) decided in mid-2016 to revisit the Strategic Plan the Corporation had prepared and adopted in 2012-2013. The Board engaged Kendig Keast Collaborative (KKC), a community planning firm based in Sugar Land, to facilitate the plan update process. KKC had prepared the City of Richmond’s award-winning Comprehensive Master Plan during 2013-14, as well as the City’s new Unified Development Code and Trails Master Plan. In support of the DCR effort, KKC was charged with:

- Bringing a fresh perspective to the Strategic Plan update, but also building on KKC’s familiarity with Richmond and its needs and priorities.
- Reconfirming DCR’s mission to guide and prioritize its specific activities.
- Placing even greater emphasis on action and tangible results.
- Better aligning and syncing DCR’s Strategic Plan with the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan, which was adopted in 2014 after the 2013 Strategic Plan.

It should be noted that this document is a strategic plan for the direction and operations of the DCR and not an Economic Development Plan for Richmond, which is among the responsibilities of the DCR to prepare and implement.

#### SIDEBAR:

**Strategic Planning** is ...

The process of arriving at a clear consensus (“getting on the same page”) about:

- Where you are—and have been.
- Where you want to be—or how to avoid where you are headed if nothing changes.
- How you will get from here to there—how best to position yourself for the future.

The real goal and benefit is common understanding of your situation and core functions, now and in the future. The ultimate goal of strategic planning and thinking is to position oneself to anticipate needs and desires versus reacting most of the time.

### Plan Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Context	Page 1
Community and Economic Development Accomplishments	
Assets	
Liabilities	
Relevant Trends and Factors	
Opportunities	
Challenges	
Vision and Mission	Page 8
Guiding Principles	
Action Agenda	Page 10
Potential Initiatives to Pursue First	
<i>TABLE 1: Results of Initial Prioritization Exercise</i>	
Economic Development Director Workshop Notes on Other Priorities	
Implementation	Page 14
Ongoing Plan Evaluation and Updating	
<i>TABLE 2: Implementation Strategy for Near-Term Action Priorities</i>	
<i>Appendix:</i>	
Issues/Actions Table from Strategic Planning Workshop 1	

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## CONTEXT

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Through the first of two DCR Board workshops conducted during the strategic planning process (one in December 2016 and another in February 2017), an initial step was to look back at recent accomplishments in Richmond—both from community-wide and economic development perspectives.

## **Community and Economic Development Accomplishments**

Accomplishments cited from recent years included:

- Retail leakage study
  - › Auto (e.g., Mercedes Benz)
  - › Grocery (e.g., H-E-B)
  - › Restaurants
- Texas State Technical College (TSTC) investment
- Attraction/recruiting efforts
- Charter change → Home Rule, administrative clarity
- Zoning
- Comprehensive Master Plan → Unified Development Code (UDC)
- Citizen engagement increased
- Capacity/staffing/budget process
- Annexation powers
  - › Rudy's
  - › FM 359
  - › Williams Way
- Extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) cleanup/swap
- Business “assurances” → quality
- City/County relationship
  - › Mobility improvements
- Leveraging communication dollars
- Infrastructure
  - › Extensions (Del Webb)
  - › Regional lift station by deed
- Bronze Scenic City
- Community of the Year Award from Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association
- Trails Master Plan
- Fire Station No. 1 design
- Public Administrator of the Year recognition for City Manager
- Parks Master Plan
- City and Texas Department of Transportation coordination regarding US 59/I-69
- DRC bylaws additions/amendments

The workshop participants also reviewed an Issues/Actions Table handout (included as an appendix to this plan). Summarized in this handout were broad categories of community issues and needs and the particular initiatives that were recommended to address them in previous local plans and studies. The compiled items drew especially from the City's Comprehensive Master Plan and the previous DCR Strategic Plan. Through the review and discussion of this table, the workshop participants identified 10 items they considered fully accomplished or well on the way toward completion, along with many others that are ongoing:

Issue / Need	Actions / Projects
Annexation Planning for Growth Management and Tax Base Expansion	✓ Approve Home Rule Charter, in part, to expand annexation capabilities
Comprehensive Planning	✓ Comprehensive Master Plan
Enhanced Amenities, including Mixed-Use Activity Centers and Destinations	✓ Enhance City gateways, including through installation of entry signage with a unified theme ... <i>Done on US 90-A, Williams Way and elsewhere. Plan to incorporate Richmond markers/identity into as locally-funded enhancements to Texas Department of Transportation upgrade of US 59/ I-69.</i>
General Public Services	✓ Improved computer networking across City offices/functions
Improved Mobility	✓ Coordinated City-County thoroughfare planning and funding ... <i>Through Comprehensive Master Plan.</i> ✓ Trails Master Plan and projects, including sidewalks and bike lanes ... <i>Proceeding with implementation including Wessendorff trail project.</i>
More Effective Land Development Regulations and Enhanced Development Quality	✓ Unified Development Code ✓ Streamlined procedures ... <i>Including through scheduled development coordination meetings with staff.</i> ✓ Utility infrastructure policies ✓ Historic preservation provisions

**Assets**

Next, Workshop 1 participants identified the following as assets on which Richmond can build:

- Proximity to a University of Houston (higher education) campus
- Friends of North Richmond
  - › Tutoring
  - › GED
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
  - › Business plans
- Johnson Development
- Henderson-Wessendorff Foundation
- Fort Bend County bus service
- Ongoing stability in City government, and relative to nearby cities
- Growing, quality healthcare facilities
  - › Uninsured care
- Fort Bend County Justice Center
  - › How to capitalize/monetize on it
  - › Offset impacts/cost (e.g., traffic)
- Overall population growth
- School district reputation and stability

- Brazos River
  - › Long Acres Ranch Nature Center – six miles of river frontage
  - › Ecological/education element (similar to George Ranch)
  - › Destination/visitation – how to monetize for community benefits
  - › City trails link
- Historic aspect – a differentiator for Richmond
- Land availability (extent of ETJ)
  - › On major roadways
  - › Large ownerships
- Annexation authority gained as Home Rule City
- Defined jurisdiction with areas to grow – where to focus?
- Community events – (tie to “Richmond” name), brand
  - › Generate goodwill
  - › Identity/branding – tie to “Richmond” name
  - › Draw visitors
  - › Careful – should be quality events, fit with local values
- Strategic Plan

**SIDEBAR:**

Other local strengths that were cited in the 2013 Strategic Plan:

- Higher education schools
  - Wharton County Junior College campus
  - Texas State Technical College (TSTC) campus
- Richmond is the County Seat of Fort Bend County
- Proximity to Houston
- Small town atmosphere
- Fort Bend County Museum and George Ranch
- Business and development friendly
- City management and staff
- Citizens pride in the community
- Richmond State School
- Parks
  - George Park (over 200 acres)
- Local private charitable foundations
  - George Foundation
  - Hawkins and Winston Foundation
- “Fort Bend Green”, part of the County Park Trail system
- Good transportation
  - Highway 59 and 90
  - Intra-City bus system planning in progress
- Religious facilities
- Railroad infrastructure
  - Current system
  - Light rail possibilities

- Common everyday thinking in the community
- Financial strength of the City and the DCR
- Volunteerism
- Defined downtown district
- Public safety services
- Accessible location
- Friendly atmosphere
- Government facilities – (State, County – over 1,400 jobs alone, LCISD)
- Transportation (county operated bus system, major highways)
- Access to highways and other cities
- Amenities (parks and trail systems)
- “Old world” community feel

**Liabilities**

Workshop 1 participants identified the following as liabilities which Richmond must overcome or work around:

- Noise issue still to address
- Funding for projects, revenue sources
- Perceptions
  - › Tackling through a communications effort to highlight accomplishments
  - › Utilizing newsletter and website
- Groceries – overcoming with H-E-B
- More focus needed on parks, green space – Trails Master Plan done
- Need a designated business park
  - › Where? – consideration for future annexation activity
  - › For target sectors/industries
- Locations for multifamily development
- Pre-development meetings to explore and vet potential Downtown and other development, redevelopment
- Need for broader scope beyond Downtown
- Addressing Richmond’s identity – needed communications focus

**SIDEBAR:**

Other local weaknesses that were cited in the 2013 Strategic Plan:

- Older infrastructure
- A defined area, limiting growth in property and sales taxes in the future
- Vacant storefronts downtown
- Noise and stopping of trains on the railroad
- Parking downtown
- Unattractive entrance to the City on Highway 90A
- No available retail space

- Recent changes in the FEMA Floodplain Maps increasing the flood plain into otherwise developable property
- Marketing of the City – websites, brochures, etc. – is insufficient
- Few retail choices for restaurants and grocery stores
- Negative financial impact of hosting the county seat and nonprofit offices
- Lack of expertise to develop economic opportunities i.e. commercial development
- Psychological barriers to downtown i.e. the railroad, river, highway 90A, etc.
- Perception of City stagnation

### ***Relevant Trends and Factors***

Workshop 1 participants identified the following trends that will shape or influence Richmond’s economic development efforts and priorities:

- Growth – both population and development
- Diversity from in-migration
  - › Mix of old and new
- Mobility options
  - › Uber, food delivery
  - › Office space potential here with build-out of closer-in cities
- Short-term rentals – Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue
- Tourism focus increasing
- Baby boom retirement wave
  - › Already a head start, Richmond’s relative age can be a liability (e.g., bond elections)
  - › Younger population – potential for, need to encourage
- More communication options with technology

### ***Opportunities***

Workshop 1 participants identified the following as opportunities on which Richmond can capitalize:

- Broader scope – other areas that need support beyond Downtown
- Golf course turnover
- Johnson Development investment
- Huge perception change from George initiative
- North FM 723 area (CVS vicinity)
- Action versus studies
- Branding of developments (e.g., Veranda)
  - › Richmond link
  - › Street names

### **SIDEBAR:**

In listing opportunities ahead for Richmond during Workshop 1, the participants were also asked to identify potential “game changers” for the community:

- Developments on US 59/I-69 – visibility, quality
- Recognition/awards
  - › Public needs to SEE and HEAR accomplishments, results
  - › Focus on action and solutions
- Communication focus
  - › Influence through messaging (e.g., about public investments)
- Don't aim too low with prospects
  - › Actively market
  - › Persistence
- Governance strategy, then:
  - › Priorities
  - › Plan
  - › Tactics
- Future possibilities versus current expectations
  - › Development types/housing
  - › BALANCE

### **Challenges**

Workshop 1 participants identified the following challenges ahead as Richmond pursues its economic development strategies:

- Maintaining the better City leadership achieved since the 2013 Strategic Plan
  - › Commitment, transparency, perceptions
  - › Communication
  - › Focus – planning
  - › Awards, recognitions
- Charter change and transition to expanded City Commission
- Addressing misperceptions
- Media coverage of Brazos “flooding”
  - › Emergency management plans in place
  - › Response/action were effective
- Ongoing need for quality, affordable housing

### **SIDEBAR:**

As part of the discussions during Workshop 1, participants were asked to consider items the City and community do not control or can only partially influence:

- Unfunded mandates – force cities to implement regulations
- Funding – do not fully control revenue
- Do shape private developments in some respects:
  - › Agreements
  - › Incentives
  - › Regulations

- With items we do not control:
  - › Where to stretch, move the bar
  - › Ways to negotiate, use leverage
  - › Help create market
  - › Communicate community goals

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## VISION and MISSION

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### Vision - Community

A *Vision* describes where you want to be in the future—as a community, an organization, etc. It is usually “big picture” and long range—a statement of aspirations. It depicts where you should be when all your strategies are implemented. The sentiments and determination expressed through a vision statement should become the driving force that energizes all subsequent efforts to marshal available resources and capabilities toward achieving the desired outcomes.

Both the City of Richmond and the DCR operate with a shared vision in mind, as expressed by the community Vision Statement contained within the City’s adopted Comprehensive Master Plan:

Great opportunities and significant challenges are ahead.  
The goals of the City Commission are to:

- Encourage, promote, and welcome expanding residential and business growth and development;
- Provide safe, secure, family-oriented communities;
- Influence, foster, and maintain the interest of safety;
- Protect and preserve well-known historic sites and memorabilia; and
- Provide a healthy business and economic atmosphere.

It is our belief that each resident and business is of the utmost importance and deserves the very best that taxpayer dollars can provide in order to develop and maintain a city that is financially secure and one in which we can all be proud.

### Mission - DCR

A *Mission* defines what an organization sees as its core activities and responsibilities, on more of a day-to-day basis, in working toward achieving its longer-term vision. In this way it is more task-oriented compared to more general vision statements. Both a vision and mission are based on fundamental values and identification of priorities amid many competing demands on time and resources. For both, the bottom line is: “What are you trying to accomplish?”

The DCR approaches its annual work program and budgeting and its day-to-day activities in pursuit of the following Mission, as further refined through the current Strategic Plan update process:



The mission of the Development Corporation of Richmond is to serve the community by promoting private and public investments that will generate multiple public revenue streams to fund quality of life enhancements and activities that preserve and capitalize on our heritage.

The DCR's adopted By-Laws contain additional language that captures the essential responsibilities and core functions of the Corporation. Among other key activities, By-Laws Section 4.04.A. charges the DCR Board with identifying and implementing strategies to "direct economic development" within the City's jurisdiction. Subsection H. then elaborates that:

'Direct economic development' shall mean the expenditure of funds for programs that directly accomplish or aid in the accomplishment of creating identifiable new jobs or retaining identifiable existing jobs. Direct economic development includes job training and/or planning and research activities necessary to promote said job creation.

The Corporation's focus will be primarily in the areas of:

- Business retention and expansion;
- Formation of new businesses;
- Attracting new businesses; and
- Any project authorized by Chapters 501 and 504 of the Texas Local Government Code for which the Corporation is eligible.

The emphasis on job creation is also stated elsewhere in the By-Laws, in the overall Corporation purpose statement based on state law and in the Board Duties subsection. Both places emphasize pursuit of strategies to eliminate unemployment and underemployment and enhance public welfare through the promotion of new and expanded business enterprises.

## Guiding Principles

A *Guiding Principle* expresses a basic value or operating policy that will apply regardless of the course of action ultimately chosen. In essence, such principles frame *how* the organization goes about pursuing its Mission. The guiding principles should be consulted when making crucial decisions and when evaluating the results of previous decisions and actions. The following list of guiding principles was adapted from DCR's 2013 Strategic Plan after further refinement through the current plan update process:

- Unlock the potential in Richmond and create a quality community with a flourishing economy and varied business opportunities.
- Foster a positive business climate in Richmond that attracts target industries to create, expand and relocate business operations here.
- Provide strategic business and economic development investment for the purpose of enhancing revenues to the City of Richmond.
- Utilize the unique capabilities and tools available to a development corporation for advancing both economic and quality of life goals of the community.
- Be good stewards of the 4B sales tax revenues under the Board's charge.

- Leverage 4B funds with other funding sources – government, private, developers and foundations.
- Provide opportunity to offset the impact of local property taxes.
- Improve the citizens’ quality of life.
- Preserve and capitalize on Richmond’s rich heritage.
- Follow the established Principles of Leadership.
- Use the funds available in the best interest of the citizens and to produce tangible results for citizens and taxpayers to see and appreciate.

**SIDEBAR:**

Regarding the Principles of Leadership cited in the list of Guiding Principles, the 2013 Strategic Plan included a Leadership Philosophy that stated the DCR Board’s intent to lead:

- By example.
- By being consistent.
- By listening.
- As a team, being supportive of each other.
- By being of service.
- By communicating early.
- In support of the final decision.
- By working through the issues first, then deciding.
- With a clear defined vision and attainable strategies and goals.
- By being flexible.
- By working toward consensus.

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**ACTION AGENDA**

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**Potential Initiatives to Pursue First**

Toward the end of the first strategic planning workshop, the participants were asked to identify their highest-priority items from among all the various discussion points captured so far. Each of the seven persons who participated in the prioritization exercise was given five sticker dots. Four dots of the same color (yellow) were worth two points each, and one dot of a different color (green) was worth five points. The results of the exercise are presented in **Table 1**, with four top-ranked items standing out from the rest of the list.

**SIDEBAR:**

During the strategic planning process and related action prioritization discussions and exercises, KKC personnel itemized typical considerations for such ranking efforts:

- “Picking the low-hanging fruit,” which involves items that are relatively quick and easy to accomplish.
- “Bang for the buck,” which emphasizes cost-effectiveness and return on investment.

- Tangible results, where the focus is on producing visible outcomes.
- “Chunking,” which requires diligence to take on longer-term or more complex initiatives that must be pursued in piecemeal fashion over time, but which will prove very beneficial.
- “Follow the money,” which elevates items with an obvious, available funding source—or where prospects are good for securing external funding such as through state or federal grants.
- “Follow the leader,” which underscores the importance of having a willing, available and enthusiastic “champion” to carry an initiative forward, which may be someone associated with a partner agency or organization when in-house candidates are otherwise committed.

**TABLE 1: Results of Initial Prioritization Exercise**

Rank	Action	Total Points	2-Point Dots		5-Point Dots	
			#	Pts	#	Pts
1	<b>Broader scope – other areas that need support beyond Downtown</b> <i>Combined with:</i> <b>Broader scope beyond Downtown</b> <i>(received 1 green dot)</i>	28	4	8	4	20
2	<b>Communication/messaging focus (e.g., regarding public investments)</b> <i>Combined with:</i> <b>Address misperceptions</b> <i>(received 1 yellow dot)</i>	17	6	12	1	5
3	<b>Help shape private developments through DCR/City activities (agreements, incentives, regulations)</b>	15	5	10	1	5
4	<b>Designated business park (for target sectors/industries)</b>	11	3	6	1	5
5 (tie)	Community events (goodwill, identity/brand, visitors)	4	2	4	0	0
5 (tie)	Governance strategy – then priorities, plan, tactics	4	2	4	0	0
6 (tie)	Do not aim too low with prospects (actively market, persistence)	2	1	2	0	0
6 (tie)	Fort Bend County Justice Center (capitalize, monetize, offset local impacts)	2	1	2	0	0
6 (tie)	Retail leakage study (auto, grocery, restaurants)	2	1	2	0	0
6 (tie)	Tangible outcomes from DCR activities	2	1	2	0	0
6 (tie)	Tourism focus increasing	2	1	2	0	0

Through the second strategic planning workshop, items 1, 2 and 4 in Table 1 above were discussed in more detail (item 3 was considered an ongoing DCR activity that occurs in coordination with City officials and staff). Additionally, the DCR Board identified several additional items as related and early implementation priorities:

- Hiring a **new Director of Economic Development** as “Job 1” in the immediate months ahead.
- Completing a **Target Industries Study** to guide DCR efforts in various areas, including the potential development of a local business park.
- Focusing on the **US 90-A corridor** on the east side of Richmond, from the Brazos River to FM 359, as a key area away from the US 59/I-69 corridor that needs more attention as part of the top-ranked “broader scope” item, and as the traditional eastern gateway into the community.

### ***Economic Development Director***

During the second strategic planning workshop, the DCR Board requested guidance for framing the key duties and responsibilities of the Director of Economic Development position, to support its upcoming recruiting and hiring process. Outlined below are suggested focus areas for the position, which should be further refined through the recruiting process, as well as from the insights and professional input of the individual ultimately brought on board as the new Director. These focus areas are in addition to the **core responsibility of the Director to serve in an executive leadership role**, interacting routinely with the DCR Board to set, execute and track annual work programs and budgets and carry out the Corporation’s mission and strategic priorities, drawing upon his or her experience in the economic development field.

- **Primary Point of Contact.** The Director should be the lead voice for all outgoing communications and incoming inquiries related to economic development in Richmond. This role should be closely coordinated with the City Manager, who is also often a first contact for external inquiries. This includes:
  - › Following up promptly and effectively to inquiries from all potential investment and job creation prospects.
  - › Maintaining a database of past and current prospects by employing customer relationship management (CRM) software (e.g., Salesforce, etc.).
  - › Knowing “the competition” well and being an enthusiastic purveyor of Richmond’s story and the unique strengths and amenities it has to offer.
  - › Reporting regularly to the City and Richmond community on DCR progress, results and next steps, including through use of quantitative indicators, selected performance metrics and other “report card” measures (e.g., tax revenues by type, job creation/retention, value of investments made, income/wages, etc.).
- **Aggressive Networker.** The Director should be plugged into numerous networks that are crucial to economic development practice, including elected officials (and key staff), public agencies, organizations, business and trade groups, and other economic development professionals at the local, regional, state (e.g., TexasOne, Team Texas, etc.) and national levels. Locally and within the region, this includes:
  - › Central Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce.
  - › West Fort Bend Management District.
  - › Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce.
  - › Fort Bend Economic Development Council.
  - › Greater Houston Partnership.
  - › Houston Regional Economic Development Alliance (HREDA).
  - › Gulf Coast Economic Development District (Houston-Galveston Area Council).
  - › Other Type A and Type B economic development corporations within the greater Houston region, especially those nearby and likely to have a more direct effect on future economic development outcomes in and around Richmond (e.g, Sugar Land, Rosenberg, Fulshear, etc.).

- **Key Data/Information Resource.** The Director should be the key contact for all essential market, development and other pertinent community data about Richmond. The Director should also be highly knowledgeable of other data and information resources about the area, available through other agencies and entities. This includes:
  - › Focusing especially on marketing and informational outreach to new and growing businesses within the target industry sectors identified for Richmond, based on keen knowledge of their needs involving space, infrastructure, transportation, workforce skills, technology and other location and investment factors.
  - › Capitalizing on access to current commercial property listings, area business park information, and other business relocation and expansion resources maintained by the Fort Bend Economic Development Council.
- **Ongoing Plan Implementation and Maintenance.** The Director should be the lead individual and primary advocate for executing the DCR Strategic Plan and a Richmond Economic Development Plan (once adopted), through ongoing Board interaction and guidance and through DCR’s annual work program and budget. This includes:
  - › Interacting routinely with City management and staff on annual and capital budgeting and priority improvements, other City programs and initiatives most relevant to economic development priorities, and the “shaping private development” emphasis included in Table 1 above to promote quality development in Richmond while assisting developers of desired and beneficial projects to navigate the City’s approval and permitting procedures in a smooth and timely manner.
  - › Tying the target industry sectors for Richmond directly into an economic development incentives strategy and subsequent package that optimizes future recruitment and attraction efforts.
  - › Managing special study efforts involving contracted consultants.
- **Image/Branding Monitor.** If not leading them, the Director should routinely monitor all activities by the DCR, City and other local and area partners and entities that help to shape public, business/development community and opinion leader perceptions of Richmond and its image, reputation, assets and challenges, and accomplishments. This includes:
  - › Lending direct or in-kind support to the City and other organizations that plan and host local community events that appeal to both residents and visitors to Richmond.

Both DCR and the West Fort Bend Management District are currently in the search process to fill their lead staff positions (Director of Economic Development and Executive Director, respectively). This presents a timely opportunity for coordination between the two organizations as the new Directors settle into their positions and prepare to advance the respective priorities of each entity—especially with the District no longer active in Rosenberg and focused on Richmond going forward.

***Workshop Notes on Other Priorities***

These additional points were made during the second strategic planning workshop related to the other identified near-term priorities:

### Broader Scope

- Locations for potential focus beyond Downtown should be determined based on: (1) DCR’s core objectives (private investment, job creation, increased public revenues, enhanced quality of life), and (2) how much “payback” will come from DCR efforts and targeted investment in a particular area.
- Balance is needed – don’t leave Downtown behind entirely (lessons learned from Rosenberg).

### US 90-A Corridor

- Challenges here include infrastructure, drainage and limited area for existing businesses to expand.
- Low-impact business types (in terms of water and sanitary sewer demands) should be emphasized in the meantime (i.e., not restaurants).
- The area should be eligible for improvements using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds intended to benefit lower-income areas.
- Annexation planning should be pursued to extend the City’s development regulations and standards to the area and for the incremental revenue gains that would accrue.
- More study and planning is needed for this area, in general, to better understand its potential, the near- and longer-term public sector actions that are needed, and the financial or other tools that may be most appropriate (e.g., Public Improvement District relative to a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone).

### Business Park

- A potential focus on office/flex space models should be explored given the pending buildout of Sugar Land for such development.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

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The community vision and DCR mission expressed in this Strategic Plan will ultimately be attained through a multitude of specific actions. Earlier sections of this plan capture numerous ideas and potential actions that were discussed during the workshops in support of this plan. The intent of this final section is to narrow the scope to a more focused “to do” list in key action areas, indicate the potential sequence and/or timing of associated steps, and specify which individual or entities will be responsible for initiating, administering and participating in the implementation process.

**Table 2** at the back of this plan provides a format for expanding upon the top-priority items in Table 1, as well as the other key items discussed in the second strategic planning workshop. By starting to frame initiatives that DCR and its new Director may pursue in the near term, Table 2 also provides a bridge between the current exercise of completing a Strategic Plan focused on the Corporation and its mission, capabilities and priorities and an eventual next step of developing a full-fledged Economic Development Plan for Richmond. The table includes the following elements and considerations:

### **Priority**

The six near-term initiatives resulting from the Strategic Plan effort are further categorized as Priority 1, 2 or 3. This could relate to Years 1-3 following Strategic Plan adoption, or it could just be a further indication of relative priority and readiness to take on a particular task over an initial implementation period not necessarily tied to calendar years. For example, action on a Priority 1 item might get started

in Year 1 but take several years to complete fully, while some advance work on a Priority 2 item might be possible toward the end of Year 1.

### **Action Type**

Each near-term initiative is linked to a type of implementation activity that will be necessary to move it forward. This is based on KKC's philosophy that communities have *five major pathways to action* as described below. Several initiatives are shown as requiring multiple of these action types, with action in all categories indicated for item 5 regarding key investment areas beyond Downtown.

- 1. Capital Investments.** Many local governments use a multi-year capital improvements planning process to identify and budget for “big ticket” projects, especially those that must be phased and/or coordinated with other initiatives. This may include street infrastructure; water, wastewater and drainage improvements; parks, trails and recreation facility construction and upgrades; construction and renovation of public buildings; and purchase of land, vehicles or major equipment. Anticipating and adequately budgeting for major capital projects is essential to implementing an overall community master plan and other types of specialized plans, including economic development plans. Decisions regarding the prioritization of potential capital improvements in Richmond should take into account the direction and priorities of this Strategic Plan and ongoing DCR planning and programming.
- 2. Programs and Initiatives.** Programs involve the routine activities of a City or an organization like DCR, as well as special projects and initiatives their staff are assigned to undertake. As part of plan implementation, this method may include initiating new or adjusting existing programs and activities, enhancing outreach and communication efforts (a stated priority of this plan), or completing specialized training to accomplish a priority objective more promptly and/or effectively.
- 3. Regulations and Standards.** Given that private investment decisions account for the vast majority of a community's physical form, land development regulations and related engineering and design standards are fundamental for implementing initiatives aimed at quality development and local image. Consequently, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development standards and technical criteria are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character and quality of development reflect local planning objectives. These codes and criteria are administered by municipal government and should advance the community's desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan principles and priorities.
- 4. Partnerships and Coordination.** Some community planning and economic development initiatives cannot be accomplished by City government or a Development Corporation on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique abilities of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community's action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities and in-kind services—which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities—and from public/private financing of community improvements.
- 5. Targeted Planning / Studies.** Various areas of City governance and economic development practice require more detailed study and planning, especially as is sometimes required to qualify for external funding opportunities. These studies involve targeted planning work at a “finer grain” level of detail than is appropriate for community-wide planning purposes (e.g., utility

infrastructure and parks/recreation master plans, transportation corridor studies, annexation service planning and fiscal impact studies, etc.). As such, some of DCR's priority initiatives will be implemented only after some additional in-depth planning or special study to clarify next steps and associated costs and considerations.

### ***Next Steps***

This involves the essential exercise of breaking down larger efforts into "first and next steps" to lay the groundwork for measurable action and build momentum toward targeted outcomes. This often requires further clarification of objectives and a realistic assessment of resources and capabilities to move an initiative forward. As noted in the table, in some cases it involves preparing to obtain professional services from specialty consultants.

### ***Implementation and Coordination Roles***

In addition to identifying which local individual, body or function, at DCR and/or the City, would likely lead a task, this portion of Table 2 also highlights a variety of local and external agencies and entities that might have a role to play in certain initiatives, whether through potential cost-sharing, technical assistance, direct cooperation (potentially through an interlocal agreement), or simply by providing input and feedback on a matter in which they have some mutual interest.

### ***Funding Potential***

This final column in Table 2 indicates both typical financing methods and new or external funding possibilities which may be pursued through plan implementation efforts.

A new Director of Economic Development, in coordination with the DCR Board, Mayor and City Commission, and City Manager will ultimately develop a first-year work program based on the overall guidance and direction from this Strategic Plan. This should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process and should reflect interaction with and insights from other public and private implementation partners.

It should be kept in mind that early implementation of certain items, while perhaps not the uppermost priorities, may be expedited by the availability of related grant or cost-sharing opportunities, by a state or federal mandate imposed on the City, or by the eagerness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with DCR. On the other hand, some high-priority items may prove difficult to tackle in the near term due to budget constraints, the lack of an obvious lead entity or individual to carry the initiative forward, or by Corporation or community readiness to take on an ambitious or potentially controversial new program.

### **Ongoing Plan Evaluation and Updating**

The Strategic Plan should be a flexible document allowing for adjustment to changing conditions in the years ahead. Shifts in political, economic, physical, technological and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances, may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the Richmond community and its Development Corporation. Over time, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some action items may be found impractical or outdated while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall vision of the community and



remains relevant and resourceful over time, the Strategic Plan must be revisited on a regular basis to confirm that its guiding principles and strategies are still on point.

### ***Annual Review and Progress Reporting***

It is essential that implementation priorities be revisited annually to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort are needed, and determine whether some items have moved up or down in relative priority given changing circumstances and emerging needs. This review and discussion should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process, capital improvements planning, and departmental/DCR programming.

As part of DCR's annual reporting, progress to date on Strategic Plan implementation should be highlighted for presentation to and discussion with the Mayor and City Commission. This ensures that the plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified for an annual plan amendment process. The progress report should include and highlight:

- Significant actions and accomplishments during the last year, including the status of implementation for each priority initiative in the Action Agenda.
- Obstacles or problems encountered during plan implementation.
- Recommendations for needed actions, programs or procedures to be developed and implemented in the coming year, including recommendation of projects to be included in the City's capital improvements programming, other programs/projects to be funded, external funding opportunities to be pursued, and priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.

In the end, one fundamental outcome from this essential process should be to translate strategic planning into strategic implementation. This is where nearly all daily efforts are directed toward achieving the Corporation's core mission and priority action initiatives, which, in turn, will lead to attaining Richmond's broader community vision and goals. DCR Board members underscored three fundamentals they hope will result from the strategic planning process:

1. Shifting the organization to a pro-active versus reactive footing.
2. Providing Board-level direction and consensus on strategic priorities on which a new Director of Economic Development should focus.
3. Showing meaningful and tangible results versus "spinning wheels."

In turn, the Strategic Plan consultants from Kendig Keast Collaborative advised that DCR focus especially on identifying and overcoming barriers to investment and reinvestment in Richmond, which can involve market factors, underperforming properties, infrastructure deficiencies, regulatory issues, and basic perception and information gaps about the community that need to be addressed.