

City Plan — Vision 2045

Existing Conditions:
Recent Trends and Current Direction

MARCH 16, 2023





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What is City Plan?

City Plan — Vision 2045 (City Plan) is a long-range plan that will create a strategic framework to balance equitable growth, quality of life improvements, and public and private investments in our city over the next two decades. City Plan will address topics that impact how people experience and interact with the City, such as where businesses, homes, sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and much more are maintained, enhanced, and added. It will also look at how our built city can better reflect and advance our community values around topics like quality of life, economic development, housing and neighborhoods, transportation, health and safety, and growth management. The process to create the Plan will tackle difficult questions about the City's current development patterns and provide an overarching tool for communicating community-driven goals and policies. Overall, this Plan will help shape the future of the places we visit, play, and live by preserving what's important to our community and guiding investments that help make Amarillo a vibrant and attractive city.

The existing Amarillo Comprehensive Plan was adopted 13 years ago. The new long-range plan, City Plan, will update the City's adopted vision and growth policy framework to reflect the current needs and desires of the community. For the long-term success of our City, it is important to embark on creating City Plan. As the City of Amarillo continues to develop and grow, it is crucial to establish a vision that will direct and manage the future investments, growth and development. The planning process will provide guidance on how the City will evolve to take care of the development we have as well as plan for new development to come.

How Does City Plan Relate to Recent Planning Efforts?

City Plan will build on recent planning efforts, including lessons learned from the recent zoning code update process. Typically, zoning code amendments come on the heels of a city's adoption

of a new comprehensive plan. However, Amarillo's last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2010. In spring 2022 when the recent Zoning Code update was presented, many residents felt they had not been able to participate in the process. City Staff agreed that the final proposed amendments did not have sufficient community input. In addition, some of the final edits to the Zoning Code update were inconsistent with the 2010 Amarillo Comprehensive Plan. City Plan will provide us with an updated community vision for the City and set the stage for a Zoning Code update that is consistent with the community's vision.

City Plan will also incorporate the Partnership for Development Progress (PDP) Strategic Plan. The PDP guided the City on how Amarillo should address growing infrastructure needs, including necessary operations, maintenance, planning and growth. Primary and Secondary Recommendations from the Strategic Plan will directly inform City Plan's Community Mobility and Infrastructure Plan Element and help to inform the elements related to Growth Management and Capacity, as well as Land Use and Community Character.

What is this Document and How is it Organized?

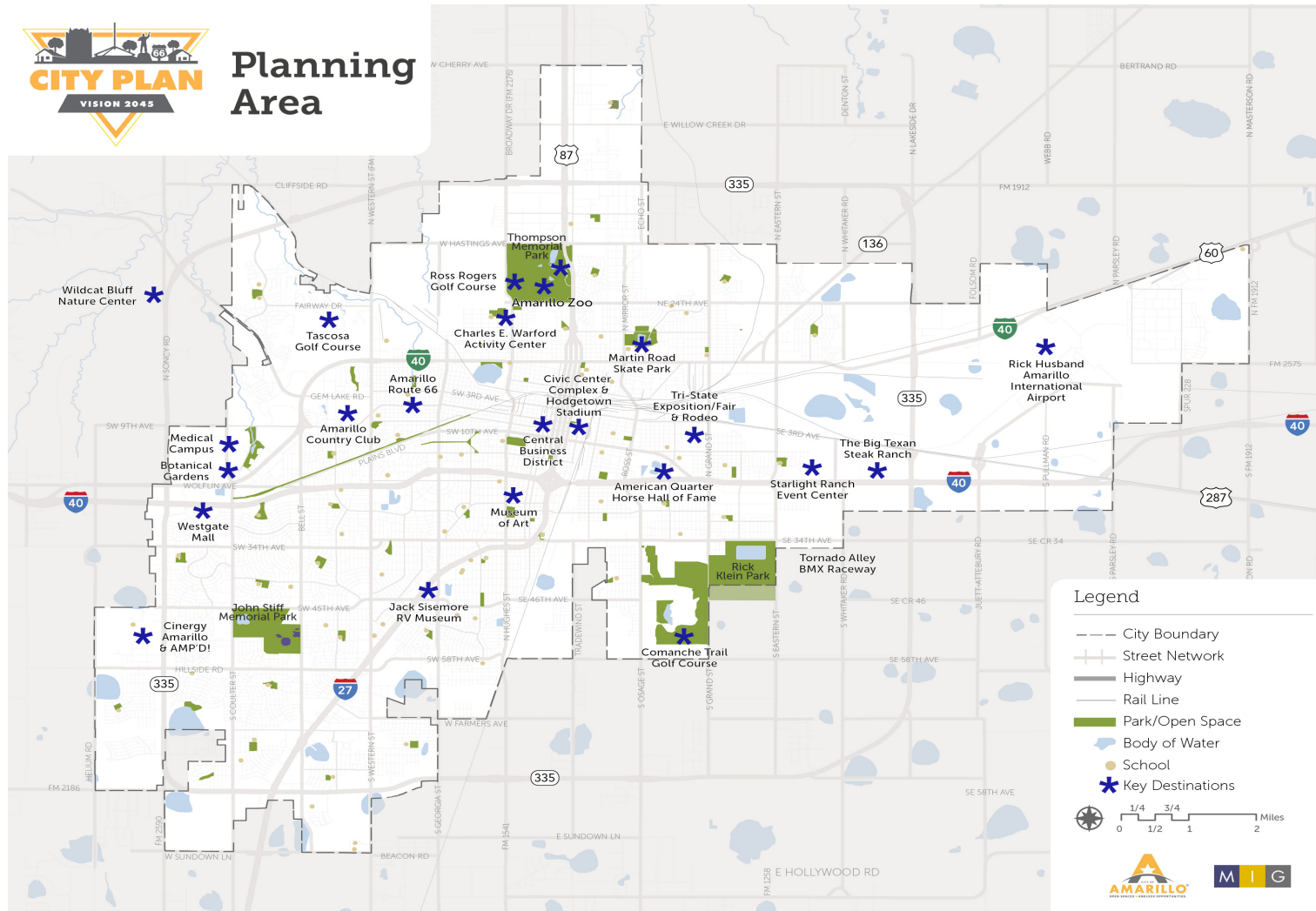
City Plan will provide updated and unified policy direction to guide implementation tools, such as zoning, economic development incentives, and infrastructure and amenity investments. It will outline new strategies for addressing citywide opportunities and challenges. This report begins setting the stage for policies and strategies by looking at Amarillo's history and existing conditions for the following topics:

- Growth Management and Capacity
- Land Use and Community Character
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Parks and Cultural Resources
- Community Mobility and Infrastructure

The topics introduced in the Amarillo Comprehensive Plan and City Plan will build and update on each of those elements. As each element is researched, the data, policy, and findings begin to tell a story about recent growth trends and patterns within the City. The data and policies



Planning Area



Legend

- City Boundary
- Street Network
- Highway
- Rail Line
- Park/Open Space
- Body of Water
- School
- ★ Key Destinations

0 1/4 1/2 1 2 Miles

researched for this report were sourced from the Amarillo Comprehensive Plan; Parks and Recreation Master Plan; CDS ResIntel Housing Study; adopted Neighborhood Plan, including North Heights, Barrio, San Jacinto, and Eastridge; the Partnership for Development Progress Strategic Plan; Regional Multimodal Plan; an inventory of businesses in Amarillo; City building permit records; City vacant lots assessment; school district

boundaries; planned transportation projects; City traffic counts; and information gathered during previous zoning code revision efforts. This report sets the stage for each element and provides a summary of the current direction the City is headed in.





BRIEF HISTORY OF AMARILLO

BRIEF HISTORY OF AMARILLO

Founding

Located in both Potter County and Randall County, Amarillo is situated in a geographically strategic location. It was established as the administrative center upon its founding in 1887. The first railroad freight services arrived that same year the City was founded. Approximately two decades later, Amarillo became the fifth city in the nation to adopt a City Commission and City Manager form of local governance. Since 1913, Amarillo has developed as an economic hub, allowing Amarillo to become one of the largest urban areas in the Texas Panhandle. There are direct highway connections to Oklahoma City in the east, Denver in the north, and Albuquerque in the west and these links to multiple states and the larger region help support the local economy. Amarillo's community and decision-makers can continue to shape the direction of growth and build on the City's assets to strengthen its natural and built landscapes for future generations.

Driving Industries

Since its founding in 1887, the City of Amarillo has been one of the top commercial centers for the Texas Panhandle. After it was established, Amarillo became a prime cattle marketing center and the hub for freight movement. The City also became a hub for health and educational services with the establishment of St. Anthony's Hospital in 1901 and West Texas State College in 1910. Amarillo quickly became a key retail trade center for the Panhandle area, the State of Texas, as well as the surrounding multi-state area. By 1915, Amarillo began establishing itself as a natural resource hub. Gas and oil were both found in Amarillo, leading the City to add a zinc smelter, oil refineries, and oil-shipping facilities. In 1928 Amarillo established the United States Helium Plant, due to the high helium content near gas fields.

In 1942, the Amarillo Army Air Base was established resulting in a sudden spike in population. The base was in use for over twenty years. With the growth of large industries, Amarillo opened its international airport, increasing traffic from visitors and business opportunities. By the 1980's, the City's airport was serving five major airlines, and the Santa Fe and Burlington national railroad freight was serving the region. City Plan will consider the historic and existing industries in Amarillo and address opportunities to strengthen these while identifying new and burgeoning opportunities.

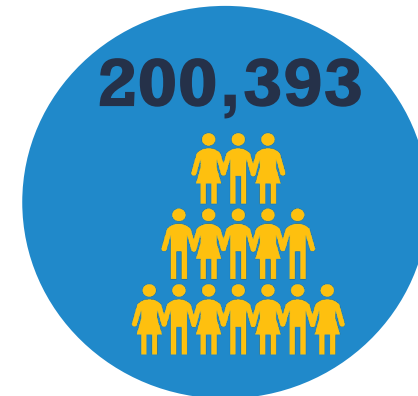
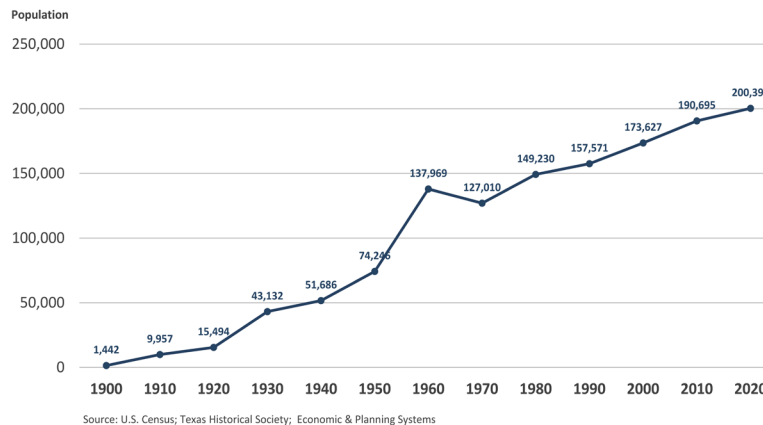


Figure 1. Historic Population of Amarillo by Decade, 1900 to 2020

Eras of Development

Establishment Era: Ellwood Park was established as the City of Amarillo's first city park in the 1890s. In 1901, Amarillo opened the St. Anthony's Hospital, representing the first medical center in the Panhandle region. Positioning itself to become the region's leader in education and medicine, the City also founded the West Texas State College in 1910. By this time, the city's population had reached almost 10,000 residents.

Peak Development Era: The largest population growth in Amarillo occurred between 1930 and 1960, when the Amarillo Army Air Base was established, and the international airport was opened. By 1960, many organizations and corporations moved their headquarters to Amarillo and, the population reached over 130,000 residents. Population continued to increase in both Potter County and Randall County. By 1970, the Army Air Base was closed, and Amarillo's population decreased for the first time. Nevertheless, the community continued to build significant infrastructure, such as a municipal building, a civic center, and High Plains Baptist hospital.

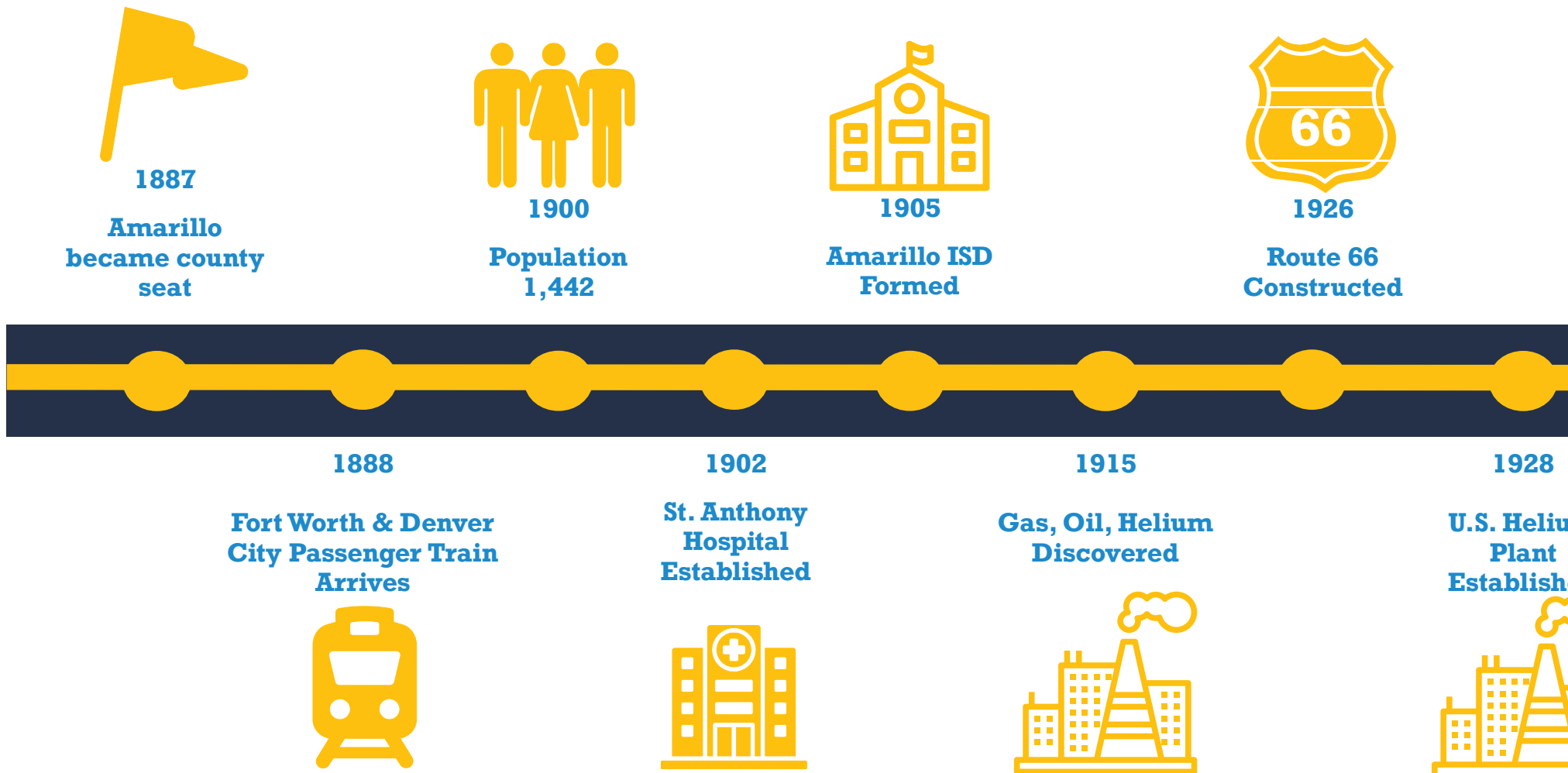
Future Growth: With the 1980 and 2010 Comprehensive Plans, Amarillo continues to envision the continued evolution of the city through public participation and policy. Renewal of shopping and consumer services in additional areas of the city (not only southwest Amarillo) and development at and near Harrington Regional Medical Center are identified economic opportunities for Amarillo in the coming decades. Greenway development in areas such as Southwest Amarillo, have the potential to increase in value while also providing entertainment and outdoor amenities for the community.

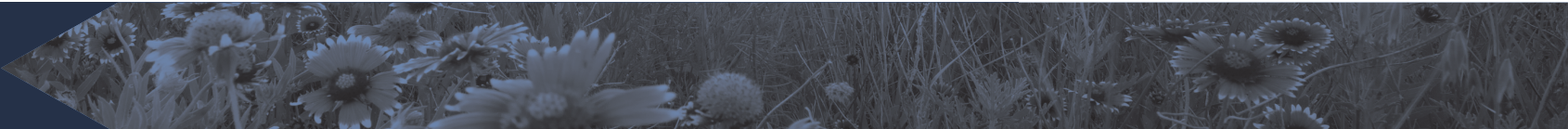


BRIEF HISTORY OF AMARILLO

Current Brand and Identity

The City of Amarillo's image and identity were a key topic in the 1980 Comprehensive Plan and continue to be emphasized in recent years. Policies and regulations are intended to help guide new areas of development, areas that require redevelopment, infill areas, as well as more rural areas. A crossroads community such as Amarillo, requires attention to major corridor entrances (ex. along I-27, I-40 corridors and US Highway 87 and 287). Visitors and potential investors largely form their impression of Amarillo based off their drive into and through town on the interstate. The City's aesthetic image and identity remains an ongoing topic of improvement for Amarillo.





1942

**Amarillo
Army Base
Established**



1980's

**Santa Fe &
Burlington National
Freight Serving Area**



1970

**Population
127,010**



2020

**Population
200,393**







GROWTH MANAGEMENT & CAPACITY

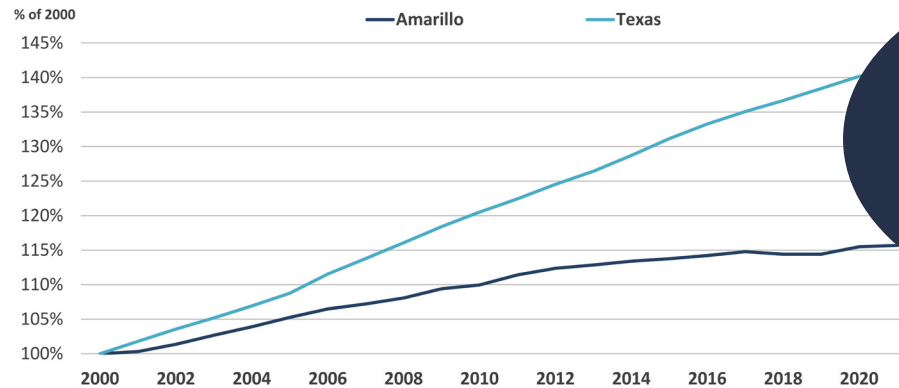
GROWTH MANAGEMENT & CAPACITY

Existing Population and Projections

In 2021, the population of Amarillo was approximately 201,000. The population of Amarillo has steadily grown over the past two decades. Between 2000 and 2021, Amarillo added nearly 27,000 residents, which represents a growth rate of 16 percent, or 0.7 percent annually. As previously stated, the population growth over the last decade was slower, with Amarillo adding 10,000 residents and growing at a rate of 0.5 percent annually.

Over the past two decades, Potter County and Randall County have grown at different rates, with the population of Randall County growing by 1.5 percent annually from 2000 to 2021, while the population of Potter County grew by 0.1 percent annually. Potter County declined in population between 2010 and 2021. Amarillo's population growth has therefore mostly occurred in Randall County, particularly on the southwestern side of Amarillo.

While the population of Amarillo has grown over the past two decades, it has grown at a significantly slower rate than Texas as a whole. As shown in Figure 2, the population of Texas grew by 41 percent since 2000, a rate approximately 2.5 times faster than that of Amarillo.



Source: Texas Demographic Center; Economic & Planning Systems

Texas: 41% Growth
Between 2000 to 2021

Amarillo: 16% Growth
Between 2000 to 2021

Figure 2. Population, Indexed, Amarillo and Texas, 2000-2021

Description	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050		
					Total	Ann. #	Ann. %
City of Amarillo	210,242	231,266	254,392	279,831	69,589	2,320	0.96%
Planning Area	246,676	276,277	309,430	346,562	99,886	3,330	1.14%
Amarillo MSA	278,000	306,787	335,200	363,218	85,218	2,841	0.90%
Potter County	134,041	147,734	161,602	175,083	41,042	1,368	0.89%
Randall County	133,494	148,264	162,786	177,431	43,937	1,465	0.95%

Source: Amarillo 2045 MTP; Economic & Planning Systems

Table 1. Amarillo MSA Population Forecast, 2020-2050

The Amarillo Metropolitan Planning Organization forecasts the City of Amarillo to grow at annual rate of 0.96 percent over the next 30 years, as shown in Table 1. This is a faster rate of growth for the City than it has experienced over the past two decades.

In Amarillo, the median age was 36.1 in 2021, up from 33.6 in 2010, and slightly higher than the median age in Texas of 35.4. As shown in Figure 3, 16 percent of the population in Amarillo is above the age of 65, which is higher than the State of Texas a whole. Fifty percent of Amarillo’s population is between the ages of 25 and 64, which represents the prime working population and slightly lower than the state percentage.

As of 2021, the population of Amarillo is 77 percent White, 7 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian, as shown in Figure 4. Thirty four percent of Amarillo’s population is of Hispanic or Latino origin, which is a lower concentration than found statewide (40 percent). The racial and ethnic makeup of Amarillo is less diverse than Texas.

In Amarillo, the median household income in 2021 was \$55,174, compared to \$67,321 in Texas as a whole. Sixteen percent of Amarillo’s population is below the poverty line, while 14 percent of the population statewide is below the poverty line.

34% of Population is of Hispanic or Latino Origin in Amarillo

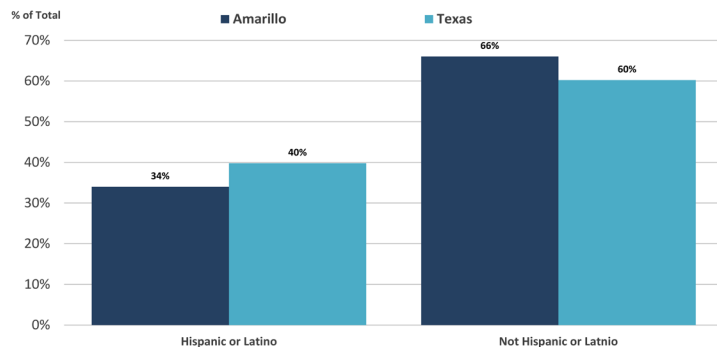


Figure 5. Hispanic or Latino Origin Population, Amarillo and Texas, 2021

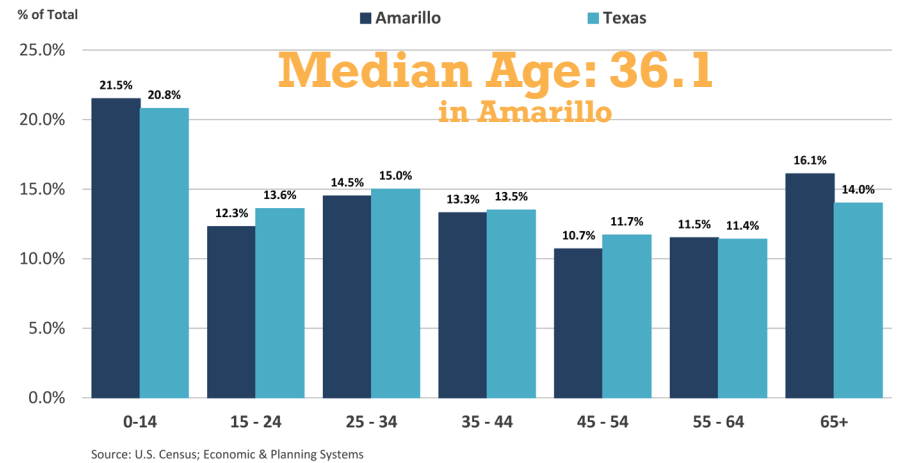


Figure 3. Population by Age Group, Amarillo and Texas, 2021

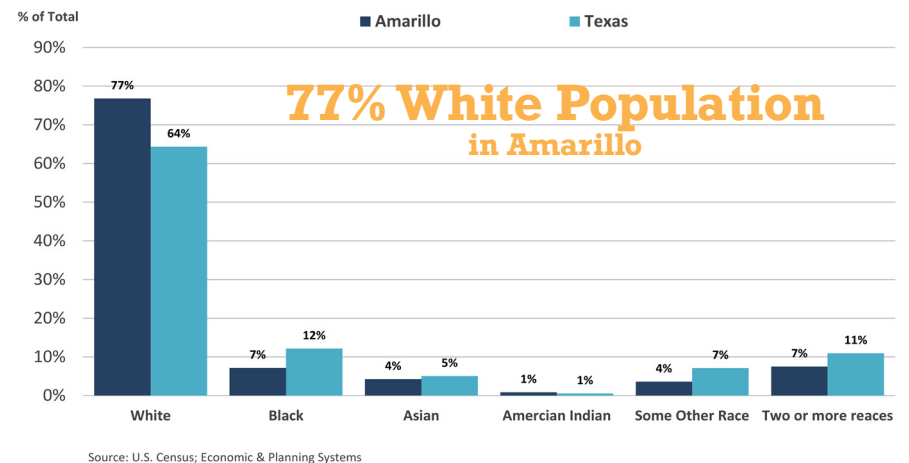
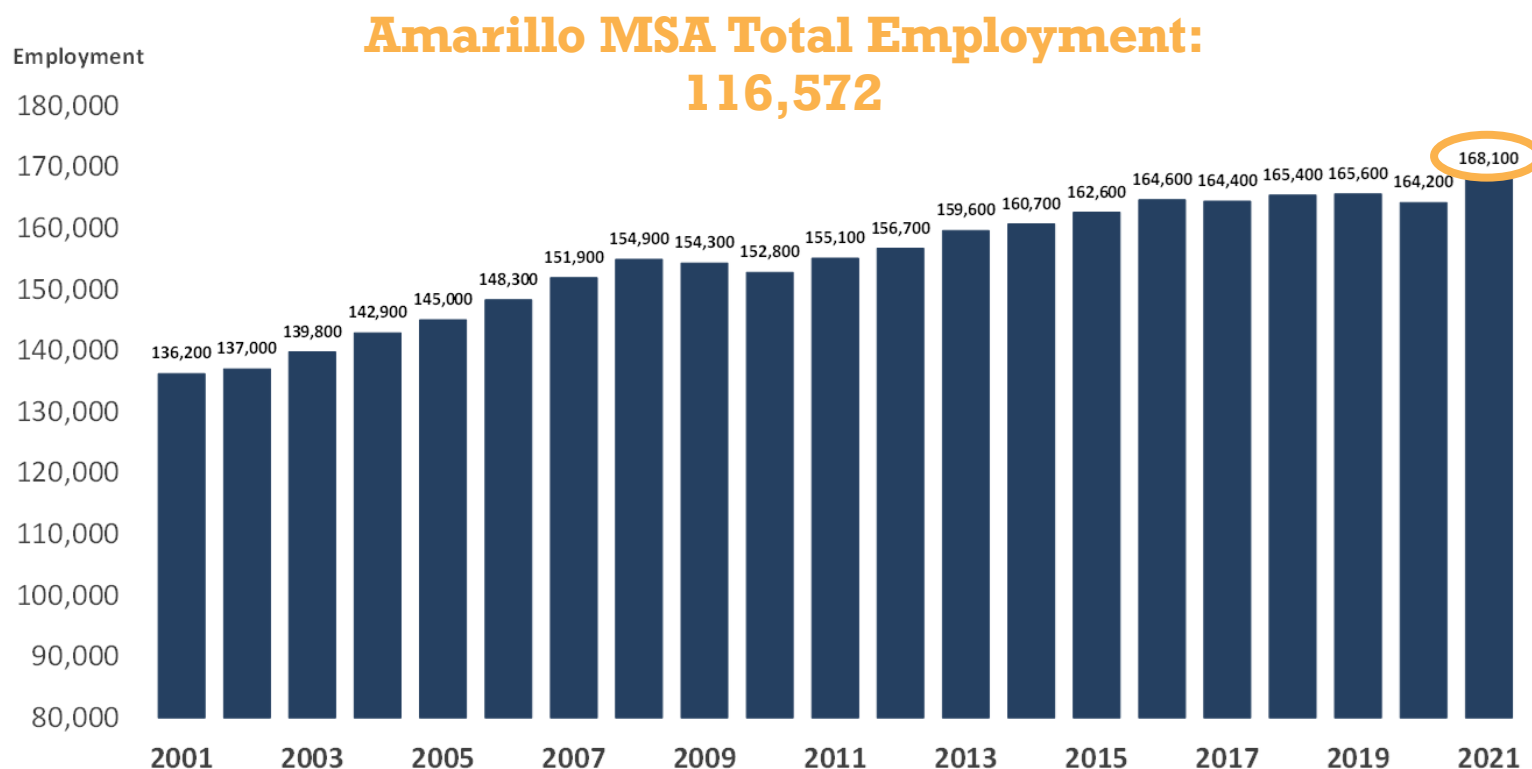


Figure 4. Population by Race, Amarillo and Texas, 2021

GROWTH MANAGEMENT & CAPACITY

Existing Jobs and Trends

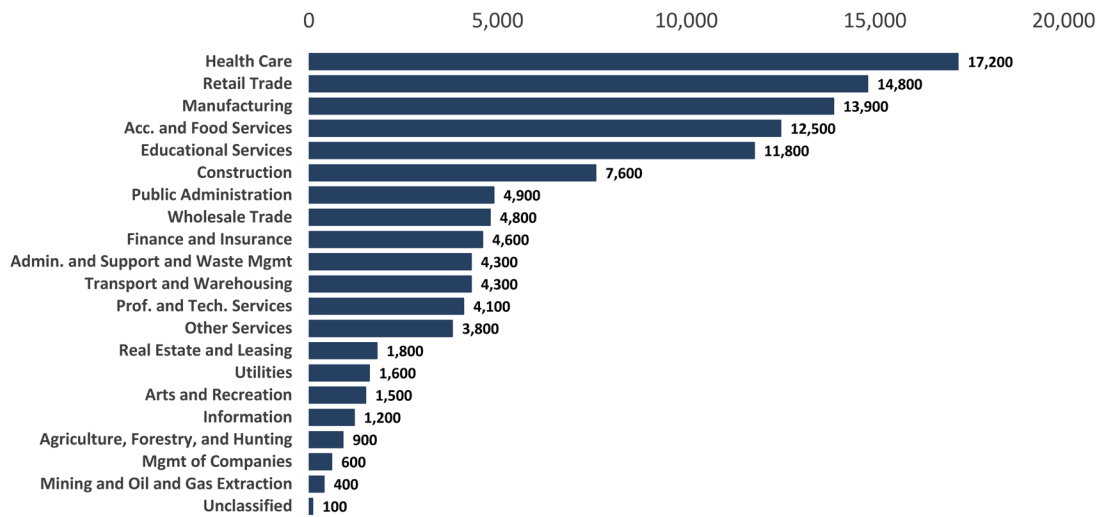
Employment in the Amarillo metropolitan statistical area (MSA) has gradually grown by 14,500 jobs in the last two decades, or 690 jobs annually. The change in employment represents an increase of 14 percent, or 0.6 percent annually, as shown in Figure 6. This indicates that employment has been outpacing population growth in the City. As of 2021, the total Amarillo MSA wage and salary employment was 116,572 jobs.



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis; Economic & Planning Systems

Figure 6. Total Employment, Amarillo MSA, 2001-2021

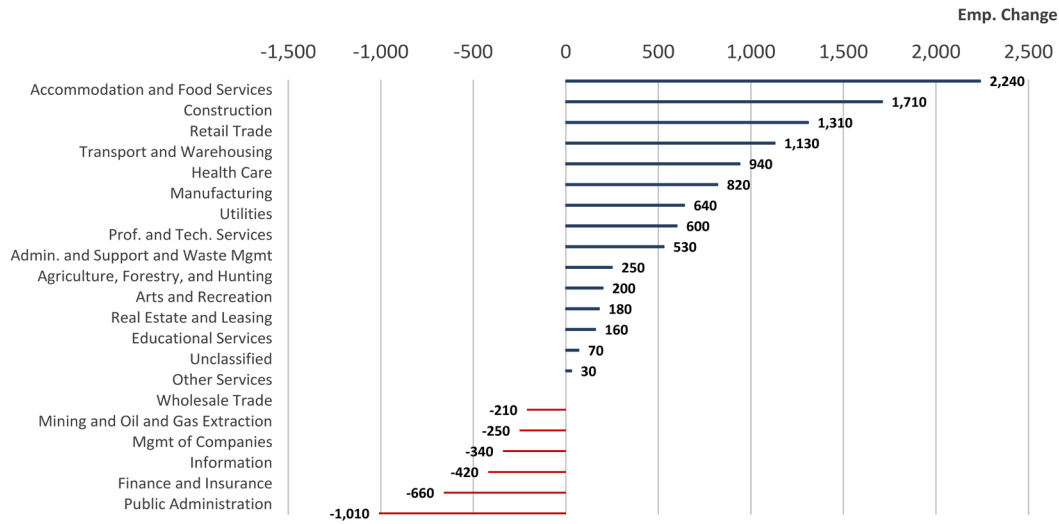
The economic base of the Amarillo metro area is diversified across several sectors. Among wage and salary employment, the largest sectors in the Amarillo MSA include Health Care, Retail Trade, Manufacturing, Accommodation and Food Services, and Educational Services, as shown in Figure 7. Between 2010 and 2021, the sectors to experience the most growth include Accommodation and Food Services, Construction, Retail Trade, and Transportation and Warehousing, as shown in Figure 8.



Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

Figure 7. Wage and Salary Employment by Sector, Amarillo MSA, 2021

Healthcare is top sector in Amarillo for wage and salary



Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

Figure 8. Employment Change by Sector, Amarillo MSA, 2010-2021

Largest employment growth in the Accomodation and Food Services sector



GROWTH MANAGEMENT & CAPACITY

Current Policies & Regulations Directing Growth

Align Amarillo Economic Development Strategic Plan

In 2017, Amarillo released a comprehensive economic development strategy. *Align Amarillo Economic Development Strategic Plan* outlined key economic development goals and associated strategies and tactics to achieve those goals. The goals include:

- Amarillo is a leader in applied education – preparing residents for the jobs of the future and supplying employers with a hard-working, highly-skilled workforce.
- Amarillo is an attractive city – with infrastructure, planning, and support systems in place that make it easy for businesses to grow and residents to get around.
- Amarillo is a global center for agricultural and life science research – recognized for its pioneering spirit and culture of entrepreneurship.
- Amarillo is a family-friendly community – rooted in Western heritage, but offering modern housing, cultural, and recreational options for all ages.
- Residents of Amarillo celebrate their community, and Amarillo is recognized as a top destination for businesses and skilled workers and their families.

Downtown Amarillo Strategic Plan

In addition, the City produced a *Downtown Amarillo Strategic Action Plan* in 2019 aimed at elevating the economic and cultural prominence of Downtown Amarillo in the region, as Downtown had experienced a lack of investment activity over the previous few decades. The plan emphasizes that the health of Downtown Amarillo is central to the City’s overall economic health and its quality of life. The plan formulates a set of goals to improve the vibrancy of Downtown. Some of these goals include:

- Attract new residential and office development
- Attract diversified retail and a grocery store
- Continue efforts to rehabilitate historic buildings
- Modernize the Civic Center complex
- Develop a security plan to ensure safety

Company	Full-Time Employment
Amarillo Independent School District	4,500
Tyson Foods, Inc.	4,300
CNS Pantex	3,844
BSA Health System	3,100
Northwest Texas Healthcare System	2,150
City of Amarillo	1,953
Xcel Energy	1,431
Affiliated Foods	1,250
Canyon ISD	1,168
Amarillo VA Healthcare System	984

Source: Amarillo Chamber of Commerce; Economic & Planning Systems

Table 2. Top Employers, Amarillo Area

Top Employers in Amarillo:

- **Amarillo ISD**



- **Tyson Foods, Inc.**





The City of Amarillo’s Zoning Ordinance is one of the primary tools used to implement the Comprehensive Plan — with a particular emphasis on the Land Use & Community Character element. Existing zoning and development regulations are codified in Title IV of the *Amarillo Code of Ordinances: Building Codes, Development, and Zoning*. Title IV includes six stand-alone chapters:

- Chapter 4-2: Signs
- Chapter 4-6: Platting and Subdivision Improvement and Maintenance
- Chapter 4-7: Manufactured Homes and Recreational Vehicle Parks
- Chapter 4-9: Airport Height Hazard and Zoning Regulations
- Chapter 4-10: Zoning
- Chapter 4-11: Landmarks and Historic Preservation

Although a major revision of the subdivision regulations was completed in 2015, the remainder of the City’s regulations range in age from

the late 1960s (Zoning) to the early 1990s and early- mid-2000s. The City initiated a major overhaul of the code in 2019, with a focus on the implementation of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Key priorities for the Zoning Ordinance Revisions effort were to reduce incompatibilities, protect neighborhood character, support opportunities for more diverse housing options, and reduce the need for updates to the Future Land Use map. A draft of the updated Zoning Code was released for public review in early 2022. Based on public input received, the decision was made to postpone the Zoning Ordinance Revision process until the current comprehensive plan update process, City Plan — Vision 2045, is completed.

TRENDS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The city of Amarillo grew slowly, but steadily, over the past decade by approximately .5% adding about 1,000 people per year. The counties; however, are experiencing more change with Potter County declining 2% over the past decade and Randall County increasing 14%.
- Amarillo is adding more jobs than people per year, averaging 1,600 jobs annually.
- The unemployment rate remains consistently one of the lowest in the state and the nation at 2.6% compared to Texas at 3.8% (December 2022).
- The City Limits currently comprises 105.13 square miles and Amarillo has a population per square mile of about 1,907 people. Compared to other similar sized Texas cities, we have 32% more land area on average and 32% fewer people. This means we have less revenue to cover more area.

