



Economic Development Action Plan

Azle. Absolutely.

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MDD Adopted August 9, 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

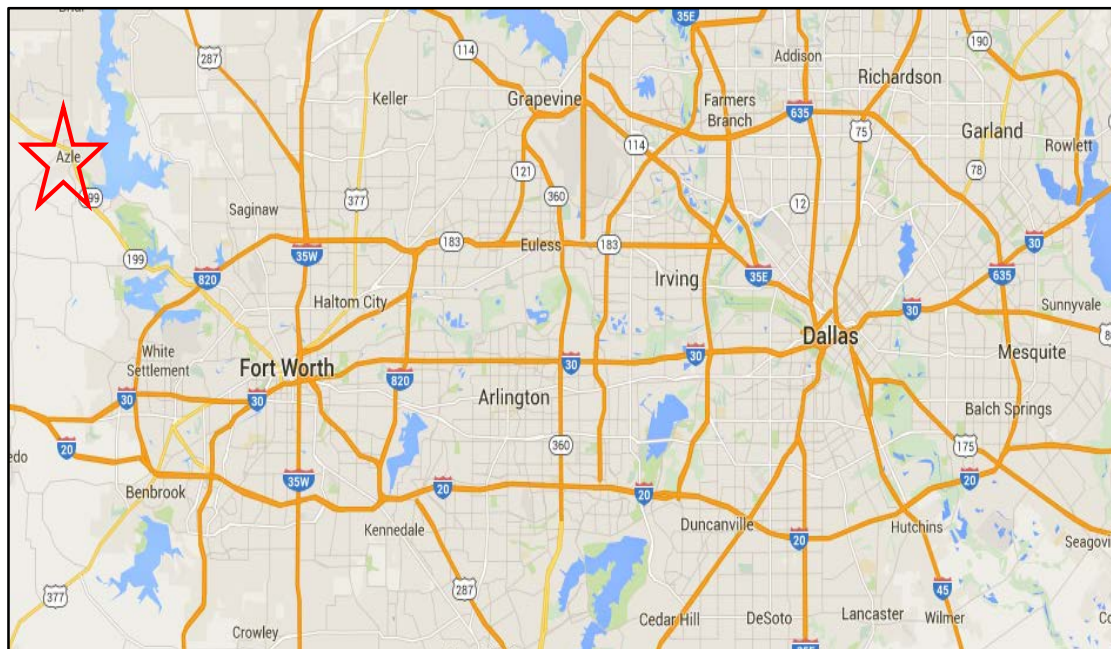
No community stands still. It either moves forward or stagnates and dies. The City of Azle is no exception. If the City is to succeed in reaching its full potential – in optimizing quality of life for its residents and financial health for its businesses – it must build upon the strategic planning done in the past and put “actions” to those planning ideas. In doing so, Azle will be ready to target industries and develop the complementary programs critical to achieving the City’s long-term economic development potential.

Like suburban communities throughout Texas, Azle is challenged because many of its economic development assets are the same as those offered in neighboring communities. As a result, Azle will need to create a competitive advantage and focus on those action items that will enhance the City’s ability to market those advantages in the most cost effective manner.

For Azle, creating a competitive advantage translates into providing business with a compelling rationale for investment. The first step was taken in early May at the MDD / Chamber Joint Meeting. From that meeting, actionable items were prioritized starting with identifying the properties / buildings with the greatest lease / sale potential and gathering the foundational data that all prospects will need to make a rational business decision to locate or expand in Azle.

Once the foundation is firmly in place, the City can begin the process of targeting businesses, industries and developers. The targeting of industries should be fluid. It will change over time, as the community attracts new businesses and residents that will eventually affect the labor force and economic profile. Time will change priorities, but regardless of priorities one need will remain constant: the need to maintain funding to support a dynamic economic development department and process for the City for Azle.

With a vision in place, funding secure, actions prioritized and systems established, Azle will succeed in realizing its full potential.

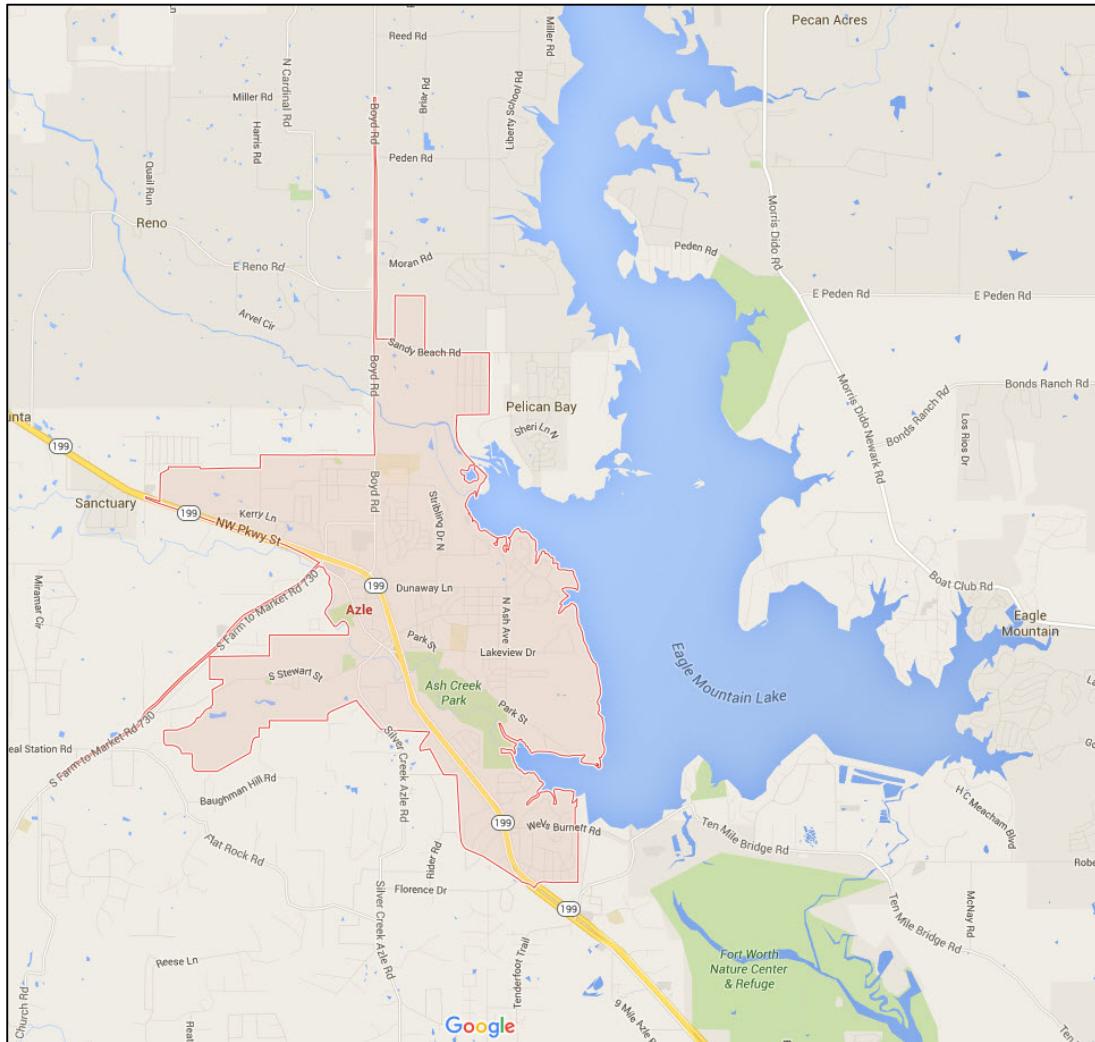


Azle is a Home Rule City of approximately 11,500 located on northwestern edge of the Dallas – Ft. Worth Metroplex in north Texas. The fact that it is a suburban community with a rural quality of life allows Azle to be able to claim as an asset, its proximity to those cities and the services and conveniences they offer, yet be disassociated from the negative aspects of those cities.

However, that proximity to urban centers creates challenges as well for Azle, as the Metroplex region presents numerous competitive site options for investment from an economic development standpoint. In fact, investors have, in the past, made the competitive comparisons and elected to invest elsewhere. To assume that the only reason for lack of investment is that prospective investors have been unaware of Azle as an option is naïve.

KEY DISTANCES

HIGHWAY 199	ADJACENT
FORT WORTH	16 MI
DALLAS	49 MI
AIRPORT: DALLAS – FT. WORTH INTERNATIONAL (DFW)	36 MI
AIRPORT: DALAS LOVE FIELD (DAL)	46 MI
LOOP 820	10 MI
INTERSTATE 20	19 MI
INTERSTATE 35W	17 MI



While Azle would probably not be found on anyone's list at the start of a site search, any company or consultant looking seriously at the Ft. Worth metropolitan area or the Greater Dallas – Ft. Worth Metroplex would in all likelihood have at least looked at Azle's statistics. To date, while efforts have been placed on planning, Azle has been regionally non-competitive based on its lack of a pro-active recruitment strategy and its absence of financial incentives. However, that is not to say that the City of Azle is without its merits or assets.

To the outside world, Azle is an unknown commodity. It needs to be more pro-active in getting the message out about the opportunities that await companies in comparison to other localities in the region.

ACTION PLAN

Since the late 1990's Azle has undertaken several strategic and community planning research initiatives. With the employment in March 2016 of a full-time economic development professional, the decision was made to bring in an outside perspective to help the City of Azle, the Azle Municipal Development District (MDD) Board and the Economic Development Committee of the Azle Chamber to assist in the formulation of an economic development action plan for the City and the MDD.

Unlike traditional strategic plans, which include strategies directed at broad categories, the work in Azle is focused on developing a vision, mission and actions centered on a number of specific initiatives over a period of time. This approach was undertaken in recognition of the fact that many strategic planning documents remain just that – documents. The City of Azle Economic Development Action Plan is designed to be THE plan of action for the City and the MDD to move the community forward as a TEAM.

The plan serves as a roadmap for Azle, guiding the application of public resources to stimulate private sector investment in the community. In doing so, community leaders can make informed decisions about how resources are allocated. Since public sector resources are limited, priority must be given to the types of projects that will spur economic activity resulting in long-term economic vitality for Azle. This plan helps the local leadership identify the top opportunities for Azle by evaluating each in terms of feasibility, desirability, and economic impact.

To know where one wants to go, one has to understand and build upon the history and heritage of the past.

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

From the City of Azle's website, one learns that the community has a rich and diverse history. The area in and near Azle was initially settled by a group of pioneers from Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, and Kentucky in the 1840's. Originally known as Elizabeth Town, the community's name was changed to Mooresville after the owner of the only store in town. There was at that time no post office and there were only 664 settlers in all of Tarrant County.

As time went on, more settlers came and more homes were built. In 1891, a man by the name of O'Bar came to the area and was instrumental in getting the first post office established in the community and the settlement's name was changed to O'Bar.



Dr. James Azle Steward, one of the few doctors in the area, owned much of the land where Azle now stands. Dr. Steward was a great benefactor of the community. He donated land for a variety of purposes that served the local settlers, including land for businesses, schools, and churches. Dr. Steward deeded enough land for a town site and the name was changed from O'Bar to Azle.

While nearby Fort Worth grew rapidly in population and commerce, becoming the largest stagecoach terminal in the southwest between 1856 and 1880, Azle's population remained virtually static. For many years Azle continued as a sleepy village, its population growing very slowly. Growth has occurred in rapid spurts in some years but has typically been slow and steady over time.

Azle became an incorporated city in April of 1957 as a general law community. In 1969, the population of the City reached 5,000 and was then eligible to become a home rule city. At that time, the Council-Manager form of government was adopted. The current City Charter was adopted in 1971 and has been amended over the years to meet the changing needs of the City.

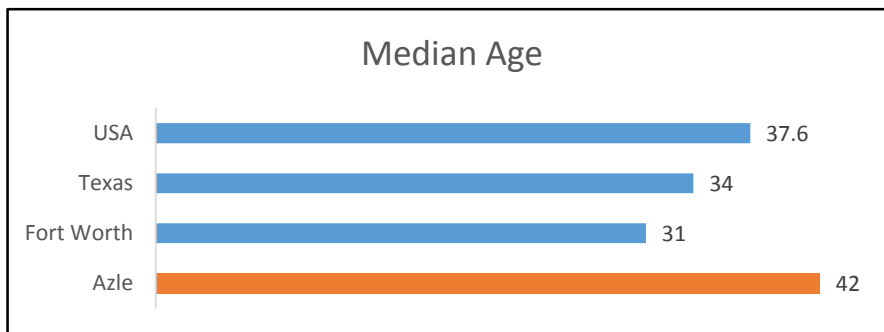
DEMOGRAPHICS & CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Today, Azle is a suburban community with a rural quality of life, northwest of Fort Worth. The community is a center of small business and industry, with modern homes in subdivisions, homes on large acreage, lake-front homes, and apartments owned and occupied by urban and industrial workers. Azle's population is growing and its new economic development actions must focus on how to take the best of the past and identify new opportunities to provide jobs for existing and incoming residents at a variety of skill levels.

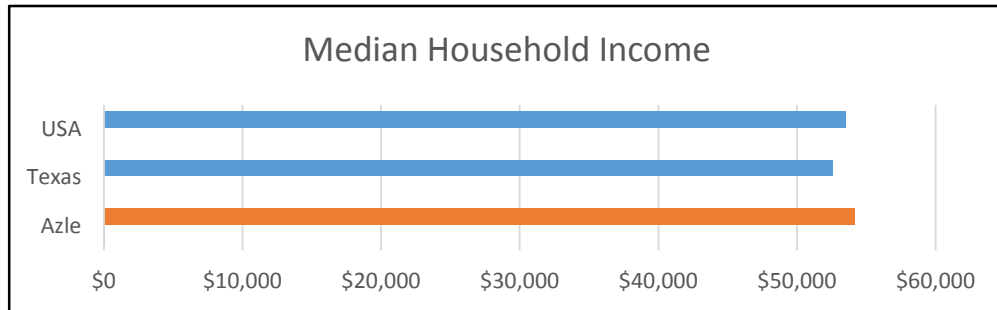
The July 2015 estimated population for the City of Azle was 11,693; a 7.3% increase in population growth since 2010. Without any pro-active economic development efforts, this slow, organic growth trend is predicted to continue, with the estimated population over the next five years to grow to only 13,500 (+1.18%).

Population density in Azle is 1,200 persons per square mile.

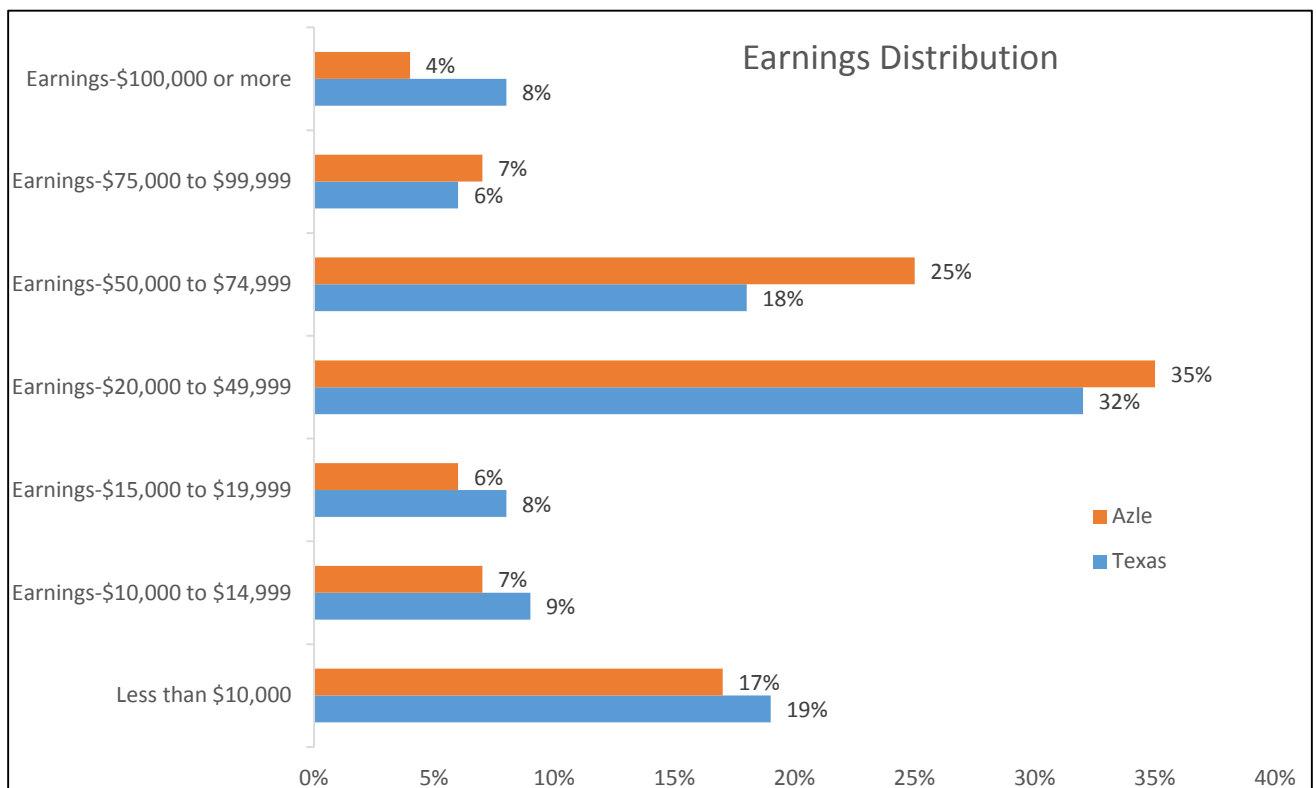
The median age in the City is 42 years. This is older than both the median age in Texas of 34 years and the median age in Fort Worth of 31 years.



Azle's median household income is approximately \$54,171; less than most other places in the immediate area. However, comparing Azle's median income to the United States average of \$53,482, Azle is about the same and is about 3% larger than the Texas average median household income of \$52,576.



The earnings distribution in Azle indicates that the majority of the population make between \$20,000 and \$49,999 per year (35%). Over 36% of the population make in excess of \$50,000 per year.



Only 18% of the population live and work in Azle. The average commute time for Azle residents to work is 34 minutes.

With this as the current economic & demographic foundation, the City of Azle has embarked upon a journey to systematically move the community forward in a unified manner.

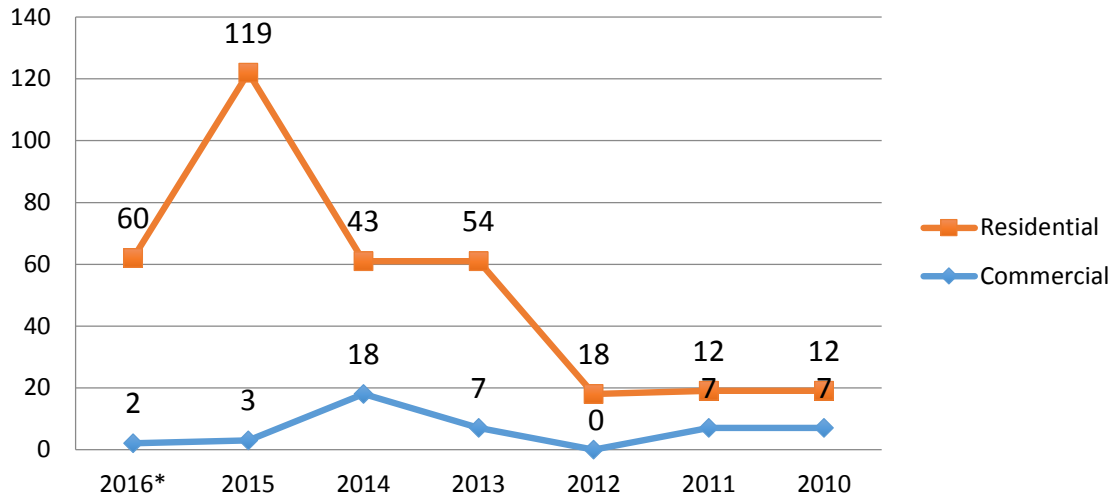
To accomplish this mission, the Azle Economic Development Department must embrace a dual approach of nurturing existing business while building a foundation from which it can pursue new investment from targeted industrial / retail sectors.

This requires that a strong foundation be laid of information and resources available to the development community at large to “get the word out” about all that Azle has to offer companies, peoples and institutions.

Source: Towncharts.com with original data sources from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (US Census), US Geological Service, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

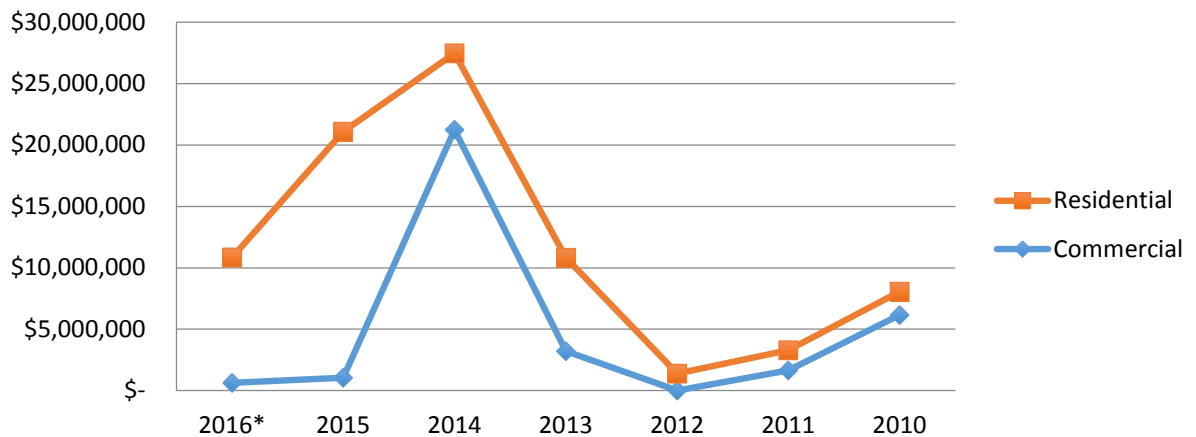
Number of Building Permits Issued

** as of April 2016*



Valuation of Building Permits

** as of April 2016*



Source: City of Azle – Development Services

COMMUNITY VISION

A community vision is the foundation....steadfast...unchanging. A vision expresses “who” Azle is as a community – its essence...its uniqueness...its reason to be. A community vision statement describes the desired long-term expectation of the jurisdiction upon implementation of their mission and goals.

Several words, expressions, feelings, sentiments were suggested by the community to communicate the essence of Azle. Those words included:

- Mixture of Rural
- Convenient
- Family
- Community
- Business Choices
- Family Oriented Entertainment
- Visibility of Police Officers
- Place you don’t want to leave
- Mix of Destination
- Workforce
- “Gateway to Eagle Mountain Lake”
- “Village”
- Destination
- Accessibility
- Reason to exit

What Makes Azle Unique

- o Caring
- o Service
- o Connection
- o Community
- o People

Given these sentiments, the Vision Statement for Azle, Texas is proposed to be:

Connecting Business and Community Toward A More Prosperous Future

MISSION STATEMENTS

A Mission Statement is the overall guiding direction for an entity. It is generally the mission statement that is the broadest policy statement of an organization. Following discussion, the consensus was that any mission statement for Azle must be focused on the community's ability to attract, train and retain quality employees and employers to be a part of the Azle community.

The City of Azle's Mission Statement is: *In Partnership with the Community, We are committed to Providing Quality Services through Thoughtful Planning, Fiscal Responsibility and Accessible, Responsive Leadership resulting in a Continuously Improving Quality of Life.*

With that in mind, the ***Mission Statement for the Economic Development Department*** is proposed to be:

The Azle Department of Economic Development works to influence business location decisions by providing information and resources designed to assist in the analysis of establishing, expanding or relocating a facility in Azle.

With this Mission Statement in mind, the ***Overarching Goal of the Azle Department of Economic Development*** will be:

Working collaboratively with the community, the Economic Development Department will serve to pro-actively attract, retain and expand commercial business and industry in Azle to expand and diversify the City's tax base and provide jobs for its citizens.

PRIORITIES

In 2014, the Azle Municipal Development District met to prioritize their development opportunities. In 2016, the MDD Board and Chamber Economic Development Committee met jointly to confirm and move beyond priorities to develop actionable items to move Azle towards its vision.

Original priorities were discussed...

...and a “Top 10” Confirmed

1. New development of vacant properties
2. Redevelopment of existing properties
3. Identify types of businesses desired for recruitment to the city
4. Identify properties for development
5. Perception of Azle
6. Encourage cooperation of existing land owners
7. Improve livability / Quality of Life (Place)
8. Improve Infrastructure
9. Increase and further diversify city’s Tax Base
10. Create marketing campaign towards targeted businesses
11. Increase employment opportunities
12. Reduce tax burden on residents
13. Improve / expand existing businesses
14. Analyze gaps – retail leakage / under-represented business types
15. Identify competitive advantages of Azle
16. Training – Board Development
17. Coordinate Efforts with Regional / State Allies
18. Investigate Grant Opportunities
19. Annexation
20. Strong internet presence
21. Community Involvement
22. Funding
23. Install sidewalks

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9. Increase and further diversify city’s tax base
10. Create marketing campaign towards targeted businesses

OBJECTIVES

The following summarizes the objectives that have been developed for Azle, representing that which the community has prioritized and seeks to accomplish in the first five years; second five years and beyond ten years.

Years 1 - 5

1. Establish a Business Retention & Expansion Program
2. Identify Properties with the Greatest Development Potential
3. Develop a Target Business List
4. Identify Developers / Brokers / Consultants
5. Marketing Plan (Perception of Azle)

Years 6 - 10

1. Infrastructure
 - a) Water
 - b) Sewer
 - c) Streets
 - d) Sidewalks throughout city including Main Street
 - i. Safe Pathways for walking, biking
 - e) Telecommunications
2. Tourism – Attractions
3. Annexation

Years 10+

1. Quality of Life
2. Increase Commercial / Industrial Tax Base

OBJECTIVES *Continued*

Years 1 - 5

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE) – Objective #1

- Develop a systematic Business Retention & Expansion Program under the leadership of the Azle Economic Development Director and other local economic development allies (Chamber, City, County EDC Program, Community College, Electric Utility, etc.)
- Train the BRE Team in the process, procedures and benefits of a “Continuous” BRE Visitation Program.
- Dedicate resources to this strong and effective BRE program
- Foster relationships with targeted and strategically chosen local businesses
- Consider enhancing tax abatements for existing businesses wanting to expand in Azle
- The BRE program should:
 - Visit a defined number of companies on an annual basis
 - Understand unmet needs in the local economy (e.g. leakages, workforce issues)
 - Identify potential opportunities for growth
 - Detect early warning signs regarding potential business closures

REAL ESTATE / SITE DEVELOPMENT – Objective #2

- Identify new “greenfield” properties with the greatest potential for development – sites with all infrastructure in place, correct zoning, established asking price and willing seller.
- Identify existing sites / buildings with the greatest potential for immediate development.
- Prioritize sites and collect data on each to have available when companies, developers, brokers, the State of Texas requests information for active prospects.
- Develop marketing materials on these sites.

OBJECTIVES *Continued*

BUSINESS ATTRACTION – Objective # 3, 4, 5

- Create an unified message and brand for Azle’s Economic Development Department that focuses on the city’s progressive qualities; starting with a website.
- Create a Marketing Plan for Azle – internal and external to enhance the Perception of Azle among target markets.
- Develop and Nurture Relationships with Local, State, National Economic Development Allies, Consultants, Brokers, Developers, etc.
- Leverage insights from business leaders, company research, BRE visitations, and media in order to strategically pursue targeted firms
- Develop an incentive package for targeted new businesses wanting to come to Azle.
- Create a simple manual of incentives
- Confirm industry targets for the City of Azle, including:
 1. Primary Targets
 - Light manufacturing
 - Assembly
 - Fabrication
 - Welding
 - Customer Service Center (Call Center)
 2. Secondary Targets
 - Hotel
 - Lakeside Corporate Retreat Center
 - Dine-in Restaurants
 3. Tertiary Targets
 - Theater
 - Unique / Upscale Downtown Retail
 - Family Entertainment Venues

OBJECTIVES *Continued*

Years 6 - 10

INFRASTRUCTURE – Objective #1

- Establish Infrastructure Planning Goals for Water, Sewer, Streets and Sidewalks throughout city including Main Street
- Explore and design Safe Pathways for walking, biking throughout the City
- Work with providers to enhance telecommunication infrastructure, service and product offerings in the City

TOURISM – Objective #2

- Enhance Tourism Opportunities and Local Attractions

ANNEXATION – Objective #3

- Establish a 10-year Annexation Plan in Two, Five-Year Phases

Years 10+

QUALITY OF LIFE – Objective #1

- Lakeside Development
- Housing Stock
- Recreational Opportunities

INCREASE COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL TAX BASE – Objective #2

- Industrial Park
- Office Park – Customer Care Centers
- Retail Opportunities

STRATEGIES

Economic development is about targeted, proactive initiatives to attract, retain and cultivate jobs, investment and the ancillary benefits derived from them. Effective service delivery is a continuum of efforts that build upon each other to achieve the desired result.

Silos have no place in the economic development of today. Led by the Economic Development Director, the City of Azle can accomplish the Vision it created in this document. To do so, however, will take a united effort by not only the City and the MDD but the entire community.

The strategies outlined below provide a roadmap and timeline for the completion of this Economic Development Action Plan.

Years 1 – 5

1. Establish a Business Retention & Expansion Program by the end of the 3rd Quarter 2016.
2. Identify five (5) properties / building with the highest development potential and gather information on those by the end of the 4th Quarter 2016
3. Develop a refined target business list based upon feasibility in Year 1 no later than the end of the 1st Quarter 2017.
 - a. Light manufacturing
 - b. Assembly
 - c. Fabrication
 - d. Welding
 - e. Customer Service Center (Call Center)
 - f. Hotel
 - g. Corporate Retreat Center
 - h. Theater
 - i. Dine-in Restaurants
4. Azle ED Director will Identify and Engage in a Dialogue of Introduction to Opportunities in Azle and Relationship Development with Consultants, Developers and Brokers by the end of the 3rd Quarter 2016.

STRATEGIES *Continued*

Years 1 – 5 continued

5. Marketing Plan (Perception of Azle). Azle ED Director will develop and implement an outreach plan to targeted consultants / commercial brokers / retail developers in the greater Dallas-Ft. Worth market and set up a meetings with six (6) representatives by end of the 2nd Quarter 2017.
6. Attend one ICSC event by the end of the 4th Quarter 2016.
7. Compile, Design & Launch an economic development website for Azle by the end of the 1st Quarter 2017.
8. Design and Develop an Aerial Map as a marketing tool for Azle by the end of the 3rd Quarter 2016.
9. Azle ED Director will identify and budget for involvement in professional associations, local & national economic development marketing organizations (like Team Texas, IAMC, ICSC and the Dallas Marketing Team), business associations for Azle Targeted Industries and develop a schedule for marketing trips for FY2016-17 no later than the end of the 3rd Quarter 2016.
10. Work with city staff to identify infrastructure goals for water/waste water extension to most developable properties by the end of the 1st Quarter 2017.
11. Begin to work on five year annexation plan to be completed by the end of the 2nd Quarter 2018.
12. Explore the potential for a new commercial development in Azle anchored by the City of Azle government facility by the end of the 3rd Quarter 2017.
13. Identify and work towards the development of a new Hotel in Azle to open by the end of the 4th Quarter 2020.

STRATEGIES *Continued*

Years 6 – 10

1. Establish Infrastructure Planning Goals for Water, Sewer, Streets and Sidewalks throughout city by the end of the 1st Quarter 2021; including funding options.
2. Design and build Safe Pathways for walking, biking throughout the City by the end of the 4th Quarter 2021
3. Enhance telecommunication infrastructure, service and product offerings in the City by end of the 2nd Quarter 2024
4. Explore opportunity and viability of establishing a Main Street Program for Azle by the end of the 1st Quarter 2024
5. Work with chamber and other community groups to identify and develop tourism opportunities including family entertainment venues, theaters and dine-in restaurants by the end of the 4th Quarter 2021
6. Implement Phase 1 of 10-year annexation plan by the end of the 4th Quarter 2023

Years 10+

1. Implement Phase 2 of annexation plan by the end of the 4th Quarter 2026
2. Explore development opportunities best suited for lake front properties that may become available to the city including possible parks, corporate convention center, eco-tourism opportunities, etc. by the end of the 1st Quarter 2026
3. By the end of the 2nd Quarter 2026, influence the development of one new industrial park, one new commercial retail center and recruit one customer care center into Azle.

[illegible]

**Those who have planned ahead,
land ahead.**

***Communities* that plan ahead,
land ahead.**

Alysia Cook – Opportunity Strategies