



# Annual Report 2019



For a day or a lifetime, Harlingen!





Harlingen has a new convention center that opened its doors on May 1, 2019. The last event center Harlingen built was in 1969 and that was the Tourist Center now called the Harlingen Community Center.





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*Front and back cover showcase the beautiful Harlingen Convention Center located at 701 Harlingen Heights Dr. The brand new facility can accommodate large and small events with more than 44,000 square feet including an outdoor venue that can hold up to 510 people.*



Dear fellow residents of Harlingen,

On behalf of the Harlingen City Commission, I present to you the 2019 Annual Report. This is one way of showing how our City government is working for you.

2019 was indeed a great year for Harlingen! As you will see, there were many firsts and just as importantly there were many accomplishments as we work to make Harlingen the perfect place for a day or for a lifetime. For example, we are the only City in the Rio Grande Valley with five all-inclusive playgrounds. We also formed local and regional partnerships that will bring new opportunities to the entire area. Those include the UTRGV School of Medicine Institute for Neuroscience being built on land donated by our Economic Development Corporation and the new educational facility to be built by UTRGV and HCISD on land donated by the City. Likewise, we built new roads, sidewalks, and targeted drainage issues by starting ten projects aimed at reducing flood possibilities throughout the City.

Much thought and consideration are given to every decision we make because the City Commission fully understands that we are stewards of your tax dollars and we work diligently to make the most of those dollars.

Be assured that as the City continues to grow and our priorities change, we will continue to address those priorities and offer you the services that will help you in your daily lives. It gives me great pride to work with you, our citizens, as we move Harlingen forward.

Respectfully yours,

*Chris Boswell*

Mayor





**Richard Uribe**  
Commissioner District 1



**Frank Puente**  
Commissioner District 2



**Michael Mezmar**  
Commissioner District 3



**Ruben De La Rosa**  
Commissioner District 4



**Victor Leal**  
Commissioner District 5



**Dan Serna**  
City Manager, CPM

## Message from the City Manager

With great pride, I invite you to view the pages within this Annual Report so that you can see firsthand the many great changes occurring in our community. There is no doubt that Harlingen is better.

We have our Mayor and Commissioners to thank for their leadership as well as the 500+ employees that remain committed to providing the best service possible to you our residents. We witnessed that dedication in late June, when Harlingen received more than 15 inches of rain within a 3-4 hour time period. City employees remained steadfast and conducted rescue efforts, pumping operations, sandbag operations, and cleanup efforts.

Employees also walked many neighborhoods to see what more could be done to help residents return to their daily lives. Our debris cleanup continued for almost two months with our Public Works employees working seven days a week in order to help residents in need as well as keeping up with the daily trash and debris pick up.

All of our City employees are trained in emergency management and stand ready to step up should the need arise again. In the meantime, we continue our daily operations and making the necessary improvements as you will see within this report.

Sincerely,

*Dan Serna*



Gabriel Gonzalez, CPM  
Assistant City Manager



Carlos Sanchez, P.E., CPM  
Assistant City Manager



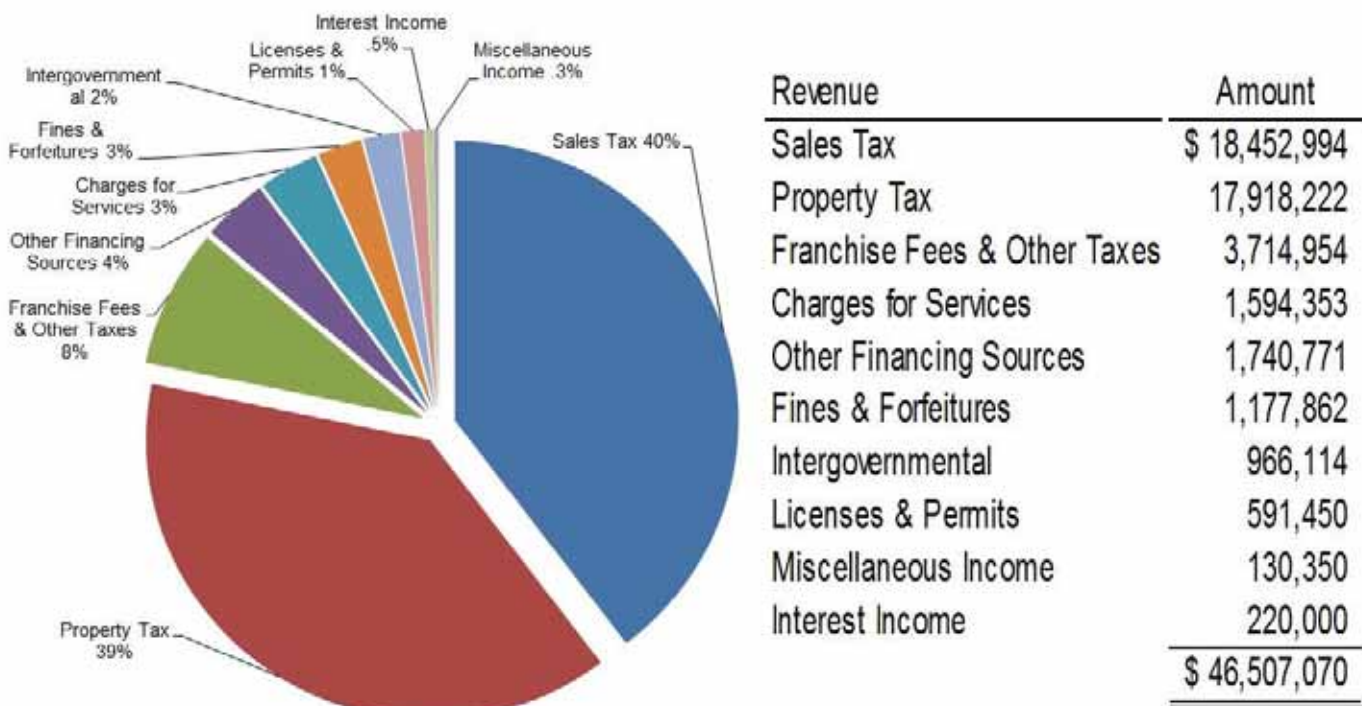
## Finance & Economy

The City of Harlingen remains financially sound and anticipates finishing FY 2019-2020 with an estimated fund balance of \$18,231,067. The city's largest revenue source continues to be sales and property taxes respectively. Franchise fees and other taxes come in third.

Harlingen's credit rating is an "AA+" which means credit rating companies see the City as having a very strong capability to meet financial commitments. This has been reaffirmed by Fitch Ratings Inc. who reports that Harlingen has very strong revenue prospects as well as strong budgetary flexibility and moderate fixed costs. Fitch predicts Harlingen will continue to have strong reserve levels with a strong operating performance. Standard & Poor's Rating Services also reports that Harlingen's economy is stable; predicting the fund balance will again remain above 30% of expenditures for the current and next fiscal years.

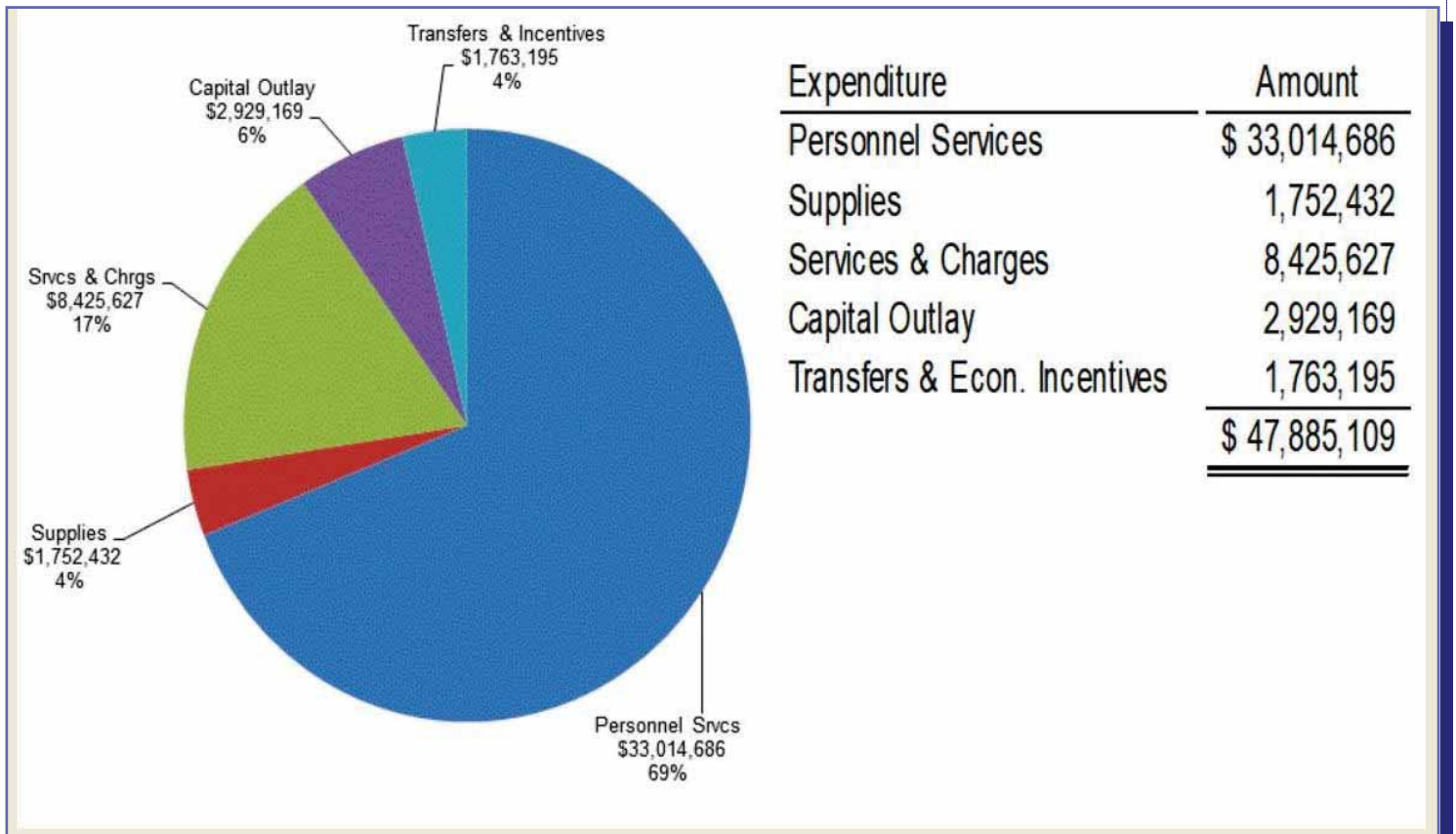
FY 2019-2020 Budget Highlights include \$1.4 million for street maintenance and overlay projects, \$1.6 million for public safety vehicles, uniforms, and personnel salary and benefits. It also includes \$1.7 million in improvements for the 9th & 13th Street Drainage Project.

### Proposed FY 2019-2020 General Fund Revenues \$46,507,070



## Finance & Economy

### Proposed FY 2019-2020 General Fund Expenditures \$47,885,109



Harlingen tops the list for Lowest Cost of Living and Most Affordable Groceries by Insure.com, a major insurance carrier that conducted a comparison of cities in the U.S.

Harlingen received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 38th consecutive year.

Harlingen received the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 29th time.

Harlingen Municipal Court was selected as the winner of the Municipal Traffic Safety Award for the 3rd consecutive year.





## Health & Education

UTRGV and the UTRGV School of Medicine broke ground on the Institute for Neuroscience that will serve as a place where medical students can learn to become doctors and researchers. It will also house clinics and diagnostic centers for numerous neuropsychiatric and aging disorders.



Harlingen also partnered with UTRGV and HCISD to build a brand new educational facility and campus in Harlingen. When complete, it will serve as a place where UTRGV students can take classes and it will house hundreds of Early College High School students.

The City of Harlingen's Health Department partnered with entomology students from UTRGV and the Instituto Politecnico Nacional Centro de Biotecnologia Genomica from Reynosa to conduct mosquito research in the area. The goal is to create a stronger surveillance program that will prevent outbreaks of diseases transmitted by mosquitoes. This is part of the department's binational work thanks to two grants it received.

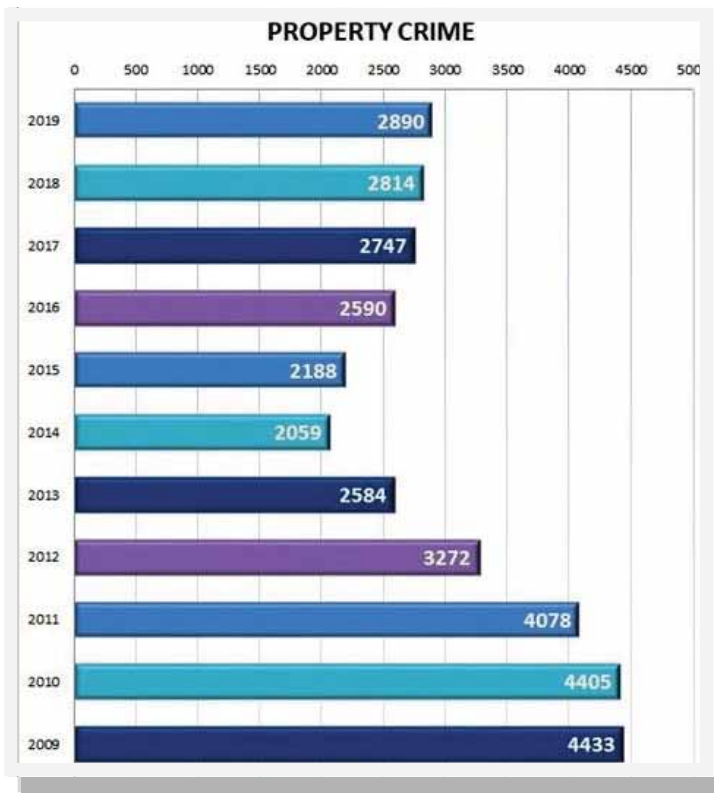
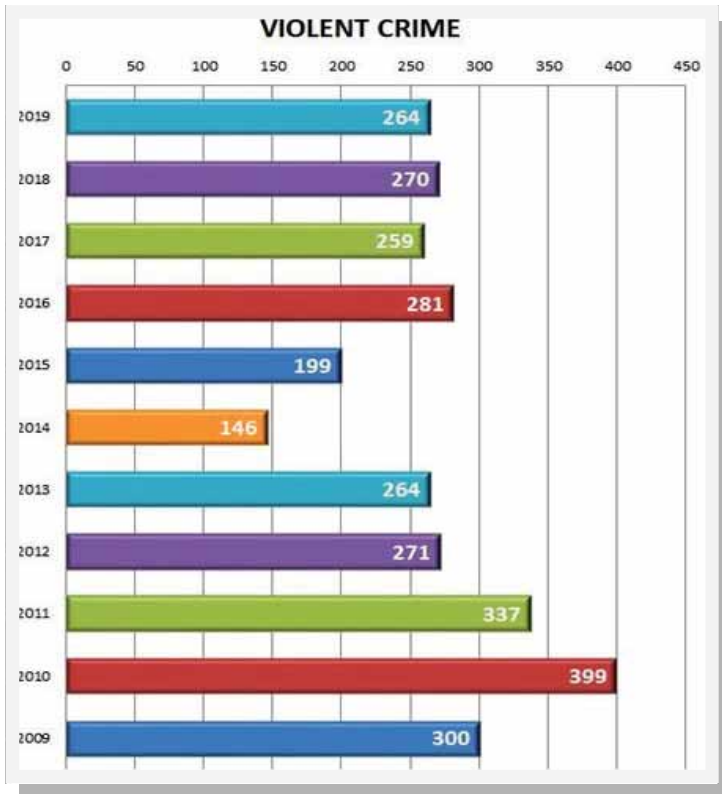


# Public Safety

Keeping the community safe is the number one priority of the Harlingen Police Department, that's why the department continues to implement pro-active 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 in the prevention of crime year round.



*Chief Mike Kester*



On June 12, 2019, Chief Kester named Miryam Anderson as the first female Assistant Chief of the Harlingen Police Department. Assistant Chief Anderson has been with the department for 22 years.



# Public Safety

The Harlingen Fire Department with a force of 110 is responsible for fire and rescue in Harlingen and has contracts with the cities of Combes, Palm Valley, Primera, and a 60 mile section of Cameron County. The department promotes prevention through many different programs to citizens of all ages. HFD also offers free fire extinguisher classes year round.



*Chief Roy Rubio*



Training is a huge part of being prepared. This year, for the first time in 30 years, the HFD conducted its own Fire Academy offering continued training courses internally at a cost savings to the City.



Firefighters assigned to the Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting Unit also undergo extensive training at VIA. The ARRF Certification is an additional accreditation required by the FAA and the Texas Commission of Fire Protection for firefighters to operate at Certified Airports.



The Harlingen Fire Department also made history this fiscal year by welcoming the first female firefighter to the department. Bree Rios joined the department that her own father has been a part of for more than 20 years. Congratulations Bree.



# Valley International Airport



VIA continues to be the premier airport in the RGV as proven with a 12.19 percent increase in enplanements during FY 2018-2019 as compared to FY 2017-2018. This fiscal year 343,732 passengers chose to board planes in Harlingen.



On March 4, 2019, American Airlines commenced three daily flights from VIA to DFW with connections to more than 800 daily flights to more than 200 nonstop destinations. In the nine months of operations in Harlingen, AA has already serviced 25,400 passengers.

Frontier Airlines has transported 30,577 passengers since starting air service in Harlingen on November 21, 2018, through October 2019. Frontier offers direct flights to Chicago-O'Hare and Denver International Airport.





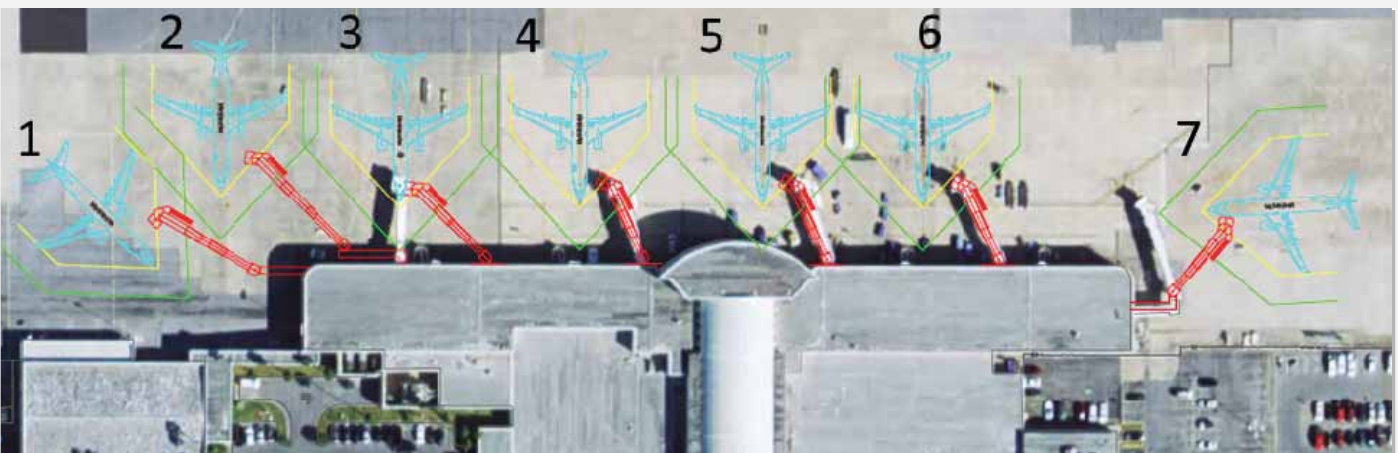
# The Valley's Airport



Air Cargo at Valley International Airport continues to grow. Harlingen is now ranked as the seventy first cargo port in the United States.



This fiscal year, VIA made \$12 million in upgrades and renovations including LED runway lights, new Terrazo floors, an LED video wall, an expanded runway system, and added passenger boarding bridges to gates 1 & 3.



## Permits & Construction



- 649 permits issued in FY 2018-2019 with a construction value of \$86,696,087.33.
- 610 permits issued in FY 2017-2018 with a construction value of \$78,432,110.85.
- Building permits up by \$8.2 million or 10.5 percent in construction value. The largest increase was in new commercial permits up 78 percent.

A ribbon cutting was held for the new Harlingen Convention Center on May 1, 2019. Open less than a year, the venue has gained popularity among people from all over the RGV. It has been rented out so much that it is exceeding the first year revenue projections.



Construction of the Hilton Garden Inn which will be connected to the Convention Center is underway. BC Lynd is investing \$13.5 million to build the 149-room hotel which should be complete in July 2020.



## Permits & Construction



The sounds of laughter and happy times have returned to Downtown's Baxter Building with the completion of a privately funded rehabilitation project. For more than 30-years the building stood empty. It is now home to 24 families who have moved into the Baxter Lofts located at the corner of A and Jackson Streets.



The developer of the Shops at Valle Vista is making a \$2.5 million investment to build a TJ Maxx next to the Target on Dixieland Road. The major apparel and home fashion store will create between 40-60 new jobs. Look for it in late 2020. Meantime, Target also remodeled the store at a cost of \$950,000.



Harlingen Corners Retail Center, home to Kohl's, Marshalls, Burlington, Logan Steakhouse, and Chuck E. Cheese, made \$500,000 in improvements that include a new parking lot, LED lights, and drainage enhancements.

## New to Harlingen



The Stuart Place Crossing Retail Development continues to grow with the addition of Johnny Rockets while Firehouse Subs opened its doors at the Harlingen Corners Retail Center and Urban Air Trampoline and Adventure Park joined the Valle Vista Mall family. Combined, this is a \$720,000 investment in Harlingen.



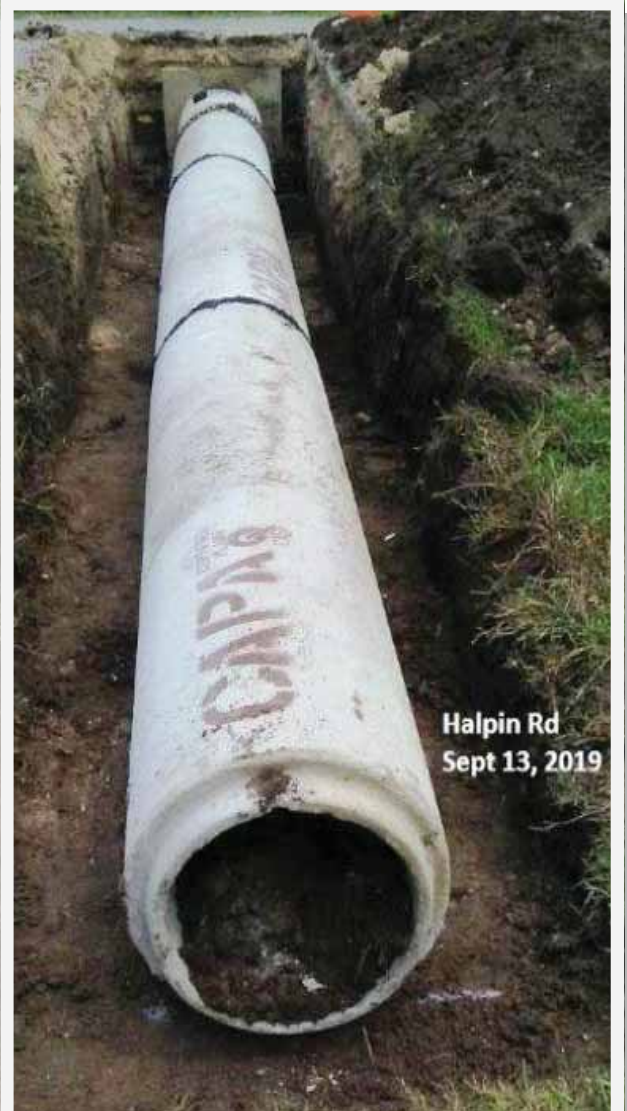
Momentum Skilled Services is investing \$6.4 million to build a 51,759 square foot facility on 77 Sunshine Strip. The skilled nursing and rehabilitation center will provide 125 beds where patients can get short or long term rehab. This will be the first facility in the RGV for the Austin based company.



Bar-B-Cuties is making a \$1.8 million investment with it's first Smokehouse Restaurant in Harlingen that will be located in front of Sam's. Girl of all Trade Tea & Coffee House is one of 12 new businesses in Downtown Harlingen and a carwash company has invested \$1 million to build a brand new express carwash on Ed Carey Drive.



# Improvement Projects



The City of Harlingen has taken on ten improvement projects aimed at helping to minimize the possibility of flooding. The projects call for cleaning, widening, replacing, and in some cases repairing the infrastructure of the drainage ditch.

Altas Palmas– Complete  
Beckham Road– Complete  
Lake Drive– Complete  
Secluded Acres–Complete  
Becky Lane– Complete

Halpin Road–Complete  
Dixieland Drainage Ditch– Completion date June 2020  
9th & 13th Street Drainage Improvements– Completion date early 2021  
13th Street Drainage Ditch– Completion date March 2020  
Jefferson Drainage Ditch– Completion date March 2020



# 2018-2019

## Street Improvement Program



- Charles Street
- Frances Street
- Park Street
- Warren Street
- G Street
- 4th Street
- 5th Street
- Haine Drive
- Nixon Road
- F Street
- 6th Street
- Buchanan Ave
- Lincoln Ave
- Strauss Street
- Commerce Street
- Hope
- Faith
- Prosperity
- Lakeshore
- William
- Carey
- Dillard
- Midlane
- Russell

*This year the City of Harlingen rehabilitated 26 streets at a cost of \$2 million.*



# 2019-2020

## Street Improvement Program



*The City of Harlingen has set aside \$1.4 million to improve the following streets as part of the 2019-2020 FY Budget.*

- Country Side
- Sunny Side
- Traxler Way
- Haine
- Granada Street
- Markowsky
- Treasure Hills
- Fairpark/Jefferson

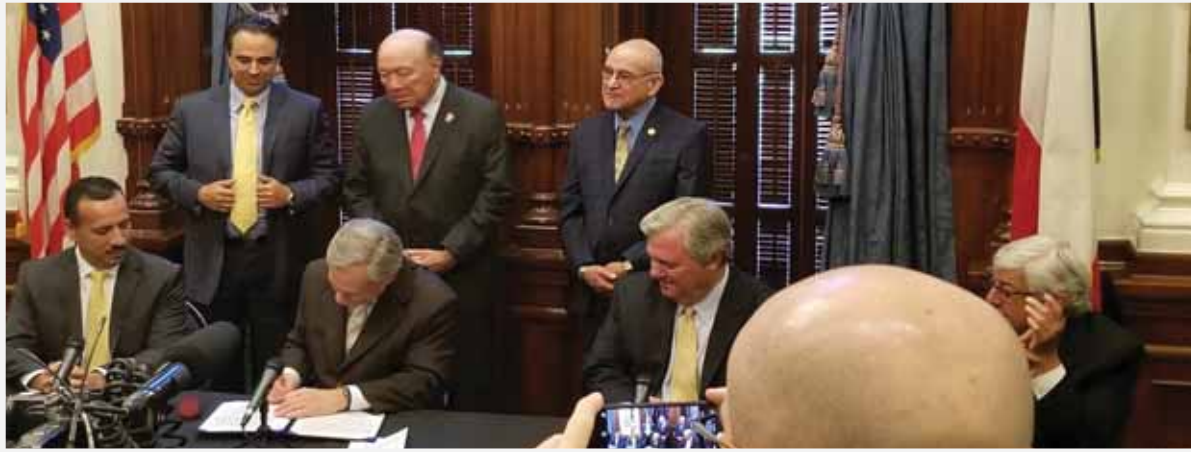
**STREET  
IMPROVEMENTS**



We added 2.1 miles of sidewalk to areas around town through the City's Sidewalk Improvement Project. This is thanks to a \$497,000 grant from the Lower Rio Grande Development Council. We also added curb and ramps. The new sidewalks were constructed on portions of FM 507 & 499, 6th Street, Ed Carey, and Haine Drive. This fiscal year, the City Commission also adopted an ordinance requiring sidewalks on all streets for new subdivisions.



# Quality of Life Projects



June 14, 2019—Governor Greg Abbott signed the re-designation and consolidation agreement creating the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization during a special ceremony at the State Capitol.



Phase 1 of the Lon C. Hill Destination Park is under construction on Fair Park Boulevard. It includes an entry court, center plaza, water features, landscaping, L & L 1/2 Street improvements, and a new parking lot.



Destination Park groundbreaking November 26, 2019.



Vestal Park is now the City's fifth all-inclusive park after \$309,035 in improvements.





Junior League of Harlingen provided \$165,000 to create the Boggus Family Teen Room at the Library.



This fiscal year, the Harlingen City Commission approved the construction of a new HEB Tennis Center at Pendleton Park complete with a new pro shop, air-conditioned space, a patio, office, training room, restrooms, and a spectator viewing area. The \$500,000 project is being funded by money set aside through the issuance of a 2001 bond.



The City commissioned an artist to create a mural to honor Southwest Airlines Founder Herb Kelleher who passed away in 2019. He chose to service Harlingen just four years after starting Southwest. The mural is located at Lozano Plaza in Downtown Harlingen.

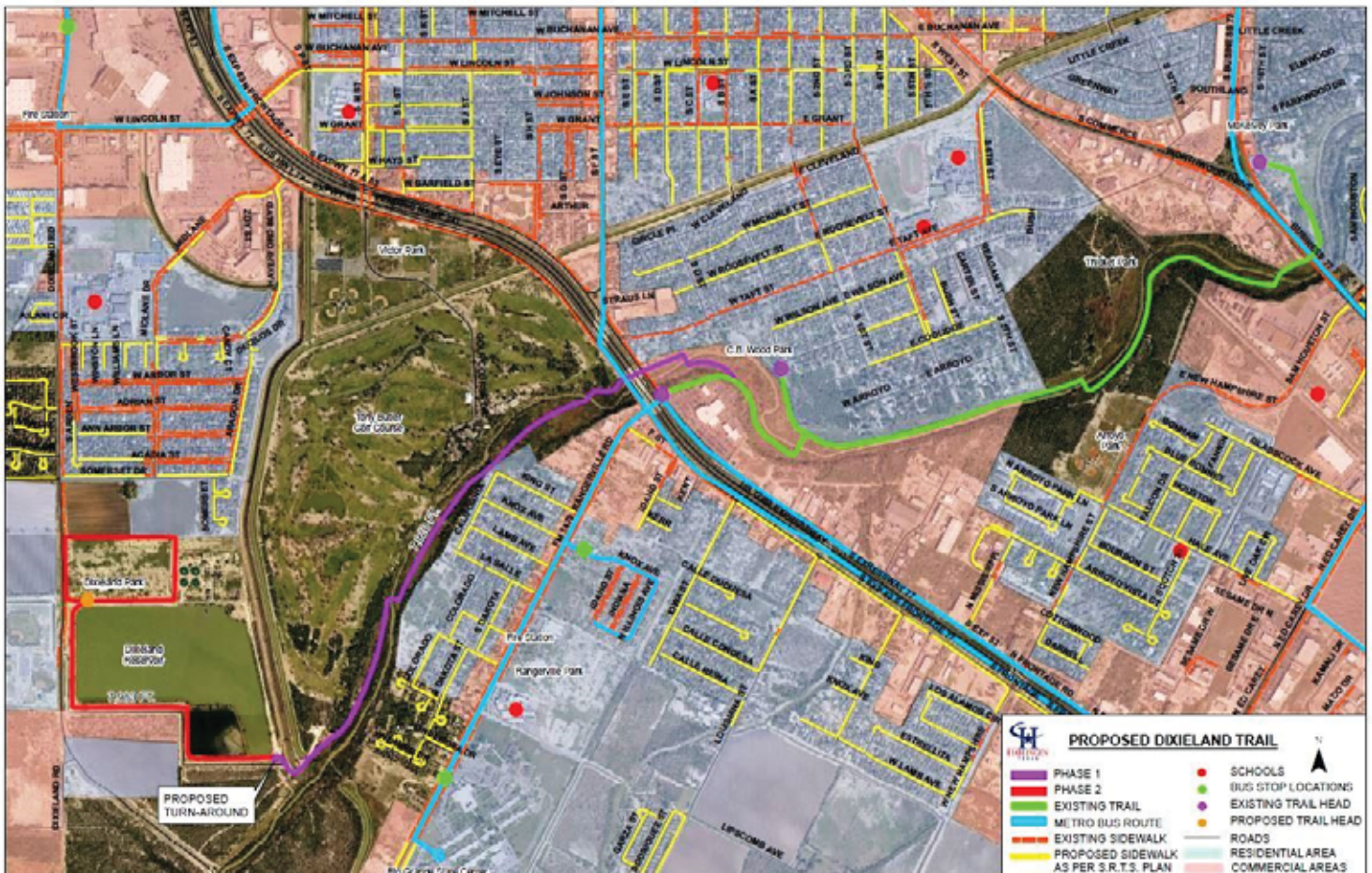




With the help of two grants, Parks & Rec was able to add an ADA ramp complete with railing at Victor Pool. One grant was from CDBG, the other from the Harlingen Wellness Coalition.



Another grant from CDBG helped with the construction of a lighted basketball court at Rangerville Park. This is the first for the park on the southeast side of Harlingen.



Thanks to the Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation, we will be extending the Hike and Bike Trail by about two miles. The Foundation awarded the City \$1.2 million for phase 1 of this project. The addition will increase the hike & bike trail to five miles.



# Hollywood Comes to Harlingen







Harlingen was selected as the backdrop for the filming of a family movie titled "Gift of an Angel" starring Christian de la Fuente, Alyssa Milano, Angel Parker, Eva Ariel Binder, and Joel Goldstein.

The crew and actors spent one month filming in selected sights throughout the City including Harlingen's Historic Jackson Street.

The Company will recognize the City of Harlingen as the principal filming location in its marketing efforts and press releases. The movie is due out in 2020 and will include a closing credit recognizing the City of Harlingen as the filming location.





# Annual Report

## 2019

Publication produced by the City of Harlingen  
Public Relations Department.



For a day or a lifetime, Harlingen!

### City of Harlingen

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