

# Lucio Honored By City of San Benito

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**Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio** (D-Brownsville), was honored recently for authoring legislation authorizing the City of San Benito to engage in economic development projects.

## **Gomez: San Benito's economic landscape is set to change\***

SAN BENITO, RGV – San Benito Mayor Ben Gomez says the impact of two pieces of legislation passed during the 86th Legislative is “sure to change the economic landscape” of his city.

The two bills are HB 4347 and HB 2199. They were championed in the Senate by state Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr., and in the House by state Rep. Eddie Lucio, III. The two legislators were honored by city leaders at a reception last Tuesday.

“HB 4347 and 2199 is legislation that is sure to change the economic landscape of San Benito for generations to come,” said Gomez, at the reception. “I want to thank the legislators who made it possible.”

City leaders are working with a developer to build a convention center, a hotel and a minor league stadium. The developer’s name and company have yet to be made public.

House Bill 2199 will allow the City of San Benito to use its municipal hotel-motel occupancy tax revenue for the development of sports and entertainment facilities.

House Bill 4347 will allow San Benito to use its municipal hotel-motel occupancy tax revenue for hotel and convention center projects and other qualified developments.

Gov. Greg Abbott signed HB 4347 into law and he allowed HB 2199 to become law without his signature. The two pieces of legislation come into effect on Sept. 1.

“The city commission and I are excited about the future economic development of our city,” said Gomez, in his remarks at the reception.

“As mayor, I would describe our city as optimistic. Optimistic that our present challenges are being outweighed by our boundless possibilities. Optimistic that we can create a future that builds upon the greatness of our past. I see and hear the optimist on a daily basis, from residents and nonresidents alike. It gives me great confidence in our future.”

Gomez thanked all of those involved in passing the new legislation. “It is sure to catapult San Benito to the next level. With unity everything is possible. San Benito will move up, united and proud.”

The reception honoring Sen. Lucio and Rep. Lucio was held at the San Benito Cultural Heritage Museum. Also honored at the event was lobbyist Parker McCollough of Mercury Public Affairs. McCollough, who served two terms as a state representative for district in Central Texas in late 1980s and early 1990s, was hired by the City of San Benito to help shepherd the economic development legislation through the House and Senate.

“The city hired me at end of 2018 as legislative consultant, or lobbyist. They had an idea, they had goals, that required them to go through the legislative process,” McCollough told the Rio Grande Guardian.

In his remarks at the reception, McCollough noted that the Legislature only meets for 140 days every other year and that the House and Senate deal with over 10,000 bills and resolutions.

“The system is designed to make the passage of legislation very difficult,” McCollough said.

And McCollough pointed out that the chances of getting HB 4347 and HB 2199 passed by the Legislature were not that great at the start of the session.

“There was some uncertainty. There was a new speaker, new members in each chamber, cities across the state were being targeted on several different fronts,” McCollough said.

“You start out at best with a 50-50 chance of passage. But, when you add in the commitment of the city, when you throw in a well-thought out plan for development, a willingness to compromise when necessary and you couple that with two of the most respected members of the Texas legislature as advocates, you really should not be surprised to be here tonight.”

McCollough thanked the San Benito leadership, including City Manager Manuel De La Rosa and City Attorney Mark E. Sossi for their work on the legislation.

“We are honoring two legislators and celebrating an important milestone in San Benito’s history. I am honored to be here,” McCollough said.

“We are doing this for the citizens of San Benito and that is the right thing to do. Congratulations for a job well-done.”

### **Historic Legislation**

For his part, De La Rosa thanked McCollough, saying: “His skill and knowledge was invaluable to us.”

De La Rosa said now was the time to mark an “historic occasion” with a big thank you to the two Lucios. He recalled that he first met with Senator Lucio to advocate for the legislation on Jan. 23 of this year. Exactly six months later, on July 23, a reception was being held to celebrate its passage.

“Senator Lucio and Representative Lucio were dynamic in their efforts to enact House Bills 4347 and 2199. As a result of these bills, the City of San Benito will see long-term economic

development benefits from this brand new legislation, just enacted by the state legislature, which creates financial mechanisms to bring about a variety of sporting, lodging and entertainment facilities to San Benito,” De La Rosa said.

“As such, this is legislation of historic proportion for San Benito and South Texas as it is intended specifically to bring greater growth and development to San Benito. House Bill 2199 is designed to use municipal hotel occupancy tax revenue for development of sports and entertainment facilities. Likewise, House Bill 4347 is a bill that will allow San Benito to again use municipal hotel occupancy tax revenue for hotel and convention center projects and other qualified developments.”

Interviewed after the reception, Mayor Gomez told the Rio Grande Guardian that he was not at liberty to explain full details about the big economic development project.

“I can say it will include a sports complex, a sports arena, a convention center, a hotel. It is going to put San Benito on the map, I can tell you this much,” Gomez said.

“It will mean more economic development for San Benito, more revenue for our city, which we need for infrastructure. We have big plans for San Benito, we have big plans, united and proud.”

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\* Muñoz, Mario., & Whitlock, Ron. "Gomez: San Benito's economic landscape is set to change." *Rio Grande Guardian*, 28 July 2019, <https://riograndeguardian.com/gomez-san-benitos-economic-landscape-is-set-to-change/>