

# FY 2022 - 2023

## Annual Report





## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It is with mixed emotions that I bid farewell as Chairman of the Board. Serving alongside such dedicated individuals has been an incredible and challenging journey. I am grateful for the trust placed in me and the collaborative spirit that defines the Laredo Chamber of Commerce. I leave with confidence in our collective ability to continue achieving greatness. Thank you for the privilege of leading this remarkable team, most especially the dedicated Chamber staff. It gives me great pleasure to end my term honoring those who supported my efforts and the

mission of our organization.

Warm regards.

*Gabriel C. Castillo*

### 2022-2023 Executive Committee

Gabriel Castillo	Chairman of the Board
L. Adrian Zapata	Chairman Elect
Rosa Cruz	Treasurer
Mike Marasco	Immediate Past Chair
Sandra Alaniz	Council Chair
Andrew Carranco	Council Chair
Catalina Dickerson	Council Chair
Gonzalo Prida	Council Chair
Gloria Solis	Council Chair

### 2023-2024 Executive Committee

L. Adrian Zapata	Chairman of the Board
Sandra Alaniz	Chairman Elect
Rossy Chase	Treasurer
Gabriel Castillo	Immediate Past Chair
A.B. Barrera	Council Chair
Catalina Dickerson	Council Chair
Jorge Leal	Council Chair
Gonzalo Prida	Council Chair
Magali Rodriguez	Council Chair
Monica Y. Martinez	Executive Director

### 2024 Board of Directors

Sandra Alaniz	RE/MAX Real Estate Srv.	Jaime Mendiola	L&F Distributors
Elizabeth Alonzo	NeighborWorks Laredo	Omar Minhas	Killam Development
Rene Arriaga	IBC Bank	Diana Ortiz	Laredo College
A.B. Barrera	AlphaGraphics Laredo	Scott Payne	KGNS-TV
Andrew Carranco	Laredo Lomas Prop.	Gonzalo Prida	Multimodal Logistics
Gabriel Castillo	IBC Bank	David Puig	Vantage Bank
Miriam Castillo	City of Laredo	Imelda Rodriguez	Falcon Int. Bank
Veronica Castillon	Laredo ISD	Magali Rodriguez	The Vaswani Group
Rossy Chase	PNC Bank	Priscilla Salinas	Laredo Medical Center
Rosa Cruz	PNC Bank	Henry Sauvignet	IBC Bank
David Dodier	PNC Bank	Gloria Solis	Echo Trauma & Rehab.
Cesar Garay	Southern Dist.	Olivia Varela	Individual Member
Jorge Leal	Laredo Medical Center	Abelina Veliz Perez	Texas Community Bank
Elmo Daniel Lopez	Laredo Physicians Gp.	David Vasquez	Gateway Cmm. Hlth. Ctr
Mike Marasco	McDonald's of Laredo	L. Adrian Zapata	PAD Specialists

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

We are a membership organization that provides leadership by connecting, building and growing the economic interests of the business, tourism, and educational initiatives of the Laredo/Webb County Metropolitan area by being a politically proactive advocate, providing professional development and serving as a catalyst for emerging trends.

## **VISION**

To be a trusted resource and partner for the business community by listening, educating, cultivating and advancing our region through engaged leadership and advocacy.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Laredo Chamber ends this year with 685 members (as of 8/31/2023) — 599 of these are business firms, 35 are individual memberships, and 51 are nonprofit organizations. 87.4% of our membership is made up of business firms.

## **ACCREDITATION**

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce achieved the highest accreditation level, 5 Stars, offered by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2018. Currently, it is going through a self-analysis process for reaccreditation. The national chamber first accredited this organization in 1997 and it has maintained its accredited status over the past two decades. According to the U.S. Chamber, there are approximately 7,000 chambers in the United States, of which, less than 3% have accreditation.

## **GOVERNANCE**

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is completely autonomous. Although it maintains active membership in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, it is governed at the local level by a board made up of 24 elected and 8 appointed directors representative of the membership.

## **HISTORY**

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is the longest running business organization in the Laredo/Webb County area. Formally registered with the Texas Secretary of State in 1915, it celebrated its 100th anniversary in April of 2015.





## MEMBERSHIP FEES

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce membership fees constituted approximately 32% of its total operating income in 2022-2023. Dues billings YTD (as of 8/31/2023) totaled \$233,469. New and reinstated accounts, which totaled 113, accounted for \$30,323.

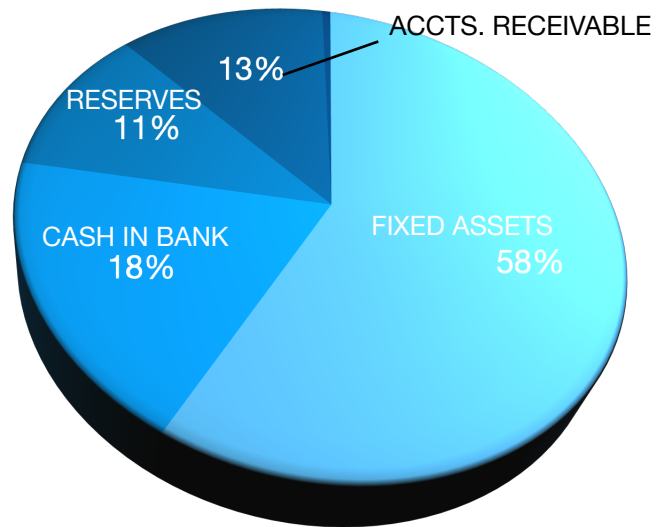
## NON DUES

The Chamber generated an additional 43% of revenue for its operating budget from “Non Dues.” This is a term that applies to any source of revenue not stemming from membership dues. Non Dues are generated through fundraising activities, donations, fees for delivery of services, and sales of promotional material or ads for publications. In 2023, the Chamber generated a total of \$294,840 in Non Dues Income

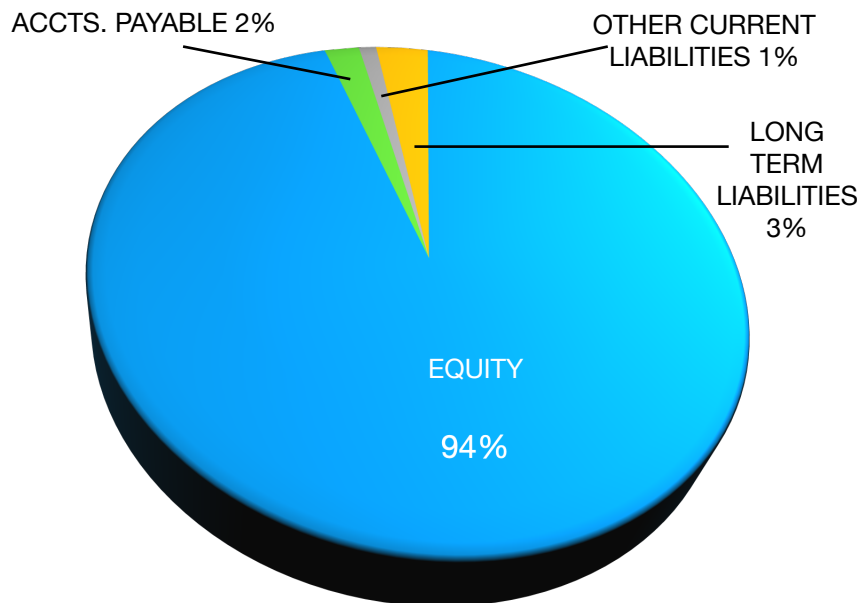
## CONTRACTS

The Chamber managed two contracts in 2022-2023, apart from the operating budget. The first contract was for tourism promotion for Webb County, worth \$150,000. The second contract was with the City of Laredo for advertising and promotion of the Cola Blanca Big Buck Contest, for an additional \$30,000.

## ASSETS \$1,337,901



## LIABILITIES & EQUITY \$1,337,901



(FIGURES LISTED HERE REFLECT DATA FROM 8/31/2023 FINANCIAL REPORT)

## Our NUMBERS

“The Laredo Chamber of Commerce membership fees constituted approximately 32% of its total operating income in 2022-2023.”



## Our **PERFORMANCE**

“The Youth Leadership Laredo (YLL) program graduated 16 seniors, who completed a 5-year commitment. Each one of them was presented with a \$500 scholarship.”

### **THE COMMITTEES AT WORK**

The Chamber’s committees play a vital role in the execution of the annual program of work. Not only do they provide a volunteer work force but they contribute as a revenue source for the Chamber’s annual budget. In 2022-2023, with support of its committees, the Chamber successfully delivered a variety of programs/activities. A summary of these follows:

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#### **REGRESA A LAREDO**

Continuing its annual tradition, the Laredo Chamber launched its Christmas Season shopping campaign in anticipation of the Thanksgiving Holidays (November 2022). Mexico celebrates its Day of the Revolution annually on the Monday preceding Black Friday. This extended weekend marks a perfect opportunity for Mexican families (normally within 150 to 200 miles from the border) to travel to communities like Laredo and begin their Christmas shopping in earnest. The Chamber, in collaboration with Webb County’s *You’d be Surprised!* campaign, the LaredoCVB and the American Express’ *Small Business Saturday* Campaign, organized a discount-coupon distribution campaign in target areas close to the border. The *Regresa a Laredo* campaign was an extension of an effort initiated earlier in 2022.

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#### **COLA BLANCA BIG BUCK CONTEST**

Held during the fall and winter months, the Cola Blanca Big Buck Contest in 2022-2023, chaired by Oscar Caballero, attracted 392 rifle and bow hunter registrations. Winners in over 40 categories were recognized at the Cola Blanca *Pachanga* held on September 23, 2023, at the LIFE County Pavilion. The Awards ceremony, now in its upgraded format which includes a “speeded up” program, live entertainment, an exhibit area, and live auction, enjoyed attendance by over 450 participants — over 50% of which hailed from outside Webb County. This year’s contest is expected to gross over \$100,000. (Note: Funding from the City of Laredo and Webb County’s Third Party contracts supplement the contest’s marketing and promotional efforts.)

### **COLA BLANCA CLAY SHOOT**

The Cola Blanca Committee reenergized the contest this year by once again planning and organizing a very successful Clay Shoot (given the Covid pandemic, the clay shoot had been put on hold over the last two years). The event was held at the Laredo Sports Complex on March 25, 2023. Promoted in surrounding communities, this year's Clay Shoot registered 62 participants, including teams from Monterrey, NL, Mexico, the Rio Grande Valley, and Jim Hogg and Zapata counties. Of particular note, is the fact that FFA students from UISD's LBJ High School participated as volunteers on the day of the event. The Cola Blanca Committee presented their club with a \$2,500 donation for their support.

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### **YOUTH LEADERSHIP LAREDO**

The Youth Leadership Laredo (YLL) program, under the guidance of Adrian Zapata, graduated 16 seniors who completed a 5-year commitment. Each one of them was presented with a \$500 scholarship. Students in YLL are recruited from 8th grade classes of local private and public schools and participate in the 5-year program organized by a team of volunteers. This year, as part of its fund-raising efforts, the YLL Committee organized a *5K Walk, Run and Bike* event titled **Cycle+Steps for Scholarships**. Held on April 29, 2023, at Father McNaboe Park, the 5K event attracted 155 participants and generated over \$12,000 in gross revenue. The PNC Bank Foundation, in addition, presented Youth Leadership Laredo, with a \$10,000 grant to assist with its operational expenses.

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### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The Education Committee, chaired by Veronica Castillon, delivered the following this year:

School Bell Awards — On May 3, in collaboration with Laredo College, Sames Laredo Chevrolet, Killam Development and IBC Bank, the committee recognized 12 exemplary educators, representative of all levels of the local education spectrum in the private and public school setting, by presenting them with the School Bell Award. Sames Laredo Chevrolet and Killam Development, in addition, combined to present each honoree with a \$500 monetary reward. The committee grossed \$4,550 in revenue and expended \$2,162.80 for the contest, netting \$2,387.20. All other expenses were covered by sponsors in-kind.

Spirit of Laredo Video Competition — Aimed to inspire local high school students to express pride in their community and an interest in pursuing a career that will help to build a better Laredo, the *Spirit of Laredo* Competition this year attracted 42 video entries. Winners of the competition were: Viviana Martinez, United High School, 1st; Jacob Aguilar, Cigarroa High School, 2nd; and Laisha Gonzalez, Martin High School, 3rd. Students received scholarships of \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500, respectively, from Killam Development and the Education Committee.

### **BOLA BLANCA CHAMBER CLASSIC**

This year's Bola Blanca Golf Tournament was held on May 6 at the Casa Blanca Golf Course. AlphaGraphics, the Title Sponsor, provided a renewed marketing campaign for the event, given the talent and creativity offered by the PMDG team. The tournament, chaired by Jorge Leal, attracted over 120 entries. Gross income for the tournament totaled \$48,845 while Expenses totaled \$23,701.33. This resulted in a net gain of \$25,143.67.

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### **SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE AND BUSINESS ICONS AWARDS**

Small Business Showcase — This year, the Small Business Committee, under the leadership of David Dodier, celebrated Small Business Week (May 1 - 5) in fashion. Rather than hosting a business expo as has been done in the past, the committee decided to go on site and conduct on air interviews and display the products/services of those involved. Businesses were invited to participate in a drawing where five lucky winners were visited during each day of that week. Twenty other businesses were also selected for showcase throughout the following months of the year.

2023 Business ICONS — On August 17, the Small Business Committee hosted the 2023 Business ICONS Awards to recognize outstanding entrepreneurs. The group decided to combine two previous events into one major, more innovative function. This year's Business ICONS celebrated businesses in four categories, joining the BusinessPerson of the Year award with other categories that had been recognized separately. Business ICONS Awards went to: Thomas D. Brittingham & Sons as BuinessPersons of the Year, Alvaro Pequeño and PEG Energy, Small Business of the Year, Culture Social Bar as Restaurant of the Year, and Laredo Little Theater for Non-Profit Organization of the Year. With Gross Revenue of \$80,575 and Expenses totaling \$39,609, the committee realized \$40,966 in Net Gain.

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### **MEMBERSHIP SERVICES**

This year, the Chamber Bienvenido's Committee, chaired by Vanessa Frausto, hosted a total of 43 ribbon cuttings, and 2 Ground Breaking ceremonies. Manuel Viñals, Membership Relations Coordinator, with support, initially from Tatiana Lopez and later from Karla Riojas, instituted a strong outreach program via the use of social media. Throughout the year, the committee also supported the organization of other events, such as the "After Hours Mixers" and the annual "Mingle & Jingle," held on December 9, 2022, in celebration of the Holiday Season.

The Membership Committee, chaired by Catalina Dickerson, has collaborated throughout the year with staff to improve on the menu of services recently offered by the Chamber to its membership. Aside from refining the list of services, the committee's goal is to develop a tier system for membership participation that provides members the opportunity to enroll in a membership level affordable to them, and yet that offers sponsorship involvement.

## OUTREACH

Throughout the year the Chamber maintained contact with its membership through its electronic system of communication. The weekly *Member News & Upcoming Events* delivered constant updates; the Chamber and Cola Blanca websites provided relevant information to members and the public; and the new interactive data system, *Growth Zone* (not yet fully implemented) offered instant access to members' business accounts.

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## GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Advocacy for the business community is one of the Laredo Chamber's priorities. This year, the Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee, led by Andrew Carranco, kicked off the year planning and organizing a series of **Mayoral Debates** prior to the November 2022 election. This proved of vital interest to Chamber members and the business community. Members of the committee then joined the City of Laredo on March 6-9 on its annual **Legislative Trip** to the nation's capital. The Chamber delegation carried forth a list of legislative priorities as it visited with government officials and agencies of interest. Forming part of the program were a brunch meeting with Senator John Cornyn, co-hosted with IBC Bank, which offered a chat with the senator in an informal setting, and a **Fly-In** visit to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce where it met with experts on various issues of interest to business and the border area.

The **Breakfast with the Mayor** monthly series, once more, formed part of the Chamber's annual plan of work, with the participation of host and organizer Robert Summers.

The committee then maintained its legislative efforts throughout the rest of the year convening with representatives of other local business organizations, e.g., LEDC, LAR, LLUSCBA, ALFA and LMA, helping identify issues of importance to the local business community.

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## EXTERNAL CONTRACTS

The Laredo Chamber, once more in 2022-2023, collaborated with Webb County and the City of Laredo managing contracts funded under Hotel/Motel Tax. Funds under these contracts are restricted and intended for marketing and promotional activities.

- *You'd be surprised!* Campaign — The contract, funded by Webb County at a level of \$150,000 targets specific markets, which include: hunters, outdoor sports enthusiasts, bird watchers, US and Mexican tourists and corporate visitors. In 2019, the Chamber, utilizing funds under this contract, developed a campaign aimed at creating an identity for Webb County as visitor destination — the *You'd be surprised!* campaign. Promotion under YBS, utilizing various strategies continued in 2022-2023, given the campaign effectiveness.
- City Contract in Support of Cola Blanca — The Laredo Chamber in 2023 also managed a contract funded by City of Laredo Hotel/Motel Tax funds in support of the Cola Blanca Contest. The contract, funded at \$30,000, supplements revenue generated by the contest itself and allows the organization to provide partial payment for personnel that assist in managing the contest, purchase media advertising, and partially pay for contest prizes.