



JUNE 2020

facebook.com/PHARREDC

1215 S. Cage Blvd. Pharr, TX 78577

pharredc.com

(956) 402-4332



# ECONOMIC TIMES



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency is creating hardships and challenges around the world. During this difficult time, I want to assure you that the Pharr EDC remains dedicated to assisting you, our business partners, and the community.

Continuing business operations in today's situation is challenging and the Pharr Economic Development Corporation (PEDC) is working to assist businesses with information and access to critical resources throughout this emergency. We have already coordinated several webinars with the U.S. Small Business Association, the Texas Workforce Commission, and our congressional leaders to discuss the recently passed Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), among other available assistance and programs.

Our priority is to ensure that our Pharr business community understands the grants, relief, and aid that are available to help their businesses keep moving forward. The PEDC is committed to helping Pharr businesses with assistance and access to resources. If you are a business in need, please do not hesitate to contact us via email at PEDC@Pharr-TX.Gov, or by calling (956) 402-4332. We are here for you!

We appreciate your understanding and please know that we are in this together and we will get through this together!

Sincerely,

*Victor Perez*

Victor Perez, Executive Director

Pharr Economic Development Corporation

## Pharr EDC Launches Pharr CARES Grant Program for Businesses

In the wake of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, businesses across the country have been forced to adjust to a new reality. The pandemic created an unprecedented negative economic impact on businesses worldwide. As communities fell under shelter-at-home orders to mitigate the spread of the disease, some businesses managed to creatively continue operations, while others were not as fortunate. With Texas now re-opening its economy, businesses are faced with a new uncertainty - how to rebound after the crisis and begin thriving economically once again.

The Pharr Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is here to help businesses recover during this time of need. Earlier this month and coinciding with Economic Development Week, the members of the Pharr EDC board of directors approved the COVID-19 Emergency Business Grant Program. Appropriately named the "Pharr CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Support)," similar to the federal financial relief program, the Pharr EDC program will provide financial relief in the form of working capital - forgivable grants between \$2,500 and \$5,000 - for businesses who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

"The Pharr EDC truly cares about helping businesses recover after suffering such sudden and immeasurable losses as a result of the coronavirus crises," said Pharr EDC Executive Director Victor Perez. "We are hoping to provide some financial relief that can help businesses in need continue operating in our community," he added.

Under Pharr CARES, eligible businesses can use the grant to supplement personnel costs, rent or commercial mortgage payments, utilities, and critical business equipment or supplies. Businesses must

**Pharr Economic Development Corporation**

**Pharr COVID-19 Recovery Center**

**Economic Relief For Businesses**

**THE PHARR CARES LOAN PROGRAM IS NOW OPEN**

In order to infuse local businesses with the cash they need to begin economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pharr EDC Board of Directors has approved the Pharr CARES program.

Nicknamed Pharr CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Support), this program provides forgivable loans between \$2,500 and \$5,000 for local businesses suffering from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Texas reopens its economy, these businesses face the uncertainty of how to rebound and thrive once again. Pharr CARES provides the support they need to move forward:

- All loans for working capital purposes in order to help businesses immediately begin recovering.
- Loans may be used for critical business costs such as personnel expenses, rent or commercial mortgage payments, utilities, and critical business equipment or supplies.
- Loans are available to Pharr businesses impacted by the pandemic.

**"We are hoping to provide some financial relief that can help businesses in need continue operating in our community."**

**VICTOR PEREZ**  
Pharr EDC Executive Director

**The Pharr EDC is here to help during this time of need.**

If your business has suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic, contact us to learn more about how Pharr CARES can help you begin recovering.

The application period will remain open until June 30, 2020, until funding is exhausted, or until the Pharr EDC determines that its program goals have been satisfied.

**Apply Now**  
1215 South Cage Blvd.  
Pharr, TX 78577

**Phone:** 956-402-4332  
**Website:** www.pharredc.com/cares

**The application period for the Pharr CARES grant will remain open until June 30, 2020, until funding has been exhausted, or until the Pharr EDC determines that its program goals have been satisfied.**

be located within the corporate limits of Pharr, and must be in compliance with all zoning, land use, and other ordinances. Applicants must be current on all property and sales taxes, and current on payroll tax requirements. There is a limit of one grant per funding opportunity per applicant. Other eligibility requirements apply, and can be found on the Pharr EDC website at www.pharredc.com/cares.

For more information, visit [www.pharredc.com](http://www.pharredc.com) or contact 956-402-4332.

# BOARD of DIRECTORS

*Pharr EDC obtains leadership and guidance through its board of directors, which represents an array of successful industry professionals who volunteer their expertise to ensure that the Pharr EDC meets the highest standard of excellence.*



**MAYOR**  
**Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D.**  
*President*



**Mario Lizcano**  
*Vice-President*



**COMMISSIONER**  
**Eleazar Guajardo**  
*Treasurer*



**Reynaldo Perez**  
*Secretary*



**COMMISSIONER**  
**Ricardo Medina**  
*Board Member*



**COMMISSIONER**  
**Ramiro Caballero, M.D.**  
*Board Member*



**Efrain Matamoros**  
*Board Member*



The Pharr EDC is proud to announce that they have earned a Merit Recognition by the Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC) as part of the 2020 Workforce Excellence Awards. The recognition comes as Pharr competed against Economic Development Council's from throughout Texas and was recognized under the population category of 40,001 to 100,000.

"We are ecstatic to receive a Merit Recognition as part of this year's TEDC Workforce Excellent Award," said Victor Perez, Pharr EDC Executive Director. "As part of the submission, we highlighted our NCCER Certification program made possible by the Texas Workforce Commission's High Demand Job Training Grant, in which we sought to solidify a partnership with the Pharr, San Juan, Alamo Independent School District (PSJA ISD) in order to prepare students for the future workforce," added Perez.

Rather than a traditional approach of creating a program within the community for working adults, the PEDC partnered with the future workers of the community

## Pharr EDC Earns Merit Recognition from the Texas Economic Development Council

(soon-to-be high school graduates) to start an industry recognized and portable certificate program. This program allows graduating students the proper access to resources, training, and skills to successfully enter the workforce upon graduation. Specifically, the PEDC partnered with PSJA ISD's drop out recovery career and technical early college high school (CCT Academy). This campus focuses on getting dropouts from the district "re-engaged" into education and provides students with alternative schedules and programs that leads to successful graduation and skills training that will in turn lead to jobs that are in-demand throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

"The PEDC believes that we must invest in our future workforce and by partnering with students who are considered "at-risk" we can ensure that they will graduate with the workforce skills, certificates, and knowledge that will allow them to not only fill in-demand skilled jobs in the Rio Grande Valley, but also assist them with successfully entering the workforce and contributing to the economic prosperity and growth of our region," Perez continued.

This new training program provides students who complete the training to be certified with a national portable NCCER Level I and Level 2 in Core, Carpentry, Construction Technol-

ogy, Electrical, HVAC, and Plumbing. The PEDC is proud of this community supported initiative which has brought our local economic, workforce, and educational partners together to help fill the gap in a needed highly skilled workforce.

The High Demand Job Training Grant provided by the Texas Workforce Commission allocated a total of \$19,362.00 to start the NCCER Certification Training Program and the PEDC contributed \$19,900.00, for a total investment of \$39,262.00. This number has not calculated the investment contributed by PSJA ISD through their district equipment and staff.

"In the City of Pharr, we believe in partnerships, innovativeness, and in the power of our education system. By bringing together leaders and experts from different community organizations, we have been able to create a program that will sustain our future workforce, fill high-demand jobs, and remain attractive to other companies and businesses in these industries who are looking for this type of workforce to fill their needs," Perez stated. "This training certification could not have come to fruition without the trusted community partnerships and leverage that we have in Pharr, and we are especially proud to have been recognized with a Merit Recognition by TEDC for our work," he said.

## Cares Act Provides Relief For Small Businesses

Economies around the world have been upended as we deal with the economic effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Here in the United States, we are feeling the effects from our largest corporations down to our local small businesses. While these times have been challenging, to say the least, we continue to work together to bring a sense of community, innovation, and strength to each other as we adapt to new ways of doing business.

Our local, state, and federal leaders have been working tirelessly to develop economic relief for our businesses. I am proud of the work Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D., the Pharr City Commission, and the Pharr Economic Development Board are doing in working with all our leaders to develop plans of actions as we respond to this pandemic. Our EDC staff has been working relentlessly, and I am proud of them for their dedication and for the outreach they are doing with our local businesses to inform them of the relief options available to them.

The Pharr EDC is proud to announce that on Friday, March 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). The stimulus package offers \$2.1 trillion in aid to individuals and businesses.

The CARES Act allocated \$350 billion to small businesses under the Paycheck Protection Program to help small businesses impacted by COVID-19. This loan is designed for businesses with fewer than 500 employees and is 100% forgivable if used for its intended purpose.

We have been working with the U.S. Small Business Administration to provide our business community with more information about the CARES Act and have also hosted webinars for our local business community to help explain the relief that is being offered through the Paycheck Protection Program.

### About the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Paycheck Protection Program is a loan designed to provide a direct incentive for small businesses to keep their workers on the payroll.

SBA will forgive loans if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities.

You can apply through any existing SBA 7(a) lender or through any federally insured

depository institution, federally insured credit union, and Farm Credit System institution that is participating. Other regulated lenders will be available to make these loans once they are approved and enrolled in the program. You should consult with your local lender/bank as to whether it is participating in the program.

Lenders may begin processing loan applications as soon as April 3, 2020. The Paycheck Protection Program will be available through June 30, 2020.

The Pharr EDC is committed to remaining a strong partner for our business community and we are continuing our efforts to work closely with all entities to ensure that our local business community has the resources, information, and assistance to thrive during this uncertain time. I would especially like to thank our partners at the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Texas Workforce Commission for their guidance and support.

To our business community, please know that we are always here to help. We are in this together, and now more than ever, we must work hand-in-hand. I assure you that we will get through this and come out more resilient than ever.



# Supporting Our Local and Small Businesses during COVID-19

In just the span of the last few months, we have all experienced changes to our daily lives. As we continue to adjust to the ever-evolving mitigation efforts imposed by local, state, and federal authorities to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic and keep us safe. Our society continues to work together to uplift and support each other.

The Pharr EDC has been monitoring the situation closely and working with all our partners and businesses to provide resources, assistance, and guidance during this time. Our community spirit is strong and resilient! Pharr, we are in this together.

While our businesses have been forced to close indoor dining/shopping and in some cases limit their workforce, they have found creative ways to remain open, making changes to operations by now providing online or over the phone orders, curbside or drive through pick-up, and delivery options. Other businesses have even started selling necessary items to the public such as vegetables, eggs, milk, meats, etc. This spirit of entrepreneurship and community is strong throughout Pharr and we want to remind our businesses that we are here for you and we thank you for the incredibly valuable service you continue to provide to our residents. Pharr, we are in this together.

Throughout this pandemic, businesses have come to a halt as they were asked to close to limit person-to-person contact. While these businesses have now been allowed to open in phases, they were resilient while closed and those that were allowed to still functioned online or via social media, providing clients the opportunity to pick up items curbside or via delivery. The Pharr EDC is proud of our community support as we continued to support businesses through new contactless methods. As we continue to monitor the situation and prepare for any future events, we must remember that we can each play our role in helping our local and small businesses thrive, they need support now more than ever. While nonessential retail establishments have been asked to close, they can still function online or via social media providing clients the opportunity to pick up items at a later date additionally, we encourage all residents to keep any existing memberships, which will continue to function as soon as we return to normal operations. We can each play our role in helping our local and small businesses thrive, they need support now more than ever.

Federal and state agencies have also announced efforts to assist our local and small businesses.

## Texas Workforce Commission Initiatives

The Texas Workforce Commission continues to offer Texas employers their full support. Be sure to visit [www.twc.texas.gov](http://www.twc.texas.gov) for important resources including legal questions regarding work from home policies to resources for loans, they are here to answer your questions and help ensure things go as smoothly as possible.

## We're in this together.

Local businesses need your support now more than ever.

Let's do our part and Shop Pharr!



**Get it to go.**  
Order from your local restaurants and bars via delivery service, to-go, or curbside pickup.



**Shop small online.**  
Websites haven't closed and it's important to leave positive reviews for local vendors and businesses.



**Buy in advance.**  
Purchase gift cards or book services from local businesses to use at a future date.



**Stay looped in.**  
Keep up with your memberships, and with services that are still offered online.



**Follow along.**  
Your favorite local businesses are online and sharing specific ways you can support them.



**Say thank you.**  
Many business owners and workers are risking their health to provide critical products and services. Be thankful.

The Pharr EDC stands hand-in-hand with all Pharr businesses and will be communicating any resources we might know of as they become available.  
**We are in this together, and we will go through it together!**

**Pharr**  
Economic Development  
Corporation

PharrEDC  
1215 S. Cage Blvd. Pharr, TX 78577  
pharrredc.com  
(956) 402-4332

We can help our local & small businesses continue to thrive by:

- 1 BUYING LOCAL
- 2 ORDERING FOOD TO GO OR DELIVERY
- 3 SHOPPING BY CALLING IN ORDER & PICKING UP

## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Be sure to visit these websites for more information on assistance and resources during this time:

Small Business Administration: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)  
United States Chamber of Commerce: [www.uschamber.com](http://www.uschamber.com)  
Texas Workforce Commission: [www.twc.texas.gov](http://www.twc.texas.gov)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



## Small Business Administration loans

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has increased its funding pool from \$20 billion to \$50 billion in response to the virus.

It is currently offering low-interest disaster loans of up to \$2 million for small businesses suffering losses due to the coronavirus. These loans, per the SBA, can be used to pay debts and cover payroll and other bills. You can apply online or by reaching out directly to your local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and your SBA district office. Visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) for more information.

## Tax deferrals

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin announced that individuals and many small businesses will have until July 15 to pay the income tax they owe up to \$1 million. This will provide some relief and allow small businesses to free up some cash to pay other more pressing bills. Now may also be the time to talk to your CPA, or other tax professional, to see if there are other tax credits you can take advantage of or additional things to claim.

## Private loans and grants

Some lenders and companies are offering discounted businesses loans and grants during the coronavirus outbreak. Additionally, check with your business's bank about your options. Citi, for example, announced that it will waive monthly service fees and remote deposit capture, as well as penalties for early CD withdrawal. Many other lenders have joined in providing relief to businesses by offering similar options. Be sure to check with your local lender or bank to see what options they may have for your business.

While it's normal to focus on what is happening right now, especially in light of the constantly changing situation, we encourage our local and small business owners to spend this time thinking about how to rebuild once this is all over. We are a resilient community and we must maintain a positive focus.

Pharr, we are in this together and we will survive this together! We encourage you to please reach out to the Pharr EDC if you have any questions or if you need help navigating your business.



## Pharr EDC Joins Community in Thanking First Responders

The Pharr EDC partnered with Senator Eddie Lucio, Top Golf, and other organizations throughout Hidalgo County to provide meals to First Responders across the valley, who have continued to serve their communities throughout the pandemic. Thank you to all First Responders for their essential work day in and day out!



# Resources and Relief for Local & Small Business



## A message from Glenn Hegar, the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

These are challenging times for businesses all over the nation. We're grateful to those that were able to remit state and local sales taxes they collected from customers in February. We understand that virtually all of our taxpayers are doing their best to remain in compliance and be responsible in submitting the taxes they collected from their customers. With that in mind, our agency is here to offer assistance to those businesses that are struggling to pay the full amount of sales taxes they collected in February.

For businesses that find themselves in this situation, our agency is offering assistance in the form of short-term payment agreements and, in most instances, waivers of penalties and interest.

We ask that you contact our Enforcement Hotline at 800-252-8880 to learn about your options for remaining in compliance and avoiding interest and late fees on taxes due.

## Texas Workforce Commission Resources for Texas Workers Impacted by COVID-19



The Texas Workforce Commission is currently accepting applications for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims for loss of employment or reduced hours due to the impact of COVID-19.

- You can file an unemployment insurance (UI) claim if your employer has reduced your hours or shut down operations due to COVID-19.
- UI can provide partial wage replacement benefit payments to workers impacted by the COVID-19.
- Weekly job search requirements for UI benefits have been waived by TWC.

The TWC is currently accepting applications for UI claims, apply at:

**English** <https://twc.texas.gov>

**Español** <https://twc.texas.gov/informacion-en-espanol>

For more information on alternative service delivery options currently being offered, please call the Workforce Solutions special hotline: (956) 983-5613.

## Texas Franchise Tax Deadline Extended to July 15



Glenn Hegar Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts | [Comptroller.Texas.gov](http://Comptroller.Texas.gov)

## TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

THROUGH THE

Texas Woman's Center for Women Entrepreneurs  
has launched a new AssistHer COVID-19  
Emergency Relief Grant

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRAM IS TO ASSIST TEXAS, WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESSES THAT HAVE BEEN SEVERELY IMPACTED BY CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19). A TOTAL OF \$1,000,000 (100 GRANT AWARDS) IS AVAILABLE.

GRANT INFORMATION: [WWW.TWU.EDU/CENTER-WOMEN-ENTREPRENEURS/ASSISTER-EMERGENCY-RELIEF-GRANT/](http://WWW.TWU.EDU/CENTER-WOMEN-ENTREPRENEURS/ASSISTER-EMERGENCY-RELIEF-GRANT/)

**Pharr**  
Economic Development  
Corporation







## Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans



U.S. Small Business Administration

The U.S. Small Business Administration is accepting low-interest loan applications for businesses impacted by COVID-19 to provide affected businesses with:

- Working capital to pay employees
- Make loan payments
- Pay bills, etc.

For details and requirements, reach out to SBA's local point of contact, Josh Patton, (956)427-8533 ext. 225 or via email at [joshua.patton@sba.gov](mailto:joshua.patton@sba.gov).

You can also register via the Disaster Loan Application Portal at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>.

### CARES ACT

The CARES Act has established new programs to help small businesses impacted by COVID19, including:

- Paycheck Protection Program
- Up to \$10K Economic Injury Disaster Loan Advance
- Bridge loans for businesses that have used SBA Express
- SBA loan debt relief

LEARN MORE: [HTTPS://WWW.SBA.GOV/CORONAVIRUSRELIEF](https://www.sba.gov/coronavirusrelief)

## Funding Options

In addition to traditional SBA funding programs, the CARES Act established several new temporary programs to address the COVID-19 outbreak.



### Paycheck Protection Program

This loan program provides loan forgiveness for retaining employees by temporarily expanding the traditional SBA 7(a) loan program.



### EIDL Loan Advance

This loan advance will provide up to \$10,000 of economic relief to businesses that are currently experiencing temporary difficulties.



### SBA Express Bridge Loans

Enables small businesses who currently have a business relationship with an SBA Express Lender to access up to \$25,000 quickly.



### SBA Debt Relief

The SBA is providing a financial reprieve to small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Texas Restaurant Relief Fund thru the Texas Restaurant Association's Education Foundation (TRA EF) - 501c3

To support independent restaurants, the Texas Restaurant Relief Fund will distribute grants of up to \$5,000 per unit to immediately support their financial needs. These funds are earmarked specifically for use to keep their doors open and their workers employed.

To apply for relief or donate to those in need, visit:

[www.txrestaurant.org/news](http://www.txrestaurant.org/news)



# COVID-19 Safety Tips

## Know How COVID-19 Spreads

- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person who are in close contact with one another (about 6 feet).
- Spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person talk, coughs, or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in or pass onto the mouths, noses, or eyes of nearby people or be breathed into the lungs.
- Droplets can also land on or pass onto surfaces and commonly touched things like doorknobs, handles, phones, or buttons.

For more information, visit [dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus](https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus)

## Remember to Wash Your Hands



Water and soap



Palm to Palm



Between Fingers



Focus on Thumbs



Back of Hands



Focus on Wrists

## Protect Yourself Wear a face mask

examples:

- scarf
- bandana
- cloth face mask

Please refrain from purchasing masks intended for use by medical personnel



## Pharr Your Bridge to Recovery Pharr COVID-19 Recovery Center

**Set up your appointment today!**  
**Call or email us to get connected to resources.**

**(956)402-4311**  
**[recovery@pharr-tx.gov](mailto:recovery@pharr-tx.gov)**

Find support and answers on these topics and more:

- City of Pharr Financial Assistance
- Information for State and Federal Funding
- Work Safe Plan
- Workforce Opportunities
- Re-Open Texas Guidelines
- Promote Business Services to help connect with customers
- Answers to business operations in Pharr
- Access to No Cost Business Consulting

**\*Services available only to Pharr businesses and residents\***



— THE CITY OF —  
**Pharr**



@cityofpharr



@pharrtx

[PHARR-TX.GOV](https://www.pharr-tx.gov)



Download our "Pharr 311" app!

## Pharr Opens COVID-19 Recovery Center

In an effort to provide recovery resources, support, and information to Pharr residents, businesses and families, the City of Pharr will open a COVID-19 Recovery Center - a resource center that will provide individualized and customized support on a variety of different issues that individuals, families, and businesses may be in need of assistance as our area grapples with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

**The COVID-19 Recovery Center opened on Wednesday, May 20, 2020, and is open from 10 am to 7 pm, Monday through Friday, and from 9 am to 1 pm on Saturday, at the Pharr Events Center (3000 N. Cage) in Pharr.**

"As the coronavirus began spreading across the country and in our area, many of our Pharr residents, families, and businesses were directly impacted in many ways, including loss of jobs, loss of income, loss of revenue, among others," said Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "In assessing the various needs of our community, we felt it was important to be there for our constituents, reach out a helping hand, and cater our response and recovery assistance to address their individual needs," he added.

The COVID-19 Recovery Center will provide resources for individuals and businesses and information regarding the following:

- Individual assistance
- City of Pharr Financial Assistance for Businesses
- Information for State and Federal Funding
- Work Safe Plan
- Workforce Opportunities
- Re-Open Texas Guidelines
- Business Services to help connect with customers
- Answers to business operations in Pharr
- Access to No Cost Business Consulting

The services at the COVID-19 Recovery Center are available at no cost for Pharr residents or business owners only. Must provide proof of residence to receive assistance.

Walk-ins are accepted onsite at the center, however, interested attendees are encouraged to contact the COVID-19 Recovery Center at (956) 402-4311 to set up a complimentary appointment.





# City of Pharr In Action



## Pharr Mayor Declares Disaster and Public Health Emergency

Following similar declarations of disaster by Texas State Governor Greg Abbott and President Donald J. Trump, this afternoon, Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D., issued a proclamation declaring a local state of disaster and public health emergency related to COVID-19 (coronavirus) for the City of Pharr effective March 13, 2020.

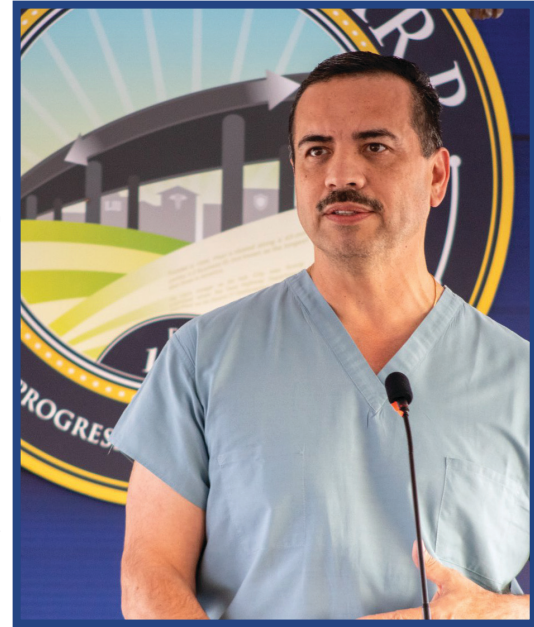
This Declaration of Disaster was made pursuant to the Texas Disaster Act of 1975 and the Texas Government Code Section 418.108(a). The Texas Disaster Act of 1975 designates Mayor Hernandez as Emergency Management Director for the City of Pharr and allows him to authorize the use of all available resources to assist in the City's response to the public health emergency related to COVID-19. By the declaration, Mayor Hernandez suspends rules or regulations that may inhibit or prevent prompt response to this threat for the duration of the incident. Further, the declaration activates the city's emergency management plan.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 crisis is now a pandemic after it has infected nearly 896,450

people around the world and killed 45,526. City officials have determined that extraordinary and immediate measures must be taken to respond quickly, prevent and alleviate the suffering of people exposed to and those infected with the virus, as well as those that could potentially be impacted by COVID-19.

City officials have been taking measures to mitigate the virus, including increasing community awareness providing information and methods for personal health and safety via social media and the City's website. City leaders ensure the public that the City's Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG) plans are actively reviewed and updated to ensure that critical government services remain uninterrupted during this crisis.

As one of the measures set in place to assist residents during this disaster, the City of Pharr will not be shutting off water for non-payment during the duration of this crisis. City officials urge and encourage all residents and families to remain vigilant, follow health and safety precautionary measures, and heed the advice of authorities to stay safe during this disaster.



## Pharr Set to Receive Federal Funding to Fight COVID-19



City of Pharr leaders were pleased to learn from U. S. Congressman Vicente Gonzalez (TX-15) that \$10,383,884 in funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was approved for District 15 for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) for the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. Pharr's award is approximately \$665,558 in CDBG funding, which can be used for areas of infrastructure, economic development, and medical supplies and equipment, among other eligible activities.

"As we continue to navigate the current situation and plan for the future, we are extremely proud that our federal partners are listening to the needs of our community and fighting to support our efforts to help our response to COVID-19," said Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "The City of Pharr applauds the actions taken by Congress and especially the efforts and dedication of Congressman Gonzalez as he continues to work with local leaders to ensure the safety and well-being of our citizens, businesses, and communities," said Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. he added.

The highly anticipated news comes just a few days after Congress passed legislative relief for Americans due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "I will continue to keep the pressure on to ensure that our district receives the funds it needs during this time of crisis," said Congressman Gonzalez. "This funding is

a vital step for cities and counties to prepare for and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to work around-the-clock for the frontline medical professionals, hospitals, and our community."

From the onset of this pandemic, the City of Pharr has taken proactive measures to prepare the community. From the implementation of the Emergency Disaster Declaration to working with Homeland Security partners to secure our southern border at the Pharr International Bridge by pre-screening to prevent any high-risk individuals from entering our city or placing them in self-quarantine, city officials have worked closely with federal, state, county, and municipal leaders to mitigate the spread and minimize the impact of COVID-19 in our community.

"We are fortunate to have great partnerships and communication with our leaders at the regional, state, and federal level as we all work together to fight this invisible enemy," Hernandez continued. "This much-needed funding will help us battle the pandemic and support our community, our healthcare system, and our economy as we continue to face growing numbers every day," he said. "I am proud of the leadership of Congressman Gonzalez, Senator Cornyn, and Senator Cruz who have worked diligently over the years to ensure that the City of Pharr and our citizens have the resources, funding, and assistance to continue thriving," he added.



Pictured during a meeting with clients are (top l to r): Jose Quintana, AdventGX President, and Marie Marchand, AdventGX Director of the Innovation Underground and SEAD Programs.

\*Photo Courtesy of AdventGX

## City of Pharr Partners with AdventGX & Texas A&M University Business Students to Provide Assistance to Local Businesses

The City of Pharr and the Greater Pharr Chamber of Commerce are pleased to announce a new initiative to provide free support and guidance to local small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The city is partnering with AdventGX, an economic development firm based out of Bryan-College Station, Texas that is directing a team of Texas A&M University business students who are volunteering their time to support businesses impacted by the pandemic.

**Specifically, AdventGX and the Texas A&M student leaders will provide small businesses in Pharr with technical assistance in the following areas:**

- Preparing their applications for programs that are currently available through the Small Business Administration (such as the PPP Program) and other funding opportunities;
- Creating an information portal with resources;
- Providing guidance preparing basic financial reports (balance sheets, income statement, proforma); and
- Running a Disaster Sustainability Model to support the decision-making process to plan financial inputs and outputs during the shutdown and post-disaster recovery with a 12 month and up to a 7-year horizon.

"Teaming up with our educational partners in higher education to provide students with the opportunity to tackle and address real-world business scenarios during a pandemic, while at the same time providing much-needed support, advice, and relief to our local small businesses who have suffered tremendously during this crisis, will result in positive outcomes for all," said Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "This is an amazing opportunity for our local small businesses as they work with AdventGX and the Texas A&M business students to create successful strategies for our local businesses to thrive," Hernandez stated.

Since 2004, AdventGX has advised local governments, state departments, NGOs, and SMEs worldwide. Support ranges from addressing strategic questions to comprehensive assessment of economic development opportunities.

"COVID-19 has hit our business community especially hard," stated Jose Quintana, President of AdventGX. "My team and I are excited to partner with the City of Pharr as we work together to help local small businesses get back on their feet and plan for the future," he continued. "We are especially proud to provide resources through our unique partnership with the Texas A&M Student Volunteer Response Team led by a group of MAYS School of Business honor students. As you may be aware, leadership and selfless service are at the core of our A&M student culture, our students are stepping up to help our Texas communities," added Quintana.

Businesses all over the world are dealing with the implications and aftermath caused by COVID-19. Small businesses have been hit especially hard in communities all over the nation, and are now faced with developing new safer business operation guidelines while enforcing social distancing measures and limited customer interaction.

The City of Pharr and the Greater Pharr Chamber of Commerce are proud to partner with AdventGX and Texas A&M students to give back and help support local businesses that have been impacted during this crisis, providing as many resources as possible to ensure that they can get back on the road to recovery and continue to thrive.

For more information on this partnership and available resources, businesses can call 956-483-5090 or visit <https://iu.adventgx.com/covid-19-city-of-pharr-small-business-info-central/> to learn more about this opportunity.

**Pharr Bridge is OPEN. We will continue to keep you updated.**

**Hours of Operation:**  
**Cars/Passenger Vehicles**

**Southbound:**

**Monday-Sunday: 6:00am-11:55pm**

**Northbound:**

**Monday-Friday: 6:00-8:00am**

**4:00-6:00pm**

**Saturday & Sunday: 6:00-8:00am**

**4:00-11:55pm**

**Trucks/Commercial**

**Southbound:**

**Monday-Friday: 7:00am-11:00pm**

**Saturday & Sunday: 7:00am-4:00pm**

**Northbound:**

**Monday-Friday: 7:00am-10:00pm**

**Saturday & Sunday: 8:00am-4:00pm**

**Essential Traffic Only:**

**Cargo**

**\*North and Southbound Cargo will not be affected.**

**\*Working hours on the bridges will not change for Cargo.**

## Pharr Approves New Emergency Order, Implements Work Safe Plan

On Thursday, April 2, 2020, Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. issued an updated Order to align with the new guidelines and emergency orders issued by President Donald J. Trump, Texas Governor Greg Abbott, and Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez, which defined the continuity of essential services and activities during the COVID-19 disaster and aimed to limit the spread of the disease.

Pharr's Order No. 2020-01 defines further measures to be implemented to reduce the substantial risk of harm to the public and requires that all essential businesses and organizations defined as critical to the nation's infrastructure submit a Work Safe Plan, which outlines plans for implementing and enforcing distancing, sanitation, and hygiene practices, to the City of Pharr.

This Order is effective as of 11:59 pm on Friday, April 3, 2020, and shall remain in effect until the state of disaster is terminated or the Order is otherwise terminated by the City Commission.

"Since we now have cases involving Pharr residents, it is imperative that we all continue doing what we can to prevent the spread of the disease, which is extremely contagious," said Mayor Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. "It is our individual responsibility to care for our community and keep it as safe and healthy as possible," he continued.

The Order further mandates that all individuals who are ill, especially those with symptoms consistent with influenza or COVID-19, shall isolate themselves at home until they recover. An entire household is ordered to self-quarantine at home for a period of no less than two weeks if anyone in a household tests positive for COVID-19 or anyone in the household has had contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

The Order further states that people who are known to have or are under investigation or monitoring for COVID-19 must abide by the Control Orders and direction provided to them by authorities, including state and local public health officials.

### COVID-19 UPDATE

## ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOANS AVAILABLE TO U.S. AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES IMPACTED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC



**APPLY: [HTTPS://WWW.SBA.GOV/FUNDING-PROGRAMS/DISASTER-ASSISTANCE](https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance)**

Agricultural businesses include businesses engaged in the legal production of food and fiber, ranching, and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other farming and agricultural related industries (as defined by section 18(b) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 647(b)). Eligible agricultural businesses must have 500 or fewer employees.