

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2010-2011



9/1/2011

96 Years in Business, 96 Years of Excellence

Established in 1915, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce is Laredo's and Webb County's longest running business organization. It is accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce with four stars.

Message from the Chairman of the Board

96 YEARS IN BUSINESS, 96 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE



Dear Members and Friends:

Our city stands out in many ways, fortunately, the vast majority are positive. Founded in 1755, Laredo is one of the country's oldest cities. It has the distinction of having seven flags fly over it and was the capital of the Republic of the Rio Grande. We have come a long way and today Laredo's population is estimated at over 250,000. At the beginning of this century, Laredo was touted as the nation's second fastest growing city. Even today, Laredo continues to grow at a pace that far exceeds the state and national averages. Our unemployment rate is lower than the state and national averages. We continue to grow our labor force and create new jobs. With our four international bridges and Rail Bridge, we continue to be by far the largest port on the Mexican Border.

Laredo continues to be a community on the rise. The recent discovery of a huge oil and gas formation, known as the Eagle Ford Shale, that includes north Webb and surrounding counties to the north has already shown a positive impact on our local economy. The Mexican Peso has been very stable in relation to the Dollar and Mexicans continue to come and shop Laredo bringing in more sales than we generate domestically. Our City Leaders have teamed up with the private sector to bring us a municipal championship golf course set to open this November. **Golf Digest** has promised to put it on one of its magazine covers and has been hailed to be one of the best golf courses in state with none better in South and Central Texas. Our city leaders have partnered with the business community and TAMU to go to Central and South America to convince exporters that using Laredo to bring their products to the U.S. will save them time and money compared to the ports that they are using now. The fruits of those efforts are beginning to show. There are good things in our future.

Our Chamber stands out in many ways. Founded in 1915, it is one of the state's oldest Chambers. It is a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and has the distinction of being recognized as a four star Chamber. Only 7 chambers in Texas can claim this distinction and none of them are in South Texas. Our Chamber has a large diversified Board of Directors that understands the challenges and opportunities we face and collaborate to bring solutions to the table. We provide our members with many benefits including lobbying for their best interests with government officials, discounts on health insurance and discounts between members, customer service seminars, and awards show casing the best we have in business and education.

I was born and raised in Laredo and have always worked to try and make it a better place. That is what the Chamber is actively doing. This is what we have done with your help.

Sincerely,

Ed Ramirez Jr.

Ed Ramirez Jr.
Chairman of the Board

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce is to provide vision and leadership to develop, promote and protect business; to encourage orderly development of business, people and infrastructure; and to be politically proactive to ensure the success of the area.

MEMBERSHIP

The Laredo Chamber ends this year with 670 members – 601 of these are business firms, 23 are individual memberships, 35 are Leadership Laredo alumni, and 11 are associate memberships. Approximately 90% of the membership is made up of business firms. It must be stressed that this year was particularly tough on membership, given the state of the economy. The Chamber lost a number of accounts during the course of the year as companies faced cutbacks – still, it remains a strong vibrant organization and is constantly adding new members to its rolls.

ACCREDITATION

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is fully accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Chambers are accredited under four possible categories – Accredited, Three-Star, Four Star, or Five-Star. The Laredo Chamber carries a Four-Star accreditation – one of only seven chambers in the state of Texas to hold such a distinction (it should be noted that there are only five chambers in the state that hold five-star accreditation). The U.S. Chamber reports that of nearly 7,000 chambers in the United States, only 230 are accredited. These represent 3% of all chambers across the country.

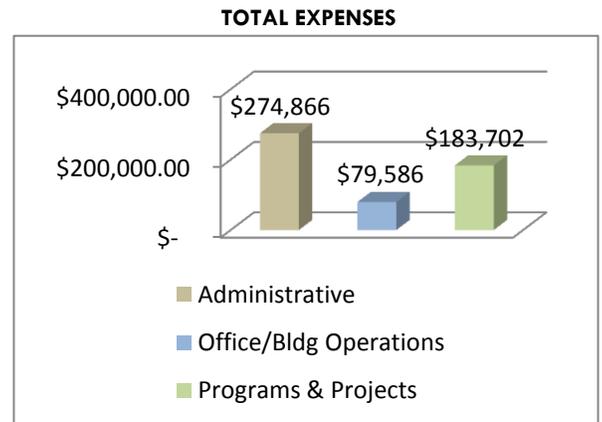
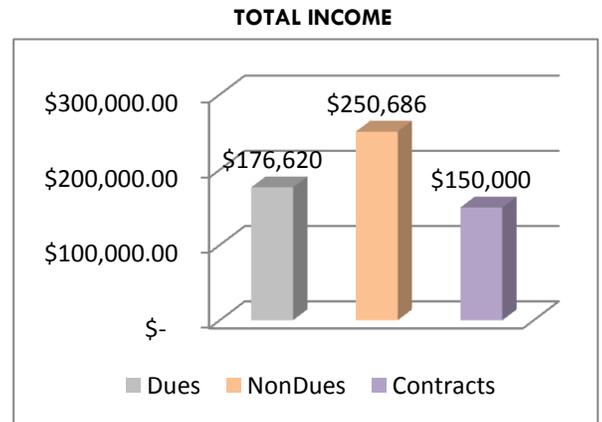
FINANCES

The Laredo Chamber’s membership fees constitute approximately 30% of its annual operating budget. In 2011, dues billings totaled \$256,000. New accounts, which totaled 77, accounted for approximately \$18,000 of these.

- Total Assets for the Chamber as of the end of August 2011 stood at \$463,323.38
- Reserves total \$154,909
- The Laredo Chamber is completely debt-free from long-term liabilities

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is ending the year in a healthy position financially – with YTD revenues (as of AUG) totaling \$577,306.31 and expenses totaling \$538,153.94. This is particularly noteworthy, given that the state of the economy during the year placed a strain on revenue sources for the Chamber. Although revenues this year decreased slightly in comparison to previous years, so did the level of expenses, thanks to measures taken early on by staff to meet the impact of the recession.

In addition to the operations budget, which is completely funded from membership dues, sponsorships and services, the Chamber in 2010-2011 managed a contract for promotion of Webb County for \$125,000; and a contract with the City of Laredo for advertising and promotion of the Cola Blanca Hunting Contest totaling \$25,000. The Laredo Chamber of Commerce also managed operations for the Laredo Trade & Travel Center in Monterrey, Mexico – Laredo’s own extension office in Northern Mexico. This office operated this year with an annual budget of \$100,000.



DELIVERY OF SERVICES

This year, in delivering services to its membership and the community at large, YOUR Laredo Chamber of Commerce --

Coordinated the “**Navidad en Laredo**” campaign in December of 2010, which promoted Laredo as shopping destination to residents of the Northern Mexico region. “Navidad en Laredo” was particularly noteworthy because it relied heavily on use of a specially designed website and social media to reach out to the market. Making use of a relatively small investment, a concentrated seven-week campaign resulted in a total of 9,230 visits to the promotional website, and the creation of a data base with over 900 contacts, making use of Google and social media.

Hosted the **Vision 2011 Economic Outlook Conference**, which, under the leadership of Willie Martinez of IBC, brought together business leaders from the region to acquaint them with the potential that was fast developing in the Eagle Ford Shale.

Total Revenue:	\$37,550.00
Expenses:	<u>\$ 8,382.24</u>
Net Gain:	\$29,167.76

Sponsored **Leadership Laredo 2010/2011** which celebrated its 25th anniversary and graduated 10 candidates under the guidance of Eddie Vela, Jr, of Commerce Bank;

Expanded the **Youth Leadership** program with support of Leadership Laredo alumni. Originally organized under Communities in Schools, the Youth Leadership program was adopted by the Chamber in 2009 under the guidance of Juanita Solis and Leadership Laredo. Currently the program services youth from private and public schools 8th – 12th grade.

Put together an extremely successful **Distinguished Business Awards Banquet** that honored local entrepreneur **Francisco ‘Pancho’ Ochoa** as **Business Person of the Year**. The event was organized under the leadership of Pepe Zuniga of BBVA Compass.

Total Revenue:	\$41,090.00
Expenses:	<u>\$11,078.32</u>
Net Gain:	\$30,011.68

Hosted the **15th Annual Family Chevrolet Bola Blanca Chamber Classic**, a first-class golf Tournament, co-chaired by Greg Morgensen of Family Chevrolet and John Ulbricht of Laredo Medical Center, that brought together 116 golfers and raised funds that will help support Chamber initiatives throughout the year.

Total Revenue:	\$35,600.00
Expenses:	<u>\$18,368.47</u>
Net Gain:	\$17,231.53

Instituted the **Customer Service Seminars**, under the direction of Cassandra Wheeler and the Customer Service Committee. The group organized and delivered a total of 20 seminars completely free to Chamber members and public organizations. Over 100 individuals took advantage of this program. Fifteen companies were recognized for participation in the entire series.

In addition, the committee hosted the annual **5-Star Customer Service Awards** banquet, where nine companies representing different industries were recognized as role models among their peers.

Total Revenue:	\$10,780.00
Expenses:	<u>\$ 7,102.04</u>
Net Gain:	\$ 3,677.96

Coordinated the **2010-2011 Cola Blanca Big Buck Contest**, (chaired this year by IBC’s Fernando Santos). Cola Blanca continues to strengthen Laredo’s ranching and retail industry, and in the 2010 hunting season attracted hundreds, if not thousands, of hunters from other areas into our region. This year Cola Blanca registered 616 hunters and scored over 100 bucks. It should be noted, however, that over 50 % of the registered hunters were from outside the city of Laredo. Cola Blanca registered hunters from as far away as Virginia, Louisiana and Florida. The contest provides sport, but more importantly, it promotes Webb County as a visitor destination. The Awards Ceremony of Sept. 24, 2011, alone brought in over 100 hunters and families from out of town that made use of Laredo’s lodging industry.

Participated in the **U.S. Chamber’s Federation Program**, which automatically gives small business members of the Chamber membership in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (at no additional cost!)

Maintained constant contact with the membership, through a modern electronic system of communication, which includes:

- **MarketPlace**, the weekly newsletter which provides the latest business information and “tips” to over 1,500 subscribers
- **The Weekly E-Planner**, which maintains Chamber members informed of current and upcoming events
- **A constantly evolving Chamber web site**, launched at the start of 2010, which provides visitors with access to a constantly updated Chamber directory and general information about Chamber activities;
- And **a new Cola Blanca web site**, also launched in 2010, which not only promotes the Cola Blanca Big Buck Contest, but additionally promotes Webb County as a visitor destination.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Membership constitutes the backbone of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce. It is its lifeblood, its strength. Every year, as in other nonprofit organizations, the staff and volunteers labor with dedication to increase our numbers. It is not an easy task. Yet, it is one that cannot be set aside. Staff and volunteers dedicate countless hours to make new businesses part of our community

This year, the Chamber Bienvenidos Committee, our official ambassador group, headed by Jonathan Ruiz, hosted a total of 39 Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies and 3 “Business After Hours” receptions, including a very successful Christmas *Posada*. More importantly, this year the Bienvenidos Committee launched a new initiative – *Power Breakfasts* – which provide another outlet to keep membership informed. In addition, the group partnered with the Chamber Board as 10 local companies were recognized as “Business of the Month.”

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

In External Affairs, this year the Laredo Chamber of Commerce was active in working with governmental leadership to promote a stronger business-friendly environment. This year, the Chamber took an active role in identifying and advancing issues of

importance to this community. To do this the Chamber has done the following:

- Joined the City of Laredo in their visit to Austin, TX, in advance of the biannual Legislative Session
- At the request of member retailers, went into action in opposing efforts at the state level to abolish the *manifiesto* system
- Took the lead in working with legislators and local media to present a positive image for our community, damaged unfortunately by events in northern Mexico
- Continues to collaborate with sister organizations, such as the Port of Corpus Christi, to identify and advance regional needs

Keep in mind that in order to advance these issues properly, we are aware of the need to keep the public sector informed. The Laredo Chamber at every step has sought the support of governmental allies, including:

- Congressman Henry Cuellar, Congressman FOR Dist. 28 in Washington, DC
- Mexican Consul General Miguel Angel Isidro
- U.S. Consul General Donald Heflin
- ... and at the state level, State Representatives Richard Raymond, Ryan Guillen and State Senator Judith Zaffirini.

Within the private sector, the Chamber continues to maintain a strong presence at the State and National levels through the involvement of its staff. Chamber president/CEO Miguel Conchas is active as a representative in –

- The U.S. Chamber CCC100, a committee representative of 100 select chambers across the country
- The U.S. Chamber’s Transportation Infrastructure Logistics Committee, an advisory committee which plays a vital role in an industry of great value to local industry
- The Board of Directors of the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC).
- Mexico’s Institute for Mexicans Abroad, a branch of the *Secretaria de Relaciones Exterior*

2010-2011 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ed Ramirez, Jr.	Chairman of the Board
Wilfredo Martinez	Chairman Elect
Joe Palacios, Jr.	Vice Chairman
Minerva Santos	Treasurer
Lupita Canales	Past Chairman of the Board
Javier Moctezuma	Council Chair
Federico 'Kiko' Trevino	Council Chair
John Ulbricht	Council Chair
Catalina Zaragoza	Council Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TERM -- OCT. 1, 2008 -- SEPT. 30, 2011

Blackstone Dilworth	San Isidro Development
Viviana Frank	Streets of Laredo Mall
David Killam	Killam Oil Co.
James Moore	LNB/BBVA
David Newman	B.P Newman Investments
Joe Palacios	Texas Community Bank
Mario Pena	International Bank of
Commerce	
Bob Tellez	H.E.B.
Memo Trevino	Southern Distributing Co.
John Ulbricht	Laredo Medical Center

TERM -- OCT. 1, 2009 -- SEPT. 30, 2012

Pablo Arenaz	Texas A&M Int. University
Lupita R. Canales	A.R. Canales Intl. Brokers Inc.
Reynaldo Godines	Reynaldo Godinez, MD
Bill Green	Laredo Morning Times
Dan Hastings, Jr.	Daniel B. Hastings, Inc.
Elmo Lopez, Jr.	Doctors Hospital
Greg Morgensen	Family Chevrolet
Federico 'Kiko' Trevino	Southern Distributors Co. Inc.
Bob Zachariah	La Quinta Inn
Catalina Zaragoza	Molina Healthcare of Texas

STAFF

Miguel A. Conchas	President/CEO
Miriam Castillo	Special Projects Coordinator
Gina Palma	Membership Coordinator
Brizzy San Miguel	Payroll & Accts. Manager
Lupita Vogel	Asst. to the President
Vanessa Flores	Membership Support
Karina Garcia	Receptionist

TERM -- OCT. 1, 2010 -- SEPT. 30, 2013

Alfonso Arguindegui	Arguindegui Oil
A.B. Barrera	PMDG Marketing Comm.
Chendo Carranco	Carranco & Lawson
⌒⌒Horacio De Leon	City of Laredo
Matt Gibson	Image Shaping
Willie Martinez	International Bank of
Commerce	
Javier S. Moctezuma	Laredo Federal Credit Union
Bill Nolen	Kansas City Southern
Ed Ramirez, Jr.	4-R Minerals, LTD
Minerva Santos	BBVA Compass Investments

CHAIRMAN APPOINTEES - TERM OCT. 1, 2010 TO SEPT. 30, 2011

Ninfa Cantu Deandar	El Mañana Newspaper
Claudia Cantu-Grimaldo	Wells Fargo Bank
Juan B. Carranza	Carrel Forwarding
Maru De La Paz	Webb Co. Sheriff's Dept.
Hector Tito Garcia	La Posada Hotel Suites
Ivan Jaime	Union Pacific
Louis T. Lavaude	Attorney At Law
Mercurio Martinez, Jr.	Individual
Alma Narvaez	Falcon International Bank
Adelaido Lalo Uribe	BBVA Compass Bank



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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