

VSTDC Plan of Work

Introduction:

On May 18, 2020, the Victoria Sales Tax Development Corporation Board (VSTDC) met to discuss their vision of economic development and the VSTDC's Strategic plan. Each board member expressed their views. The consensus, as expressed first by Mayor McCoy, was the economic development involves any activity that makes Victoria A better place to live or visit.

One of the board members wants VSTDC to focus on Victoria's current assets. He mentioned the ports, the airport, higher education, and historic tourism examples of economic development opportunities.

Another member suggested that the VSTDC pursue an economic base analysis. This would look at the entire region as it exists today in terms of how we compare with other similar regions of the State. This analysis will identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to help us prioritize our activities. This initiative was recently completed in January 2023 by NewMark consultants and has driven the new path of this plan of work.

Recently on June 1st, 2023, the VSTDC Plan of Work sub-committee met and discussed the new strategic plan and have organized the list of tasks in a way that is effective and efficient as it pertains to VSTDC.

Many of the late Mayor's goals and objectives are touched on in this new economic strategic plan and have been implemented or are in progress. These goals and objectives are specific to Victoria and to the entire 13 county region. Implementation has begun and along with this plan efforts to grow and prosper the region will continue for years to come.

This plan of work will annually be updated and have a focus on key target areas such as Workforce Development, Business Recruitment, Business Retention and Expansion, Marketing, Infrastructure, Organizational, Regional Collaboration, Small Business Entrepreneurship and Placemaking.

Economic Development Target Areas and Goals

Workforce Development

1. Relocating Partner Assistance Program
 - a. Create a Relocating Partner Assistance Program to support employers that are having difficulty assisting their newly relocated employees' partners with job placement in the region; Work with the heads of area businesses and their human resource departments to review and share the resumes of newly relocated individuals who are part of a job placement package. Focus not just on Quality of Life. Need to include assistance for spouse to find work. (Chamber of Commerce)
2. Post Graduation Tracking
 - a. Track graduates to determine if they plan on attending higher education locally or out of the region or pursuing certificate programs or technical training that could be brought back and paired with local companies open positions. Ensure local graduates know about open positions in the community they can return to after graduation. (VISD, UHV, VC and Chamber of Commerce)
3. Internship Academy
 - a. Use workforce assessment to identify key jobs. Offer job shadowing opportunities for freshmen or first-term vocational students, mentorship opportunities for sophomores or second-semester vocational students, and internships for juniors, seniors, and second-year vocational students. Arrange funding through scholarships and business support for the Internship Academy. (VC, UHV, VISD)
4. GCRPC Transit
 - a. Continue to support our local transit system to provide public transportation to the community. (City, Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission)

Business Recruitment

1. Regional Business Recruitment
 - a. Local EDOs should consider the needs of each prospective business and focus efforts on attracting businesses whose needs match the assets that their county provides. This includes matching infrastructure, workforce, and real estate needs of prospects to local communities. Local EDOs should focus their efforts on

business where their region or location meets the Critical Location Factors (CLF) of the industry/business. (VEDC)

Business Retention & Expansion

1. Business Retention & Expansion Plan
 - a. Use the resources and staffing that regional partners offer to assist in retaining businesses in the Victoria region and help existing businesses to expand. Be available to attend these visits with your regional partners when they need your assistance. Be ready to provide assistance and answers to the companies when they come up in those BRE visits. (VEDC)
 - b. Create a “Rapid Response Team” to quickly intervene when companies are having issues. (VEDC, City, County, State, Utilities, Workforce Board, Port, College/University)

Marketing

1. “Why Victoria” Message
 - a. Marketing materials should contain a unified message about the Victoria region's unique competitive advantages. Regional Partners should help tell when working with new and existing businesses. Happy existing clients lead to testimonials and success stories that strengthen your brand's reputation. Make sure that documents have a professional look and feel. This is critical when working with international clients. (VEDC)
2. Project Announcements
 - a. When a project announces its commitment to expand or locate in the Victoria region, VEDC should be included in the press release through call-out or quote and should be present at any and all project announcements, groundbreakings, grand openings, etc. (VEDC)
3. Victoria Area Marketing Plan
 - a. Implement an education and marketing campaign (write news releases, showcasing assets and programs, for email distribution, publication in newspapers, radio, and television stories, and on the City and VEDC websites, as described at the May 19 Council meeting) (VEDC)

Infrastructure

1. Site Identification
 - a. Work to identify additional sites in the City of Victoria that can be used to market the City. Gather the information required to add these sites to VEDC's site database. Be sure to work with the site owners / brokers to make sure they have available infrastructure and costs to bring utilities to those sites so everyone is clear on the opportunity and the costs related. (City/VEDC)

2. City Infrastructure

- a. Continue to support utility projects, streets and drainage projects, and engineering studies for capital improvement projects. (City)

Organizational

1. Work Sessions and Educational Programs

- a. Identify economic development tools and understand their use (Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, Foreign Trade Zones, Public Improvement Districts, Community Block Grant Programs, Opportunity Zones, Freeport Tax Exemptions, New Market Tax Credit, Victoria Housing Finance Corporation, Victoria Health Facilities Development corporation, Victoria Development Commission, etc.) (City/VEDC)

2. VSTDC Board/Council Education

- a. Identify economic development tools and understand their use (Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, Foreign Trade Zones, Public Improvement Districts, Community Block Grant Programs, Opportunity Zones, Freeport Tax Exemptions, New Market Tax Credit, Victoria Housing Finance Corporation, Victoria Health Facilities Development corporation, Victoria Development Commission, etc.) (City)
- b. Provide examples of Victoria's past use of economic development tools, or their use in other similar markets. (City/VEDC)

3. VSTDC Coalition

- a. Identify partners who can provide staff and resources to overcome political and financial constraints (City, County, Airport, COG (REDAC), GLO Ports, UHV(SBDC), Victoria College, Workforce Solutions, Victoria Alliance, and area wide EDC's, Counties and Municipalities)
- b. Establish quarterly meetings with the partners to build relationships and collaboration on future economic development projects. (City, County, VEDC)

4. Reporting and Metrics

- a. Establish quarterly action plan and periodic reporting requirements for VSTDC and City Council to be regularly kept informed on the progress of the strategic plan and return on investment. Identify similar programs in existence and determine expected ROI. (VEDC/City)

5. Incentives and Policy Guidelines

- a. Update and improve the City's incentive guidelines and policies for future prospective developments in the form of performance agreements and/or tax abatements. (City)

6. Business Recruitment Inquiries

- a. Business relocation inquiries should be directed to VEDC staff. If initial relocation inquiries begin outside of the economic development team, they need to be

routed to the VEDC economic development team. Regional partners and other supporting parties should be educated on the importance of the Economic Development Team and the reasons their requests for information need to be completed as quickly as possible. If Business Development is a priority for Victoria, then all departments need to help the Economic Development Team be successful and support their efforts. (VEDC)

Regional Collaboration

1. Have a monthly Regional Partners meeting to grow and create the needed cooperation between regional partners and VEDC. Must have a defined agenda with clear outcomes. Quarterly turn one of these meetings to a hosted event in one of the Regional Partners locations where you focus on learning about a regional partner asset like a Port or Business tour. Encouraging Regional Partners to expand their messaging and using the regions assets in their selling and prospecting. (VEDC)

Small Business & Entrepreneurship

1. Innovation Collective
 - a. Work to promote the programs and initiatives of the Innovation Collective. Require more transparency around programming, funding, and processes to build trust in the community and gain supporters and increase funds. Transparency around venture capital support staying in the region. (Innovation Collective, UHV, VC, City)
 - b. Encourage collaboration between the Victoria Chamber of Commerce and Innovation Collective to achieve synergies. Introduce Victoria Chamber of Commerce to Innovation Collective programs and offerings to promote an entrepreneurial culture in Victoria and the surrounding region. (UHV, Chamber, Innovation Collective)

Placemaking

1. Downtown Programming-College Oriented
 - a. Cater special events to the city's college age population. For example, special events and programs during move-in week or graduation when you have access to parents and new college students from across the state, country, and globe; Events around sporting events when you have access to students, parents, and alumni. (City, UHV, VC)
 - b. Engage students in community improvement initiatives like helping elderly and disabled to clean up their yards providing a needed service, beautifying neighborhoods, cutting down on code violations and building community pride.

Work with community affairs offices/student unions to coordinate efforts. (VISD, UHV, VC)

- c. Make it easier for college and university students to come to downtown through public transportation and easy parking. Make sure events do not conflict with finals so that students can participate. (City)