

Align Amarillo

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan
August 15, 2017



AMARILLO
economic development corp.



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INTRODUCTION

Project Background

In November 2016, the City of Amarillo (City) and Amarillo Economic Development Corporation (Amarillo EDC) partnered to develop a new economic development strategic plan for the community. The City and Amarillo EDC issued a competitive request for proposals for professional assistance in this process. After reviewing proposals from a number of qualified firms, the City and Amarillo EDC selected Avalanche Consulting and Community Development Strategies (CDS) to help develop a new, community-wide economic development strategy in 2017.

Project Process

The primary goal of the strategic planning process was to develop a shared, community-wide vision for Amarillo's future and identify an actionable strategy to help partner organizations throughout the city achieve this vision. The strategy works to align public and private organizations throughout Amarillo and build the resources necessary to help businesses and residents succeed. The seven-month strategic planning process included two phases:

1. *Discovery* – During this phase, the project team engaged with Amarillo stakeholders to understand the community's strengths and challenges and identify an economic development vision for the future. While gathering community input, the project team conducted an in-depth data analysis and benchmarking of trends in the city and region.
2. *Economic Development Strategy* – During this phase, the project team developed an economic development strategy for Amarillo. The strategy sets a vision for the community – developed from the perspectives expressed by citizens, businesses, and leadership throughout the planning process. The strategy includes goals that move Amarillo towards its vision and clear, actionable tactics that support each goal.

Stakeholder Input

Listening to Amarillo residents and businesses is critical to developing a shared, inclusive vision for the entire community. Throughout the strategic planning process, the project team strived to engage the citizens of Amarillo through a variety of avenues. The project team led focus groups around relevant topics, held on-one-one interviews, conducted an online survey, toured the community, and facilitated two public meetings. The strategy also received guidance from an Advisory Committee comprised of leaders from the public sector, private sector, nonprofits, and educational organizations in Amarillo. Overall through the planning process, the project engaged nearly 1,000 Amarillo citizens and asks for their support and input throughout implementation.

ALIGN AMARILLO STRATEGIC PLAN

This Align Amarillo Strategic Plan (Align Amarillo) represents the culmination of seven months of extensive research, community engagement, and planning. Because this is a comprehensive economic development strategy, it is a large document – integrating diverse goals and tactics, from educational outreach programs to streetscape improvements. At first glance it may seem overwhelming, but the document is broken into several sections that should be read one at a time to make it more digestible.

The strategy opens with an overview of **Vision & Goals**, which explains the overall strategic framework and summarizes the goals, high-level recommendations, and five priority efforts that should be a primary focus for Amarillo leadership. The Vision & Goals section acts as an executive summary for the strategy and should provide inspiration.

The following **Strategic Recommendations** section covers the detailed strategies and tactics that support each Align Amarillo goal related to *Talent, Infrastructure, Innovation, Quality of Life, and Communication*. The Strategic Recommendations is a reference document that provides explanations for each goal, recommendations, and specific tactics to help the City, Amarillo EDC, and partner organizations achieve these goals. This section concludes with Best Practices on related topics from across the country.

The **Organizing for Implementation** section provides recommended roles for each partner organization in Amarillo – with a structure modeled after best practice communities across the country. This is meant to help effectively align economic development efforts among partners and avoid redundancy and confusion of roles. This section also includes metrics for tracking strategic success moving forward and tables to help organize the many activities outlined in this strategy.

The strategy concludes with an **Incentives Analysis & Recommendations** section that summarizes the wide variety of incentive tools available to support the Align Amarillo strategy – including programs available from the City, Amarillo EDC, Potter County, Randall County, the State of Texas, the Federal Government, and more. This analysis concludes with a recommendation that Amarillo remain an economic development sales tax community and explanation for that conclusion.

This strategy is technical and detailed, but it is intended to serve the whole community. Ultimately, implementing Align Amarillo is about partnerships and community engagement. It will require hard work, dedication, and commitment of resources. But the payoff will be a more successful Amarillo that serves its residents and businesses and creates new opportunities for future generations.

ALIGN AMARILLO PROJECT TEAM



Part of the Great Plains and the largest city in the Texas Panhandle, Amarillo had its beginnings in 1887, when the Fort Worth-Denver City railroad was constructed across the Texas Panhandle. Centrally located in the Texas Panhandle and bordered by New Mexico and Oklahoma, Amarillo's economic history was closely tied to agriculture and the energy industry. These days businesses such as copper refining, fiberglass production, meat packing, ordnance manufacturing, customer service operations, and aircraft assembly operations have diversified the city's economy. Serving as a regional medical center also plays a key role in Amarillo's economy. Today, Amarillo is home to 190,695 (per 2010 Census) people and always welcomes newcomers. Amarillo is a strong community of neighborhoods; proud of the quality of life assets available to residents and visitors alike. A wonderful city to live, work and play!



The Amarillo EDC promotes business expansion in the greater Amarillo area to build a stronger, more diversified economy and increase the economic vitality and wealth of the community. With programs focusing on business recruitment, business expansion and retention, as well as entrepreneurship, the Amarillo EDC is dedicated to helping grow Amarillo's economy for tomorrow's generations.



Avalanche Consulting is the nation's premier economic development strategist. Avalanche is deeply driven to make a positive impact and seek clients who are equally inspired to energize their economies. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Avalanche was established in 2005 and its team has assisted more than 200 communities across the US and abroad.



CDS is a leading national consulting firm headquartered in Houston, Texas, providing economic analysis, public planning, and market research services to clients in a wide variety of industries. Since 1971, CDS has remained at the forefront of the industry by doing three things: 1. Staying actively involved in numerous professional and trade associations. 2. Providing clear, unbiased, and up-to-date solutions by employing the most appropriate and cost effective research methods. 3. Utilizing solution-oriented analysis teams to focus on each project assignment adapted to your needs.

Economic Development Vision & Goals



Align Amarillo Vision Statement

The vision statement for a comprehensive economic development strategy should reflect the **values and priorities** of residents – providing a guide for the present by building upon the past and aspiring for the future. The statement should act as a signpost when making decisions about Amarillo’s future – such as which investments to prioritize and how to market the city to businesses, talented individuals, and visitors. When developing a vision and goals, the community should be bold – considering where the city could be – not only where it is today.

Through public meetings, interviews, focus groups, and an online survey, the Align Amarillo project team heard the **personal stories of residents and business owners** from across Amarillo and the surrounding region. The words in the following vision statement were carefully chosen to highlight the qualities that Amarillo residents most value and wish to enhance and prioritize in the coming years.

Importantly, Amarillo’s vision statement looks beyond the metropolitan boundaries to include the entire Panhandle. As communities throughout the Panhandle face global competition for opportunities, the City and Amarillo EDC must strengthen the city’s position as its thriving center – providing the shared education, economic, and lifestyle resources that help residents and businesses thrive.

Vision Statement

Amarillo is the heart of the Panhandle – a pioneering ag-tech, life science, and manufacturing region that elevates businesses and families through quality education, infrastructure, and a multigenerational lifestyle.

Align Amarillo Framework

The vision statement provides the overarching, long-term guidance for Align Amarillo, setting the tone and helping identify supportive goals, strategies, and tactics for the next five years. The graphic below illustrates the overall Align Amarillo strategic framework.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Vision

GOAL 1

GOAL 2

GOAL 3

GOAL 4

GOAL 5

Strategies + Tactics

Strategies + Tactics

Strategies + Tactics

Strategies + Tactics

Strategies + Tactics

1.1

1.2

1.3

2.1

2.2

2.3

3.1

3.2

3.3

4.1

4.2

4.3

5.1

5.2

5.3

Align Amarillo Goals

Achieving the Align Amarillo strategic vision will require hard work and investment from the City, Amarillo EDC, Potter County, Randall County, partner organizations throughout the metropolitan area, private businesses, and the residents themselves. The following goals will help organize the community to address priorities over the next five years.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Vision – Amarillo is the heart of the Panhandle – a pioneering ag-tech, life science, and manufacturing region that elevates businesses and families through quality education, infrastructure, and multigenerational lifestyle.

GOAL 1 – TALENT

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.

GOAL 2 – INFRASTRUCTURE

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.

GOAL 3 – INNOVATION

Amarillo is a global center for agricultural and life science research – recognized for its pioneering spirit and culture of entrepreneurship.

GOAL 4 – QUALITY OF LIFE

Amarillo is a family-friendly community – rooted in Western heritage but offering modern housing, cultural, and recreational options for all ages.

GOAL 5 – COMMUNICATION

Residents of Amarillo celebrate their community, and Amarillo is recognized as a top destination for businesses and skilled workers and their families.

Align Amarillo Recommendations

Each goal in Align Amarillo is supported by recommendations and tactics designed to move Amarillo towards its vision. These include strategies to address short-term needs and others that build long-term capacity.

Vision – Amarillo is the heart of the Panhandle – a pioneering ag-tech, life science, and manufacturing region that elevates businesses and families through quality education, infrastructure, and multigenerational lifestyle.

Goal 1 – 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.

- 1.1 – Expand programs at area independent school districts (ISDs) that provide students with the skills they need to build careers in the local economy.
- 1.2 – Align and integrate education programs at Amarillo College (AC), West Texas A&M University (WTAMU), and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC).
- 1.3 – Connect Amarillo’s disconnected, underserved, and underemployed population to training, job opportunities, and resources for productive career pathways.
- 1.4 – Continue supporting the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine.

Goal 2 – 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.

- 2.1 – Continue to streamline the City’s development and inspection processes and improve customer service.
- 2.2 – Continue to plan for utility infrastructure expansion that supports industrial, commercial, and residential development in targeted areas.
- 2.3 – Implement transportation master plan and prioritize road repair, maintenance, and beautification.
- 2.4 – Improve high-speed internet connectivity options in Amarillo.
- 2.5 – Focus District Recommendations.

Goal 3 – Amarillo is a global center for agricultural and life science research – recognized for its pioneering spirit and culture of entrepreneurship.

- 3.1 Raise awareness of Amarillo’s entrepreneurial resources, support local businesses, and tell local success stories.
- 3.2 Encourage commercialization and development of clusters related to the community’s research activities.
- 3.3 Increase entrepreneurial education programs at all levels.

Align Amarillo Recommendations

Goal 4 – Amarillo is a family-friendly community – rooted in Western heritage but offering modern housing, cultural, and recreational options for all ages.

- 4.1 Raise awareness of existing cultural and entertainment opportunities.
- 4.2 Continue to expand entertainment and recreational amenities – especially for younger residents and families.
- 4.3 Broaden housing options and maintain existing housing stock.
- 4.4 Improve infrastructure and amenities in underserved neighborhoods.

Goal 5 – Residents of Amarillo celebrate their community, and Amarillo is recognized as a top destination for businesses and skilled workers and their families.

- 5.1 Communicate within Amarillo about the role of economic development and raise awareness of Amarillo’s many strengths.
- 5.2 Recruit high-impact primary employers and talented workers for specific, high-skill industries.

Priority Efforts

Align Amarillo describes many goals and recommendations, but there are five overarching priority efforts on which the community should focus in the short-term that will have long-term benefits for the entire city and Panhandle region.

Supporting the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine

Large animal veterinarians are in high-demand in West Texas, and regional leaders have been working to develop a Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine for thirty years. In 2016, the Amarillo EDC approved a \$15 million grant to assist TTUHSC in developing the vet school in Amarillo. Following the 2017 Texas legislative session, Governor Abbott signed into law a budget that included a \$4.1 million allocation for the vet school – indicating apparent state approval of the initiative. The school will have a tremendous impact on the regional economy – potentially more than any other single project. Leadership must continue energized, coordinated efforts to make this project a reality.

Establishing Amarillo as a leader in applied education

For a city of its size, Amarillo is lucky to have three world-class educational institutions and strong school districts. These schools provide complementary programming that together present a robust overall system. Today, workforce is the biggest topic in economic development and drives the location decisions of many businesses. Through continued program coordination, Amarillo has the capacity to focus these educational resources on the applied needs of regional businesses while also thinking forward to the needs of the future. This foundation is a competitive asset for business attraction and will also help connect residents to pathways for success.

Making Amarillo a global center for Agricultural / Life Science research and innovation

Amarillo is a highly entrepreneurial community with research activity already occurring in the region, but few observers internally or externally regard Amarillo as a research and innovation center. This needs to change. The community should support research across industries, but the city's unique position in the Panhandle and large livestock, agriculture, and life science industries create an opportunity for research and technological development that can have global reach.

Priority Efforts – Continued...

Investing in amenities to support a multi-generational community

Amarillo is rich with culture, but not all residents have this perception of the city. Some see the community as aging and deteriorating – with crumbling streets, limited entertainment options, and few of the modern, walkable mixed-use neighborhoods that are popular nationally among people of all ages. Outside impressions tend to be even worse – based on views from I-40 as they drive through town. To stay economically competitive and retain talent, the community must encourage more diverse housing options, construct more youth sports facilities, and generate more positive lifestyle coverage among other strategies.

Spurring a local dialogue about the future and investing in Amarillo

The recommendations in this strategy align economic development efforts in Amarillo and identify new strategies to prepare for the future, but none will be free. Cities cannot rely state or federal governments to solve their problems. The community of Amarillo must invest in itself to achieve its goals and vision. This can require difficult decisions about taxes and funding mechanisms. These conversations have already begun – and the community should not shy away from them – they are critical to future success.

Strategic Recommendations



Goal 1

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.

Finding skilled talent has become the primary concern of businesses across the US. The training requirements of jobs continues to change and labor markets are tightening across the country – making it harder for employers to find the workers they need. Employees in Amarillo are known for their work ethic, but workforce growth has stalled as many less-educated individuals have dropped out of the labor pool. Aligning applied educational programs to the needs of businesses and improving access to training for all residents will be critical to ensuring Amarillo's businesses remain competitive in the future. This educational system also provides a foundation to attract businesses to the region. The following recommendations will help Amarillo achieve this goal:

- 1.1 – Expand programs at area ISDs that provide students with the skills they need to build careers in the local economy.
- 1.2 – Align and integrate education programs at AC, WTAMU, and TTUHSC.
- 1.3 – Connect Amarillo's disconnected, underserved, and underemployed population to training, job opportunities, and resources for productive career pathways.
- 1.4 – Continue supporting the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine.

1.1 – Expand programs at areas ISDs that provide students with the skills they need to build careers in the local economy.

At a bare minimum, jobs in the modern economy require a high school degree, and many more require employees with technical and soft skills. Expanding Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics (STEM), Career & Technical Education (CTE), and other educational programs in the local school districts will help prepare students for these jobs or continued education. In addition to helping students, these programs help support business attraction and expansion efforts. Amarillo's educational partners are already doing a tremendous job and should continue on their trajectory.

Expand shared STEM/CTE resources and programs at Amarillo ISD, Canyon ISD, River Road ISD, Highland Park ISD, AC, and WTAMU.

- Support existing dual credit programs that allow high school students to develop technical skills and transfer credits to AC and WTAMU.
- Continue efforts to develop partnerships that allow high school students to graduate with workforce certificates in technical areas such as Aviation, Welding, and Auto-Body.
- Support CISD efforts to build a manufacturing center.
- Explore whether to build a CTE Center for AISD or continue coordination with AC facilities and equipment. Identify transportation and scheduling options to allow AISD students to effectively utilize the AC East Campus CTE equipment and facilities for training.

Continue monthly leadership meetings between AC, WTAMU, and ISDs.

- These meetings help support the strong working relationships between Amarillo's educational partners and are critical to continued coordination of programs and effective utilization of assets.
- Use these meetings to identify new desirable programs, bridge gaps in the education system, and avoid duplication of efforts.
- When appropriate, invite city and county elected leaders to participate in meetings and update them on programs and strategic needs.

1.1 – Continued...

Work with local employers to create more internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships for high school students.

- Invite employers and their workers to speak to students at all grade levels – discussing what they do, the work environment, and the path they followed to get to their position.
- Expand company visitations and hands-on learning programs. Consider hosting field trips for elementary school students to learn more about local manufacturing and other firms.
- Develop formal internship and apprenticeship programs for high school students to receive on-the-job training and expose them to career opportunities with local employers.
- Develop programs that help teachers learn about career opportunities by getting them introduced to local employers. This will help them better educate students about local jobs and skills requirements.
- Work with Amarillo Area Foundation (AAF) and other nonprofits to establish or expand upon student mentorship programs. These programs can include group activities as well as one-on-one mentoring. Activities might include – field trips; drug, crime, and pregnancy prevention; counseling, tutoring, scholarship, and internship/career placement assistance.

Lead Organizations: ISDs

Partner Organizations: AC, WTAMU, AAF, Private Employers

Timeframe: 2017 – Ongoing

1.2 – Align and integrate education programs at AC, WTAMU, and TTUHSC.

Amarillo is blessed with three world-class post-secondary educational institutions in AC, WTAMU, and TTUHSC. Each institution offers a unique set of complementary programs that serve the local economy, and together they provide an educational foundation that helps residents gain the skills they need to succeed while also supporting the needs of businesses. Because in-demand skills are constantly changing, these institutions should continue to meet regularly with each other, local employers, and students to stay ahead of the curve.

Educate students about in-demand job opportunities and education pathways that will prepare them for these careers.

- Require incoming students at AC and WTAMU to meet with advisors to discuss their plans for the future.
 - Whenever possible inform students about specific in-demand occupations in Amarillo and the Panhandle.
- Create digital and physical brochures to share information about in-demand occupations and educational programs with students and the general public.
 - Highlight salary levels, education requirements, and locations that provide training.
 - Link to information about employers who are currently hiring.
 - Include information related to scholarships and other programs for funding education.

Continue to work with local employers to develop specific training programs for existing and new employees.

- Explore ways to innovate beyond traditional advisory groups for training programs.
 - Consider bringing in outside experts to advise on new training trends and opportunities.
- Ask local employers to donate equipment and employee time for training.
- Utilize state and other training funds to develop training programs for employers looking to train new employees and existing employees on new equipment.
- Coordinate with local employers to ensure that when students graduate, they will still be hiring for specific positions.
 - Maintain ongoing conversations with employers about hiring plans to avoid timing mismatches.

1.2 – Continued...

Continue efforts to expand education in applied sciences and fields that serve regional employers

- Continue developing education programs in applied sciences that help train students in practical applications related to local industries – especially manufacturing, agriculture, and engineering.
- Develop more advanced degree programs (masters and doctorates) to serve local industry needs.

Work with local employers to provide continuing education for employees.

- Market the availability of engineering masters programs that allow employees of businesses to earn credential while they work.

Continue to increase access to educational programs throughout Amarillo and the Panhandle.

- Utilize the WTAMU Downtown Center, AC campuses, and other satellite facilities to provide educational services to residents of the entire Panhandle.
 - Build collaborative environments for education around each campus.
- Market opportunities for distance education for more remote students in the Panhandle and others outside the region.
 - Highlight applied industry opportunities that are unique to Amarillo.

Lead Organization: AC, WTAMU, TTUHSC

Partner Organizations: Amarillo EDC, Private Employers

Timeframe: 2017 – Ongoing

1.3 – Connect Amarillo’s disconnected, underserved, and underemployed population to training, job opportunities, and resources for productive career pathways.

In recent years, Amarillo’s labor force has grown slowly as many residents with a high school degree or less fall out of the workforce. Amarillo’s minority and low-income residents make up a disproportionate share of the less-educated population – many of whom face significant barriers to education. The top three barriers to education in Amarillo are transportation, childcare, and financial resources. Finding creative solutions to address these barriers and help connect underserved and disconnected residents to education and career pathways will be critical to ensuring Amarillo has a growing and skilled labor force in the future.

Create new and expand programs that actively engage residents and inform them about career and education opportunities.

- Utilize recruiters and other outreach coordinators to enter low-income communities and meet with residents to raise awareness of career pathways.
- Improve access to high school equivalency/GED programs.
- Ensure information about adult learning programs, scholarship and financial aid information, and job postings are shared with community members in low-income neighborhoods.
 - Work with churches, nonprofits, and other social service organizations that engage with low-income populations and those outside the current labor force.
 - Wherever possible highlight specific, local job opportunities and their salary levels made available by education programs.
 - Invite individuals who have successfully re-entered the workforce to share their stories with the community.
- Work with nonprofits that help under-served communities, refugees, and residents returning from prison to reconnect.
 - Identify nationally funded programs and services for refugees.
 - Pursue the US Department of Justice’s Second Chance Act grants and programs to help former prisoners reenter the workforce.

Develop creative transportation solutions to connect less mobile residents with educational institutions and employers.

- Utilize the City’s new transportation plan to identify public transit options to serve communities in need.
- Educational institutions should also consider developing their own shuttle services for lower-income residents.

1.3 – Continued...

- Pursue partnerships with nonprofits and private employers to develop and fund shuttle services.
- Interview students and under-served community residents to identify priority routes .
- Subsidize campus ride share options for lower-income students.
- Continue to work with students and targeted communities to structure class schedules that ease access.
 - Consider the needs of students who must work while training – expanding night courses and non-traditional schedules.
 - Take into account transportation times for students that live far from educational institutions.

Explore opportunities to incentivize and subsidize affordable childcare options throughout Amarillo.

- Initiate a community-wide conversation about childcare to raise awareness of this issue and solicit ideas on creative solutions.
 - AC is beginning to facilitate this dialogue. The City and private employers should be engaged as partners to highlight the importance of this issue.
- Identify public-private partnerships to subsidize childcare services through a variety of avenues, including:
 - Leasing public property to childcare providers at a reduced rate.
 - Constructing municipal childcare centers with operations contracted to licensed, private service providers.
- Streamline permitting processes where possible to reduce barriers to establishing childcare centers and assist applicants when navigating local and state permitting and licensing processes.
- Utilize any federal and state programs that fund childcare facilities.

Expand scholarships and other programs that provide financial assistance to low-income students.

- Look at opportunities to expand the Achievement through Commitment to Education (ACE) program throughout Amarillo and the Panhandle.
 - Work with the AAF and other regional nonprofits and foundations to fund scholarship programs for qualified Panhandle residents.
- Continue to connect residents with federal and state education financial assistance programs.
- Continue to develop fast-track and dual degree education programs that allow students to receive training and degrees at minimal time and cost.

Lead Organization: AC, AAF, Other Nonprofits
Partner Organizations: City, WTAMU
Timeframe: 2017 – Ongoing

1.4 – Continue supporting the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine.

Large animal veterinarians are in high-demand in West Texas, and regional leaders have been working to develop a Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine for thirty years. In 2016, the Amarillo EDC approved a \$15 million grant to assist TTUHSC in developing the vet school in Amarillo. Following the 2017 Texas legislative session, Governor Abbott signed into law a budget that included a \$4.1 million allocation for the vet school – indicating apparent state approval of the initiative. This will be a transformative project for Amarillo and the Panhandle and must continue to be developed.

Continue to coordinate Amarillo EDC, TTUHSC, Texas Tech University System, state representatives, City, and county leadership to work on this project.

- Create a vet school working group of representatives to provide support for the project.
- Identify next steps to keep the veterinary school moving forward.
- Establish a development campaign to raise private sector money to fund the vet school.
 - Work with West Texas livestock businesses, landowners, banks, and other private employers to make this a reality.

Lead Organization: TTUHSC

Partner Organizations: Amarillo EDC, City, State of Texas, Private Employers

Timeframe: Ongoing

INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 2

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.

For industrial users, infrastructure is one of Amarillo's most competitive strengths. The city has rail and highway access, reliable and affordable utilities, a shovel-ready industrial park, a unique airport runway, and much more. At the same time, many of the city's roads are in disrepair, and streetscapes are not attractive, especially when entering the city – creating a poor first impression for visitors. Through interviews and the community survey, residents expressed a strong desire to improve Amarillo's physical appearance. The business community also shared concerns with the City's development review and inspection processes that must continue to be addressed. This will help ensure Amarillo is a city where businesses can build and grow. The following recommendations will help Amarillo achieve this goal:

- 2.1 – Continue to streamline the City's development and inspection processes and improve customer service.
- 2.2 – Continue to plan for utility infrastructure expansion that supports industrial, commercial, and residential development in targeted areas.
- 2.3 – Implement transportation master plan and prioritize road repair, maintenance, and beautification.
- 2.4 – Improve high-speed internet connectivity options in Amarillo.
- 2.5 – Focus District Recommendations



2.1 – Continue to streamline the City’s development and inspection processes and improve customer service.

During the stakeholder input process, many developers and property owners expressed frustration with the City’s development and inspections processes. This is not a new conversation or one unique to Amarillo, but it is one that needs to continue to be addressed. In general, the City’s codes reflect modern best practices, but developers observe inconsistent enforcement of standards and a lack of reliability in the review process. Unreliability can deter business investment, and the City must continue to work with the development community to address these perceptions and ensure a streamlined review and inspection system.

Continue to follow and adopt modern development standards to ensure public safety and that the City is conforming to national best practices.

- Building codes and development standards are designed to protect the public interest. All efforts to streamline and improve development processes should always be considered in this light.

Continue to engage in conversations with the development community to identify and address legitimate concerns with the development process.

- Consider creating an ombudsman position to gather complaints related to the development process and evaluate their validity.
 - If funding is an issue, evaluate whether this role could be added to an existing City staff member’s responsibilities.
- Continue to provide online surveys to submit feedback to the City on development issues.

Complete efforts to move City forms and information online to track applications and increase transparency.

- Many cities have successfully implemented digital development systems. These allow applicants to track their projects at all stages of the development process and provide greater accuracy for scheduling.

Lead Organization: City

Partner Organizations: Potter County, Randall County, Private Property Owners

Timeframe: 2017 – 2020

2.2 – Continue to plan for utility infrastructure expansion that supports industrial, commercial, and residential development in targeted areas.

Some geographic areas in the City and its Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) are not currently served by water and wastewater infrastructure, which limits the potential for their development due to high costs of connecting to existing infrastructure networks. The City's ongoing planning efforts should consider where to prioritize utility expansions to encourage new construction.

Collaborate with the Amarillo EDC and private businesses to ensure utility plans, zoning, and other City plans are consistent with economic development priorities.

- Building infrastructure is an expensive process, but the City must continue to plan for and construct new water and wastewater lines and maintain existing systems.
- To ensure plans are prioritizing construction in desirable areas, the City should continue to collaborate with the Amarillo EDC and private businesses to evaluate those areas.

Evaluate areas within the ETJ to be considered for strategic annexations followed by utility extensions.

- Because the City does not maintain or expand infrastructure into the ETJ, where much new development will occur, they must be strategic in identifying areas for annexation followed by extension of utility services.

Lead Organization: City

Partner Organizations: Amarillo EDC, Private Businesses and Land Owners

Timeframe: Ongoing

2.3 – Implement transportation master plan and prioritize road repair, maintenance, and beautification.

In the community survey, many residents expressed a strong desire for road repairs and streetscape beautification throughout Amarillo. The City is currently developing a transportation master plan. This plan will provide guidance for overall efforts to repair, maintain, and beautify city streets and corridors.

Once completed, this master plan should be implemented and used to prioritize repair, maintenance, and beautification efforts.

Complete the Amarillo transportation master plan and begin implementation.

- Utilize communication channels to ensure the plan is understood and embraced by the general public.
 - Many citizens continue to wonder about the status of the improvements to State Loop 335.
- Complete the pavement condition assessment and address identified deficiencies.
- Continue development and implementation of a thoroughfare plan and on-going implementation of the regional long-range transportation plan.

Advocate for Local, State, and Federal funding for road and highway repair in Amarillo.

- Work with State representatives to advocate Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) to prioritize investments in Amarillo.
- Utilize this strategy and the transportation master plan to help justify and prioritize requests for funds.
- Identify and apply for federal grants and other road repair and transportation programs for which Amarillo might qualify.

Assess and prepare for the effects of freight traffic on roads in areas existing and planned industrial development.

- Roads near existing industrial sites, such as the airport, often face greater wear and tear due to freight distribution traffic.
- Ensure the master plan takes these affects into account and identifies strategies to maintain these areas.

Lead Organization: City
Partner Organizations: TXDOT, Federal Government
Timeframe: 2017 - Ongoing

2.4 – Improve high-speed internet connectivity options in Amarillo.

Businesses in Amarillo report having reliable and high-speed internet access, but according to the latest data from the National Telecommunication & Information Administration only 4% of residents have access to internet at speeds of 50 MBPS or higher – compared to 83% nationally and 51% in Texas. High-speed internet connectivity is increasingly seen as a basic utility – like paved roads one hundred years ago – and to stay competitive in efforts to retain and attract businesses and younger residents, Amarillo must work to improve access to high-speed internet, or the city will quickly be left behind by the competition.

Work with AT&T and other internet service providers (ISPs) to increase local internet speed.

- Continue to meet with ISPs to emphasize that demand exists and encourage them to construct new broadband and fiber lines to residential neighborhoods in Amarillo.
- Encourage residents and businesses to privately lobby ISPs to improve connection speeds through phone calls, emails, and other direct contacts.
 - Keep up the conversation to ensure they are aware of demand and see an incentive to build more lines in Amarillo.

Lead Organization: Amarillo EDC, ISPs

Partner Organizations: Business Community, Residents

Timeframe: 2017 – Ongoing

2.5 – Focus District Recommendations

The consulting team was tasked at looking at four distinct focus districts in Amarillo – the Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport (Airport Area), Central Business District (Downtown), the Harrington Regional Medical Center (HRMC), and Route 66 Historic District (6th Street). A separate report presents analysis and perspectives on each of these districts, but this page includes some high level recommendations related to specific development opportunities in the focus districts. Please see the Economic Development Focus Districts report for more details on each geographic area.

Develop policies to incentivize and facilitate the rehabilitation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of commercial buildings in Downtown.

- Examine development and building codes to identify obstacles and costs that lessen the practicality and financial viability of these kinds of projects.
- Consider incentive programs specifically designed to assist these projects, utilizing Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), Chapter 380 Agreements, revolving loans, and other funds; performance-based structures are preferable from a risk management standpoint.

Continue streetscape, walkability, and parking improvements and extend throughout Downtown and 6th Street.

- Establish street design standards that prioritize pedestrian movement.
- Develop streetscape identity improvements to connect 6th Street to the Downtown core.
- Extend the hike and bike trail to 6th Street and the Downtown core.
- Prepare a parking supply and management strategy for 6th Street.
- Acquire a site and plan for a new Downtown centerpiece park.

2.5 – Continued...

Strengthen infrastructure in Airport Area.

- Identify incentives or funding source to extend utility infrastructure to potential industrial sites, possibly using nearby Eastside TIRZ expansion or Type A funds.
- Create a freight-focused transportation plan to properly handle trucking traffic and interaction with railroads.
- Improve transit / shuttle access to Amarillo College facility and large employers from underserved neighborhoods.

Lead Organization: City

Partner Organizations: Amarillo EDC, Center City, 6th Street Associations, TxDOT, Philanthropic Community, Special Districts

Timeframe: 3 – 7 years

Goal 3

Amarillo is a global center for agricultural and life science research – recognized for its pioneering spirit and culture of entrepreneurship.

Amarillo was established in a remote geography through great effort and risk by settlers with a pioneering spirit. That pioneering spirit remains in the community today – seen in the high share of local small businesses and self-employed individuals, the strong regional banks and other institutions, and the many new business ideas brought to fruition at the WT Enterprise Center (WTEC). Amarillo is also home to numerous researchers at TTUHSC, WTAMU, Pantex, and other organizations developing new applied technologies and services. While home to entrepreneurs, many perceive the community as relatively risk-averse. To stay relevant in the face of technological change, the community must foster its local entrepreneurial culture. The following recommendations will help Amarillo achieve this goal:

- 3.1 Raise awareness of Amarillo's entrepreneurial resources, support local businesses, and tell local success stories.
- 3.2 Encourage commercialization and development of clusters related to the community's research activities.
- 3.3 Increase entrepreneurial education programs at all levels.

3.1 – Raise awareness of Amarillo’s entrepreneurial resources, support local businesses, and tell local success stories.

Amarillo boasts a thriving entrepreneurial community with many locally-owned businesses. Its unique culture of self reliance and problem solving fosters innovation. However, many are unaware of the wealth of resources available to entrepreneurs and the research activity already occurring in the region. Amarillo is also not recognized as a research or innovation hub by many outside of the community. Raising awareness of Amarillo’s entrepreneurial climate and resources will help spark new business growth.

Include Amarillo’s entrepreneurial success as part of an external marketing campaign to target audiences and talent (see Goal 5.2).

- Share success stories of local entrepreneurs. Ask them to share why they chose Amarillo to start their business and how the community has helped them succeed. Include these testimonials on the Amarillo EDC website.
- Showcase the Amarillo EnterPrize Challenge, including success stories of past fund recipients.
- Profile the various entrepreneurial assets in the community, including the WTEC, TTUHSC, and Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center.
- Share specific information about services offered to entrepreneurs. Ensure a dedicated page of the Amarillo EDC website highlights these programs and links to each resource, such as the incubation, advisory, financial, and other services to startups at WTEC and West Texas Small Business Development Center (WTSBDC).

Develop an internal marketing campaign to raise awareness of entrepreneurial assets and resources within the community. (See Goal 5.1).

- Using the content outlined above, develop an internal social media campaign that highlights Amarillo’s entrepreneurial assets and resources on Amarillo EDC and City’s Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram pages.
- Reach out to local media to pitch an “Innovative Amarillo” series that profiles successful entrepreneurs and resources. Reach out to both local newspapers and magazines such as Amarillo Living.

3.1 – Continued...

Continue to expand and promote entrepreneurial small business resources.

- Develop a more robust angel network to support local entrepreneurs – expanding on the existing West Texas Angel Network.
 - Continue aligning with other angel investor groups in Texas to pool resources and mitigate risk.
 - Utilize the internal marketing effort outlined on the previous page to foster an entrepreneurial culture among startups and investors that is more accepting of risk to help encourage investment.
- Identify other funding sources for startups, such as microloan programs or grants, including the Economic Development Administration University Centers program.
- Continue development of accelerator programs at the WTEC.

Lead Organization: Amarillo EDC, City

Partner Organizations: WTEC, TTUHSC, Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center, WTAMU, WTSBDC

Timeframe: 2017 – Ongoing

3.2 – Encourage commercialization and development of clusters related to the community’s research activities.

There are numerous opportunities to build upon research taking place in Amarillo through commercialization. Texas Tech University (TTU) is making strides to increase tech commercialization by partnering with the private sector to utilize their patent portfolio. TTUHSC spends millions of dollars on medical and biological research each year. The Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center and WTAMU are also conducting local research in agriculture and other fields. Without a concentrated effort to commercialize these activities, their discoveries may not be translated into jobs and investment.

Connect research activities and technological innovation occurring at Texas Tech (TTU), WTAMU, and Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center to the private sector to ensure their discoveries are translated into jobs and investment in Amarillo.

- Align research, education, and entrepreneurial resources in Amarillo with target industries. Map current research initiatives aligned with Amarillo’s target industries, such as the Agricultural research programs at TTU and WTAMU, Pharmaceutical research program at TTUHSC, and potential opportunities with the recently approved Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine.
- Meet with TTU officials to learn how they can potentially replicate commercialization programs that have been successful in other communities, such as the Texas A&M University Biocorridor in Bryan-College Station (see Best Practice: Research Valley Biocorridor for more information).

Lead Organization: TTU, TTUHSC, Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center, WTAMU

Partner Organization: Amarillo EDC

Timeframe: 2018 – Ongoing

3.3 – Increase entrepreneurial education programs at all levels.

Research, education, and entrepreneurial resources in Amarillo are supportive of local industries and have the potential to support more job creation with additional alignment. Including entrepreneurial education programs, starting at PK12, will develop an innovative workforce at a young age. Additionally, take steps to connect Amarillo’s underserved population with AC and WTAMU’s technology-related programs.

Develop entrepreneurial programming at regional ISDs.

- This will help students adopt an entrepreneurial mindset early on, particularly concepts related to creativity, innovation, and failure.
- Continue programs such as Amarillo’s Lemonade Day, which teaches students about starting a business.
- Ask local entrepreneurs to assist with program development for other experiential entrepreneurship programs.
 - Consider developing an “Entrepreneur Day” with experiential activities, speakers (such as local successful entrepreneurs), and a business competition. For example, create a “Shark Tank” event at local schools that allow students to develop business ideas, pitch them at an event, and compete for prizes.
 - Include entrepreneurial or technology-related educational programs in after school programs.

Connect technology-related educational programs to underserved populations.

- Develop programs that help connect underserved population with technology needed to succeed in the workforce. For example, consider developing training seminars at local libraries, churches, and other locations that serve this community. Engage local employers and educators to develop and teach curriculum.
- Promote technology-related programs available at AC. Ensure information about financial aid and scholarships is easily accessible.
- Encourage at-risk students to participate in PK12 entrepreneurial programming outlined above.

Lead Organization: Regional ISDs, AC, WTAMU, Local Entrepreneurs
Partner Organizations: Amarillo EDC, City
Timeframe: 2019 – Ongoing

QUALITY OF LIFE

Goal 4

Amarillo is a family-friendly community – rooted in Western heritage but offering modern housing, cultural, and recreational options for all ages.

Amarillo has a long cultural history that has attracted visitors and enriched the lives of residents. From the rodeo to the symphony, residents of Amarillo can enjoy art, music, entertainment, mountain biking, and many more lifestyle activities. At the same time, many residents do not participate in these activities due to limited awareness of them or cost. The community survey and interviews revealed a high demand in Amarillo for more urban and family-oriented amenities – including walkable mixed-use areas, sports facilities, and social gathering spaces for young adults. The following recommendations will help Amarillo achieve this goal:

- 4.1 Raise awareness of existing cultural and entertainment opportunities.
- 4.2 Continue to expand entertainment and recreational amenities – especially for younger residents and families.
- 4.3 Broaden housing options and maintain existing housing stock.
- 4.4 Improve infrastructure and amenities in underserved neighborhoods.

4.1 – Raise awareness of existing cultural and entertainment opportunities.

Amarillo has a large, diverse arts community and has recently been designated a cultural district. Additionally, the community boasts a variety of outdoor recreation amenities and serves as the retail hub for the region. Despite these amenities, many residents express concern that there are not enough things to do. A dedicated marketing effort to promote Amarillo's cultural and entertainment assets will heighten awareness among residents. Visitors will also spend more time in Amarillo.

Develop marketing content dedicated to Amarillo's quality of life amenities that can be used in marketing campaigns to attract visitors, businesses, and residents.

- Develop and publicize a comprehensive website with information about arts, entertainment, and recreation activities. This can be linked to the Amarillo EDC, City, Convention and Visitor Council (CVC), and Chamber of Commerce (CoC) websites.
- Highlight Amarillo's cultural district, profiling various artists and events. Rather than just listing venues, tell stories that help showcase the talent and unique character of Amarillo's arts community.
- Include information about Amarillo's outdoor amenities and nearby sites, such as the Palo Duro Canyon.
- Hire a photographer and videographer to capture these images and stories of Amarillo's rich cultural and quality of life amenities, such as families visiting the Community Market, young professionals attending cultural events, and visitors exploring the Palo Duro Canyon.
- Use this content on websites, social media, and across other marketing materials used by the Amarillo EDC, City, CVC, CoC, and others that promote Amarillo's quality of life assets.

Showcase quality of life amenities in the internal marketing campaign (see Goal 5.1).

- Continue to keep a calendar of events updated (such as the one found on www.visitamarillo.com). Encourage other sites that promote cultural activities and events to link to this event page.
- Encourage brand ambassadors to share information about arts, entertainment, and recreation activities in Amarillo with their networks.
- Promote events and activities across social media platforms and in local newspapers.

Lead Organization: Center City, CVC, CoC
Partner Organizations: City, Amarillo EDC
Timeframe: 2017 – Ongoing

4.2 – Continue to expand entertainment and recreational amenities – especially for younger residents and families.

Many residents of Amarillo desire more walkable, urban amenities. Redevelopment and beautification will help enhance Amarillo's vibrancy and potentially spur some of these investments. Also, residents often mention the shortage of youth and other sports facilities in the city. With larger more updated facilities, Amarillo could serve as the Panhandle's sports destination. These investments and others tailored for diverse, multigenerational residents is an important part of building a robust economy.

Maintain, beautify, and redevelop public spaces, such as downtown, 6th Street, and the I-40 corridor.

- Inventory the maintenance and beautification initiatives needed in each of these neighborhoods, such as park space, improved streetscapes (including sidewalks and crosswalks), walkable and bike-friendly pathways, and a parking strategy. Plan for each project in the City Capital Improvements Program.
- Consider establishing a business improvement district to help implement these initiatives and complement Center City's façade grants program, downtown business promotion, and other programming.
- Consider adopting city policies to incentivize improvements by local business owners, such as Chapter 380 agreements with the Downtown TIRZ.

Support the growth of independent businesses and amenities that enhance downtown quality of life.

- Expand daytime and late afternoon event programming that will add to downtown's vibrancy and bolster foot traffic for businesses.
- Consider developing a cooperative workspace on Sixth Street, which could become an incubator for small, local business.
- Consider adopting assistance programs to help independent startup businesses open downtown or on Sixth Street.
- Consider programs provided by public agencies or nonprofit organizations, such as a revolving loan program or grants for building improvements.
 - Explore creative programs such as a "Main Street Challenge" that awards funds to local businesses that want to locate downtown to help spur investment and fill empty spaces (see Best Practice: Spartanburg Main Street Challenge).

4.2 – Continued...

Explore establishing a cultural fund that allows businesses to easily support.

- Consider establishing a community-wide cultural fund administered by a central organization such as Center City with the purpose of supporting arts and cultural organizations and events and other amenities.
- Utilize this fund as a single investment point for philanthropy – making it easier for businesses to support cultural activities and receive recognition.

Invest in youth sports recreation facilities to support the strong demand in Amarillo and the Panhandle.

- Conduct a feasibility study for youth sport recreation facility development. Use this study to determine the geographical draw Amarillo would have by serving as the Panhandle's hub for hosting sports leagues and competitions. Identify gaps in offerings and the optimal facilities needed to meet regional demand. Evaluate the potential economic impact for the City.
- Invest in a public relations campaign to pass a bond for facility funding. Use the feasibility and economic impact study to demonstrate the demand and value to voters.
- Work with the CVC to promote Amarillo as a destination for youth sports.

Continue efforts to attract destination retail and entertainment to Amarillo.

- Where appropriate, the City should continue to encourage the opening of destination retail and entertainment facilities and establishments in Amarillo.
 - These efforts should be focused on businesses that fill gaps in the local supply and that face challenges becoming established in Amarillo.
 - Chapter 380 agreements and other tools should be utilized to help attraction efforts.
 - In addition to filing the needs of residents, new retail and entertainment options will help bolster the community's ability to attract and retain visitors and tourists for longer periods of time.

Lead Organization: City, Center City

Partner Organizations: Amarillo EDC, CVC

Timeframe: 2018 – 2020

4.3 – Broaden housing options and maintain existing housing stock.

While homes for sale in Amarillo are relatively affordable, there are not many homes for sale. Both home builders and residents expressed concerns that not enough new housing is being built to match the demand. Additionally, much of the existing housing stock is aging and deteriorating – particularly in low-income neighborhoods – which can lead to significant safety and infrastructure costs for the City in the future. Amarillo must broaden housing options to retain younger individuals, families, and Baby Boomers (who increasingly seek more urban lifestyles). In particular, focus on more housing options downtown and in denser, mixed-use developments.

Increase the number and diversity of housing options in Amarillo.

- Conduct a housing study to determine housing demand, market trends, and gaps in offerings. Share this study with local developers to spur further investment in new construction in Amarillo.
- Increase the number of mixed-use developments in downtown Amarillo. These high-end developments that mix retail, office, and residential space are highly sought after by young professionals, executives, and retirees alike.
 - Consider converting vacant spaces downtown into residential space. As outlined in the Economic Development Focus Districts report, this may require financial assistance or incentives from local government to be financially feasible.
 - Reasonable changes may be needed to development and building codes to accommodate these options.

Lead Organization: City
Partner Organizations: Developers
Timeframe: 2019 – Ongoing

4.4 – Improve infrastructure and amenities in underserved neighborhoods.

Amarillo's underserved population is disconnected from the amenities found throughout the rest of the community, including retail and dining, grocery stores, public transportation, affordable housing, healthcare, and parks and green space. Investing in these amenities throughout the community will increase quality of life for all residents.

Invest in infrastructure in underserved neighborhoods that will enhance residents' quality of life.

- Continue City neighborhood planning efforts.
 - Explore options to revitalize neighborhoods with beautification projects, parks, green space and sidewalks.
- Recruit services to underserved neighborhoods that promote healthy lifestyles, such as a grocery store or a low-cost mobile health clinic.
- Establish programs to assist with rehabilitation of aging housing combined with preservation of affordability.
- Explore funding options for these investments such as grants, debt financing, or Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) funds (see Best Practice: 3CDC for more information).
- Utilize Neighborhood Empowerment Zones to provide incentives for development in targeted neighborhoods.
 - Incentives can include property tax abatements, fee waivers, and other tools that encourage investment and rehabilitation.

Lead Organization: City, AAF

Partner Organizations: Community organizations such as local churches, Other local nonprofits, Regional banks

Timeframe: 2018 – Ongoing

Goal 5

Residents of Amarillo celebrate their community, and Amarillo is recognized as a top destination for businesses and skilled workers and their families.

Residents of Amarillo love their community, but in recent years there has been a lot of negative dialogue and civic disunity. The consulting team heard this through discussions with the community, and it was made clear by survey respondents – who expressed a strong desire for greater unity, vision, and overall leadership. A core component of the Align Amarillo strategic planning process has been stakeholder inclusion. The City, Amarillo EDC, elected officials, and partner organizations must continue to maintain this communication in a transparent manner. Communication should tell the positive story of assets in Amarillo and focus on future opportunities. Through proactive messaging, community leaders should foster a dialogue about economic development and the need to invest in Amarillo to address strategic priorities.

The following recommendations will help Amarillo achieve this goal:

- 5.1 Communicate internally about the role of economic development and raise awareness of Amarillo's many strengths.
- 5.2 Recruit high-impact primary employers and talented workers for specific, high-skill industries.



5.1 – Communicate internally about the role of economic development and raise awareness of Amarillo’s many strengths.

As highlighted throughout Align Amarillo, the community boasts many competitive advantages and attractive amenities for both business and talent. Yet many residents are unaware of these assets – from entrepreneurial resources to unique arts and cultural offerings – or overly focus on negative impressions. A dedicated internal marketing campaign will help educate the community about the role of economic development, increase awareness of assets and opportunities, and ultimately generate pride in the community.

Educate the community about economic development when unveiling the Strategic Plan.

- Host a roll out event that unveils Align Amarillo to the public. Use this opportunity to generate awareness about the role of economic development in the community.
 - Share the topline vision and goals as well as the distinct role the City, Amarillo EDC, private sector, and other key stakeholders play in implementing Align Amarillo.
 - Share information about how achieving these goals will benefit all residents of Amarillo, especially how it will help new generations stay in Amarillo – allowing them to benefit and thrive from the community’s success and prosperity.
 - It is important to highlight that a key element to success is that the community must invest in itself in order to achieve its vision and goals.
 - Unveil the internal marketing campaign (see following page). Share information about how citizens can sign up to become brand ambassadors.
 - Encourage local media to attend the roll out event. Ask them to write a series about the strategic plan roll out, internal marketing campaign, and the role of economic development in the community.
 - Provide talking points to the Advisory Board, Amarillo EDC board members, and City elected officials to ensure messaging is aligned.
- Host regular community events to engage with citizens about Strategic Plan implementation and to foster forward-thinking dialogue about the future of Amarillo. Use these conversations as an opportunity to educate the community about economic development initiatives and future trends affecting the community as well as hear input from stakeholders (see Best Practice: Austin Conversation Corps for an example).

5.1 – Continued....

- Be transparent with implementation progress. Continue to keep the www.AlignAmarillo.com website updated with progress reports.
 - Post progress updates via press releases to local media and across Amarillo EDC and City social media platforms.
 - Ask other Amarillo organizations to share progress reports and economic development wins, such as through the Amarillo Chamber newsletter.

Tell a consistent, positive story of pride and opportunity in Amarillo through an internal marketing campaign.

- Use Align Amarillo’s roll out event to launch a campaign that generates local pride in Amarillo’s assets. Provide sign-up forms at the event to recruit “Amarillo Allies” to be social media brand ambassadors.
 - Include community leaders as brand ambassadors to promote Amarillo.
- Following the roll out event, engage Allies on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to share what they love about living and working in Amarillo and to promote assets that aren’t as well-known, such as arts amenities, cultural events, and entrepreneurial resources.
 - Ask Advisory Board members and representatives from other community organizations – including the CVC, CoC, Center City, and young professional organizations – to become Amarillo Allies. Ask them to reach out to their networks to recruit more ambassadors.
 - Develop an Amarillo Allies toolkit that includes sample social media posts, social media accounts to follow and engage with (such as Amarillo EDC and City’s Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts), and social media campaign hashtags (such as #AmarilloAlly).
- In addition to the Allies campaign, utilize Amarillo EDC and City’s social media platforms to educate the community about positive findings and factoids uncovered throughout the strategic planning process.
 - Promote assets that are not as well-known, including arts and cultural amenities and entrepreneurial resources. Utilize content developed about quality of life assets (see Goal 4.1) and entrepreneurial resources (see Goal 3.1).
 - Develop a social media calendar that allows each organization to proactively plan content based on specific topics (such as a week-long campaign dedicated to celebrating innovation in Amarillo) or based around community events (such as a campaign highlighting Amarillo’s Community Market).

Lead Organization – Amarillo EDC, City
Partner Organizations – CoC, Local Employers
Timeframe – 2017 – Ongoing

5.2 – Recruit high-impact primary employers and talented workers for specific, high-skill industries.

Recruiting business and talent to region will require a highly targeted external marketing campaign. Utilizing the findings generated throughout this strategic planning process, Amarillo can create tailored marketing content for each of its target industries as well as in-demand talent. Utilizing high Return On Investment (ROI) marketing channels, such as digital platforms and earned media, will make a greater impact compared to costly advertising and printed materials.

Develop an external marketing campaign for each target industry.

- Update the Amarillo EDC website with target industries identified in this strategic planning process. Include information such as:
 - Testimonials from target industry executives, in video format if possible;
 - Sales messages outlined in the forthcoming Target Industry Competitiveness report;
 - Top employers and suppliers for each industry;
 - Workforce data, education programs, and training that support each industry; and
 - An accurate, up-to-date property listing of available sites and buildings.
- Develop a media relations campaign. Earned media is one of the most trusted resources among business executives. Engage a PR agency to lead this if the Amarillo EDC does not have the current staff capacity to do so.
 - Develop press releases that can be distributed to publications such as Area Development; Site Selection Magazine; business journals in geographies with high concentrations of target industries; and target industry-related publications (see sidebar for a sample list).
 - Continue ongoing marketing campaign with Inc Magazine
- Connect with target audiences on social media.
 - Develop a tailored social media campaign for each target industry using the content listed on the previous page.

SAMPLE TRADE PUBLICATIONS

Advanced Manufacturing

IndustryWeek
National Defense Magazine
Defense News

Professional & Information Services

Wall Street Journal
Bloomberg Businessweek
Forbes
PC Magazine
Engineering & Technology

Agricultural & Life Sciences

Precision Agriculture
Feed & Grain
Food Technology
Modern Healthcare
PharmaTimes

Aviation & Logistics

Aviation Week
Aerospace Manufacturing
Global Trade

5.2 – Continued...

- Actively engage with target industry executives, site selectors, and other influencers and decision-makers on Twitter and LinkedIn
- Engage with state economic development partners on social media, such as Team Texas.
- Connect with target audiences in person.
 - Attend events that will have a large number of target industry executives and other key decision-makers present, rather than other economic developers. Schedule one-on-one meetings while at these events. Ask local executives to facilitate introductions if needed.
 - Conduct mission trips to locations that have a high concentration of target industry firms. Ask local target industry executives to facilitate introductions if needed.
 - Invite target industry executives and site selectors to familiarization tours and inbound events in Amarillo to showcase the community. Work with the CVC to recruit target industry-related conferences and events to Amarillo.
 - Time social media and media relations activities to align with in-person business development activity and events. Create an annual marketing calendar to coordinate various campaigns and ease implementation.

Recruit a talented workforce to Amarillo for specific, high-skill industries.

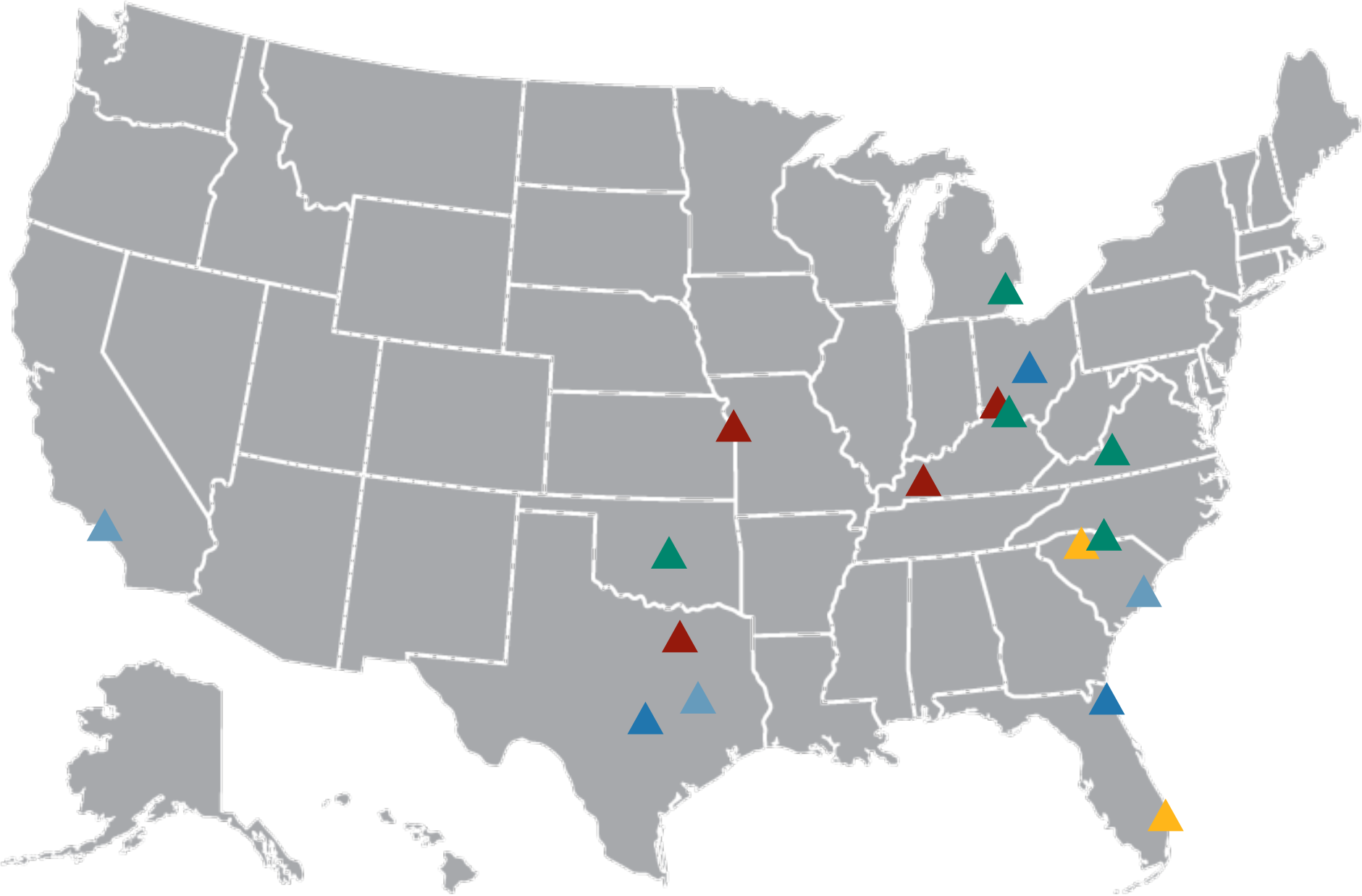
- Utilize the content developed to showcase Amarillo’s quality of life assets (see Goal 4.1) to attract talent. Create a landing page for prospective residents that:
 - Includes information about education, residential real estate offerings, neighborhood profiles, and quality of life amenities;
 - Showcases Amarillo’s cultural district designation and other arts and culture amenities;
 - Highlights Amarillo’s innovative and entrepreneurial culture;
 - Features video testimonials from residents, including young professional and families, about what they love about living and working in Amarillo; and
 - Live streams social media posts from the brand ambassador program.
- Provide a talent marketing package to local employers that includes the information above. Provide suggested tour itineraries and talking points to employers that will help them promote Amarillo when recruiting new hires.

Lead Organization – Amarillo EDC

Partner Organizations – Inc Magazine, City, Educators, Local Employers

Timeframe – 2018 – Ongoing

BEST PRACTICES



TALENT

Best Practice: Upstate SC Alliance STEAM Mentor Program

The Upstate SC Alliance developed a mentor program at a local middle school to increase students' interest in STEAM subjects and expose them to careers in manufacturing and engineering. Rather than just inviting manufacturers to Career Days, they created a hands-on and immersive experience to create a lasting impression. The program began with a Mentor Fair in which representatives from twelve local companies set up booths similar to a Career Fair format, except it was the sixth grade students who selected the company they wanted to work with. Projects were then developed that reflected real-world scenarios in their industry. Company mentors worked with their group of students on the project four times during the school year. The projects incorporated many different roles and career types that are present in modern manufacturing, including research, design, finance and management. Each project taught students how all the functions come together and how to work towards a common goal. The program was successful at engaging students and creating a better understanding of careers in manufacturing and engineering.

Best Practice: Miami-Dade Academic Leaders Council

Miami Dade Academic Leaders Council (ALC) was developed to address skills gaps in target industries by aligning curriculum with target industry needs, advancing internship programs that retain college graduates in Miami-Dade County, and collaborating on universal educational issues. Participants in the ALC included presidents of all six local colleges and universities as well as the superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The Talent Development Network is an outcome of ALC's work. It is an internship program that provides undergraduate and graduate students practical experience with industry partners that are aligned with Miami-Dade County's target industries. It serves as the single internship hub for all Miami-Dade students and companies. The goal for the first two years is to create at least 200 new paid industry-specific internships to impact permanent job placement rates while preserving local talent.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Best Practice: Cincinnati Jump Team

The Cincinnati Jump Team was developed when the Cincinnati Small Business Advisory Committee identified a need for a one-stop, centralized web portal. The city will also use this web portal to streamline the permit process for businesses by creating a “Jump Team” in city government. The “Jump Team” would consist of representatives from all relevant departments to assist when a business is applying for permits and reduce the time it takes to get the business open.

Best Practice: McKinney, Texas Development Department

The McKinney, Texas Development Department provides important permitting information for residents and businesses online. Permit Submittal Guides clarify submittal requirements for various residential and commercial developments. It includes flow charts that map out each step in the process. This empowers McKinney residents to obtain the resources they need to move forward with development.

Best Practice: Kansas City KCBizcare:

The Kansas City Business Customer Service Center or “KCBizcare” opened June 1, 2009 and was established as a separate entity under the City Manager’s Office to provide enhanced services to the small business community. KCBizcare currently has a staff of three and provides business-specific “roadmaps” for opening a business; public access to city computers to look up property and zoning information, access city records, and submit applications online; referrals to city departments, agencies, and partner organizations involved in regulation or business assistance; and guidance and assistance in navigating the city’s licensing, permitting, and approval processes.

Best Practice: Princeton, KY “Let’s Paint the Town!” Program

Princeton, Kentucky’s “Let’s Paint the Town!” project was a historic preservation and downtown revitalization effort. The objectives were to enhance the downtown historic area, promote an appreciation for preservation, and stimulate economic development. The effort was achieved through donated funds and volunteer labor. Over 6,000 volunteer hours were clocked, 50 downtown businesses were restored and over 120 sponsors donated over \$65,000 to the effort. There was increased foot traffic, which subsequently increased investment interest downtown. The project was recognized at the National Main Streets Conference as one of the “25 Great Marketing Ideas” in the country.

Best Practice: Research Valley Biocorridor

The Research Valley, located in Bryan-College Station, Texas, is a talent hub with strong ties between university, industry, and government partners. The Research Valley Partnership works closely with higher education partners at Texas A&M University and Blinn College to establish meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships with the private sector that result in innovation. For example, the Research Valley BioCorridor is an initiative that provides speed-to-market connections between research, commercialization, and business. In 2011, the cities of Bryan and College Station approved an interlocal agreement to work together to develop the BioCorridor with strong support from Research Valley Partnership and Texas A&M University.

The Biocorridor is home to the Texas A&M Center for Innovation in Advanced Development and Manufacturing (CIADM). It includes the facility operated by Kalon Biotherapeutics, which will manufacture GlaxoSmithKine's groundbreaking pandemic influenza vaccine; Caliber Biotherapeutics, the world's largest plant-based vaccine manufacturing facility; and Woodbolt International, the developer of Cellucor nutrition products, among others. The Texas A&M CIADM created an environment where business, university, and government all work together as one cohesive unit. It is different from other facilities (there are three CIADMs in the US) because it involves a university partner. Involving state university, federal, and private entities creates new challenges and levels of complexity, but the dedicated leadership across sectors allowed them to overcome these challenges. Seeing what they could accomplish together made it worth the effort. For example, groundbreaking mobile clean room technology was developed as a result of the research capacity at the university and funding from the private sector. This technology changed the landscape of vaccine production, making Texas A&M CIADM more nimble and adaptable than other facilities of its kind.

As the Research Valley Biocorridor grows, more and more biomedical companies and talent are drawn to Research Valley as a destination for innovative biotherapeutics research and production and the unique collaboration that takes place. Having the support and buy-in from organizations across education, private, and public sectors is key to their success. The Research Valley Partnership is now spearheading an initiative to create more awareness of the BioCorridor and develop a brand that all organizations can adopt to further strengthen ties and communicate as one cohesive unit.

Best Practice: CodeON Charleston

CodeON Charleston is a coding program that provides basic tech education to kids age 8 to 10 in a low-income, underserved neighborhood of Charleston, SC. It operates in Laundry Matters, the only laundromat in walking distance for residents. A portion of the facility was turned into a community center due to its easy access. Laptops, tablets, and Wi-Fi routers were donated by local tech companies, whose employees also volunteer to teach. Establishing CodeON in Laundry Matters has been a successful way to build trust in the neighborhood and provide access to tech education to young students.

Best Practice: Mulholland Robotics Middle School

Mulholland Robotics Middle School in Los Angeles, CA is a magnet school with a robotics curriculum theme. Students build robots to solve problems and use robotics as a lens for other lessons. For example, students had an assignment to build a robot that could help save people from an earthquake and integrated math equations to learn how fast tectonic plates move. The magnet program received \$150,000 from the school board and attracted 200 new students in its first year.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Best Practice: Oklahoma City MAPS

A plan to revitalize and re-energize Oklahoma City was created that inspired residents to invest in their struggling community. Business leaders, community stakeholders, and elected officials became advocates for “Believe in Our Future,” a campaign that asked voters to approve a penny sales tax that would improve quality of life through downtown revitalization. The result was MAPS – Metropolitan Area Projects. The initiative called for taxpayers to drive downtown revitalization and included nine major projects in the central business district that would provide new and upgraded cultural, sports, recreation, entertainment, and convention facilities. The selling point? The plan explicitly detailed what projects would be funded and the government would not go into debt to pay for the projects. In 1993, Oklahoma City voters passed a five-year, one-cent sales tax.

The program was overwhelmingly successful and generated \$350 million in funding. The U.S. Conference of Mayors pointed to the community noting, “Using a pay-as-you-go structure allowed Oklahoma City to build world-class facilities without the burden of debt for future generations and city leaders. Oklahoma City citizens made the historic decision to invest their own money in the city they called home.”

The first nine MAPS projects took ten years to complete and included construction of the Triple-A Bricktown Ballpark, a new downtown arena, the Bricktown Canal, and renovation of the Civic Center Music Hall and Convention Center, to name a few. Projects did not begin until enough taxes had been collected to pay for the project. With its success and a blueprint in hand, leaders sought to address issues in the Oklahoma City Public Schools and launched MAPS for Kids, which passed for \$514 million in 2001. That was coupled with a \$180 million Oklahoma City Public Schools bond issue, and the total funding was used for facility improvements, technology, and transportation projects. In the end, the program will have built or renovated 70 buildings. In late 2009, with the success of two previous efforts, city, business, and community leaders went back to the taxpayers with an aggressive ask - \$777 million for eight new projects. They voted yes. The program includes funding for a new 70-acre downtown park, new convention center, modern transit, and more than 50 miles of biking and walking trails.

The MAPS program makes Oklahoma City an attractive place to live, work, raise a family, and start or grow a business. A study funded by the Greater Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce has shown that over time, the MAPS initiatives brought in more than \$5 billion in private and public investment to the region. Leaders say that MAPS has transformed more than just infrastructure. There is a change in attitude and strong desire to be in Oklahoma City, with graduates seeking jobs in the area and young families planting roots, and corporate location and expansion exploding over the last decade.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Best Practice: Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC)

Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) was created by business leadership in the community that saw the need to revitalize Cincinnati's downtown. 3CDC is funded by local corporations and serves as the developer, asset manager, and lender/fund manager of its projects, partnering with the City as needed. Funding is made possible through private sector contributions, management fees, and below-market developer fees. 3CDC operates two private investment funds – the Cincinnati New Markets Fund (CNMF) and the Cincinnati Equity Fund (CEF) – that are used for downtown redevelopment and economic development projects in distressed neighborhoods. 3CDC's four strategic goals are “to create great civic spaces, create high-density mixed-use development, preserve historic structures and streetscapes and build diverse mixed-income neighborhoods supported by local businesses.” The corporation takes a holistic approach to its development, including everything from homeless shelters to arts and cultural amenities. Since 2004, over \$843 million has been invested in redevelopment and new construction projects in downtown Cincinnati and Over-the-Rhine.

Best Practice: Holy Cross Samaritan Center

Holy Cross Samaritan Center in Detroit, Michigan is a large, multi-organization facility that provides a diverse mix of family health, employment, and community services in the impoverished neighborhood of east Detroit, where a shrinking industrial base has created systemic problems with homelessness, poverty, and unemployment. The Samaritan Center is a collaboration of 70 organizations in Michigan's largest one-stop service center, reaching over 7,000 individuals weekly. Boysville of Michigan and SER Metro-Detroit sponsor the program.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Best Practice: Roanoke, Virginia

The Roanoke Region in Virginia is rich with outdoor assets, from access to the Appalachian Trail to Smith Mountain Lake. These amenities are not taken for granted – in fact, thoughtful outdoor infrastructure investments continue to be made with community support. For example, a kayak launch site opened on the Roanoke River near downtown in October 2016. This \$80,000 investment was funded by a community crowdfunding campaign – all private donations, not tax dollars. Additional financial support and in-kind services came from dozens of local businesses. The campaign to develop the kayak launch was spearheaded by the Roanoke Outside Foundation, which is a nonprofit arm of the regional economic development entity, Roanoke Regional Partnership. The Roanoke Outside Foundation used a robust marketing campaign to reach out to community members through social media and local media coverage. Strong partnerships in support of the kayak launch were forged as well, including The City of Roanoke, Carilion Clinic, and The Bridges development (a mixed-use development located near the kayak launch). Roanoke City Parks and Recreation and the city’s storm water division now manage the kayak launch, which can be used by community members at no cost.

Best Practice: Spartanburg Main Street Challenge

The Spartanburg Main Street Challenge is an initiative spearheaded by the Economic Development Department of the City of Spartanburg, SC to revitalize their downtown. Beginning in 2013, the initiative offered a \$12,000 grand prize to three winners who pitched a business plan that would diversify the business mix in Spartanburg’s downtown. In this entrepreneurial contest, contestants could submit a plan for a new or expanding business on the condition that if they won they would sign a 3 year lease in a retail space downtown, open by November 1, 2013, and operate during regular business hours. After the first successful year, the Spartanburg Economic Development continued the Main Street Challenge, and by the end of 2015 levels of investment and activity in downtown were at an all time high. Winners of the Main Street Challenge include a maternity specialty store, pet boutique, micro-distillery, hiking and backpacking store, and juice bar. The program proved so successful that nearby town Gaffey created its own Main Street Challenge for their downtown, and Spartanburg is running out of downtown real estate to offer winners.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

Best Practice: Austin Conversation Corps

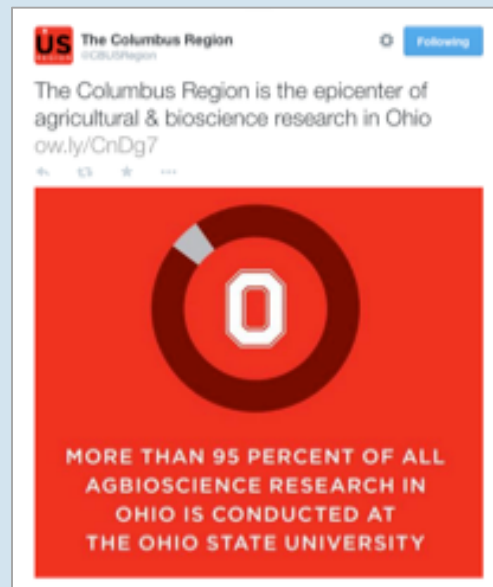
Conversation Corps was developed as a platform to host civic dialogue throughout the Austin region and provide a voice to community members on key public issues. The program was developed through a partnership between the City of Austin, Capital Metro and the Austin Independent Schools District. A topic is selected for each month by partner organizations and has included everything from tourism to traffic. Conversations are held in multiple locations around the Austin metro including coffee shops, schools, houses of worship, and more. Volunteers are trained to facilitate the conversations, which involves structured dialogue that allows everyone to have a chance to speak and respond to what others say. Feedback is collected and shared with the decision-makers for each issue. Participants are given resources to stay informed on the issue and how their input influenced decisions. Information on each topic as well as action taken based on feedback is recorded on the Conversation Corps website: www.conversationcorps.org.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

Best Practice: The Columbus Region

The Columbus Region utilizes a multi-faceted marketing strategy to educate the general public, business decision makers, and location consultants about why the Columbus Region is an ideal business location. They employ a robust digital presence that is built around a recently re-launched website. They effectively integrate social media messages to target audiences like site selectors, industry sectors, and prospective talent. For brand reinforcement and to increase awareness of the Columbus Region, imagery and messages are consistent across all channels.

Messages showcase assets, one of which is the region's people – a highly talented, educated, and diverse workforce. Fact sheets and infographics are used to summarize and succinctly state what makes the Columbus Region a great place to locate a business, work, and live. The infographics are deployed in social media use, again reinforcing key takeaways about the region.




MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

Best Practice: JAXUSA Partnership

During the development of the Innovate Northeast Florida economic development strategy, it became clear that JAXUSA needed to build awareness of all the positive things happening in the region. A strong foundation of community pride and awareness would strengthen the authenticity of JAXUSA's brand and aid in both internal and external marketing efforts. JAXUSA needed to share success stories throughout its marketing campaign, showing how thousands of individual stories together create one undeniably great region. Since implementation, JAXUSA has created a consistent brand used across all marketing tools, including a robust online presence. It began with a successful storytelling campaign called JAXBoldest in 2012. JAXBoldest solicited positive stories of entrepreneurship and civic involvement in video format and invited residents to vote on their favorites. Winners were announced at the roll out event for the regional strategy. JAXUSA also launched the grassroots #ilovejax social media campaign to build community pride. In 2013, JAXUSA invested in a website re-design, presentations, photography, and videos that continue to reinforce its brand and incorporates #ilovejax throughout.

Results for #ilovejax

Top / All / People you follow

- Mayor Alvin Brown** @MayorAlvinBrown · 5m
Check out these photos from the London trip with the @Jaguars and @JaxChamber [ow.ly/qfBKU](#) #JAXinUK #ilovejax
Expand
- jaxevents** @jaxevents · 3h
Do you have your tickets yet for Pandora's Unforgettable Holiday Moments on Ice? Click here if you don't: [ow.ly/qfKTM](#) #ilovejax
Expand
- JAX2025** @JAX2025 · 4h
Next Quarterly Update is tomorrow! Join us for lunch at WJCT- last min. registration now: [ow.ly/qfG0n](#) #JAX2025 #ilovejax
Followed by Sommer Leach and 1 other
Expand
- Jax Jazz Festival** @JaxJazzFest · Apr 3
.@LalahHathaway is the only artist to win a Best R&B Album Grammy for a live album! She'll be at #JaxJazzFest on Sunday, May 26th! #LoveJax


City of Jacksonville @CityofJax · Mar 30
With over 400 parks in the city, which park is YOUR park? #ilovejax #onlyinjax



4 6 15

Organizing for Implementation



Defining Roles

Successful economic development initiatives involve collaboration across many community organizations. Amarillo EDC, City, CoC, CVC, Center City, WTEC, educational institutions, the private sector, and others each serve an important role. Having clearly defined roles and ensuring all organizations are working towards a shared vision is critical for success. On the following pages, we define economic development roles for each of these organizations.

Amarillo Economic Development Corporation

Amarillo EDC has a direct role in economic development activities by leading business recruitment and business retention and expansion activities. It serves as the main point of contact for businesses interested in locating to or expanding within Amarillo. Amarillo EDC also supports entrepreneurial activities by funding the Amarillo EnterPrize Challenge and directing entrepreneurs and small business owners to supporting resources throughout the community.

Economic development organizations across the country having been taking on a more holistic role to address the many facets of their community that affects their ability to attract, retain, and expand business, including workforce development, infrastructure improvements, and quality of life. Amarillo EDC's roles include:

- Promoting Amarillo as a premier location for businesses and talent
- Investing in marketing and communications tools to promote Amarillo
- Building relationships with primary employers and business influencers like site consultants and real estate professionals
- Leading local business retention and expansion (BR&E) initiatives, surveying and meeting with local businesses to understand and respond to their needs
- Serving as Amarillo's point of contact for Team Texas, the Governor's office and other entities generating leads for the region and state
- Providing confidential project management assistance to expanding and relocating businesses
- Providing and managing incentives that entice targeted businesses to grow in Amarillo, evaluating eligibility, facilitating incentive negotiations, and monitoring compliance and return on investment
- Working closely with local partners like the City, CoC, and others to ensure Amarillo is highly competitive and responsive to businesses' needs

Defining Roles

- Supporting investments in projects that help create and retain primary jobs in Amarillo (e.g., land, buildings, equipment, and targeted infrastructure)
- Supporting investments in projects that enhance Amarillo's quality of life, making it a more desirable location for primary employers and their employees

City of Amarillo

The City's primary economic development responsibility is to ensure that the community is a competitive location for businesses and talent. This involves offering predictable, efficient processes for growing businesses; adopting competitive business policies; encouraging economic development through productive relationships with other organizations; and providing infrastructure and quality of life amenities that make the community a desirable place. Other City roles include:

- Shepherding companies and prospects through City processes and policies
- Promoting Amarillo as a premier location for businesses and talent
- Managing City incentives, evaluating eligibility, facilitating incentive negotiations, and monitoring compliance and return on investment
- Working with local partners on projects that will make Amarillo more appealing to businesses and talent
- Informing elected officials of economic development activities and goals
- Facilitating community dialogue to build positive relationships with businesses and citizens
- Directing information requests, leads, and other economic development requests to Amarillo EDC
- Working closely with local partners like the Amarillo EDC, CoC, and others to ensure the Amarillo is highly competitive and responsive to businesses' needs

Defining Roles

Amarillo Chamber of Commerce

The CoC's mission is to “enhance business and industry growth while preserving a high quality of life.” As the lead organization responsible for networking and promoting Amarillo's businesses, the CoC serves a critical economic development function. In addition, the CoC's roles should include:

- Networking and promoting Amarillo's businesses
- Maintaining current information about the community
- Sharing information about the community with residents, newcomers, and visitors
- Staying alert to local businesses' needs and working with community partners to address their challenges
- Initiating and being involved in special and seasonal community events
- Participating in Amarillo EDC's business retention and expansion activities
- Working closely with local partners like the Amarillo EDC, City, and others to ensure the Amarillo is highly competitive and responsive to businesses' needs

Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council

The CVC's main role is to promote tourism and recruit conferences and other events to take place in Amarillo. This complements economic development activities, as it helps to promote the quality of life amenities in the region. The CVC's role includes:

- Recruiting conferences and events to Amarillo, including those in target industries
- Marketing Amarillo's tourism and quality of life amenities
- Supporting investments in projects that enhance Amarillo's quality of life, making it a more desirable location for visitors

Defining Roles

Center City of Amarillo

Center City’s mission is to “bring people to downtown Amarillo through organization, events, promotion, design and facilitation of economic restructuring.” Downtown Amarillo is a key asset for both business and talent alike, providing a vibrant location for businesses while enhancing quality of life amenities with offerings such as restaurants, entertainment, community events, and more. Center City’s initiative to receive a cultural district designation further supports Amarillo’s marketing and branding efforts. Center City’s role includes:

- Supporting revitalization efforts in downtown Amarillo
- Distributing façade grants to downtown businesses
- Promoting downtown Amarillo as a cultural destination as well as a desirable location to live and work

WT Enterprise Center

The mission of the WTEC is to “apply the principles of business incubation as a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurial development in order to foster economic growth for Amarillo and the Texas Panhandle region.” This organization plays a key role in supporting startups in Amarillo and fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. WT Enterprise Center’s role includes:

- Providing space for entrepreneurs that allows them to lower overhead cost and reduce risk
- Developing coaching and training programs that help entrepreneurs take their business to the next level
- Supporting Amarillo’s overall culture of innovation and entrepreneurship
- Working closely with local partners like the Amarillo EDC, City of Amarillo, Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, and others to ensure Amarillo is highly competitive and responsive to entrepreneur and small business needs

Defining Roles

Educational Institutions

Educational institutions in Amarillo, including all four regional ISDs, AC, TTUHSC, and WTAMU, play an important role to ensure curriculum and training programs are aligned with local business needs. Each education provider should continue to actively communicate with local businesses and the Amarillo EDC in order to continuously adapt to changing skills needed by employers.

Private Sector

Local businesses in Amarillo also play an important role in economic development. The private sector must actively communicate its needs to Amarillo EDC and participate in its business retention and expansion program. The private sector should also actively support investments that enhance the community's quality of life as well as infrastructure investments that help create and retain primary jobs in Amarillo.

Metrics of Success

The following metrics provide guidance for monitoring the success of Align Amarillo. We highly recommend that metrics are tracked and published on the www.AlignAmarillo.com website on a regular basis.

Activity Metrics track output to ensure the strategic plan is being executed and that goals are being addressed. Regularly review the implementation timelines provided at the end of this document and monitor the percent complete of each item. At the end of each year, identify tactics that were not completed on-time (or never started). Determine whether those tactics should be added to the next year's activities or dynamics have shifted and the tactic is no longer applicable.

Prosperity Metrics track outcomes and how effective Amarillo is at progressing toward its goals. We recommend tracking a handful of metrics for each goal:

Economic Position

- Jobs created / retained
- Ratio of job growth to population growth
- Investment by target industry companies

Talent

- Educational attainment
- Household / per capita incomes
- Population growth
- Population age / diversity

Infrastructure

- Available commercial / industrial real estate
- Utility availability / pricing
- Percent of residents with internet access

Metrics of Success

Innovation

- Number of new businesses with fewer than 10 employees
- Patent activity
- Research expenditures
- Venture and angel capital investment made through WTEC
- Lending activity at Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation and other regional small business lenders

Quality of Life

- Percent mix of housing options (multifamily, single family, mixed use, executive)
- Homeowner and rental vacancy rates
- New home construction
- Retail sales tax revenues
- Poverty rates

Communication

- Number of visits to Amarillo EDC website & landing pages
- Average length of stay by visitors on Amarillo EDC website & landing pages
- Number of social media followers (Amarillo EDC & City)
- Frequency of campaign hashtag (#) mentions
- Number of Amarillo media mentions
- Number of qualified leads generated by targeted marketing campaigns

Implementation Tables

Please see Appendix I – Implementation Tables.

These spreadsheets provide all recommendations in table format for easy tracking by year and organization.

Incentive Analysis & Recommendations



Introduction

Economic development incentives include a wide range of tools intended to stimulate investment and job creation in a community. These tools generally will not make a bad deal good, but instead are intended to help bridge gaps for individuals and businesses – helping businesses secure low-cost financing to purchase new equipment, providing training for new technologies, or encouraging investment in distressed areas, for example.

Incentives are not just for recruiting new businesses to a community. They also offer assistance to existing businesses and new startups companies. Incentives come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but they are usually focused on creating primary jobs – those that produce goods and services that are exported outside a community – helping bring outside dollars in and increasing local wealth. These jobs have significant multiplier impacts. Incentives can also be used to help a community achieve its strategic goals, such as encouraging development in a specific geography, building a new industry cluster, or addressing poverty.

It is important for a community to understand all the tools in its tool box and which goals they help address. ***These tools are tactical and should not be confused with the regular budgetary processes that city, county, state, and other government bodies utilize to plan, develop, and maintain their general operations.***

Incentive Analysis & Recommendations

This section of the strategy provides a review of incentive tools currently available to businesses in Amarillo through the City, Amarillo EDC, State of Texas, and other organizations. These tools include a range of programs designed to retain, attract, and expand primary jobs and address strategic goals in Amarillo. Many of these programs are administered through cooperation between multiple organizations. This analysis concludes with a table that highlights how these incentive programs help address the Align Amarillo strategic goals.

In recent years, there has been significant debate in Amarillo regarding whether the city should be utilizing a Type A or Type B economic development sales tax. To conclude this section, the consulting team provides a comparison of the Type A and Type B options and analysis of how they fit into the overall tool box of programs available in the community.

This analysis concludes with a recommendation that Amarillo continue to utilize the Type A sales tax.

City of Amarillo Tools

Property Tax Abatement

Property tax abatements can be offered by cities, counties, and special districts in accordance with tax abatement agreements. Property tax abatements are not available from school districts. In addition to real property, tax abatement agreements may also abate all or part of the value of tangible personal property (e.g. inventory or supplies).

Chapter 380 Agreements

Chapter 380 of the Local Government Code authorizes municipalities to offer incentives designed to promote economic development. Specifically, it provides for offering loans and grants of city funds or services at little or no cost to promote state and local economic development and to stimulate business and commercial activity. In order to provide a grant or loan, Amarillo must establish a program to implement the incentives. Before proceeding, Amarillo must review their city charters or local policies that may restrict its ability provide a loan or grant.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone

The TIRZ is a funding tool, among others, for downtown redevelopment. The TIRZ is not an additional tax, but directs any increase in tax revenue from the base year of 2008 that result from increases in property values to be utilized for downtown development. The TIRZ primarily focuses on investment in public infrastructure.

Bonding Capacity

The City also has the capacity to issue bonds with voter approval. Municipal bonds are debt securities issued by the City to pay for specific projects that will serve the community. Bonds are paid back through property taxes collected by the City and therefore require voter approval.

Enterprise Zone Program

The Enterprise Zone (EZ) Program is designed to attract new industry and to encourage the expansion of existing businesses in Amarillo and a portion of its ETJ. The EZ program is an essential strategy in Amarillo's efforts to strengthen and diversify the local economy. The program benefits small businesses and large industry with a primary emphasis on manufacturing, commercial, wholesale, warehousing, and distribution activities. The primary goal of the program is to revitalize economically distressed areas by creating new job opportunities for residents that are under skilled, inexperienced, disadvantaged, or displaced, including a commitment to developing or participating in job training or educational programs for economically-disadvantaged persons.

The City is responsible for administering the program and monitoring local program effectiveness under the guidance of the Texas Department of Economic Development. Tax abatements, local sales tax refunds, local development fee rebates, and special transportation services can be used to recruit new business and industry that will invest in the distressed area and provide employment opportunities. State incentives may include a refund of certain state sales and use taxes and franchise tax reduction for enterprise projects, have a preference for contracting with businesses in zones, and priority status for state-administered programs and funds.

Amarillo EDC Tools

Type A Sales Tax Fund

The Amarillo EDC works proactively to invest in the future and growth of Amarillo. Amarillo offers many competitive advantages such as location, workforce and available infrastructure, but when utilized with growing companies with solid business foundations, incentives can be the key to the successful economic growth of a city and the region. The Amarillo EDC and local governing entities offer local incentives to companies on a project-by-project basis. Final funding commitments are evaluated by criteria including such as total jobs created, initial capital investment, and annual local expenditures. Assistance might include low interest loans or local development and start-up grants for investments in property development or infrastructure improvement.

Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation Loans

Amarillo's non-profit development company, certified by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), serves as a bridge between local lenders and companies that typically don't meet the requirements for traditional financing. Over the past 30+ years, the Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation (TPRDC) has created and / or retained more than 1,700 jobs in the Amarillo area and guaranteed 155 loans worth \$65 million to small businesses in Potter and Randall counties. Typical TPRDC funding projects through the Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program entails a bank loan secured by a first lien covering 50% of a project's cost. Then the TPRDC covers up to the remaining 40 percent of the cost, and the borrower injects approximately 10%. Other advantages include enhanced cash flow, low down payment, long-term financing at low, fixed interest rate, and fixed monthly payments.

Amarillo EnterPrize Challenge

The Amarillo EnterPrize Challenge is a program administered by WTEC. Enterprize Challenge is funded by the Amarillo EDC and is designed to help entrepreneurs expand an existing business or launch a new business. Participants gain a better understanding of how to develop and follow a realistic business plan, and qualifying entrants can request a share of \$500,000 in capital funding grants from the Amarillo EDC. WTEC also manages a City of Amarillo micro-loan program.

Other Local Organization Tools

Property Tax Value Limitation – Independent School Districts

The Texas Economic Development Act provides an ten-year limitation on the taxable value of the property extended to a taxpayer who agrees to build or install property and create jobs. The value limitation applies to *the local school district maintenance and operations tax* (M&O) portion of the property tax and varies by school district. To participate, the company must apply to the effective school district. Value Limitation Tax Credits are administered through the Comptroller of Public Accounts.

Triple Freeport Exemption

A freeport exemption is a property tax exemption administered through the Comptroller of Public Accounts. A community may utilize the freeport exemption for various types of goods that are detained in Texas for a short period of time, including goods, wares, merchandise, ores, and certain aircraft and aircraft parts. Freeport property qualifies for an exemption from ad valorem taxation only if it has been detained in the state for 175 days or less for the purpose of assembly, storage, manufacturing, processing, or fabricating. For certain aircraft parts, a community, by official action, may extend the deadline to 730 days.

Chapter 381 Agreements

Similar to Chapter 380 Agreements for municipalities, Chapter 381 of the Local Government Code allows counties, including Potter and Randall Counties, to provide incentives encouraging developers to build in their jurisdictions. A county may administer and develop a program to make loans and grants of public money to promote state or local economic development and to stimulate, encourage, and develop business location and commercial activity in their county. The county also may develop and administer a program for entering into a tax abatement agreement, enabling counties to negotiate directly with developers and businesses.

Enterprise Zone

Potter County, Randall County and AC may offer tax incentives for the portion of the zone in their jurisdictions. The counties may abate taxes on real property improvements over a period of ten years. In the ETJ, the counties can submit a waiver of subdivision plat filing fees. Other forms of assistance include development fee exemptions rebate of water and sewage frontage, and tap fees.

Center City Façade Grants

Center City in partnership with the City administers a façade grant program. Façade Grants are matching grants of up to \$20,000 that improve the appearance of downtown buildings. The City of Amarillo provides \$60,000 in façade grant monies to Center City. A volunteer committee that includes architects, designers and community leaders review each application to determine which projects will receive the funds. Property eligible for façade grants must be within certain city boundaries.

Panhandle Micro-Loan Program

The Panhandle Micro-Loan Program provides small businesses with increased access to capital in the Panhandle. Activities to be financed may include, but are not limited to acquisition or expansion of an existing business, purchase & development of land and buildings, remodeling and improvements, purchase of equipment, machinery, or vehicles, and Startup costs, working capital or gap financing.

State of Texas Tools

New Market Tax Credit

The New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) Program is for investors interested in supporting opportunities in low-income communities, and encourages investments that create jobs and spur additional economic development. NMTC investments have financed a wide variety of operating businesses and real estate projects, including manufacturers, health care and child care providers, charter schools, supermarkets and alternative energy companies. Through NMTC, individual and corporate investors receive a federal tax credit in return for making equity investments in specialized Community Development Entities, like TxCDC. These investment funds are then coupled with a loan from a commercial lender and equity to provide financial support to developers who have projects in communities where the poverty rate is at least 20 percent and a most families have a low median income.

Texas Enterprise Fund

The Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) is a cash grant used as a financial incentive tool for projects that offer significant projected job creation and capital investment where a single Texas site is competing with another viable out-of-state option. Since its inception in 2004, the TEF has awarded over 140 grants totaling nearly \$600 million across a wide variety of industries and projects committed to creating more than 80,000 jobs and investing more than \$27 billion (as of May 31, 2017).

Texas Skills Development Fund

The Skills Development Fund provides local customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers to increase skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. The Texas Workforce Commission funds for the program. Funds are best used when there is collaboration among businesses, public community and technical colleges, Workforce Development Boards and economic development partners.

The Governor's University Research Initiative

The Governor's University Research Initiative (GURI) grant program was enacted in 2015 with a goal to bring the best and brightest distinguished researchers in the world to Texas. The GURI grant program is a matching grant program that assists eligible institutions of higher education in recruiting distinguished researchers. The program is operated within the Office of the Governor in the Economic Development and Tourism Division.

Texas Capital Fund Infrastructure / Real Estate Programs

The Texas Capital Fund Infrastructure / Real Estate Programs are economic development tools designed to provide financial resources to non-entitlement communities. Funds can be utilized for public infrastructure needed to assist a business that commits to create and/or retain permanent jobs, primarily for low - moderate income persons.

State of Texas Tools

Skills for Small Business Program

Skills for Small Business finances the design and implementation of customized job training programs for newly hired employees of small businesses. Administered by the Texas Workforce Commission, the Skills for Small Business program supports businesses with fewer than 100 employees, emphasizes training for new workers, and helps upgrade the skills of incumbent workers. Through this program, up to \$2 million from the Skills Development Fund is dedicated to more than 433,000 small employers.

The Self Sufficiency Fund

The Self Sufficiency Fund provides community and technical colleges access to training dollars to support high-quality customized training projects statewide. Colleges strengthen their position as economic development assets, businesses gain a more highly trained workforce, workers upgrade their skills, and the Texas economy grows more competitive. The Self-Sufficiency Fund supports training primarily for low-income individuals and those receiving public assistance achieve self-sufficiency and independence.

Product Development and Small Business Incubator Fund

The Product Development and Small Business Incubator Fund (PDSBI) is a revolving loan program financed through original bond issuances that aids in the development, production and commercialization of new or improved products and fosters and stimulate small business in Texas. Loan proceeds can be used for a broad range of capital and operating expenditures including property, plant, and equipment which can be amortized over the life of the asset.

The Capital Access Program

The Capital Access Program was established to increase the availability of financing for businesses and nonprofit organizations that face barriers in accessing capital or fall outside the guidelines of conventional lending. Use of proceeds may include working capital or the purchase, construction, or lease of capital assets, including buildings and equipment.

Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

The new state historic tax credit offers applicants a credit of up to 25% of eligible rehabilitation costs for buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, and Texas State Antiquities Landmarks registries. The program is administered jointly by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in cooperation with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program also offers a 20% tax credit for rehabilitation of historic buildings.

PACE Program

The PACE program allows owners of commercial and industrial properties to obtain low-cost, long-term loans for water conservation, energy-efficiency improvement, and distributed generation retrofits. The PACE statute authorizes municipalities and counties in Texas to work with private lenders and property owners to finance qualified improvements using voluntary contractual assessments.

Federal Tools

Foreign Trade Zone 252

Foreign-trade zones (FTZs) are basically ‘free-trade zones.’ Within FTZs, company goods can be unloaded, manufactured, reassembled, tested, sampled, processed, repackaged, and re-exported without going through U.S. customs authorities. FTZs promote the international competitiveness because Zone activities primarily involve US operations combining foreign inputs with significant US inputs. Zones also facilitate and expedite international trade, retain and create jobs, and encourage investment, manufacturing, and logistics within the United States. FTZ have major financial benefits and lead to streamlined logistics for companies importing and/or exporting internationally.

Health Resources and Services Administration – Rural Health Grants

The Health Resources and Services Administration provides rural health grants to fund rural hospitals, health centers, and local clinics for underserved people.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development supports child care facilities near or within public housing.

National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts offers a number of grants for art projects. Funding is specifically for projects, which can consist of one or more specific events or activities. Projects can be new or existing and range in size. Their programs include:

- *Art Works* –To support the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts.
- *Challenge America* – To support projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations.
- *Our Town* – Organizations may apply for creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core. Our Town offers support for projects in two areas:
 - Arts Engagement, Cultural Planning, and Design Projects that represent the distinct character and quality of their communities. Projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization.
 - Projects that Build Knowledge About Creative Placemaking. These projects are available to arts and design service organizations, and industry or university organizations that provide technical assistance to those doing place-based work.

National Park Service - National Heritage Areas Programs

National Heritage Areas are individually authorized by Congress and receive funding, technical assistance, and management support from the National Park Service. Heritage area designation provides a vehicle for promoting local economic and cultural vitality by capitalizing on an area’s heritage assets, particularly through heritage tourism.

Federal Tools

National Science Foundation Small Business Grants

The National Science Foundation Small Business Grants program provide funds for early-stage research and development at small businesses. This research should be based on transformational technology with high technical risk and potential for significant societal or commercial impact.

Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program

The Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is dedicated to preserving the special places and stories Route 66. The program collaborates with private, nonprofit, and government partners to identify, prioritize, and address priority preservation needs of Route 66. The program provides cost-share grants to help preserve the most significant and representative historic sites dating to the route's period of significance (1926-1985). The program also assists preservation planning, research, and educational initiatives, and serves as a clearinghouse for preservation information and technical assistance.

US Department of Health and Human Services

The Office of Child Care has several funding programs for child care facilities.

US Department of Energy Grants

The US Department of Energy supports a number of grant, loan, and financing programs that support businesses. These programs are not limited to energy-related projects and include a range of small business and other support programs.

US Economic Development Administration Grants

The US Economic Development Administration (EDA) accepts applications from rural and urban areas to provide investments that support construction, non-construction, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects under EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. Grants under these programs are designed to leverage existing regional assets and support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches.

Economic Development Administration – Regional Innovation Strategies Grants

In 2015, the EDA launched a \$10 million funding opportunity within their Regional Innovation Strategies Program. Under this program, communities can apply for funding through two programs:

- i6 Challenge (\$8 million) – This is a national competition for an award of up to \$2.5 million to projects that provide services to rural areas. They are seeking projects that create outreach plans to populations and communities that are traditionally underrepresented in innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Seed Funding Support Grants (\$2 million) – These grants provide funding for technical assistance to support feasibility, planning, formation, and launch of cluster-specific seed capital funds. Funds must include job creation in their consideration and outreach to underrepresented communities and populations.

Federal Tools

US Department of Commerce – Market Developer Cooperator Program – International Trade Administration

This program is designed to build partnerships by providing federal assistance to organizations involved in export promotion. The program can support tourism initiatives to promote international visitors in communities outside of federal lands.

US Small Business Administration

The Small Business Administration provides small business financing options, technical assistance, and child care resource information.

US Department of Agriculture – Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial, or business undertakings.

US Department of Agriculture - Resource Conservation and Development Program

This program provides technical and limited financial assistance to Resource Conservation & Development Councils with development projects, including heritage tourism and related business development.

US Department of Agriculture – Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

This program provides loans and grants to Microenterprise Development Organizations to

- Provide microloans to microenterprise startups and growth through a Rural Microloan Revolving Fund
- Provide Training and technical Assistance to microloan borrowers and micro entrepreneurs

US Department of Agriculture – Rural Development Grants

Community Programs provides grants to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 population.

Incentive Tool Box

Local Organizations

Organization	Incentive Tool	Strategic Goal Area Supported					Target Industry Supported				
		Talent	Infrastructure	Innovation	Quality of Life	Communication	Advanced Manufacturing	Agriculture & Life Sciences	Aviation & Logistics	Professional & Information Services	Destination Economy
City of Amarillo	Property Tax Abatement						X	X	X	X	
	Chapter 380 Agreements				X						X
	Center City TIRZ				X					X	X
	Center City Façade Grants				X						X
	Bonding Capacity		X		X						
	Enterprise Zone Program	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
	Freeport Exemption						X	X	X		
Amarillo EDC	Financial Assistance through 4A Sales Tax Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
	Enterprize Challenge			X			X	X	X	X	
Potter & Randall Counties	Property Tax Abatement						X	X	X	X	
	Enterprise Zone Program	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
	Chapter 381 Agreements				X						X
	Freeport Exemption						X	X	X		
Amarillo ISD	Property Tax Abatement						X	X	X	X	
	Freeport Exemption						X	X	X		
Panhandle Regional Planning Commission	Panhandle Micro-Loan Program			X	X		X	X	X	X	X

Incentive Tool Box

State & Federal

Organization	Incentive Tool	Strategic Goal Area Supported					Target Industry Supported				
		Talent	Infrastructure	Innovation	Quality of Life	Communication	Advanced Manufacturing	Agriculture & Life Sciences	Aviation & Logistics	Professional & Information Services	Destination Economy
State of Texas	New Market Tax Credit	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	
	Texas Enterprise Fund					X	X	X	X	X	
	Texas Skills Development Fund	X					X	X	X	X	
	The Governor's University Research Initiative			X							
	Texas Capital Fund Infrastructure / Real Estate Programs		X								
	Skills for Small Business Program	X		X			X	X	X	X	
	The Self Sufficiency Fund	X					X	X	X	X	
	Texas Product Development & Small Business Incubator Fund			X							
	The Capital Access Program		X	X							
	Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program		X		X						X
	PACE Program		X		X						
Enterprise Zone Program	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	
Freeport Exemption						X	X	X			
Federal Government	Foreign Trade Zone 252					X	X	X	X		
	HRSA Rural Health Grants				X			X			
	HUD Childcare Facilities Program	X			X						
	National Endowment for the Arts				X						X
	NPS - National Heritage Areas Programs										X
	NSF - Small Business Grants			X							
	Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program		X								X
	US Dept. of Health & Human Svcs.	X									
	US DOE Grants		X								
	US Economic Development Administration Grants		X								
	US Economic Development Administration Regional Innovation Strategies Grants		X								
	US ITA - Market Developer Cooperator Program						X	X	X		X
	US Small Business Administration	X	X								
	USDA - Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program	X									
	USDA - Resource Conservation & Development Program										X
USDA - Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program			X								
USDA - Rural Development Grants	X										

Comparison of Type A and Type B

What is Type A and Type B?

In 1979, the Texas State Legislature passed the Development Corporation Act which allows cities to impose a sales tax to fund economic development activities pursuant to specific regulations and falling under two designations – Section 4A or Section 4B of the code. According to the Texas Comptroller, “Sales tax generated by both Type A and Type B is primarily intended to promote manufacturing and industrial development; Type B corporation may fund some quality of life projects, and efforts to retain primary jobs.” The Type A sales tax can also be used for specific quality of life projects through voter approval. **It is important to note that neither the Type A or Type B sales tax is intended to replace traditional municipal funding mechanisms.**

A sales tax election is required to adopt either type of sales tax, and if adopted, in combination with other city taxes – the rate cannot exceed the 2% limit on local sales taxes. If adopted and fitting within their sales tax limit, cities can have either a Type A sales tax, Type B sales tax, or both. The use of sales tax income generated by Type A and Type B taxes is restricted to certain economic development activities. If local voters approve a Type A or Type B sales tax, they must create a corporation to administer the funds generated. Guidelines for these corporations are established by Texas state law, and the corporation’s board of directors is appointed by the local city council. Currently, 101 cities have adopted Type A taxes, 367 have adopted Type B taxes, and 118 cities have adopted both Type A and Type B taxes.

In 1989, Amarillo voters approved one of the first Type A sales taxes in the state and created the Amarillo EDC to administer this tax. Since then, the Type A sales tax funds have been used to create and retain thousands of jobs and stimulate significant investment in Amarillo. According to a 2014 study by the Perryman Group, the annual economic benefits provided by companies assisted by the Amarillo EDC include \$5.5 billion in gross regional product and 54,141 permanent jobs – representing approximately one in three local jobs.

Comparison of Type A and Type B

	Type A	Type B
<p>Key Features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County population must be under 500,000 • Allows for investments in land, buildings, equipment, facilities, expenditures, infrastructure, and improvements that help retain or create primary jobs related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing or industrial facilities • Research & development facilities • Military facilities • Recycling facilities • Distribution & warehousing facilities • Primary job training facilities • Corporate headquarters • Maintenance & operations of projects • Approved projects that do NOT require primary jobs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job training classes & career centers • Targeted infrastructure projects for new or expanded businesses – limited to streets, rail spurs, water & sewer, electric & gas, drainage, and other site improvements • General aviation business service airports • Port-related facilities • Commuter rail, light rail, or motor buses • Under special conditions, a Type A revenues can be used to fund a Type B project with : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public notice of the proposed project • Public hearing • Special election for voter approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Texas cities are eligible by population • Allows for investments in land, buildings, equipment, facilities, expenditures, infrastructure, and improvements that help retain or create primary jobs related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing or industrial facilities • Research & development facilities • Military facilities • Recycling facilities • Distribution & warehousing facilities • Primary job training facilities • Corporate headquarters • Maintenance & operations of projects • Transportation facilities • Sewage or solid waste disposal facilities • Water facilities • Public safety facilities • Streets and roads • Drainage improvements • Demolition of existing structures • Improvements or facilities that create or retain primary jobs • Approved projects that do NOT require primary jobs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job training classes & career centers • Targeted infrastructure projects for new or expanded businesses – limited to streets, rail spurs, water & sewer, electric & gas, drainage, and other site improvements • Commuter rail, light rail, or motor buses • Professional & amateur sports and athletic facilities • Entertainment, tourist, and convention facilities • Public parks and related open-space improvements • Affordable housing • Water supply facilities & water conservation • Airport facilities

Comparison of Type A and Type B – Continued...

	Type A	Type B
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved through a special sales tax election – approved through city ordinance or voter petition with 20% of recent local voters • Tax rate can be adjusted through special election • Sales tax is effective until repealed by an election • Board of directors appointed by city council • Minimum five members not to exceed six years • Qualifications not stipulated • Meetings must occur within city limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved through a special sales tax election – approved through city ordinance or voter petition with 20% of recent local voters • Tax rate can be adjusted through special election • Sales tax is effective until repealed by an election • Board of directors appointed by city council • Seven directors • Three of seven must not be city council members or city employees • All directors serve two-year terms • Directors must be city residents • Meetings must occur within city limits
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Type A sales tax is strictly for primary job creation – which creates a focused mission for the administering corporation and always results in job creation • Fewer eligible projects often means greater investment in each project • Type A funds can still be used for Type B projects with voter approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Type B sales tax is available to all cities in Texas, regardless of size • The Type B sales tax provides more flexibility in use – including certain quality of life projects
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Type A sales tax funds cannot be used for quality of life projects and overall has more restrictions • Cities in counties with populations over 500,000 cannot adopt Type A sales tax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type B projects do not always create jobs in the community • Because Type B funds can be used for more projects, communities can face greater controversy in determining which should receive funds • Reliance on sales taxes to fund operations and maintenance of certain city infrastructure and amenities can make cities more vulnerable to the effects of economic downturns • Projects funded through Type B often have greater administrative restrictions

Type A / Type B Recommendation

Based on the analysis of incentive tools available in Amarillo and strategic goals, the consulting team recommends that the city continue to utilize the Type A economic development sales tax option.

For nearly thirty years, the Amarillo EDC has been a high-performing organization and their focus on primary job creation has attracted, retained, and helped create new businesses throughout Amarillo. The EDC has a dedicated, professional staff with the expertise and experience to effectively work for the city's best interests.

Like all business ventures, there is inherent risk in economic development activities – some investments will work and others may not – but the Type A sales tax has allowed the Amarillo EDC to be innovative and strategic in their efforts to bolster the local economy. In order to protect business interests, certain aspects of the Amarillo EDC's operations must remain confidential, but recent efforts to increase transparency and communication with the entire Amarillo community create additional assurances that the Type A sales tax funds are being utilized for the public good. The Type A sales tax is also not limited only to primary job investments – it can also be used for job training, targeted infrastructure for new and expanding businesses, and specific transportation infrastructure and equipment.

While switching to a Type B sales tax may seem like an attractive option to fund a variety of projects that do not create primary jobs, this would not necessarily help Amarillo achieve its strategic goals. ***Amarillo's current incentive offerings provide effective tools that support each of the Align Amarillo strategic goals and are administered by organizations with the knowledge and skills to utilize them.***

Additionally, the Type B sales tax would potentially dilute the value of tax funds, create additional controversies in the community, and distract residents from the difficult but important conversations regarding necessary services, tax rates, and long-term municipal fiscal sustainability.

There are numerous projects desired by Amarillo residents that currently face funding gaps – from beautification efforts to an aquatics center. ***If these investments are important to the community, then they should consider funding them through bond elections and city tax revenues – to ensure sustainable long-term operational funding.*** The City currently has one of the lowest property tax rates in the state – which means there are fewer funds available to provide services and programs for the community. That is a choice made by the population, and if they desire more services, residents must recognize that paying for them means identifying sustainable funding sources. If these were funded by a Type B tax, it would raise questions about their long-term stability and the community's willingness to pay for the things it wants.

Type A / Type B Recommendation

A Type B tax system might seem like a wonderful potential new source of money for investments, but switching to Type B would only be diverting funds from necessary economic development investments. Every group in the city with a desired project would also see this fund as a potential pool from which to draw, creating division and competition within the community to dedicate these funds to different projects. This could quickly deplete Type B funding and create new frustrations within the community.

There is also the concern that by constructing quality of life and other projects via a Type B sales tax, the city could be left to address maintenance and operation costs without a well-developed, permanent revenue stream attached to each project. This could encourage development in a non-sustainable fashion by prioritizing projects that do not have the market demand or financial support necessary to make them truly viable.

Most importantly, if the Amarillo community does see a strategic, catalyst quality of life project that could benefit from sales tax funding – *the Type A system allows for special projects to be funded through a public hearing and special election*. This provides flexibility within the current Type A system but ensures that any projects are prioritized and fully vetted by the community – a very democratic and transparent use of the funds.

The on-going conversation about Type A and Type B among citizens of Amarillo highlights a need for clearer policies and procedures related to incentive awards throughout the community. **The consulting team recommends that each organization administering incentive tools in Amarillo develop and adopt a formal, transparent incentive policy to guide allocation of future awards.**

The following page outlines the qualities that mark a strong incentive policy.

Traits of a Strong Incentive Policy

Incentives can take numerous forms and provide a range of benefits to the recipients, but the most effective economic development incentive policies share some common traits.

Strong incentive policies generally:

- Follow transparent, public guidelines for project qualifications and award decisions
- Utilize evaluation standards consistently across projects
- Are tied to specific goals and criteria, including:
 - Whether the project is creating or preserving high-paying, primary jobs
 - Whether the project addresses goals in the economic development strategy
 - Whether the project supports target industry cluster development
 - Whether the project accelerates redevelopment in targeted geographies
 - Whether the project supports construction of infrastructure or real estate that would not be built without assistance
- Ensure economic impacts and benefits of incentivized projects exceed the costs
- Avoid front loading incentive awards
- Include programs that are available for local small businesses and existing business retention, not only relocation of new businesses
- Utilize claw-back measures in agreements in case recipients do not fulfill their contractual obligations

Along with adopting and following a general incentive policy, communities must also remain flexible with their incentive processes. All projects are unique, and many require creative tools to assist businesses or take advantage of catalyst opportunities. In general, consideration of incentives should begin as a conversation with the business or individual – seeking to understand their needs and identify whether any available incentive tools can assist them or close any gaps.