



PHASE 4: WICHITA FALLS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Submitted by Market Street Services Inc.
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April 23, 2018

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STEERING COMMITTEE

NAME

ORGANIZATION

Henry Florsheim, Chair	Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, CEO
Phyllis Cowling, Vice Chair	United Regional Health Care System, CEO
Ben Hoover, Vice Chair	Nix Law Firm, Attorney
Dr. Jeff Stambaugh, Vice Chair	Midwestern State University, Director
Blake Andrews	American National Bank, Executive Vice President and CFO
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Bert Huff	MyStaf, Owner
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Dr. James Johnston	Midwestern State University, Provost
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Mike Kuhrt	Wichita Falls Independent School District, Superintendent
Darron Leiker	City of Wichita Falls, City Manager
Nancy Marks	Community Representative
Lacey Morgan	Care Team, Owner
Teresa Pontius Caves	Community Foundation, President
Dusty Potter	Hearing Aid Express, Owner
Margie Reese	Wichita Falls Alliance for Arts & Culture, Executive Director
Gonzalo Robles	Café con Leche Wichita Falls, Educational Consultant
Paul Rodriguez	First Bank, Branch Manager
Mayor Stephen Santellana	City of Wichita Falls
Nick Schreiber	SLA Architects, Director of Marketing
Michael Stanford	Sharp Iron, President
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Col. Andrea Themely	Sheppard Air Force Base; Commander, 80th Flying Training Wing
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Dr. Monica Wilkinson	Vernon College, USDA Grant Coordinator

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The five-phase research and strategic planning process will last approximately nine months, concluding in April 2018. A diverse Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors will guide the process and ensure that it lays the foundation that will allow people and businesses to thrive and wealth to accumulate in the community.

Phase One: Stakeholder Engagement

Qualitative feedback is a vital component that will be used to inform subsequent phases in identifying strategic priorities for Wichita Falls. This phase involved reaching out to as many regional stakeholders as possible through an online survey, individual interviews, and focus groups to help identify the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

Phase Two: Regional Assessment and Scorecards

The Regional Assessment provided a detailed examination of the Wichita Falls area's competitiveness as a place to live, work, visit, and do business. The Assessment wove qualitative feedback from phase one in with the quantitative findings to create a set of "stories" that provided a concise narrative of the region's opportunities and the challenges it will face as it seeks to become a more prosperous, successful place and increase quality of life for all its residents. The Assessment was complemented by a series of scorecards that benchmarked the Wichita Falls region's performance to that of nine peer or aspirational regions.

Phase Three: Target Sector Analysis & Marketing Review

The Analysis offered an in-depth examination of the economic opportunities that have the greatest potential to create new jobs, retain existing jobs, spur innovation, and raise levels of prosperity throughout the Wichita Falls region. Research focused on businesses, the occupational concentrations that support them, as well as factors such as innovation, infrastructure, and entrepreneurial capacities in order to identify the target business sectors with the greatest potential. The Marketing Review analyzed the existing economic and community marketing efforts to identify any areas for improvement.

Phase Four: Economic Development Strategy

The Strategy represents the culmination of all the quantitative and qualitative research findings and strategic implications. The Strategy will guide the community's collective actions and will be geared towards addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities. The plan will be holistic, actionable, and measurable. Examples of best practice programs, policies, and initiatives from communities around the country will be included when relevant and appropriate to help form strategic recommendations and their subsequent implementation.

Phase Five: Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan ensures that the Strategy is activated and sustained for the next five years and beyond. The Plan will formalize timelines for phasing in the Strategy's multiple actions, identify lead and support implementation entities, determine existing and necessary financial and personnel capacity to drive implementation, propose optimal staffing and governance operations, and confirm performance metrics to track implementation progress and success.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Public, private, and non-profit leaders have come together around a comprehensive community and economic development initiative that will help Wichita Falls achieve a more prosperous and successful future. This process has resulted in the Wichita Falls Economic Development Strategy, a consensus blueprint that will guide the community's collective actions for the next five years. The remainder of this section describes how this Strategy was developed and outlines its structure.

HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The strategic planning process began with the development of **two foundational research documents** that directly informed the creation of the Strategy. The **Regional Assessment and Scorecards** examined the competitive issues facing Wichita Falls by evaluating them through the prism of what Market Street believes to be the three critical aspects of a community: its people, their prosperity, and the quality of the place. It was based on in-depth data analysis covering demographic, socioeconomic, economic, and quality of life trends as well as extensive public input gathered through focus groups, interviews, and an online survey that received 3,999 responses from community stakeholders. Key findings from research and public input were incorporated into a narrative consisting of seven key stories that help explain the community's current realities, key successes, and remaining challenges. These seven stories are:

1. "Stagnant" Population Growth Masks a More Troubling Reality
2. A Shrinking Workforce Seriously Threatens Competitiveness
3. Educational Attainment Lags Behind, and Recent Gains May be Unsustainable
4. An Economy Built on Government Employment
5. Standards of Living are on the Rise, but Many Residents are Being Left Behind
6. Investing in Homegrown Talent Will be Critical to Future Success
7. A Strong Value Proposition, but Continuing to Improve "Place" is Vital

The **Target Sector Analysis and Marketing Review** identified three business sectors that the community can pursue in the near-term through "targeted" activities. They are: Manufacturing, Aerospace & Aviation, and Business Support Services (e.g. customer care, data centers, and other establishments that facilitate a variety of administrative and "back office" functions for companies engaged in some other primary line of business). The document also analyzed Wichita Falls' economic development marketing program and identified potential areas for improvement.

A brief summary of these two research reports is included in Appendix B of this document. But before proceeding, it is first necessary to discuss a key finding from the Regional Assessment that significantly influences the type of strategic framework that Wichita Falls should pursue.

A consistent theme from public input was that Wichita Falls is “stagnant” relative to other dynamic, growing metro economies across Texas. But a variety of data suggests that, rather than stagnation, Wichita Falls is in fact exhibiting early signs of decline. Although its total population has held steady in recent years, data clearly show that the region is losing residents to other parts of the United States, with the difference being made up by natural change (births minus deaths) and a relatively smaller amount of net international in-migration. Additionally, the region’s population of younger residents is also declining; there were fewer residents in the 0 to 19 and 25 to 54 age brackets in 2016 than there were in 2006. These declines were offset by a significant increase in the population aged 55 and over. The loss of “prime-age” workers and their families represents a significant threat to Wichita Falls’ workforce sustainability, and warning signs are already evident in data. The region’s civilian labor force – those working or actively looking for work – shrank rapidly between 2006 and 2016. **These and other data points suggest that Wichita Falls could be in the early stages of a vicious cycle – a lack of job opportunities leads people to leave, which creates a shortage of workers, which causes existing businesses to close or relocate, further decreasing the number of job opportunities.**

Simply put, Wichita Falls faces a troubling *status quo* future. Fortunately, the community’s leaders recognize this reality. In response, they have come together around a planning process that will result in an Economic Development Strategy that will determine what the community must do in order to achieve a more successful and prosperous future. There are numerous ways to organize a strategic framework. **But for a community that must fundamentally re-orient its trajectory, a modest, incremental approach will not suffice. Wichita Falls must instead focus on a limited set of catalytic efforts that can significantly improve the community’s attractiveness in the near term.**

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Research, public input, and Steering Committee feedback led to the determination of a strategic framework for Wichita Falls to advance in the coming years. The Wichita Falls Economic Development Strategy is organized around a set of five **Community Goals** that can be pursued through seven high-impact **Catalysts**. Each Catalyst can be activated by pursuing series of **Tactical Recommendations** that correspond to actions, programs, and other initiatives.

It is important to note that while the Catalysts and Tactical Recommendations are numbered for the purposes of organization, **this order does not imply hierarchy or priority. The framework is interdependent and connected, and no single element can in isolation advance Wichita Falls toward a more prosperous and successful future.** The framework is summarized as follows:

Five overarching Community Goals...

- ∠ Attract and retain residents and businesses
- ∠ Increase prosperity for all Wichita Falls residents
- ∠ Enhance quality of life and quality of place
- ∠ Promote inclusivity and equity
- ∠ Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls

...that the community can pursue through seven Potential Catalysts...

1. The Wichita Falls Talent Partnership
2. Modern School Facilities
3. A Best-Practice Economic Development Program
4. A Thriving Sheppard Air Force Base
5. An Entrepreneurial 'Maker Hub'
6. A Live-Work-Play Downtown
7. A Bicycle-Friendly Community

...each of which is activated through Tactical Recommendations that correspond to actions, programs, and other initiatives.

The remainder of this Strategy describes the seven Catalysts in greater detail. Each section begins with a brief justification and overview of the initiative and a short description of how the Catalyst connects to each of the five Community Goals. This is followed by a discussion of the “strategic approach” and the specific Tactical Recommendations that will be required to advance each Catalyst.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that a significant amount of work is already underway in Wichita Falls related to many elements of the strategic framework; when relevant, this document references these current or recent efforts. This is partially by design, as no community can or should start completely from scratch, and in many respects, Wichita Falls will be “jumping on a moving train” to leverage existing capacity. But more can always be done with adequate resources, committed leadership, and a spirit of cooperation.

It is also important to acknowledge the many efforts that are not captured in one of the seven Catalysts. From upgrades to Lake Wichita and the community’s water infrastructure to improved internal communications and services for seniors and low-income households, there are many other ongoing or proposed programs and initiatives that aim to strengthen Wichita Falls as a community and improve the lives of its current and future residents. **Their lack of inclusion in this document is not meant to suggest that this work is unimportant but is instead a necessary tradeoff inherent to developing a highly focused community and economic development strategy.** As previously discussed, Wichita Falls must take bold action to alter its current trajectory. Accordingly, its collective approach to community and economic development must be organized around a set of transformative Catalysts that will advance the community toward a more prosperous and successful future.

1. The Wichita Falls Talent Partnership

Create a “collective impact” partnership that aligns education and training providers and cross-sector partners to improve educational outcomes and create a more competitive workforce

In the modern economy, talent is perhaps the key driver of economic success and prosperity. The availability of a skilled and educated workforce is a top factor influencing location decisions across many business sectors, and at the individual level, educational attainment is strongly correlated with earning potential and personal well-being. The adult population in Wichita Falls is relatively less educated than state and national averages. And while this gap has been closing in recent years, the fact that younger people in Wichita Falls are less educated than older residents suggests this trend may not be sustainable.

There are two ways that communities can raise educational attainment rates. The first is attracting new residents from outside the community, though research revealed that Wichita Falls is, on net, losing residents to other parts of Texas and the United States. Ensuring that Wichita Falls is attractive to talented individuals is an important strategic need, and other Catalysts in this Strategy seek to address it. But the community can also seek to improve its workforce by producing and retaining “homegrown” talent.

Wichita Falls has the building blocks of a quality “talent pipeline,” including Midwestern State University, Vernon College, the new Career Education Center (CEC), and public schools that parents and recent students generally view favorably. Additionally, non-profits and other organizations operate a range of programs designed to improve educational attainment and individual outcomes. But public input also revealed areas for improvement. In particular stakeholders recognize the need for the region’s education and training providers, business community, non-profits, and other partners to work more collaboratively. To that end, communities around the country have embraced “collective impact” models that bring together a range of partners to work toward system-level improvements to a local talent pipeline. Adopting such a model would allow the community to work together to raise educational attainment levels, strengthen the region’s workforce, and improve the lives of its current and future residents.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** A strong workforce is essential to economic competitiveness and education systems can play an important role in individual location decisions.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** Educational attainment is closely tied to living standards.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** Increased educational attainment is associated with a range of improved outcomes at the individual level.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** A key component of the Partnership would be to enhance, expand, and align programming for all residents, particularly those from traditionally underserved groups.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** A visible, community-wide effort to increase educational attainment would boost local pride and positively impact outside image.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

As previously discussed, Wichita Falls has strong education and training assets and several ongoing initiatives dedicated to improving educational outcomes. Ensuring that these organizations and efforts are working collaboratively can help maximize their impact and improve education and skill levels in the community. This is best achieved through the adoption of a “collective impact” approach that brings together government entities, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to work together on a shared community vision – in this case improving educational outcomes.

These collective impact partnerships are sometimes called “cradle to career” initiatives due to their focus on improving programs and services for children of all ages. Partnerships that also address workforce development for adults might be labeled “cradle *through* career.” There are multiple proven models that communities can adopt to create such a partnership. Two prominent examples are Alignment USA and StriveTogether, which are national networks that offer a variety of support and training services to communities.

Collective impact is premised on cross-sector collaboration. Partners work collectively through a “backbone” committee or entity that is responsible for aligning the existing efforts of its various members and identifying ways in which services can be improved. In Wichita Falls, this backbone committee should be comprised of key leaders from Midwestern State, Vernon College, WFISD, other public and private schools and districts, early childhood education partners, private businesses, foundations, non-profits and social service providers, faith-based organizations, and other organizations integral to the “talent pipeline.”

In most cases, the backbone entity of a collective impact education partnership will include multiple subgroups or “action teams” dedicated to a specific issue or set of issues – e.g. dropout prevention or kindergarten readiness. In Wichita Falls, action teams could be formed around issues that emerged as community priorities during research and public input, including early childhood education programs, additional support services for students and families from economically disadvantaged households, and re-engagement of high school graduates who are not in school or attached to the workforce, among others. Action teams should be chaired by one or more members of the backbone committee, but their membership is typically broader than that of the backbone and often includes practitioner-level members. The backbone committee and its action teams must constantly seek to optimize programming. To do so, it must utilize on-the-ground observations and local expertise in combination with student-level data that can help determine whether actions are leading to improved outcomes.

Collective impact partnerships have varied corporate structures. Some are incorporated as standalone 501(c)(3) entities while others are positioned underneath an established organization such as a foundation or chamber of commerce; the implementation phase of this strategic planning process will consider the best options for Wichita Falls. Critically, however, the backbone must be supported by at least one professional staff person charged with ensuring its efficient and collaborative operation, managing day-to-day operations, communicating with partners and investors, and guiding initiatives related to talent development. Accordingly, the Partnership must be sustainably resourced to ensure its successful launch and effective operation.

1.1 Establish and staff the Wichita Falls Talent Partnership “backbone entity” to align the local talent pipeline

- ∠ Ensuring that the right partners are “around the table” will be critical to the success of this Catalyst; identify and secure commitments from an initial set of key partners (e.g. WFISD, Vernon College, MSU, the Chamber, etc.) then leverage the knowledge and connections of these organizations to involve a broad range of education and training providers and other important community partners
- ∠ Ensure that Wichita Falls’ diversity – racial and ethnic, cultural, etc. – is reflected in the membership of the backbone entity and its various action teams; engage individuals and organizations who can serve as “community connectors” to make certain that communities of color and other constituencies are represented in the Partnership and effectively served by programs and services
- ∠ Research best-practice models and engage a national network to assist in Partnership development; formally establish the Partnership entity based on the desired corporate model and pursue public and private sources of funding to ensure that it is professionally staffed and operated
- ∠ Retain professional staff to ensure the effective and collaborative operation of the Partnership
- ∠ Develop a “pledge of support” for partners to signify their commitment to working collaboratively to raise levels of educational attainment in the community

BEST PRACTICE #1: Alignment Nashville (Nashville, TN)

BEST PRACTICE #2: Strive Partnership (Cincinnati, OH)

1.2 Task the Partnership with developing programming that enhances the local talent pipeline

- ∠ Task the newly convened backbone entity with identifying a set of initial focus areas for the community to address through collective action
- ∠ As a first step, utilize partner knowledge to inventory existing programs and services to determine what is working well, identify gaps, and seek opportunities for alignment and enhancement
- ∠ Steering Committee members identified “pre-birth to 5” and the point at which an individual is about to enter the workforce as critical time periods on which the community should focus; based on research and input, initial focus areas could also reasonably include some or all of the following:
 - Expanded access to early childhood education options for middle-income families
 - Kindergarten readiness (see Best Practice #3)
 - A range of wraparound services for students and families from low-income households and/or with limited English proficiency to address achievement gaps (see Best Practice #4)
 - Connecting STEAM programming at the PK-12 level to “maker-focused” entrepreneurial efforts (see Tactical Recommendation 5.1 and Best Practice #5)

- Services to engage at-risk students and recent high school graduates who are neither working nor in school (see Best Practice #6 and Best Practice #7)
- A community-wide program focused on retaining graduates by establishing long-term relationships between individuals and employers (see Best Practice #8)
- Programs to develop, retain, and/or attract teachers, professors, and instructors at all levels of the education and training pipeline
- Identifying options to develop additional dedicated public funding streams to support education and training institutions and programs

BEST PRACTICE #3: Kindergarten Readiness Program (Marin County, CA)

BEST PRACTICE #4: Parent University (Mesa, AZ)

BEST PRACTICE #5: Dream It Do It (Oklahoma City, OK)

BEST PRACTICE #6: Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (Cincinnati, OH)

BEST PRACTICE #7: Reach Out to Dropouts (Houston, TX)

BEST PRACTICE #8: Greater Grads (Oklahoma City, OK)

1.3 Create “action teams” beneath the Partnership to advance work in specific program areas

- ∠ Create action-oriented teams under the backbone entity to align and enhance programs and initiatives in one or more of the focus areas identified in Tactical Recommendation 1.2; identify one or more members of the backbone committee to chair each action team
- ∠ Task chairs and other backbone partners with identifying additional organizations and individuals to populate each action team
- ∠ Through each action team, design and align programming, develop resources, and work directly with partners to ensure effective implementation

1.4 Develop accountability metrics and a robust data program that safeguards student privacy

- ∠ Develop a set of accountability metrics to measure progress for all education and training partners
- ∠ Work with a network such as Alignment USA or StriveTogether to develop a student-level data program; develop protocols for safeguarding the privacy of students and families¹
- ∠ Create a partnership website to publicize high-level data through an online “data dashboard” and communicate progress to partners, investors, and the general public through annual reports

¹ http://www.strivetoegether.org/sites/default/files/StriveTogether_Student_Data_Privacy_Best_Practices.pdf

2. Modern School Facilities

Build consensus and support for needed facility upgrades in the Wichita Falls Independent School District to boost student experiences, community pride, and external perceptions.

On the online survey administered as part of the public input process, more than 1,300 individuals indicated that they or one of their children had attended a Wichita Falls Independent School District (WFISD) in the past five years. Approximately 62 percent of these individuals agreed with the statement, “Children in this district receive a high-quality education.” But roughly the same proportion – 65 percent – agreed with the statement, “The quality of our public schools inhibit our community’s growth.” These responses may seem contradictory at first, but they are likely a product of a prominent theme to emerge from public input: stakeholders widely believe that the district’s facilities – especially its high schools – are outdated.

Input participants noted that residents and outsiders alike are naturally drawn to comparing Wichita Falls to other communities around North Texas that have made major investments in school facilities in recent years. According to these stakeholders, the fact that Wichita Falls’ facilities are viewed less favorably serves as a major barrier to attracting and retaining residents and businesses. There is also a strong connection between facility quality and student learning. According to the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (CEEPA) at Penn State, “school facilities affect health, behavior, engagement, learning, and growth in achievement. Thus, researchers generally conclude that without adequate facilities and resources, it is extremely difficult to serve large numbers of children with complex needs.”² Stakeholders acknowledge that upgrading WFISD’s facilities will require significant investments. But the consensus belief among these individuals is that the return on these investments will far outweigh the costs.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** Stakeholders said modern school facilities are crucial to the community’s ability to attract and retain talent.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** A more competitive community would raise standards of living in the long run.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** Modern school facilities would deliver a significant aesthetic enhancement to the community.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** Upgrades would likely impact all students in WFISD.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** Modern school facilities would increase community pride and help change the image of Wichita Falls among prospective residents.

² The Importance of School Facilities in Improving Student Outcomes. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis, College of Education, Penn State. Retrieved from: <http://sites.psu.edu/ceepa/2015/06/07/the-importance-of-school-facilities-in-improving-student-outcomes/>

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Developing a specific plan for the future of WFISD's high school facilities is beyond the scope of this process. But the message from a wide variety of stakeholders is clear: Wichita Falls must upgrade its high school facilities in the near future. Doing so will be an exercise in consensus-building and advocacy.

A discussion of school facilities is inherently political as it involves decisions about how millions of dollars of public funds are allocated. It is also inherently emotional, as students, parents, alumni, teachers, and staff often develop deep connections to physical spaces and the communities and cultures that grow up around them. Stakeholders in Wichita Falls understand this reality. In 2014, voters overwhelmingly voted down a bond initiative that would have consolidated Wichita Falls and Rider high schools into a single new facility. But input participants noted that just one year later, voters passed a bond initiative that resulted in the new WFISD Career Education Center (CEC), a \$28 million facility that is widely viewed as one of the most positive developments in the community in recent years.

Stakeholders noted that in addition to being a spectacular facility, the CEC is proof that the community can pull together to make needed investments in educational facilities. To build upon this success, the community must bring together key stakeholders and the public to identify a consensus plan for facility upgrades that takes into account a variety of community priorities and desires. Importantly, it must also adhere to the adage that "construction must follow instruction." That is, new or upgraded school facilities must be designed to meet the community's specific educational needs. They also must be adaptable to potential changes in instruction models, technologies, etc. As the community begins shaping a consensus plan, it must keep the needs of its students and educators at the center of discussions.

Once a consensus facilities plan has been identified, a community-wide advocacy campaign must begin to support the bond initiative that will be required to translate vision into reality. The following Tactical Recommendations focus on the process of building community consensus and, ultimately, electoral support for this critical issue.

2.1 Conduct a public visioning process to build consensus around a plan for WFISD facility upgrades

- ∟ Convene WFISD stakeholders to determine whether existing facilities plans and studies provide a sufficient basis for decision-making; expediently conduct additional research as needed
- ∟ Conduct a large-scale public input process to gather community feedback about specific options for WFISD facility upgrades and build consensus around a desired alternative, including the sequencing and timeline of specific actions
- ∟ Seek to engage as many WFISD parents as possible – including those attached to SAFB – in the input and consensus-building process to ensure broad-based community support and buy-in for the selected alternative
- ∟ Outreach techniques could include public meetings, charrettes, open houses, information kiosks and input exercises at school and other public events, online surveys, advertisements, etc.

- ∠ Retain a firm skilled in facilitating processes connected to educational facilities planning or other public infrastructure projects to guide the public outreach process

2.2 Launch a community-wide campaign to build support for needed bond initiative

- ∠ With a consensus alternative established (see Tactical Recommendation 2.1), create a multi-faceted campaign in favor of passing one or more school bond initiatives that will be required to modernize WFISD facilities
- ∠ Engage parents and parent groups in the campaign and seek public endorsements from key stakeholders and partners (e.g. the business community)
- ∠ Enlist a wide range of community partners to conduct advocacy work on behalf of the campaign; for 501(c)(3) non-profits that cannot engage in political advocacy, develop specialized messaging that seeks to educate and inform voters on the issues
- ∠ Launch a multi-channel advocacy campaign inclusive of a website, social media, op-eds, a speakers bureau, outdoor and traditional media advertisements, etc.; consider retaining an experienced communications firm to develop messaging and provide services such as graphic design
- ∠ Evaluate the need to incorporate a special non-profit – e.g. a 501(c)(4) – to coordinate and fund education facilities advocacy efforts

BEST PRACTICE #9: Yes for Missoula Schools (Missoula County, MT)

3. A Best-Practice Economic Development Program

Advance programs and policies that improve the local business climate and give Wichita Falls the best chance to grow jobs and investment in the coming years

A primary impetus for this strategic planning process was the community's desire to become more prosperous. As a practical matter, this will require increasing and improving opportunities for employment. Most individuals and households rely upon the availability of quality jobs to increase their standards of living. On a larger scale, wealth accumulates in regions when local business establishments "export" goods and services to other markets in the United States and beyond. So while every aspect of this Strategy can help make Wichita Falls more economically competitive in the long run, a holistic approach to economic development must also consider opportunities to grow jobs and investment in the near-term.

For decades, many communities and their economic development organizations have exclusively associated "economic development" with "business recruitment." While the recruitment is an important component of an economic development program, it comprises only one-third of a "three-legged stool." In fact, employment growth is primarily driven by the other two legs of the stool – expansions of existing businesses and entrepreneurship. Successful communities now pursue a balanced approach that incorporates business recruitment, business retention and expansion (BRE), and support for new enterprises. This Catalyst focuses on programs and policies that Wichita Falls can pursue to grow jobs and investment in the next five years. Additional opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial activity are addressed separately in Catalyst 5.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** This Catalyst focuses specifically on attracting and retaining businesses and ensuring a competitive overall business climate.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** Creating an attractive environment for jobs and investment is critical to raising standards of living for residents in Wichita Falls.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** Business attraction and retention has an indirect yet major influence on community vibrancy.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** Many businesses now recognize diversity and inclusion as core values that impact the bottom line; this Catalyst includes a Tactical Recommendation that seeks to create a business culture of inclusion and expand opportunities for all residents.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** While business location decisions are influenced by many factors, a reputation as a "good place to do business" is a valuable asset.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Wichita Falls already has a well-developed economic development program that is carried out by the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce and its public and private partners. Additionally, business leaders who participated in the stakeholder engagement process generally viewed the community's business climate in a favorable light. But research and public input did identify several ways in which the community can better grow jobs and investment through business attraction, retention, and small business support activities.

The Target Sector Analysis identified an updated set of three export-oriented business sectors that have relatively strong prospects for growth in the coming years based on Wichita Falls' existing workforce and asset base. These are: Manufacturing, Aerospace & Aviation, and Business Support Services. Due to workforce constraints, it is unlikely that Wichita Falls could accommodate a new large-scale employer in these or other sectors in the near future. That said, the community has an opportunity to attract small to mid-sized projects in these areas through a targeted approach to economic development. And while the community has made significant upgrades to its economic development marketing program and capacity in recent years, The Marketing Review focused on ways in which Wichita Falls' approach to business attraction can be improved.

Research and input also identified additional opportunities for improving the community's economic development program, business climate, and asset base or "product." For one, the community's workforce challenges underscore the importance of entrepreneurship and helping existing businesses grow and thrive. Wichita Falls has existing resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs, but according to stakeholders, there is a need to better publicize these services. Input participants said a downtown presence for entrepreneurship would make a significant impact on awareness and utilization of services by placing them in a highly visible area that is also an emerging "hotspot" of small business activity.

Stakeholders also noted a need to better emphasize diversity and inclusion in the community's business culture. Like many areas around the country, Wichita Falls is diversifying, and stakeholders said that more should be done to ensure that opportunities are open to residents from all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Successful business and communities understand that diversity and inclusion are imperative to the "bottom-line." Accordingly, this Catalyst includes a Tactical Recommendation that focuses on a proactive approach to addressing these issues in Wichita Falls in order to improve the community's openness and competitiveness.

3.1 Continue to develop a best-practice economic development marketing program centered on new target business sectors

- ∠ Based on needed adjustments to the community's target business sectors and economic development marketing program identified through the Target Sector Analysis and Marketing Review
- ∠ Build upon recent improvements to the local economic development marketing program by making recommended upgrades:
 - An updated website with interactive data and site information, improved copy, and content that highlights the updated roster of target business sectors
 - Developing limited, high-quality "leave-behind" collateral promoting the community and specific target sectors
 - Carefully evaluating the efficacy of trade shows, meetings, and other "direct sales" on an ongoing basis to ensure they are producing an acceptable ROI in the form of active projects
 - Conducting a special inbound marketing event to showcase the community to site consultants and/or other key decision makers in a given sector
- ∠ Could also work with the Wichita Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) to recruit conferences and meetings that align with targeted sectors

BEST PRACTICE #10: GrowMetroTulsa.com (Tulsa, OK)

BEST PRACTICE #11: AugustaVABusiness.com (Augusta County, VA)

3.2 Improve capabilities to track and respond to employer needs identified through business retention and expansion (BRE) activities

- ∠ Most best-practice BRE programs utilize specialized software to track and manage existing business and coordinate partner responses to identified opportunities and challenges. Wichita Falls has an established BRE initiative but lacks these important tools.
- ∠ Obtain specialized software (such as Synchronist or ExecutivePulse) to track BRE activities and assign and manage follow-up tasks for partners
- ∠ As tracking capabilities improve, work with economic development partners to identify and address consistent themes, challenges, etc. that emerge from BRE activities

3.3 Formalize a streamlined permitting and “pre-construction” process for major relocations, expansions, and renovations

- ∠ Develop a framework to formalize “one-stop” pre-construction meetings to help ease the regulatory process for major development and redevelopment projects; the City of Wichita Falls has previously offered these meetings on occasion
- ∠ Pre-construction meetings would convene representatives from all relevant government entities and departments to discuss project specifics and regulatory requirements and develop plans to work through any issues
- ∠ Continue quarterly meetings between the development community and key elected and department leaders from the City of Wichita Falls; leverage these discussions to develop the framework

3.4 Ensure that available sites and buildings are ready to accommodate end-users

- ∠ Competitive economic development projects frequently require sites or buildings that can be readied within a short amount of time; accordingly, communities must ensure that their real estate “product” is as ready as possible to accommodate new development and/or users
- ∠ Inventory conditions at key sites and buildings to ensure that they are ready to accommodate likely development
- ∠ Examine planning/zoning and other regulatory conditions, site access, environmental conditions, building condition, etc.
- ∠ For sites owned by the community’s 4A entity, the Wichita Falls Economic Development Corporation (WFEDC), invest in feasible upgrades as soon as possible to ensure that the site can accommodate a project working on a tight timeframe, thereby giving it the best chance of producing a positive return on investment for local taxpayers
- ∠ Seek the Texas Economic Development Council’s S.T.A.R certified site designation for one or more “shovel-ready” sites to help promote the most promising development opportunities in the community

3.5 Establish a diversity business council to promote a culture of diversity and inclusion

- ∠ Work with the Chamber and other public and private partners to form a council and encourage local firms to participate
- ∠ Develop and administer an annual workplace inclusivity survey to identify and measure local diversity and inclusion efforts; report findings in an annual report
- ∠ Establish an annual diversity summit to raise the profile of the community’s commitment to creating opportunities and increasing prosperity for all residents

- ∠ Work with council members, Leadership Wichita Falls, and others to increase diversity on local boards of directors

BEST PRACTICE #12: Greater Des Moines Partnership Inclusion Council (Des Moines, IA)

BEST PRACTICE #13: Madison Region Economic Development & Diversity Summit (Madison, WI)

3.6 Align the community's legislative agenda, public policies, and outreach programs with strategic economic development needs

- ∠ Many aspects of community and economic development are closely intertwined with matters of public policy at the local, state, and federal levels; accordingly, best-practice communities work cooperatively to craft public policy advocacy agendas that promote economic growth and community vibrancy and help advance the Catalysts in this Strategy
- ∠ Work collaboratively with the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, the Sheppard Military Affairs Commission, and local, state, and federal partners to craft annual legislative agendas that support holistic economic development needs and allow the community to speak with one cohesive voice
- ∠ Given the relatively high concentrations of government employment in Wichita Falls, continue to maintain strong relationships with legislative delegations to ensure that the community is well-represented at the state and federal levels

4. A Thriving Sheppard Air Force Base

Ensure that Sheppard Air Force Base is stable and growing by advocating for current and new missions and strengthening ties between the base and the community.

The previous Catalyst is geared toward promoting private-sector job growth in export-oriented fields by creating a favorable climate for economic development and business growth. But as discussed in the Regional Assessment, government constitutes the single largest sector of Wichita Falls' economy. A healthy overall economy can certainly benefit government institutions, but generally speaking, their missions and budgets are set by policymakers at the state and federal levels. Accordingly, advocacy and public policy work is critical to the health of Wichita Falls' economy. This is especially true for the community's largest economic engine – Sheppard Air Force Base – which has its own specific set of advocacy needs.

Put simply, a thriving Sheppard Air Force Base is vital to a healthy Wichita Falls economy. According to its 2015 Economic Impact Statement, the base has an annual economic impact of nearly \$767 million. Throughout the public input process, stakeholders consistently mentioned the base as one of the region's great strengths. But like all military installations, the base's scope and role would be subject to review should a future round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activities be called. Stakeholders in Wichita Falls understand this reality, as the 2005 BRAC round led to the consolidation of military medical training and the relocation of the 882nd Training group from Sheppard to Fort Sam Houston.

One positive to come out of the 2005 BRAC round, however, was the creation of the Sheppard Military Affairs Committee (SMAC), which has enabled the community to rally behind a consistent message. SMAC is a non-profit organization that serves as the voice for Sheppard Air Force Base and the broader region. It seeks to protect the base's existing missions and jobs, pursue new missions, and enhance the base's economic impact. This Catalyst focuses primarily on continuing the work of SMAC and its partners and further strengthening ties between the base and the broader community.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** SAFB is a vital component of the local economy and contributes to the presence of thousands of residents.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** Ensuring a strong SAFB helps create private employment opportunities and increase prosperity even for individuals with no direct connection to the military.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** SAFB's presence contributes to the community's vibrancy and the diversity of restaurants, retail options, etc.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** SAFB brings people from all over the world to Wichita Falls.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** SAFB is a major source of community pride and is one of the things for which the community is best known outside the region.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

In addition to its ongoing advocacy efforts, SMAC and its partners have taken proactive steps in recent years to support Sheppard Air Force Base and its missions. These include a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) process completed in 2014 and a newly commissioned strategic planning process focused on mission sustainability for SAFB. Ensuring that the recommendations from these studies are implemented in a timely fashion will go a long way toward ensuring a thriving SAFB. This Strategic Pathway also includes support for additional needs and opportunities that emerged through public input – namely, additional outreach to the community and enhanced support to help connect military families and veterans to job and community engagement opportunities.

4.1 Continue the advocacy work led by the Sheppard Military Affairs Committee

- ∠ Continue to support the work of SMAC and ensure that it is adequately resourced and supported
- ∠ Continue to work with all relevant partners to implement recommendations from the Sheppard Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)

4.2 Advance the development of a strategic plan for mission sustainability

- ∠ Fully support SMAC's mission sustainability preparedness planning process and position all relevant partners to quickly adopt recommendations as needed
- ∠ As discussed in Tactical Recommendation 3.7, maintain strong relationships with Wichita Falls' federal legislative delegation to sustain and grow SAFB
- ∠ Because many tasks may not need to be activated unless and until a future BRAC round is triggered in the future, work with SMAC, the Chamber, and other partners to ensure that new elected officials and other leaders who move into their roles in the coming years are briefed on planning activities and strategic needs (see Tactical Recommendation 4.3)

4.3 Increase community awareness about advocacy and planning efforts

- ∠ Work with partners such as the Chamber and others to leverage local communications channels in order to increase community awareness about advocacy efforts, issue needed calls to action, and recognize and celebrate SAFB
- ∠ In partnership with the Chamber, SMAC, and SAFB, create a community liaison program to educate and inform community business leaders about the SAFB mission and to strengthen ties between the base and local public and private leaders

4.4 Connect military personnel, families, and veterans to job and community engagement opportunities

- ∠ Convene representatives from the business community and SAFB to develop a program to connect trailing SAFB spouses/partners with employment opportunities; could include a resume-matching service
- ∠ Develop an attractive, user-friendly website with information about community programs, youth sports leagues, parks, utilities, religious organizations, etc. in Wichita Falls; if desired, this website could be designed to appeal to a broad audience with a special section of content for military families
- ∠ Work with base leadership to evaluate the feasibility of a survey of military personnel, veterans, retirees, spouses/partners, and others to determine further opportunities for engagement

BEST PRACTICE #14: CarpeDM (Des Moines, IA)

4.5 Strengthen physical connections between Sheppard Air Force Base and the Wichita Falls Community

- ∠ Work with SAFB leadership, the City of Wichita Falls, and other key stakeholders to enhance connectivity between the base and the community for Airmen, other personnel, and their families
- ∠ Work with all relevant stakeholders to connect SAFB to the community's growing network of bicycle infrastructure (see Tactical Recommendation 7.2)
- ∠ Evaluate options to further leverage the Sheppard Main Gate Transit facility; this could entail subsidized rideshares and/or additional fixed-route transit to Downtown Wichita Falls to complement service to the Sikes Center Mall

5. An Entrepreneurial ‘Maker Hub’

Grow jobs and wealth by positioning Wichita Falls as a hub for entrepreneurship centered on the “maker movement” and “homegrown” manufacturing enterprises.

Potential Catalyst 3 focuses on various ways in which Wichita Falls can create an optimal climate for various types of business growth – including increasing the visibility of the community’s existing small business support services. But Wichita Falls also has an additional opportunity to promote economic growth through small business and entrepreneurship. The community can embrace the burgeoning “maker movement” and leverage its existing strength in small, custom manufacturing shops to produce strong “homegrown” manufacturing companies.

Discussions of “entrepreneurial ecosystems” and “startups” often evoke images of app development and efforts to disrupt existing business models with technological advances. While exceptions certainly exist, these activities are generally concentrated in a relatively small set of large metros where entrepreneurs can more readily access capital, talent, and support networks. But it is important to note that firms with “high growth” potential need not be “high tech.” Successful entrepreneurial and small business support efforts are built around helping manufacturing firms – even ones that make decidedly “low-tech” end products – to begin operations, scale up, improve processes, and gain access to new customers and markets.

Research and input suggests that the community has a strong base of engineers and mechanically inclined individuals who may have new product ideas as well as numerous smaller manufacturing firms with core competencies in customized and precision production. Accordingly, a range of programming to help establish Wichita Falls as a hub for “makers” and manufacturing entrepreneurship represents a promising niche opportunity for the community.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** Services for entrepreneurs and small manufacturing firms could create strong incentives for these individuals and firms to remain in the community.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** The ultimate goal of this Catalyst is to grow new businesses and help “homegrown” manufacturing firms thrive. Doing so would create jobs and bring new wealth in the community by exporting products to other regions.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** In addition to many indirect benefits, a Downtown maker hub could significantly contribute to the vibrancy of the area by bringing in a new active use.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** A makerspace can help lower barriers to entry for prospective manufacturing entrepreneurs, and steps should be taken to ensure equitable access to it.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** A successful program would improve the community’s manufacturing reputation and could potentially attract more widespread attention.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

This Catalyst involves establishing Wichita Falls as a hub for manufacturing entrepreneurship by developing facilities and a continuum of support services and programs that encourage the development of new product ideas and help small manufacturing firms grow and thrive.

The cornerstone of the initiative is the development of a makerspace – a collaborative space where individuals can gather, create, network, and learn – and an integrated business incubator in or near Downtown Wichita Falls. The “maker movement” represents an ideal entry point into manufacturing entrepreneurship. The movement is the evolution of “do it yourself” (DIY) production into a more sophisticated process whereby average individuals can utilize established and emerging technologies to produce sophisticated prototypes and products. The movement has been rapidly spreading across the country, largely through the creation of common fabrication labs or “makerspaces” complete with necessary tools and resources where inventors and “makers” can convene and tinker. Wichita Falls already has a nascent makerspace, Sarek Labs, and the community further demonstrated interest in the maker movement in October 2017 with the inaugural Texoma Mini Maker Faire event that drew approximately 1,000 participants.

At the most basic level, a makerspace allows individuals to utilize various types of technologies and equipment that would be difficult or impossible to access otherwise. Technologies frequently include 3D printing and scanning, design software, laser cutting and engraving, metalworking and woodworking tools and machinery, and so on. Many facilities also offer a range of training and education programs, networking events, and so on. Some also have built-in business incubators that can help transition a promising idea into marketable products and nurture small and new firms into companies with high growth potential. This Catalyst calls for Wichita Falls to take an integrated approach to supporting manufacturing entrepreneurship.

Corporate structures and funding models vary, but makerspaces are frequently non-profit entities that are funded through a combination of membership dues and corporate, university, and/or philanthropic support. Some facilities also create additional revenue streams by offering contract production services, professional consulting, and mentoring. In addition to an integrated makerspace with an incubator, Wichita Falls should also provide a range of services and support to help small and startup manufacturing firms scale. Growing a manufacturing business can be an expensive proposition with significant upfront capital requirements. There are several ways in which these barriers to entry can be lowered. One is to provide subsidized, flexible physical spaces in which new and small manufacturing firms can grow. Some communities do this through a single, dedicated facility, but this could also be accomplished through offering reduced rents at publicly-owned buildings and business parks to well-qualified “homegrown” companies.

Another means of support is “economic gardening,” a proven model that provides customized support to second-stage firms that are poised for growth by helping them identify new markets and sales leads, develop new business relationships, and optimize their existing business and marketing plans. Much of the market and business intelligence that the program provides would be expensive or otherwise difficult to obtain or develop for many firms. The Edward Lowe Foundation provides pilot program implementation assistance for communities interested in economic gardening. Finally, access to capital is a fundamental need for all new and growing firms – this Catalyst includes a Tactical Recommendation focused on addressing this challenge.

5.1 Establish a development plan for an entrepreneurial maker hub

- ∠ Convene a range of public, private, and non-profit community partners including the City of Wichita Falls, Midwestern State University, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, Sarek Labs, and others
- ∠ Create a development plan for an entrepreneurial maker hub centered on an integrated makerspace and business incubator to develop homegrown manufacturing firms and promote entrepreneurship in Wichita Falls
- ∠ The development plan should do the following:
 - Inventory existing programs and capacity
 - Establish desired initial programming and potential opportunities for expansion
 - Assess physical space and resource needs
 - Identify potential locations and examine options to purchase, lease, or assume control of a viable space
 - Identify a desired business model and corporate structure
 - Develop an initial budget
 - Determine partner commitments and create a resource development strategy
- ∠ The development plan should also establish acceptance criteria and commitment guidelines for the business incubator; participants should be incorporated firms with products that are beyond the idea stage, are making sales or are ready to do so, and are willing to commit to a program lasting 9-18 months; task professional staff (see Tactical Recommendation 5.2) with providing coaching and mentoring to incubator participants and developing additional incubator programming
- ∠ When creating the development plan, evaluate whether additional entrepreneurial resources – e.g. a branch of the Midwestern State Small Business Development Center (SBDC) – could be co-located with the facility in order to increase their visibility

- ∠ Other initial programming could reasonably include the following:
 - A program to engage high school and college students in tinkering and creating at the makerspace – could develop partnerships with the Career Education Center, Vernon College, Midwestern State’s mechanical engineering program, etc.
 - Instructional classes and community workshops
 - “Pre-incubator” mentoring services for tinkerers and inventors seeking to turn ideas into workable prototypes
 - Programs or support for individuals and small firms in the aerospace parts manufacturing sector
 - Networking events for makers and entrepreneurs

BEST PRACTICE #15: Next Fab (Philadelphia PA and Wilmington, DE)

BEST PRACTICE #16: Idea Foundry (Columbus, OH)

5.2 Retain professional staff to program and operate the makerspace and incubator

- ∠ Retain one or more professional staff to operate the facility and work with partners to develop programming
- ∠ The business incubator component must be overseen by a proven entrepreneur and/or an individual with significant experience running an incubator or accelerator
- ∠ Operating the makerspace component will involve providing hands-on assistance to users with a wide variety of interests and skill levels; could be more flexible and could involve both paid and volunteer staff

5.3 Establish the facility in Downtown Wichita Falls

- ∠ Purchase, lease, or assume control of an appropriate facility in Downtown Wichita Falls to take advantage of the area’s compact, amenity-rich environment that appeals to innovators
- ∠ Work with local businesses to donate depreciated or surplus equipment such as laser cutters, sign cutters, and milling machines to the facility
- ∠ Ensure that the facility has adequate co-working and meeting space to accommodate a business incubator; could also outfit the facility with a commercial kitchen to promote food-based businesses, and a common area for networking and social events to establish a more active gathering space for entrepreneurs
- ∠ Offer “scholarships” or other financial offsets for low-income residents, students, veterans, military spouses/partners, and other groups to ensure equitable access to the facility

5.4 Launch a pilot “economic gardening” program to assist promising “second-stage” manufacturing firms

- ∠ Engage the Edward Lowe Foundation-led program to launch a pilot program
- ∠ Develop necessary resources and staff capacity to support the program
- ∠ Identify and recruit five eligible second-stage firms to participate in the program
 - According to the Edward Lowe Foundation, second-stage companies are those that have grown past the startup stage but are not yet mature. They typically have annual revenues between \$1 and \$50 million and likely do not have a full-scale professional management team.
- ∠ If successful, expand the program to additional community businesses

BEST PRACTICE #17: Economic Gardening program (Littleton, CO)

5.5 Provide affordable flex space to help small and startup manufacturing firms grow

- ∠ Work with the Wichita Falls Economic Development Corporation (WFEDC), economic development professionals, and other stakeholders to identify options for providing flex space capable of accommodating the production and business operations of startup manufacturing firms for free or at significantly below-market rates
- ∠ Evaluate the feasibility of converting an underutilized WFEDC-owned asset into a dedicated home for manufacturing firms that are startups or new to the community and working to scale up; could be operated as an extension of the business incubator established in Tactical Recommendation 5.2

5.6 Expand access to capital for homegrown manufacturing firms with growth potential

- ∠ Engage Texoma Angels, local financial institutions, and high net-worth individuals to increase investment in well-qualified Wichita Falls-based manufacturing firms with high growth potential
- ∠ Evaluate the feasibility of reviving the Wichita Falls Growth Fund with a focus on homegrown manufacturing
- ∠ Could identify firms through the business incubator and economic gardening programs established in 5.2 and 5.3
- ∠ Evaluate the feasibility of establishing small grants for firms with aerospace product ideas and veteran-owned businesses to leverage existing community strengths and activate new entrepreneurs

6. A Live-Work-Play Downtown

Further establish Downtown Wichita Falls as a vibrant, mixed-use destination to create a major quality of place amenity for current and prospective residents.

As previously discussed, a skilled and educated workforce is the most important factor for determining a community's future economic success. And now more than ever, talented individuals are placing a strong emphasis on quality of place when determining where to live. Research also suggests that a community's aesthetics and social offerings – how a place looks and what there is to do – have an important impact on “attaching” individuals to the place they live. The public input process revealed that Wichita Falls residents generally feel their community is a great place to live with a value proposition rooted in a low cost of living, short commute times, public safety, and a family-oriented atmosphere. But input also revealed that the community must improve its social offerings if it is to better attach current and future residents. Specifically, stakeholders said they would especially like to see more “everyday” places (e.g. restaurants, bars, and coffee shops) to gather and meet people.

Market forces play an important role in determining the quantity and type of social amenities available in a given place. But many communities have successfully leveraged public investments and developed enhanced programming to attract new private developments and business activities that help make vibrant and attractive places. But because resources are limited, these types of investments must be targeted. Accordingly, many communities have focused their efforts on revitalizing their historic downtowns due to their abundance of existing infrastructure, walkable character, and relative density. Fortunately, Downtown Wichita Falls is already in the midst of a renaissance, and significant planning work is underway to see that it continues. This Catalyst focuses on ways to complement and support this progress.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** Stakeholders identified sustaining downtown momentum as a top community priority. And in the economic development world, vibrant mixed-use districts are seen as a crucial factor in attracting and retaining talent and businesses.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** Over time, a more vibrant Downtown will help boost the community's competitiveness and, in turn, create more prosperity-increasing economic activity.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** This Catalyst aims to directly improve the community's vibrancy and aesthetics through new housing and amenities, infrastructure upgrades, etc.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** A vibrant, mixed-use Downtown provides a space where people of all types can gather.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** Recent progress has already boosted community pride and further progress would positively influence the first impressions of visitors.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Economic development frequently happens at the intersection of free enterprise and public policy. This is especially true with issues of downtown development. In the past few decades, private investment has flowed into historic downtowns around the nation as market preferences have shifted away from purely auto-oriented development patterns and toward walkable neighborhoods with a mixture of uses. But the public sector has also played a significant role and many downtown revitalization success stories might not have happened at all without leadership and financial backing of local governments and related entities such as redevelopment authorities.

This trend holds true in Wichita Falls, where public support has leveraged an influx of private investment and creativity. As a recent example, a private developer is revitalizing the Petroleum Building on Scott Avenue with housing geared toward Midwestern State students and ground-floor retail. The project would not have been workable without an \$800,000 investment from the Wichita Falls 4B Sales Tax Corporation, which the organization's board approved in December 2017. The public and private sector are also working together around the Downtown Development Steering Committee, a city-led group dedicated to addressing a wide range of issues impacting downtown redevelopment – regulations, incentives, streetscapes and so on. In October 2017, the group retained a consulting group to assist with its planning activities.

Put simply, Downtown Wichita Falls already has significant private-sector momentum and public-sector support. This Catalyst focuses on additional public and private efforts that, in Market Street's opinion, are needed to complement ongoing efforts in Downtown Wichita Falls and advance the community toward becoming the type of live-work-play environment that residents desire.

Stakeholder feedback revealed that while the community has strong capabilities to support the marketing and event programming of Downtown, there is not a staff position dedicated solely to pursuing and supporting actual downtown development. This Catalyst proposes creating a new staff position to serve as the "point person" for attracting new investment in Downtown Wichita Falls.

Public input also revealed that many of the logical "next steps" for Downtown Wichita Falls will involve capital intensive projects including public infrastructure such as streetscapes and new housing and supportive neighborhood retail that would likely require some level of a public-private partnership in order to be economically viable. The Downtown Development Steering Committee is evaluating numerous options along these lines; Tactical Recommendations in this Catalyst support the advancement of tools and policies that can move the district further toward being a true live-work-play area. Finally, this section also includes recommendations to further activate the Kay Yeager Coliseum and MPEC and market Downtown Wichita Falls to internal and external audiences.

6.1 Support the Downtown Development Steering Committee's work to create a favorable environment for investment in Downtown Wichita Falls

- ∠ Continue to build community support for the work of the Downtown Development Steering Committee
- ∠ With the Committee and other downtown stakeholders, evaluate whether participation in the Main Street America program would be advantageous for Downtown Wichita Falls
- ∠ Enlist a wide range of downtown stakeholders and community partners to amplify the groups findings and recommendations and build a "business case" for why investment in Downtown Wichita Falls is important for the entire community, not just the neighborhood itself

6.2 Create professional "economic development" staff capacity dedicated to grow investment and increase quality of place in Downtown

- ∠ Identify or create a staff position devoted primarily to promoting development, redevelopment, and private investment in Downtown Wichita Falls to complement existing marketing staff capacity
- ∠ Retain an individual with significant experience in leading a downtown or community development organization; task the new staff person with serving as the "point person" for all things related to downtown development
- ∠ Seek to incentivize the development of new housing and supportive neighborhood retail (e.g. pharmacy, grocery, dry cleaning, etc.) in Downtown Wichita Falls; continue work with the Downtown Development Steering Committee to optimize zoning and development regulations and examine all available incentive options to support this development
- ∠ Work with economic development staff and others to identify developers interested in creating residential product in Downtown Wichita Falls
- ∠ Create an inventory of all "second-floor" spaces (essentially, all space available in downtown buildings above street level) to identify opportunities to create new residential spaces in existing buildings; this would ensure that potential developers are connected to all available incentive opportunities, including historic tax credits, etc.

BEST PRACTICE #18: Center City Housing Incentive Policy (San Antonio, TX)

6.3 Establish a business improvement district (BID) to fund downtown infrastructure upgrades

- ∠ Convene representatives from City of Wichita Falls and downtown property owners to establish a BID (sometimes referred to as a public improvement district) to fund infrastructure improvements; this could potentially also fund services such as public safety and beautification
- ∠ If appropriate, leverage BID revenue to catalyze redevelopment by defraying development costs associated with hardscapes, parking infrastructure, utility upgrades, and/or relocations, etc.

- Note: the Downtown Development Steering Committee's finance subcommittee is evaluating a BID as one potential option for funding improvements in Downtown Wichita Falls identified through the Committee

6.4 Continue to pursue the development of a hotel adjacent to the Kay Yeager Coliseum and MPEC to further activate the facilities

- ∠ Continue to convene relevant stakeholders including elected and appointed officials, economic development professionals, and representatives from the Wichita Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau to seek the development of a hotel that would make the community and its facilities more attractive for meetings, conventions, and other events
- ∠ Continue to work with accommodation industry experts and development professionals to identify potential private-sector partners and evaluate the need for public participation in the project

6.5 Launch a multi-faceted marketing strategy for Downtown Wichita Falls

- ∠ Convene partners including the Downtown Wichita Falls Development organization, the CVB, downtown business and property owners, and others to advance the effort
- ∠ Retain a communications firm with significant experience in place-based marketing to craft a brand identity for Downtown Wichita Falls and develop and execute a multi-channel marketing strategy for Wichita Falls; potential components of the strategy could include social media, targeted online advertisements, and advertisements in traditional media outlets in nearby markets
- ∠ The campaign should also include an earned media component that seeks to seed positive stories about Downtown Wichita Falls in respected media outlets; earned media is generally coverage that is "won" as opposed to "bought" and is regarded as highly credible – and in many cases more cost efficient than other forms of external marketing
- ∠ Work with the CVB to pursue conventions and meetings that would likely increase patronage of downtown businesses

BEST PRACTICE #19: Earned media and public relations activities (Chattanooga, TN)

7. A Bicycle Friendly Community

Become a League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Community to raise quality of life, attract and retain talent, and cultivate an organic external identity for Wichita Falls

Throughout the public input process, stakeholders identified two interrelated issues as being among the most pressing concerns in Wichita Falls. First, the community has trouble attracting and retaining talented individuals and their families, a belief that is well supported by data. Second, Wichita Falls is a relatively unknown community outside of the immediate North Texas region. Though the connection may not seem obvious at first, an ambitious plan to make Wichita Falls a bicycle-friendly community would significantly improve the community's attractiveness to talent and help create a positive, organic identity for the community well beyond its immediate surroundings. Doing so would also have numerous other public health, equity, and quality of life benefits.

A primary impetus for this Catalyst is the already strong association between Wichita Falls and cycling. The Hotter'N'Hell Hundred race and the numerous events that take place around it on a weekend each August is one of the biggest points of pride in the community. The event attracts more than 13,000 riders from around the world. Leveraging this success with infrastructure, programs, and policies to promote an everyday bicycle culture would allow Wichita Falls to cultivate a memorable external identity that can stand out in a crowded (and costly) talent and place-based marketing field.

Making bicycle use attractive, safe, and convenient on an everyday basis could also significantly improve the community's attractiveness to talent, especially young professionals. In 2015, the Urban Land Institute surveyed 1,202 adults to determine the types of environments in which they prefer to live and the community attributes with which they wish to surround themselves. Approximately 63 percent of Millennial respondents (ages 18 to 36) said they prefer to live in a place where they do not need to use a car often compared to 49 percent of Baby Boomers (ages 50 to 68) who said the same. Respondents to the online survey in Wichita Falls identified the ability to access shops, restaurants, and services without a car as a community weakness, with nearly 57 percent rating this factor "very poor" or "below average."

Improving conditions for bicycling could help residents access jobs and amenities without using a car, which would serve as an attractive complement to Wichita Falls' short automobile commute times and lack of traffic congestion. Enhancing bicycle infrastructure could also promote greater equity, as it would open up more opportunities for individuals who do not have access to car. It would also increase recreational opportunities and promote active lifestyles, which can have significant public health benefits.

This Catalyst focuses on ways in which Wichita Falls can embrace bicycling to achieve many benefits at a low cost relative to other types of major infrastructure projects. To guide its efforts, Wichita Falls can follow a "roadmap" established by the League of American Bicyclists and, ultimately, seek recognition from this organization as a Bicycle Friendly Community.

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY GOALS

- ∠ **Attract and retain residents and businesses:** Having the option to access jobs, retail, and other amenities without a car is an important factor for many individuals when making decisions about where to live; this is especially true for younger workers.
- ∠ **Increase prosperity for all residents:** Supporting and encouraging active transportation can improve public health, create new recreational opportunities, and expand access to amenities.
- ∠ **Enhance quality of life and quality of place:** Enhanced bicycle infrastructure and programming would directly improve connectivity.
- ∠ **Promote inclusivity and equity:** For people without access to a car, quality bicycle infrastructure can be an important link to jobs and services. An ambitious citywide program could also help advance revitalization efforts in areas that have suffered from disinvestment.
- ∠ **Improve internal and external perceptions of Wichita Falls:** Hotter’N’Hell is among the most important influences on the community’s external identity. Leaning into this image could help Wichita Falls stand out in a crowded place-based marketing landscape.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Bicycling already plays an important role in Wichita Falls. The Hotter’N’Hell Hundred race (and its associated events) is both a well-loved local event and a significant part of the region’s external identity. This Catalyst focuses on ways that Wichita Falls can become a bicycle friendly place every day of the year for riders of all abilities, not just serious cyclists. The League of American Bicyclists is widely regarded as the respected authority for recognizing bicycling best practices in communities in the United States. The organization’s Bicycle Friendly Community program provides a “roadmap” for communities to follow in becoming bicycle friendly. Communities who follow the necessary steps and apply can receive a designation as a Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, or Diamond Bicycle Friendly Community. Since the program’s inception in 1995, the League has received more than 1,500 bicycle friendly community applications; 430 communities are currently recognized as Bicycle Friendly Communities with an additional 100 receiving an honorable mention. Bicycle Friendly Communities in Texas include Austin at the Gold level and Brownsville, El Paso, Fort Worth, Frisco, Houston, Plano, Richardson, San Antonio, and The Woodlands at the Bronze level.

The core of this strategic approach is built around achieving a Bronze designation for Wichita Falls in the first five years of strategic implementation. The League does not establish exact standards for what constitutes a Bronze, as its designations are based on both objective and subjective criteria. But receiving Bicycle Friendly Community designation generally involves factors such as bicycle-friendly laws, education and public outreach, infrastructure expansion, bike program staff, active bike clubs and signature events, and so on. Before proceeding, it should be noted that the “community” with respect to this Catalyst is the City of Wichita Falls given its population and relative density, though other parts of the region could participate or work on parallel approaches if desired. The League also offers Bicycle Friendly designations for individual employers and higher education institutions.

7.1 Continue to promote Hotter’N’Hell as a preeminent destination event

- ∠ Continue to support race organizers in efforts to make Hotter’N’Hell a world-renowned event
- ∠ Evaluate whether an increase in marketing expenditures would lead to more participants and a positive return on investment for the community (in the form of additional tax revenue and exposure)
- ∠ Leverage event to promote bicycling and showcase new programs and infrastructure to residents and visitors and drive media coverage

7.2 Prioritize completion of the Wichita Falls Circle Trail

- ∠ Support development of local resources and continue to pursue Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants and other public and private monies to complete the full 25-mile Wichita Falls Circle Trail

7.3 Commission a new bicycle master plan for Wichita Falls

- ∠ Retain an infrastructure planning firm with significant bicycle expertise to develop an updated bicycle master plan for the City of Wichita Falls (the most recent full bicycle planning process was completed more than 10 years ago by the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization)
- ∠ Ensure that the plan focuses on bicycle infrastructure that promotes usage by cyclists of all ability levels (e.g. buffered bike lanes, cycle tracks, grade-separated infrastructure, etc.)
- ∠ Ensure that the plan considers strong bicycle connections between Sheppard Air Force Base and other community hubs such as Downtown Wichita Falls (see Tactical Recommendation 4.5)
- ∠ Develop design guidelines and planning for an initial network of infrastructure; conduct an extensive public input process and work with all relevant local, regional, and state government entities to ensure design guidelines are compliant with regulations and other implementation considerations
- ∠ Evaluate all local regulations and ordinances (e.g. City Standards) that cover streets and other infrastructure to ensure that they are in keeping with the new design guidelines; ensure that whenever regularly scheduled maintenance or upgrades occur (e.g. resurfacings) that bicycle infrastructure is implemented automatically

7.4 Create organizational and staff capacity to advance bicycling in Wichita Falls

- ∠ Convene public and private partners to create and resource a new 501(c)(3) or a dedicated account or division within an existing foundation or non-profit to advance bicycling in Wichita Falls
- ∠ Professional staff capacity to support bicycling is a critical aspect of achieving a Bicycle Friendly Community designation (the typical Bronze community has one bicycle staff person per 77,000 residents); work with public and private partners to resource a Bicycle Coordinator staff position within the new organization or division to serve as the point-person for bicycle issues in Wichita Falls
- ∠ Program of work would include but not necessarily be limited to the following:

- Educating and informing the public on bicycle issues
- Receiving grants and other funds and potentially funding some infrastructure upgrades
- Implementing programs to increase equity and access to bicycling, e.g. a “bikes for kids” initiative to rehabilitate old bicycles to ensure that every child in Wichita Falls has access to a bicycle, beginning with children in low-income households
- Working with local employers to promote bicycle friendly policies and facilities to help overcome climatic barriers to biking to work (shower and locker facilities, etc.)

7.5 Pursue a high-impact “example project” and other quick wins to begin building out an enhanced bicycle infrastructure network

- ∠ Convene public and private partners to resource and implement a highly visible bicycle infrastructure project to demonstrate concepts outlined in the updated master plan (see Tactical Recommendation 7.2)
- ∠ Pursue the early implementation of low-cost upgrades such as signage, permanent or temporary lane restripings and buffers, and so on to further enhance visibility in a short amount of time
- ∠ Seek to concentrate and connect all early improvements to enhance their value and begin building out a usable network
- ∠ Hold “Streets Alive” festivals that temporarily close down streets in a given area (typically on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon) to showcase active street uses; could be paired with additional temporary infrastructure (see Best Practice #20)

BEST PRACTICE #20: Macon Connects (Macon, GA)

7.6 Complete other necessary steps to achieve a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community designation

- ∠ Leverage the organizational and professional staff capacity established in Tactical Recommendation 7.3 to coordinate efforts to achieve a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclists in the first five years of implementation
- ∠ With the Bronze designation achieved, work with partners to begin plotting necessary steps to achieve additional levels

7.7 Promote improvements to infrastructure and culture through a publicity campaign centered on earned media

- ∠ Work with a public relations or communications firm with high-quality contacts at media outlets to seed positive news stories about momentum of bicycle-friendly initiative once it has achieved early wins; this would ideally be carried out in conjunction with the downtown marketing campaign discussed in Tactical Recommendation 6.6
- ∠ Evaluate the feasibility of pursuing earned media placements and limited targeted advertisements geared toward talent that could be interested in relocating to a community with a commitment to bicycle infrastructure

APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICES

#1: ALIGNMENT NASHVILLE (NASHVILLE, TN)

alignmentnashville.org

Emerging from a study conducted by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, Alignment Nashville brings community organizations and resources into alignment so that their coordinated support of Nashville's youth has a maximum impact on public schools success, children's health, and the success of Nashville's community as a whole. Alignment Nashville integrates the efforts of over 175 nonprofit organizations, ensuring that their work aligns with the strategic plans of the Metro Nashville Public School System, and other local community plans.

Alignment Nashville is overseen by a board of directors and operating board, consisting of Metro Nashville Public Schools administrators and community organization executives. The board also develops direction and processes for the initiative's working committees. Greater returns on investment, higher quality services, enhanced capacity, and better leveraging of local funding are goals of Alignment Nashville.

Alignment Nashville was utilized during the creation of the Metro Nashville Public Schools' 2007-14 Strategic Plan developed by the Cambridge Group. The program was funded by public and private entities throughout Metro Nashville.

Alignment USA was formed out by Alignment Nashville and is a network of communities that share the common principles, structure, process, and technology. Network communities include Honolulu, HI; Elgin, IL; Detroit, MI; Rockford, IL; and Coachella Valley, CA; among others.

#2: STRIVE PARTNERSHIP (CINCINNATI, OH)

www.strivetgether.org

The Strive Partnership in Metro Cincinnati is a 501(c)3 coalition of early childhood advocates, district superintendents, college and university presidents, community funders, business leaders, and service providers united around shared issues, goals and measurements, and results. With a motto of "Every Child, Every Step of the Way, From Cradle to Career," the Partnership seeks to serve as a catalyst for working together across sectors and along the entire educational continuum to drive better results in education. The guiding goals of the Strive Partnership are that every child is prepared for school, every child is supported inside and outside of school, every child succeeds academically, every child enrolls in some form of postsecondary education, and every child graduates and enters a career.

The Strive Partnership is guided by data driven decision-making, facilitating and sustaining coordinated action, and advocating for and aligning funding around what works. To measure success, the Strive Partnership tracks its progress relative to: kindergarten readiness; reading and math achievement; high school graduation rates; average ACT scores; and college enrollment, completion, and retention. The

StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network was born out of the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati and assists other communities in implementing the StriveTogether framework. It has grown to include over 70 community partnerships in 31 states and Washington D.C. Some of the network members include:

- E3 Alliance (Austin, TX)
- ImpactTulsa (Tulsa, OK)
- Boston Opportunity Agenda (Boston, MA)
- KConnect (Grand Rapids, MI)
- Milwaukee Succeeds (Milwaukee, WI)
- Generation Next (Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN)

#3: KINDERGARTEN READINESS PROGRAM (MARIN COUNTY, CA)

The Marin Community Foundation's focus on early childhood learning stemmed from the realization that fewer than one in five of Marin County's African American or Latino high school students were prepared for a post-secondary education upon graduation. As part of a multifaceted effort, the Marin Community Foundation developed the kindergarten readiness program to increase the number of low-income and children of color who were prepared for academic success. Though the foundation has assets that far exceed those of many other community foundations, its initiatives can work at a variety of scales. Accessibility is a cornerstone of the program. The Marin Community Foundation ensures that its kindergarten readiness program is accessible to low-income and children of color through three primary initiatives:

- ✓ **Reading on Ranches:** With the assistance of family advocates and volunteers, the Reading on Ranches program provides children in remote, rural, and underserved areas in Marin County with rich literacy experiences over the summer to ensure the retain their literary skills by visiting children at their homes.
- ✓ **Home Visit Program:** Similar to Reading on Ranches, the Home Visit Program engages home visitors who provide a preschool experience to children who would have otherwise not had the opportunity to attend preschool before their kindergarten enrollment. Home visitors visit two families a day, five days a week with a maximum caseload of six families.
- ✓ **Families Learning and Growing (FLAG):** The FLAG program is a year-round preschool-on-wheels that travels throughout Marin County providing free early learning services to underserved families whose children are not currently enrolled in preschool. The preschool-on-wheels provides 75 minute-long classes which include circle-time, interactive stories, art projects, and various other school readiness activities.

The Marin Community Foundation encourages and applies philanthropic investment to help improve the human condition, embrace diversity, promote a humane and democratic society, and enhance Marin County's quality of life.

#4: PARENT UNIVERSITY (MESA, AZ)

mpsaz.org/parentu/

With the philosophy that parenting is a continuous learning process and that the foundation for a child's education is laid at home, the Mesa Public School system launched a Parent University program in 1987.³ The diverse offering of sessions and workshops, held in junior high school auditoriums and other local school sites, now boasts attendance rates of 4,000 parents annually. Programming is offered in both English and Spanish. The program is publicized through radio announcements, target fliers, brochures sent home with every student, and announcements in the monthly district newsletter. Topics for sessions are relevant, often specifically requested by parents, and led by local and national speakers and experts. In 2016, Parent University offered approximately 46 courses during its fall semester.

Parent University is funded through a small registration fee for participants, grants, partnerships with local nonprofit agencies like Mesa United Way. Scholarships are available for those parents who are unable to meet the registration fee.

#5: DREAM IT DO IT (OKLAHOMA)

dreamitdoitok.org

Developed by OK2Grow, the Dream It Do It program cultivates the next generation of makers, builders, and manufacturing workers by showcasing career opportunities available in the manufacturing sector. Through classroom visits, internships, job shadowing, educator and student tours of manufacturing facilities, career fairs, and collaborative training programs, Dream It Do It alters negative perceptions of manufacturing careers held by many students, parents, and educators. Along with providing direct experiences through factory tours, internships, and job shadowing programs, Dream It Do It provides supportive materials aimed at educating students about the real manufacturing workplace environment. Such instructional materials include lesson plans covering manufacturing in the 21st century, designing and building a robot, and designing and building a shoe along with practical, non-manufacturing specific lesson plans on professionalism, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking.

In 2016, nearly 16 students across nine school districts participated in "signing day" where local companies provide paid internship opportunities to rising juniors and seniors during the semester. Local public partners are highly engaged in "signing day," the city of Tulsa employed 15 students at its municipal garage in 2016.

³ Mesa Public Schools. "History of Parent University" Mesa Public Schools. 2016. Accessed December, 6th 2016 at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3vu91yYQEP-S2hmd0tBN01QeWs/view>

#6: CINCINNATI YOUTH COLLABORATIVE (CINCINNATI, OH)

cycyouth.org

For over 30 years, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) has actively engaged the business community, the Cincinnati Public Schools, and local organizations and governments to take a collaborative approach to tackling dropout rates and empowering children and young adults to succeed in education, career, and life. The program offers one-on-one mentoring for students as young as second grade and continues on through high school. Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees once a week for at least a year. They also offer tutoring services, college advisors, and career specialists in an effort to keep students in school and on the pathway to success. In 2014, CYC had 40 dedicated staff members, 1,300 volunteers, and 59 corporate partners. Overall, 2,900 students were served, and the program had tremendous success. Reports show that 96% of senior students in CYC programs graduated from high school and 88% of seniors successfully transitioned to college, career, or military.

#7: REACH OUT TO DROPOUTS (HOUSTON, TX)

houstonisd.org/Page/32112

The Reach Out to Dropouts initiative was first implemented by the Houston Independent School District (HISD) in 2004 as a means to re-engage students who had recently dropped out of high school. In its short history, its success has led to similar programs launching in 24 other Texas cities and communities across the country. A vast network of community volunteers (concerned citizens, teachers, administrators, business leaders, and the United Way) support the program by walking door-to-door in teams to visit the families of students that have not re-enrolled in school within the first few weeks of a new school year or failed to graduate the previous year. The 10th annual event held in September 2015 featured 18 school districts participating across greater Houston.

#8: GREATER GRADS (OKLAHOMA, OK)

greatergrads.com

Greater Grads is an initiative of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's Education and Workforce Development division. It launched in 2006 to build Oklahoma City's talent base by connecting Oklahoma graduates—a vital component of the City's future workforce—with employers in the Oklahoma City region. These connections will help Oklahoma City's flourishing economy, creating even more opportunities in the years to come. Upon recognizing that the Oklahoma City region was experiencing brain drain and that it is home to over 120,000 college students every year—with regional higher education enrollment as large as Boston or Philadelphia—the Chamber launched a targeted effort necessary to focus those students on opportunities available to the locally.

The program consists of three parts:

- ✓ InternOKC summer program: Interns can be enrolled in this four week series that includes a kick-off session and four lunch sessions that highlight the benefits of living and working in the Oklahoma City region. This fosters peer networking and provides resources to help students transition from college to career.
- ✓ Greater Grads Career Fair: The career fair is held each spring with more than 100 recruiters from local companies. A link on the Greater Grads website provides attendees with resume and interviewing tips to maximize their success and efficiently utilize the time of participating employers.
- ✓ Website for graduates and employers: This website focuses on promoting Oklahoma City to recent college graduates and young professionals and connecting them with jobs available at local businesses.

In just the first six months of the site's launch, traffic increased by 300 percent. Site data shows that the average length of stay is 10 minutes, which is 400 percent above Greater Grad's goal of two minutes (generally considered the standard benchmark for successful sites). Ten internships were posted on GreaterGrads.com at its launch; now the website features over 100 during peak intern hiring periods.

A year after Greater Grads' debut, a partnership was formed with the Alliance of Emerging Professionals (AEP), Oklahoma City's young professionals group. These recent college graduates returned to their campuses to promote the Greater Grads program and website to college students during monthly AEP social events.

Greater Grads is one of the primary programs of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's Education and Workforce Development department and a direct tactic of the Chamber's economic development strategy. It is staffed by a full-time manager of education and outreach programs.

#9: YES FOR MISSOULA SCHOOLS (MISSOULA COUNTY, MT)

In Missoula County (population 116,130), critical facility maintenance at the county's public schools had been put off for decades and its school buildings were in desperate need of modernization and repair. The average age of the county's school buildings was 57 years and many had been built more than 100 years ago. In response, two school bonds were put on the November 2015 ballot. The bonds would generate a total of \$158 million to pay for the necessary building improvements and technology infrastructure upgrades at each of the 17 schools in the county.

In order to get enough support for the bonds and voters voting yes, an organized campaign was launched and a top PR firm was hired. The Citizens Committee, Invest in Missoula Schools, led the effort and organized hundreds of resident volunteers to spread the word and secure votes. The two bonds also received endorsements from key groups such as the Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce, the Missoula Organization of Realtors, and all of the local unions, among others. Overall, there was a broad coalition of supporters which included more than 500 community leaders, business owners, and elected officials that publicly

endorsed the bonds and donated time and financial support to ensure that all voters were properly informed about the school facility needs.

The Chamber was vocal in its support and its Board of Directors voted unanimously to support both bonds while also encouraging its members to give their endorsement for the bonds. The Chamber's advocacy center website listed a rundown of school facility needs and other literature to educate individuals about the bonds. The Board Chair and past Board Chair also co-wrote a guest column in the local newspaper titled, "High-quality schools help drive local economy: It's time to invest in our schools." In it, they called on voters to invest in the community, its children, and its future. They also underscored the importance that quality schools have on the economy both from the standpoint of a skilled workforce and in terms of talent attraction stating that many professionals assess the public schools before deciding to relocate their children to Missoula.

In November 2015, local voters passed the \$70 million high school bond and \$88 million elementary bond, and Missoula County Public Schools secured the necessary funds to pay for local school maintenance, renovations, remodeling, technology upgrades, and security updates.

#10: GROWMETROTULSA.COM (TULSA, OK)

growmetrotulsa.com

GrowMetroTulsa.com is the primary economic development website for the Tulsa region. The website houses a number of print collateral materials available for download including brochures on each of its target industries and its award-winning general purpose print brochure, *Grow in a Vibrant Region*, a multi-purpose full-color brochure highlighting Tulsa and the surrounding region.

The Tulsa Regional Chamber's digital marketing campaign was recently recognized by IEDC in its 2017 Excellence in Economic Development awards. The Digital Marketing Campaign was a very successful, low-cost per contact marketing program that created online ads promoting GrowMetroTulsa.com to a highly targeted group of individuals. Print and digital marketing efforts included outreach to site location consultants, real estate staff, and companies considering relocation. In 2016, they mailed business development post cards highlighting the diverse and growing region to more than 1,100 consultants and national contacts. Additionally, more than 1,000 site location consultants received the Tulsa's Future monthly consultant newsletter focusing on new business announcements and quality of life amenities.



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#11: AUGUSTAVABUSINESS.COM (AUGUSTA COUNTY, VA)

augustaVAbusiness.com

Augusta County's 2016 redesign of its Economic Development website is a living extension of the County's economic development efforts. The site offers real-time accessibility for industrial prospects, site selection consultants, existing or new businesses looking to build or expand, small business, and entrepreneurs. Augusta County's growth, agricultural foundation, workforce, location and access, and speed-to-market as well as educational and healthcare systems all influence the positioning statement – Augusta County, VA: where industrial growth meets exceptionally beautiful living.

Augusta County Economic Development won a Gold Excellence in Economic Development Award for its website, augustaVAbusiness.com, a project in the category of General Purpose Website of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in 2017. The website provides all of the necessary information on starting, locating, and expanding a business in the county such as sites and buildings, incentives, demographics, and small business resources. Additionally, there is information on quality of life and target industries. Its resources include downloadable infographics, overviews, and reports with relevant information on the workforce, target sectors, transportation, and overall key indicators. Users are also able to make customized reports that compile the requested information into one seamless PDF.


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WHY AUGUSTA COUNTY



HAPPY & TALENTED WORKFORCE
Our skilled workforce enjoys exceptional livability



AGRICULTURE
We are the second largest agriculture producer in VA with a vertical linkage between suppliers and buyers



SPEED-TO-MARKET
Speed-to-market can be measured in days, not months



LOCATION & ACCESS
Mid-Atlantic location in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, where I-81 and I-64 converge



GROWTH
\$200+ million in investment in the past three years



LOW COST OF DOING BUSINESS
Low tax rates and labor costs below the national average

#12: GREATER DES MOINES PARTNERSHIP INCLUSION COUNCIL (DES MOINES, IA)

dsmpartnership.com/growing-business-here/business-resources/inclusion

The Greater Des Moines Partnership is the economic and community development organization serving the Greater Des Moines, Iowa region. One of the Partnership's many initiatives is an Inclusion Council that seeks to promote a diverse and inclusive community. The Council is comprised of representatives from the region's businesses, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. It seeks to act as a "catalyst to mobilize the business community toward a broad economic development vision that incorporates all people as valued contributors and valuable customers." Its program of work includes quarterly multicultural receptions, webinars, an inclusion-focused magazine, and support for an international talent strategy.

#13: MADISON REGION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & DIVERSITY SUMMIT (MADISON, WI)

In 2013, the Madison Region's Economic Partnership (MadREP) and the Urban League of Greater Madison (ULGM) partnered to host a joint event on diversity and economic development for Madison Region businesses and community leaders. Now in its third year, the annual Summit focuses on the community's collective commitment to advancing talent, opportunity, and prosperity for all of its residents. Participants include hundreds of representatives from the eight-county Madison region and range from HR professionals and hiring managers to educators, entrepreneurs, elected officials, and emerging leaders.

Recognizing the link between diversity and economic growth and that thriving communities embody, embrace, and encourage diversity, Summit participants are committed to tackling economic, workforce, and community development issues in the Madison region. Each year, conversations held at the Summit focus on diversity and economic development, with the goal of molding the region to become a model for economic inclusion. Recent breakout session topics included "Building Business through Supplier Diversity," "Combating Implicit Bias in the Workplace," "Entrepreneurship in Communities of Color," and "Immigration and the Madison Region Workforce & Economy."

#14: CARPEDM (DES MOINES, IA)

seizedesmoines.com

Launched by the Greater Des Moines Partnership, CarpeDM (www.SeizeDesMoines.com) is a website that acts as a one-stop shop for new and prospective residents of the Greater Des Moines Area. CarpeDM provides a wealth of information for relocating residents including a relocation guide, local school and higher education systems, detailed neighborhood information as well as links to neighborhood resource organizations, and bus and air service infrastructure in the Greater Des Moines Area. Perhaps CarpeDM's strongest feature is its integration of the professional networking site LinkedIn. While browsing the interactive website, prospective new residents can connect with community members who have volunteered to be ambassadors for certain topic areas and local programs. For instance, new residents desiring to learn more about the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Des Moines can easily select an ambassador and connect with them through LinkedIn. To assist in generating content, the Greater Des Moines Partnership has leveraged the Greater Des Moines community by adding a "contribute content" feature. Once registered, CarpeDM users can create their own profile, connect with ambassadors through LinkedIn, add pages, edit content, and submit photos. The site also provides opportunities for users to get connected to job opportunities.

#15: NEXT FAB (PHILADELPHIA, PA; WILMINGTON, DE)

nextfab.com

NextFab is a network of three membership-based makerspaces that provides access to tools, technology, education, events, and services to makers of various backgrounds and skill levels. NextFab is aimed at both

individual makers as well as businesses and start-ups. Its services include education and startup programming and professional design, production, and placemaking services. Originally starting in South Philadelphia, NextFab has expanded to two additional locations – one in North Philadelphia and one in Wilmington, DE. Each of the locations is equipped with state-of-the-art tools and technology in a range of departments including 3D printing and scanning, design software, laser cutting and engraving, metalworking, textiles, jewelry, woodworking, and electronics. NextFab also offers contract services, which provide an additional revenue stream. Its professional contract services includes custom designs, consulting, prototyping, and fabrication services.

In addition to offering space, equipment, and educational programs, NextFab offers business accelerator and incubator programs to assist entrepreneurs in launching their products. Its 12-week RAPID Hardware Accelerator program focuses on helping hardware entrepreneurs jump-start their business. RAPID stands for Revenue through Advanced manufacturing, Product development, Innovation, and Design. The preferred applicant has a physical prototype, a patented technology, and a good estimate of market size. The program includes access to the facilities, equipment, educational services, funding, and business and technical consulting to assist with product development. Additionally, NextFab will invest up to \$25,000 in each of the accepted teams. Typically there are four to five teams accepted into each RAPID Hardware Accelerator program cohort. Its incubator program is a nine-month commitment with extensive programming such as business coaching, workshops, events, business competitions, and guest speakers. The program exposes members to client companies and a network of mentors.

#16: IDEA foundry (COLUMBUS, OH)

ideafoundry.com

Located in a renovated 100-yr old shoe factory, the Idea Foundry is a 60,000 square feet space with workshops, offices, working nooks, classrooms, and communal space. The first floor is home to a 20,000 square foot workshop which houses equipment, tools, and design/assembly space as well as a lobby and retail café. Its hundreds of tools range from 3D printers and table saws to precision lasers. On the second floor is 25,000 square feet of co-working space while the third floor has a roof-top deck for socializing and quiet nooks for private work. In addition to equipment and space, the Idea Foundry has classes with topics such as how to start a limited liability company and blacksmithing 101, as well as meetups and speakers on various topics. It also offers custom production, public speaking, and private consulting to help others launch makerspaces of their own.

The Idea Foundry was founded in 2008 and currently has a staff of 11 people. Its mission is to be a “place where furniture and sculpture and jewelry and drones and motorcycles and 3D printers and chess boards and video games come to life in the hands of artists, artisans, techies and entrepreneurs.” Its most recent expansion was in February 2017 with the opening of the second-floor co-working space with its 32 private offices, 10 to 15 dedicated desks, multiple meeting and class rooms, a kitchen, and open co-working space.

#17: ECONOMIC GARDENING PROGRAM (LITTLETON, CO)

Littleton, Colorado is a small town of less than 50,000 people, but the community's full-on embrace of economic gardening as a primary means of job creation has put them on the map in economic development circles. In 1987, Littleton suffered the sudden loss of over 7,000 jobs after missile manufacturer Martin Marietta (now Lockheed Martin) significantly downsized its workforce. As a result, Littleton implemented an economic gardening plan targeted at second stage companies, in order to spur significant job creation from existing small- and medium-sized businesses in lieu of aggressively recruiting businesses through tax incentives. Two decades later, Littleton has more than doubled its jobs base and more than tripled its sales tax revenue. Littleton's success in implementing its economic gardening program has drawn the interest of hundreds of other communities who have reached out to the City of Littleton to hear its success story. While Littleton represents a municipal example of a successful economic development program, numerous states and regional economic development authorities have also had success with pilot economic gardening programs. In one such example, 20 companies participated in a regional pilot program led by the Greater Rochester (NY) Enterprise that resulted in the creation of 117 new jobs at a cost of \$1,700 per job – much lower than the typical cost per job associated with incentive-based strategies.

#18: CENTER CITY HOUSING INCENTIVE POLICY (CCHIP) (SAN ANTONIO, TX)

sanantonio.gov/CCDO/IncentivesandPrograms/CCHIP

In 2012, San Antonio created the Center City Housing Incentive Policy as an incentive system focused on encouraging housing redevelopment within the greater downtown area. The incentives sought to promote new housing and activate the downtown through financial incentives for historic building rehabilitation, residential development, mixed-use retail and commercial space.

The as-of-right incentive program offered to eligible projects City of San Antonio Water System (SAWS) Impact Fee Waivers, up to a 15-year Real Property Tax Rebate (City ad valorem taxes only), up to \$7,500 per housing unit in a Low-Interest Loan (2% interest rate, forgivable in the Central Business District) and a Mixed-Use Forgivable Loan of up to \$20 per square foot of commercial office space and up to \$25 per square foot of retail space. Due to the as-of-right nature of the program, eligible projects qualified for incentives under CCHIP if they fell within the Greater Downtown Area and met the density requirement of at least 16 housing units per acre (or 8 units per acre for adaptive reuse or historic rehabilitation projects).

Between 2012 and 2017, there were 64 developments with 6,543 housing units and CCHIP awarded developers with over \$97 million worth of incentives. The program was considered a success in that it achieved 89 percent of its goal to create 7,500 housing units in downtown by 2020. In December 2017, a temporary moratorium was placed on administrative approvals of the CCHIP agreements. The system was halted in order to shift policies from a housing-first strategy into one that focuses on affordable housing.

#19: EARNED MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY (CHATTANOOGA, TN)

Ever since Walter Cronkite called Chattanooga the “dirtiest city in America” in the 1970s, the community has been focused on changing both its local realities and also external perceptions. Beginning in the 2000s, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, partnering with the region’s Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, contracted with a national public relations firm to try to change the outside perceptions of Chattanooga as a declining industrial city with few modern assets for companies, talent, or visitors.

Focusing on strengths such as its revitalized downtown, America’s first city-wide gigabit fiber network, emerging entrepreneurial climate, and other assets, the public relations (earned media) strategy has seen notable success. Since implementing the strategy, the Chattanooga region has been featured in hundreds of business media placements with more than 1 billion impressions worldwide in a wide range of national, regional trade and online outlets including The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, The Economist, Fortune, CNN, Fox Business News, CNBC, and The Huffington Post. The tourism and visitation campaign was also effective, with nearly 1 billion impressions showcasing Chattanooga in outlets such as ABC News, Birmingham Parent, Baltimore Sun, Chicago Tribune, Delta SKY, Forbes.com, Georgia Magazine, National Geographic Weekend, Preservation, and Southern Living.

#20: MACON CONNECTS (MACON, GA)

newtownmacon.com/macon-connects/

Macon, Georgia is a town 80 miles southeast of Atlanta with a population of around 150,000. In 2016, the community launched, Macon Connects, an initiative that stemmed from the city’s 2015 downtown master plan, Macon Action Plan (MAP), a comprehensive strategy to guide change and growth in the urban core. Macon Connects is a collaboration between the downtown Macon economic development nonprofit, Newtown Macon, Macon-Bibb County, Macon Urban Development Authority, Main Street Macon, the Better Block Foundation and 8 80 Cities.

After conducting public outreach, it was clear that residents overwhelmingly wanted more mobility options in Macon, ones that would allow residents to be less car-dependent. In September 2016, Macon Connects conducted a pop-up lane experiment to demonstrate to city officials the positive changes that designated bike lanes can have on the community. With more than 80 volunteers, the group installed the pop-up network which consisted of over five miles of connected bike infrastructure and formed the world’s largest pop up bike network. For the week that the pop-up ran, ridership on the lanes jumped to over 200 riders per day, and along the four corridors, bike counts increased from as little as 5.5 times to as much as 18.6 times the normal ridership level without the bike infrastructure. Illustrating that if you build it, they will ride, the temporary experiment resulted in the implementation of permanent bike lanes in downtown. In addition to a few permanent bike lanes being built, every time a road is paved, it is evaluated to see if a bike lane can be added.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH SUMMARY

Regional Assessment

The Regional Assessment represents the critical first step in the five-phase research and strategic planning process. It examined a wide variety of demographic, socioeconomic, economic, and quality of life indicators to tell a story about the community and uncover the key strengths, weaknesses, assets, and challenges that must be leveraged and addressed in order to raise levels of prosperity in the region. It was built upon an in-depth quantitative analysis and a significant amount of community input gathered from focus groups, interviews, and an online survey that received responses from 3,999 area residents, workers, and business leaders. The information was then woven into seven key stories that present a narrative discussion of the key issues facing Wichita Falls.

These seven stories are as follows:

1. "Stagnant" Population Growth Masks a More Troubling Reality
2. A Shrinking Workforce Seriously Threatens Competitiveness
3. Educational Attainment Lags Behind, and Recent Gains May be Unsustainable
4. An Economy Built on Government Employment
5. Standards of Living are on the Rise, but Many Residents are Being Left Behind
6. Investing in Homegrown Talent Will be Critical to Future Success
7. A Strong Value Proposition, but Continuing to Improve "Place" is Vital

Supplementing these storylines was a series of scorecards that evaluated the region's competitiveness in five key areas: economic performance, workforce sustainability, business environment, innovation and entrepreneurship, and quality of life. The scorecards are available in the full Regional Assessment.



1. “Stagnant” Population Growth Masks a More Troubling Reality

Wichita Falls’ slow population growth was a persistent theme throughout the public input process, with a wide variety of stakeholders from all across the community citing it as a competitive concern. Data showed that when viewed within the context of comparison communities, particularly other metro areas in Texas, Wichita Falls truly does stand out as a major outlier in a fast-growing part of the country. Even so, population change alone is not a sufficient indicator of a region’s success or future prospects. Ultimately, a community’s ability to build wealth and improve standards of living for its residents depends on a range of factors beyond population growth – including important fundamentals such as workforce strength, educational attainment levels, economic performance, and so on. In these areas, there is strong evidence that Wichita Falls is faltering and showing early signs of decline.

2. A Shrinking Workforce Seriously Threatens Competitiveness

Wichita Falls is facing strong competition for talent and data show that the community is losing residents to other large cities in Texas, particularly in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area. In fact, between 2004 and 2014, Wichita Falls lost a net average of roughly 400 residents per year to the Metroplex. And while Wichita Falls has favorable age dynamics and is not facing near-term threats from impending retirements, it is losing population in younger age brackets – particularly prime age workers between the ages of 25 to 54 – during a time when those age groups are growing nationally. Consequently, Wichita Falls’ labor force is contracting at an alarming rate. A shrinking workforce ultimately presents a serious threat to the region’s ability to support the needs of current employers, in addition to any future potential economic activity.

3. Educational Attainment Lags Behind, and Recent Gains May be Unsustainable

A community’s ability to provide a deep pool of talented workers is crucial to its economic success. At present, Wichita Falls has proportionally fewer residents with associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and graduate degrees relative to the United States and many of its comparison communities. Additionally, younger residents have lower educational attainment rates than those in the older age groups. Given the current migration dynamics, the region’s educational attainment rates will fall farther behind national rates if the status quo holds. With a less educated workforce to replace individuals age 45 to 64 that will be retiring in the ten to twenty years, the community’s local employers will face additional challenges finding skilled and experienced workers.

4. An Economy Built on Government Employment

Overall, Wichita Falls’ economy is highly concentrated in government and in sectors that serve the local population such as retail trade and health care. Yet, export-oriented business sectors – those that offer greater potential to bring new wealth into the community – are less concentrated than the national average, in some cases by significant margins. Employment data also reveals that Wichita Falls is still struggling from the Great Recession and that the most significant decline has occurred in its largest export-oriented sector – manufacturing. Input participants generally agree that the community’s business climate is not a hindrance to growth, but data suggest that there is some level of disconnect in the region’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

5. Standards of Living are on the Rise, but Many Residents are Being Left Behind

There are numerous ways to measure the overall economic well-being of a community's residents. For example, per capita income grew by 40.2 percent between 2005 and 2015 and outpaced the inflation rate, indicating a real growth in personal income. But, much of that has been driven by transfer payments. Average wages in Wichita Falls meanwhile trailed national growth rates and roughly 55 percent of households in Wichita Falls earn less than \$50,000 per year. The community also suffers from pervasive poverty. Approximately one in four children in Wichita Falls were living in poverty and 17.8 percent of all residents lived below the poverty line. However, more concerning is the fact that poverty rates are moving in the wrong the direction.

6. Investing in Homegrown Talent Will be Critical to Future Success

Stakeholders generally perceive the quality of education at WFISD to be good, but the district's facilities – especially its high schools – are outdated and potentially constitute a significant competitive disadvantage for the community. However, the new WFISD Career Education Center (CEC) drew consistent praise from the education and business communities regarding its important role in developing talented, skilled workers and improving the lives of area students. Wichita Falls is also fortunate to have two higher education institutions – Midwestern State University (MSU) and Vernon College – both of which have an important role to play in developing the local workforce. However, it was reported that they are losing graduates every year to Dallas and other cities and that more could be done to better connect the community's various education and training assets to each other and to the business community. Given the region's declining workforce and net domestic out-migration, a strong homegrown talent pipeline will be critical to the region's economic future.

7. A Strong Value Proposition, but Continuing to Improve "Place" is Vital

If Wichita Falls wants to attract more talented workers and retain its existing residents, it must ensure that it is offering the quality of life and place-based characteristics that these individuals desire. Wichita Falls' current residents generally have a great deal of affinity for their community and feel it is a great place to live. Input participants specifically highlighted the community's very low cost of living, short commute times and minimal traffic, safety, and family-oriented atmosphere as major strengths. But improving Downtown Wichita Falls emerged as a clear priority throughout the public input process. Stakeholders widely agreed that additional public and private investments will be critical to Downtown Wichita Falls' future success.

Target Sector Analysis

Communities across the country are pursuing differentiated economic development strategies that seek to support the development of “targeted” business sectors which may benefit from specific competitive advantages afforded by the community, its location, and its asset base. The practice of “targeting” has grown as communities have witnessed the advantages that come from directing finite resources toward the development of such “targeted” business sectors. Identified “targets” are those that have the most potential to bring and grow jobs and investment in the region and are a critical function of a region’s community and economic development efforts. The second phase of this comprehensive strategic planning process identified and profiled those sectors which possess the greatest potential to elevate prosperity through job and wealth creation in the years and decades to come.



KEY CONCEPTS RELATED TO TARGET SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

CLUSTERS: Agglomerations – or “clusters” – represent groups of interrelated businesses that choose to co-locate for one reason or another. The historical growth of clustered economic activity in areas such as the Silicon Valley, Route 128 in Massachusetts, and the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina are oft-cited and well developed case studies for other regions across the nation as they strive to develop similar agglomerations of related businesses. But there are countless examples of such clusters around the country and the world. While the factors that have led to clustering vary tremendously by region and sector, such agglomerations occur over time because a location has an asset base that affords the sector and the companies that operate within them some form of competitive advantage. The competitive advantages derived by these firms often result in comparatively high potential for employment growth and wealth creation.

TARGETS: Even so, many communities and economic regions choose to strategically target sectors of economic activity that may not currently be characterized by a strong agglomeration – or “cluster” – of related businesses. A targeted sector – or simply a “target” – is any type of business activity that is strategically pursued by an economic development organization and its partners for growth and development. That is to say, a “target” is an area where financial and staff resources, and the programs and policies they support, are specifically focused. “Targets” are often those segments of an economy where competitive advantages exist, prospects for future growth are greatest, and return on investment is likely highest.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ASSET BASE: Strategic targeting is predicated upon a solid understanding of a community's strengths and weaknesses, specifically as they relate to the needs of specific business sectors and the companies that operate within these sectors. The factors that medium to large companies consider when evaluating a community as potential location for a new facility are often referred to as site location factors, site selection factors, or site considerations. These factors vary tremendously by sector. For example, data center operations typically seek locations with low natural disaster risk, affordable and abundant water necessary for cooling, and redundant and exceptional fiber-optic, broadband infrastructure, among other attributes. Corporate headquarters typically seek locations with a well-educated workforce, exceptional passenger air connectivity, and abundant amenities. Accordingly, communities that are able to offer such characteristics are better positioned to attract these kinds of operations. Understanding the community's asset base – inclusive of a wide variety of these potential site location factors – is critical to understanding the community's competitiveness for various business sectors. Likewise, an understanding of its deficiencies in terms of such site location factors will help the community identify areas that need further investment if the community wishes to transform such deficiencies into future assets.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH: Target business sectors reflect existing agglomerations of establishments with similar business activities that have likely flourished in a community because of an asset base that aligns with that sector's primary site location considerations. Other sectors that share similar site location factors may not currently be concentrated in the community, but the aforementioned asset base could make the community an attractive location for these new activities. Accordingly, such sectors represent opportunities where the community may have a particularly high chance for success in marketing and recruitment efforts that seek to attract new corporate investments or relocations that would benefit from the community's existing asset base.

For decades many communities and their economic development organizations have exclusively associated "economic development" with "business recruitment." While the recruitment of new companies is an important component of any targeted economic development program, it is only one leg of the stool. The growth of regional economies and their target business sectors are overwhelmingly driven by existing businesses and entrepreneurs. A variety of studies have shown that between 70 percent and up to 95 percent of the country's job creation over various time periods has been attributable to the expansion of existing companies. While new investments generate ribbon cuttings and headlines, existing businesses and entrepreneurs are creating the majority of jobs in our country. Accordingly, any effort to develop target sectors and nurture employment growth within them must focus upon the needs of existing businesses as well as entrepreneurs.

RECOMMENDED TARGET SECTORS

Key findings from the Competitive Assessment, stakeholder input, and extensive quantitative analysis were used to identify existing and potential cluster activity. Based on the analysis of Wichita Falls' workforce and economic composition and assets, Market Street recommends three target sectors for the community to pursue to grow and attract jobs and investment in the next five years. The recommended sectors are shown in the following graphic.



Wichita Falls has historically been a major center for various production activities with a strong foundation in **Manufacturing**. The region's existing strengths, workforce, training capacity, and overall asset base, along with national trends indicate that there are great opportunities to grow new manufacturing jobs in Wichita Falls. The region boasts a wide range of manufacturing operations and has a productive workforce that supports their activities. Such diversity of the manufacturing base in Wichita Falls is a competitive advantage that the region should leverage.

Wichita Falls' manufacturing base is spread out across multiple subsectors and the community exhibits a general competency for a variety of production activities. Accordingly, it would not make sense to adopt a narrow approach focused on specific manufacturing clusters. The community should pursue all manufacturing opportunities that meet its goals of creating quality jobs. But the region's stagnant population, low unemployment, and other factors indicate that it is unlikely to be able to support large-scale operations. Therefore, rather than focusing on one or two manufacturing niches, Wichita Falls should instead focus on small to mid-size manufacturing operations with various activities. By focusing strategic resources on targeting smaller projects rather than going after one "homerun," the region will see more success and have a greater ROI.

Wichita Falls has a long history of aviation activity dating back to 1917 with the construction of Call Field, an aviation training field used during World War I. Today, **Aerospace & Aviation** still plays a critical role in the

local economy and provides the foundation and opportunity to grow quality jobs and attract additional investment. The community's century of aviation activity, the presence of MSU engineering programs, an ample supply of low-cost industrial and office space, and a geographic location close to substantial aerospace business in Dallas/Fort Worth shows great promise for new aerospace investment in Wichita Falls. Wichita Falls was best suited to grow aerospace jobs in four areas: new production technologies; specialized, high-end machine and metalworking shops; electronic, electrical, measurement and control parts or components; and aerospace and related project offices. These types of operations require skillsets that are consistent with the workforce strengths and limitations detailed in the Manufacturing target profile. Overall, Wichita Falls has a number of opportunities to grow and expand quality jobs in Aviation & Aerospace.

Wichita Falls also has several competitive advantages that could help it attract and grow jobs within **Business Support Services**. Establishments in the Business Support Services sector facilitate key administrative and "back office" functions for companies engaged in some other primary line of business. Common activities that are consolidated into a single location such as accounting, payroll services, data centers, and phone-based support at customer care centers or call centers are often referred to as shared services. Today's call center and back office activities range from low-skill, such as data entry, up to professional services and support activities that include clinical health care and financial services. Wichita Falls will be most competitive over the next five years for companies that fall in the middle of the range of functions and skills and are small to mid-size operations. The community's low cost of living, business-friendly environment, and supply of workers that have less than a college degree contribute to making Wichita Falls a desirable location for Business Support Services business activities.

The full Target Sector Analysis presents a more comprehensive evaluation of the factors influencing the competitiveness of specific economic activities that reflect Market Street's recommendations for target business sectors in Wichita Falls, including a review of sector performance, workforce attributes, and site location considerations.