

FAST-MOVING **WEST TEXAS** LEADS THE WAY TO THE FUTURE

The resourceful and enterprising people of the energy-rich land of West Texas are laying the foundations for a new era of innovation and growth

One of the fastest-growing regions of a state and is the ninth largest economy in the world, West Texas has long been celebrated as a place of spectacular landscapes, determined people and unlimited economic freedom.

Today, West Texas is writing a bold new chapter in its history and firing the imagination of businesspeople, students, travelers and working men and women all across America.

At the heart of the oil and gas industry that is harnessing the abundant riches of the Permian Basin, the economy of West Texas is witnessing rapid business growth across a wide and diversified range of sectors. From healthcare to logistics, retail to education, light manufacturing to tourism, leisure and entertainment, the region is living up to its legendary status as a land of opportunity for investors, innovators and for ordinary hard-working Americans and their families. From 2010 to 2020, the population of the West Texas region as defined by the state government increased by more than 13%. If it were a state, it would now boast the fourth highest per capita income in the US.

As you would expect from the pioneer mentality that characterizes West Texans, nobody here is content just to sit back and watch the oil and gas dollars flow in. Across the region, companies and cities are investing to create a sustainable, multi-faceted economy that will thrive long after today's oil and gas boom has become a distant memory. With a strong educational base and a rigorous work ethic, West Texas is now leading the nation in state-of-the-art fields as diverse as aerospace, wind power and additive manufacturing.

Just outside the city of Odessa, one of the major oil field technology centers in the world, fuel company Nacero plans to build the first natural gas-to-gasoline manufacturing facility in the US, creating thousands of clean economy jobs and adding an estimated $25 billion to the economy →

Top row: Monica Tschauner Director, Discover Odessa Javier Joven, Mayor, Odessa Kelly Tomblin, President & CEO, El Paso Electric Kevin Carter, President & CEO, Amarillo Economic Development Corporation Misty Mayo, CEO Development Corporation of Abilene.

Middle row: Tom Manskey Director, Odessa Development Corporation Russell Lowery-Hart President, Amarillo College.

Bottom row: Reneé Earls President & CEO, Odessa Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Tedd L Mitchell, Chancellor Texas Tech University System Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager, El Paso; Dr. Lori Rice-Spearman, President Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center John Osborne, President & CEO; Lubbock Economic Development Alliance.

WEST TEXAS DATA



POPULATION
2,879M



MALE 45,6%
FEMALE 54,4%



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
$49,955

→ of the region during the 50+ year operating life of the $7 billion plant.

As well as the proximity to plentiful gas resources, the financial support and can-do spirit shown by local elected officials were instrumental in bringing this cutting-edge project to the region, says Javier Joven, the Mayor of Odessa.

"West Texas was the leader in making the United States energy independent, creating a record-setting boom in the economy that I have never experienced in my lifetime," Joven says. "Now we are working with the private sector to continue to invest in reliable fossil fuels but with an environmental focus."

While the region has a strong heritage in oil and gas, companies and cities here are also on the forefront of innovation in sustainable transportation. In 2022, El Paso, the largest city in West Texas, formed a partnership with General Motors to install charging stations for electric vehicles and develop solar and EV sustainable microgrids, especially at the fast-growing El Paso International Airport. As a major trade and logistics hub, with some $100 billion of commerce passing through El Paso's ports every year, West Texas is helping lead the way towards a clean-energy future for transportation and logistics.

All across the region, local administrations are building imaginative partnerships with the private sector to support sustainable development. In the sibling cities of Odessa and Midland, authorities have reached landmark agreements to sell reclaimed wastewater to energy companies for use in their fracking operations, rather than rely on groundwater resources.

"It is a huge injection of dollars into our local budget for our taxpayers," Mayor Joven says. "We have been able to expand our infrastructure in water and sewerage as a result."

Wherever you go in West Texas, this focus on partnering with the private sector to improve the quality of life for residents is a constant. Hospitals, universities and colleges, schools, parks, museums and cultural centers are expanding all across the bustling small cities that are scattered across this region, from El Paso on the Mexican border to Lubbock in the heart of cotton country, from Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle to Abilene just a short drive to Dallas Fort Worth.

Home to some of the safest and most vibrant small cities in the US, with revitalized downtown areas and exceptional cultural attractions, and also blessed with a glorious climate, the region is one of the country's fastest-growing destinations for tourists, students and business travelers alike.

"We are proud of what West Texas has become," says David Osborn, the President and CEO of WestStar Bank, the largest lender in the so-called Borderplex region. "We have good education and medical facilities here and our mild weather is perfect. Our business climate is attractive, and we welcome people to come and join us any time."

Major investments in housing, healthcare, education, infrastructure and leisure are turning the cities of West Texas into some of the most attractive places to live in the US. As well as providing plentiful job opportunities, these cities are home to outstanding schools, community colleges, hospitals and universities. Across the region, educational institutions are increasing student numbers, adding high-technology courses, opening new buildings and helping ensure a steady supply of the specialist workers needed by high-tech industries such as advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, aerospace and renewable energy.

"The support given for higher education in Texas far exceeds what I have experienced in other states," says Sandra Woodley, President of the University of Texas Permian Basin (UTPB) in Odessa. "We have a growing knowledge economy here in West Texas. Our number one priority is to double the number of people who get a degree from our institution."

"And as a new era dawns for cities and towns all across this rugged land, the work ethic and the public-spirited values that have made West Texas great will burn as brightly as they always have," says Tedd L. Mitchell, M.D., Chancellor of the Lubbock-based Texas Tech University System (TTUS).

"We want students to be true to West Texas grit and develop selflessness and discipline, not just to improve their own lives but to improve the lives of everyone who lives in their community." ●



OIL WEALTH FORMS THE BEDROCK OF THE WEST TEXAS ECONOMY

LUBBOCK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE™

Where Talent
MEETS OPPORTUNITY



Lubbock, Texas graduates more than 13,000 students annually from its four universities and community college. These future workers harbor a work ethic that rivals the rest and are ready to create the life they want to live in Lubbock.

Learn more about the opportunities and lure of the "Hub City" at

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#LUBBOCKLEADS



Lubbock, best known as the hometown of Texas Tech University, legions of popular musicians, & High Plains wineries.

LUBBOCK TURNS ON THE CHARM
FOR BUSINESS & MILLENNIALS

Boasting a revitalized downtown & world-class universities, Lubbock is welcoming a new generation of workers with growing job opportunities & an unrivaled quality of life

On the sunny, windswept high plains of Texas, the famous cotton town of Lubbock has never known a time like this before. The birthplace of rock and roll icon Buddy Holly and other legendary musicians, over the past decade the population of the so-called Hub City has increased by 50%. Companies in sectors ranging from semiconductors and software development to healthcare, retail and manufacturing are all choosing to set up and expand in Lubbock, creating thousands of new job opportunities.

Dan Pope, the Mayor of Lubbock says, "we have set new records two years in a row when it comes to single-family homes. People want the freedom of West Texas and the high quality of life that our citizens enjoy."

LEDA's Workforce Development projects & activities are adding value to local businesses.



Ranked among the best cities in the country for millennials, there are no signs of a slowdown in the number of businesses and people coming to Lubbock. In 2021, the city attracted the largest single private capital investment in its history, when cheese and dairy producer Leprino Foods chose East Lubbock as the site of a $870 million manufacturing plant. Breaking ground on the project in June 2022, the investment will result in an economic impact of $10.6 billion over the next ten years. Leprino Foods will generate 600 full-time positions to staff the facility.

"This project exemplifies the collaborative nature of the city to create opportunities for business growth," says John Osborne, the President and CEO of the Lubbock Economic Development Alliance (LEDA). "This kind of growth does not happen overnight. It is a result of the decades of hard work, vision and leadership to build this future."

It is not only in agriculture and food production industries that Lubbock has emerged as a force to be reckoned with. Home to Texas Tech University and to a series of highly rated colleges and schools, the city provides high-technology businesses with the skilled workforce they need to grow. German semiconductor company X-FAB, which has six plants around the world and manufactures wafers for automotive, industrial, consumer, medical, and other applications, has selected Lubbock for its only site in the US. In revitalized downtown Lubbock, medical scribe company Skywriter has created 130 new job openings for medical and pre-medical students.



Major business clusters in Lubbock include information systems, technology & manufacturing among others.

Won over by the easy access to talented students from Texas Tech and other universities, LA-based digital agency Hoverstate has created 50 high-paying jobs in the thriving downtown area.

"We have a burgeoning software sector in our community because these companies can count on hiring bright, young people out of great universities," Mayor Pope says.

"College graduates today want to live, work, and play downtown. By reinvigorating our downtown with new hotels, apartments, stores, breweries, bars and restaurants, we have prepared our community for the future."

In more traditional sectors, long-time Lubbock companies are also expanding their manufacturing operations here. In 2022, TrueNorth Steel and WL Plastics Corporation both decided to increase their footprints in the community, adding 133 new jobs and almost $42 million of investment.

"Lubbock has proven to be a stable source of skilled labor and an ideal location for the efficient distribution of our products to major national markets," said Mark Wason, CEO of WL Plastics.

Situated on the crossroads of Interstate 27 and four major highways, Lubbock is in the central time zone and is equal distance to both coasts, facilitating distribution across the country. Within the city itself, LEDA says that average commute times are just 16 minutes.

As well as location, infrastructure and educational facilities, Lubbock also has other, more intangible advantages. Companies and people moving here say the city's quality of life, low costs and community spirit are factors that are just as important in their decision as its roads, hospitals, and universities. With a thriving arts and music scene, award-winning restaurants and bustling bars and hotels, Lubbock is one of the best places to live in the country for young people and for families, Mayor Pope says.

"Lubbock is best described as a modern city with old-fashioned values," the mayor says. "It is a place where family still matters and where when you move into a neighborhood, you're likely to have one neighbor bring you a pie and welcome you and another neighbor knock on your door and ask you where you go to church."

The city is also attracting rapidly increasing numbers of outside visitors. Since 2014, LEDA estimates that demand for hotel rooms has grown nearly 20%, as tourists on vacation, hospital patients, business travelers, and families visiting students all come to Lubbock in ever-rising numbers.

Opened in early 2021, the Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts and Sciences has added a new dimension to the city's appeal and given young workers yet another reason to come to Lubbock to enjoy life and develop their careers.

"Catalytic projects like the Buddy Holly Hall and the revitalization of downtown are key to attracting the future generation of our workforce," LEDA's John Osborne says. "They are a crucial component of instigating business growth in our great city." ●

City invests in response to rapid population growth

The 11th largest city in Texas and the 2nd largest city west of Interstate 35, Lubbock's population is forecasted for continued rapid growth. To respond to this increase, the city has invested proactively in building housing and constructing new transport infrastructure such as expanding the Marsha Sharp Freeway and widening Loop 289. Loop 88, a major ongoing road-widening project, that will create an outer loop around the west and south areas of Lubbock and improve mobility and safety on the roads.

At the same time, and with the approval of voters, the city has issued an unprecedented $420 million of bonds to fund the construction of a series of schools that will cater to young families arriving in Lubbock.

"It is not only higher education that is critical but also schools," says Kay McDowell, the President and CEO of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce. "We have tremendous high schools and K-12 schools. Many of our students graduate high school with skills that they use to find jobs immediately."

As a result of these investments in housing, education and transportation, Lubbock is successfully preserving its high quality of life despite the increasing pressure on resources. "Our city is programmed for growth," McDowell says. "We have phenomenal transportation infrastructure, which gives people more time to be with their families and their children and more time to do the things they love."

LUBBOCK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
CATALYST • CONVENER • CHAMPION

LUBBOCK
A THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY



JOHN OSBORNE
President & CEO
Lubbock Economic Development Alliance (LEDA)

FACTS

7%
GROWTH THROUGH 2022

11th
LARGEST CITY IN TEXAS

6th
BEST BUSINESS CLIMATE FOR MID- SIZED CITIES

+640,000
REGIONAL POPULATION

52,000
COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE LUBBOCK AREA

Lubbock is often referred as the Hub City. Mayor Pope sees Lubbock as the capital of West Texas. In your opinion, what role does it play in the West Texan economy?
There's about 600 miles between the Dallas-Fort Worth area and Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Lubbock is halfway between these two major metropolitan areas. We sit in the middle of some other great cities in West Texas such as Abilene, San Angelo, Midland, Odessa and Amarillo so that really puts us as the Hub City and the capital of West Texas. We are a center for manufacturing, retail, healthcare, education and even agriculture. All of these activities are taking place here in both our community and region, making it a place a lot of people are attracted to. These people also contribute to make Lubbock the economic engine that helps the city continue to grow.



COVID affected many businesses in the region. How would you assess the results of the Support Lubbock Fund?
The Support Lubbock Fund was established to assist our companies before the federal government or even the state government got involved. The bulk, if not quite all of the companies that were assisted, ended up surviving the downturn in the economy. We were ecstatic that the fund helped our local businesses get through the pandemic. But more importantly, Lubbock has very hardworking businesses and a labor force that is not only innovative but also intuitive. I believe that both of these factors, even more than the Support Lubbock Fund, enabled so many businesses to survive and thrive during these challenging times.

Major business clusters in Lubbock include agribusiness, education, food processing, health services, information systems & technology and manufacturing. Which clusters are driving the economy nowadays?
All these sectors that you mentioned contribute to the economic engine for our community. Agriculture obviously has a tremendous impact, from our farmers growing food and cotton fiber for global exports to our agricultural and food manufacturing companies that generate new technologies for the region and the world. Manufacturing is also important. In fact, we've got one of the very few silicon carbide (SiC) chip manufacturers in the US right here in Lubbock; the German company X-FAB. They're using cutting-edge technology to make computer chips for everything from cellphones to automobiles and everything in between. We are very much a center for healthcare too. Many people throughout rural West Texas as well as Eastern New Mexico come to Lubbock to get their healthcare needs. That's the result of the innovations coming out of Texas Tech University and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center that enable companies to conduct groundbreaking research and develop state-of-the-art products in not just the healthcare or agriculture industry, but in all industries.

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and has long been recognized as an important economic development tool for the Texas economy in terms of revenue. How do you perceive the potential of the tourism sector in your city?



The infrastructure and the highway system to Lubbock are very much a hub-and-spoke design, much like you'd see in the wheel of a bicycle. There are roads and highways coming from all directions into Lubbock, and there's a reason for that: it's because we're the Hub City.
People from throughout the region come to Lubbock for a variety of their goods and services. But we have also noticed, because we have world-class educational institutions and colleges here in our community, that people come to Lubbock from all over the region and even from abroad to get their education.
This growth of individuals earning their education in Lubbock helps the overall rise of tourism. Potential students are coming to visit their prospective school, loved ones are visiting their kids or friends at school, and they are spending time here. We see people coming because of the corporate growth that we've had in our community and the ever-increasing oil and gas business in the Permian Basin; Lubbock is just on the north side of it.
We see people coming for their healthcare needs and spending days or even weeks getting the necessary healthcare that they might need.
We also see people coming to learn how we do things.
We get a lot of international travelers that come to see how we process our agriculture and how technology is developing from an agricultural perspective.
We get a lot of international visitors that come in because of the notoriety of our musicians that have grown up here like Buddy Holly, Mac Davis, Waylon Jennings and the many others who got their start in Lubbock.
In 2010 we ended up having about 4.6 million visitors annually whereas right before COVID hit we had about 6.4 million visitors. That is a pretty significant growth on an annual basis which means more hotels and restaurants have been developed. We are also adding more attractions including the Adventure Park and The Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts and Sciences where you can go and watch a Broadway show, a ballet performance or the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra play.

Lubbock is said to be in the top 20 places where millennials are moving to. How do you see the policies and initiatives to help improve the quality of the regional workforce?
The Lubbock Economic Development Alliance (LEDA) has invested close to $17 million to help develop and grow the skills and talents our workforce needs. We've invested in our community college to better the traditional academic classes as well as the career and technical education classes. We've also invested in all of our county school districts as well as school districts throughout the 15-county region to assist with their career and technical education programs, knowing that many of those high school and community college graduates will then either come to college in our community or come to work in our community. We have established notable nursing, truck driving and welding programs. We've increased the capacity in each field and many others like culinary arts. We've done so because businesses have asked for a more qualified workforce. We partnered with our education institutions to make that happen.

Kay McDowell, the head of Lubbock Chamber of Commerce, mentioned innovation as a key factor to improve the city. How are you embracing innovation to generate more growth and wealth?
We have a Tier-1 research institution here in our community, Texas Tech University, in which there's a tremendous amount of research being done on new technologies in a variety of industries. We have helped to establish the Lubbock Angel Network (LAN) and the Innovation Hub to connect the new technologies that are coming out of the university with entrepreneurs to develop the ideas and introduce them to local investors to help fund their ventures; giving them the best chance of success. We've seen an impressive amount of new companies take advantage of these new technologies. In fact, last year a product of this program made its way on a spacecraft at the International Space Station.



EL PASO SETS THE PACE IN TECHNOLOGY TRAVEL & TOURISM

A major force in industries such as advanced manufacturing & aerospace, this vibrant & attractive city on the Mexican border is also a popular tourist destination

When in September 2022 President Biden selected El Paso as one of 21 winners of the $1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge and awarded the El Paso aerospace and advanced manufacturing industry a $40 million grant, he set the seal on the city's emergence as the undisputed economic powerhouse of West Texas.

Projects funded as part of the award include establishing the El Paso Makes Advanced Manufacturing District and special STEM training for a region that is 82% Hispanic. The funding will give skilled workers the chance to build new careers and grow businesses in West Texas.

"Being at the forefront of technological advancements in manufacturing will make us globally competitive while keeping our talent in El Paso by creating high-paying jobs," said City Manager Tommy Gonzalez.

"We're talking about thousands of job opportunities that will be added to the thousands the city has already created," said Sam Rodriguez, City of El Paso Chief Operations Officer. "It will also help in growing existing businesses related to the industry, local businesses, and increasing our overall quality of life. It truly is a momentous occasion for our region and everyone who will benefit from it."

The largest city in West Texas, and the 22nd largest in the country, El Paso has long been one of the top economic performers in the US. As the epicenter of the Borderplex region that encompasses Ciudad Juárez across the Mexican border and the city of Las Cruces in New Mexico, El Paso is at the heart of the seventh largest manufacturing hub in North America. Competitive taxes, low costs, world-class infrastructure, a young and talented workforce, and generous incentives for business, have all helped El Paso punch above its weight when it comes to attracting private sector investment and creating high-quality jobs. In industries as varied as retail, logistics, and light manufacturing, a presence in the city has become almost indispensable. In one of El Paso's biggest wins of 2022, electrical equipment giant Schneider Electric said the city would be home to its largest manufacturing operation in the US as part of a $100 million investment that will create around 400 jobs at a new manufacturing plant.

"This investment is an incredible opportunity for the El Paso community to not only strengthen our city's industry but also showcase the talent of our skilled workforce," said El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser.

Now El Paso is diversifying its economy even further and expanding rapidly into state-of-the-art sectors such as aerospace and advanced manufacturing. Leveraging the research resources of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and the nearby presence of giant army base Fort Bliss, the city is developing one of the most extensive ecosystems for aerospace, defense, 3D printing and cutting-edge manufacturing anywhere in the country.

El Paso's winning bid to the Economic Development Administration was led jointly by the UTEP Aerospace Center and by UTEP's W.M. Keck Center for 3D Innovation, two internationally recognized research institutions. The grant provides $15 million to UTEP for the creation of an Aerospace and Defense Innovation Network for Manufacturers. In recent years, the university has completed advanced manufacturing research worth more than $100 million sponsored by NASA, the Department of Defense, the National Science Foundation, and other agencies.

"Leveraging the research preeminence, →



El Paso boasts vintage color-scheme streetcars with modern amenities like air conditioning & Wi-Fi.





THE BORDER TOWN OF EL PASO IS ONE OF THE 10 SAFEST CITIES IN THE US

→ expertise and talent pipeline of the Aerospace and Keck centers, we will work with small and medium manufacturers and startups to make them more competitive and to earn new customers in aerospace and defense markets," said Ahsan Choudhuri, Ph.D., associate vice president and founding director of the UTEP Aerospace Center.

"West Texas has the talent, the research capabilities and a strong and nimble manufacturing base that will be the foundation of our success."

In August this year, a groundbreaking ceremony at UTEP for an $80 million Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace Center took place inaugurating the university's two premier research institutes in one state-of-the-art facility.

The first step in the implementation of the government funding will be the creation of a $25 million Advanced Manufacturing District that will be home to hundreds of small to medium-sized manufacturers on 250 acres of land provided by the city and strategically located adjacent to El Paso International Airport.

The airport itself is one of El Paso's most valuable assets, playing a critical role in the city's national and international connectivity. That is an advantage not only in terms of winning new business investment but also in appealing to the increasing numbers of leisure travelers who are choosing El Paso as their destination. Passenger traffic is now exceeding its pre-pandemic level, with 29 airlines using the airport on 136 routes in three countries (the US, Mexico and Guatemala). Serving as the gateway to West Texas, Southern New Mexico, and Northern Mexico, the airport was used by almost 5,000 flights in August.

Awarded $5 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law this year, the airport is currently investing in new passenger facilities to accommodate more travelers and improve access for people with disabilities. "It will improve the passenger experience by enhancing accessibility and modernizing our terminal," said Sam Rodriguez, who is responsible for aviation in the city.

A regular winner of awards for medium-sized airports, El Paso International Airport is an attractive gateway to the city for the many tourists of all ages who come here to visit the historic sights, enjoy the nearby walking trials, or simply soak up the unique cultural atmosphere of this vibrant and peaceful place.

Many travelers head straight to the thriving downtown area, check in to historic hotels where the likes of Elizabeth Taylor once stayed, and enjoy all the sights, sounds and aromas of the famous Paseo de Las Luces on a warm El Paso evening. Heading directly to the Mexican border, this walkable and friendly street is lined with small storefronts in historic buildings, all illuminated by colorful string lights. Unlike any downtown elsewhere in the country, it is the perfect place to immerse yourself in this unique bicultural city and indulge in empanadas and margaritas or steaks and beers to your heart's content.

El Paso is also blessed with historic attractions and cultural and recreational offerings for all tastes. One of the best ways to enjoy these riches is to hop on one of the streetcars running along the downtown tracks and visit the El Paso Museum of History, the Museum of Art with more than 7,000 works of art, stop in at the Wigwam Museum for local and regional lore, catch a performance at the Abraham Chavez Theatre or walk around popular San Jacinto Plaza. The city will gain a major new attraction next year with the opening of a Mexican American Cultural Center that will explore El Paso's rich heritage and celebrate Mexican American art and culture.

Also in 2023, the El Paso Children's Museum and Science Center will complete its transformation into La Nube, described as a hands-on center of imagination, exploration, and creativity for children and adults to embrace their natural curiosity and learn through play. With nine themed learning experiences spread across four stories and 70,000 square feet of space, La Nube will add another dimension to the growing appeal of El Paso as an ideal city in which to live, work and play. ●



El Paso is preserving Mexican culture & art with its famous Ballet Folklorico.







Generating & providing sustainable solar energy is an ongoing goal for El Paso Electric.

BUOYANT **EL PASO PRIVATE SECTOR** REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Talented people, low costs, world-class infrastructure & connectivity are helping the city compete for major business projects

One of the most important manufacturing and trade centers in North America, with the largest bilingual workforce in the western hemisphere, El Paso is attracting new businesses eager to harness the skills of local residents and serve the city's rapidly growing market for goods and services.

Without the extensive fossil fuel riches of other cities in West Texas, El Paso's greatest resource is its growing population of young, talented and bi-cultural people. Bordering New Mexico and the Mexican state of Chihuahua, El Paso is the second largest port of entry into the US and is located at the heart of a consumer market of more than 2.6 million people with a median age of 32. With vibrant cross-border commerce, retailers and other service industry companies such as healthcare, leisure and hospitality are among the largest private sector employers in El Paso.

The talents of this young and growing population, coupled with the city's low costs and its high quality of life, are the main draws for major businesses such as national broadband provider Charter Communications, owner of the Spectrum brand, which recently created more than 350 sales jobs in El Paso.

The city's strategic location is another major advantage for private sector employers. Continuous investment in infrastructure, from roads to rail to electricity networks, have helped El Paso develop from a 19th century gambling town into a major international trade hub. The I-10 Highway provides connectivity from the west to the east of the country, with an estimated $2 trillion worth of commerce flowing along the road every year. Efficient freight railroads connect the city to all major US markets, while El Paso International Airport is investing $178 million in airfield projects and terminal improvements over the next five years. It is this multi-modal and international infrastructure that led TJX, the operator of T.J. Maxx, Marshalls and HomeGoods stores, to select El Paso as the site for a new $150 million national distribution center.

Infrastructure providers are also increasingly focused on developing low-carbon solutions for transport and energy. Serving about 450,000 retail and wholesale customers, regional electric utility El Paso Electric (EPE) is rolling out new technologies including advanced metering systems, predictive maintenance and electric vehicle charging stations, as well as initiatives such as a bilingual online tool to help El Paso residents find the electric vehicles that best meet their needs.

"Our strategy must be holistically connected to energy solutions that will serve our customers affordably and reliably while reducing our carbon footprint over the long term," says Kelly A. Tomblin, President and CEO of El Paso Electric. ●



LEADING UNIVERSITIES COMMIT TO DIVERSITY SERVICE & ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The five institutions of the Texas Tech University System are educating record numbers of students, providing West Texas with a diverse, skilled & passionate workforce

In 2021, the state of Texas tied with California for the most Tier 1 universities in the nation, as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Home to the headquarters of the Texas Tech University System (TTU System), West Texas benefits in full from these resources. The five separate universities which form part of the TTU System provide employers with a fast-growing and highly skilled workforce, helping make the region's cities young, vibrant and dynamic places to live, work and visit.

"Our five component institutions are distinct and distinguished which makes us well-rounded," says TTU System Chancellor Tedd. L. Mitchell, M.D. "We are one of just nine universities in the nation to offer the full portfolio of academic programs we have available to our students."

The five institutions of the TTU System operate at 24 academic locations in 21 cities. The institutions include three general universities, including Lubbock-based Texas Tech University, alongside two health-related universities, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) also in Lubbock and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso.

"Each of our universities has a unique flavor," Chancellor Mitchell says. "This is one of the main strengths of our overall system."

The breadth of education and training provided by Texas Tech is reflected in national rankings: in a survey of corporate recruiters, Texas Tech ranked ninth overall and first in the state of Texas. Recruiters said they sought Texas Tech graduates largely due to the school's overall reputation, as well as their overall preparedness, work ethic, and Texas location.

As it prepares to celebrate its centennial in 2023, Texas Tech has reported record enrollment of more than 40,000 students and confirmed its status as one of the nation's fastest-growing institutions of higher education.

Texas Tech is focused on promoting social mobility, driving diversity and reaching out to first-generation students. The latest class includes nearly 2,000 Pell-eligible students. Hispanic students have accounted for more than 70% of the increase in student numbers in the last decade, with the school recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) since 2019.

"We have to confront the great diversity of our population in the state and nation by providing students who may not have typically pursued degrees, especially in the STEM areas, opportunities to do so," says Tech President Lawrence Schovanec.

It is this emphasis on serving the community that characterizes all the institutions that belong to the TTU System. Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, the state's leader in graduating health care providers, is increasing its activities in fast-growing cities such as Abilene and Amarillo to help grow the nursing workforce.

"We are not just expanding programs, but also enhancing the academic experience," says Lori Rice-Spearman, Ph.D., President of TTUHSC. "We want to recruit students who share our vision of working, learning and serving." ●





TTUS is focused on advancing higher education, health care & research in West Texas.

EL PASO
A SAFE & SECURE CITY



TOMMY GONZALEZ
City Manager
El Paso

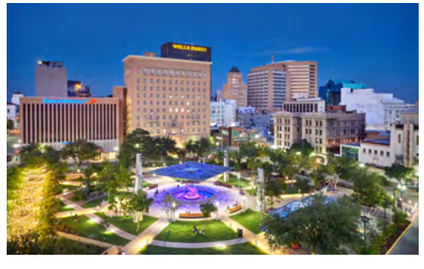
El Paso is the most populous city in the region and the second largest majority-Hispanic city in the United States. What role do you think El Paso plays in the regional economy?
El Paso has been key in the development that has taken place across our region. We have improved the economy of our region. We have increased wages and the number and quality of jobs created. We serve as the hub for the entire region, not just Texas. People from New Mexico come here to shop, do business and have fun, and so do our Mexican brothers and sisters from Juárez and beyond. People from the Mexican State of Chihuahua are here frequently to enjoy our many amenities. We serve as the hub for the region and for our partners that gravitate to El Paso.

The economy in El Paso is projected to grow at a healthy 4.1% in 2022 to $30.4 billion. What are your priorities, as the City Manager, to make sure 2023 also has a growth?
We are taking advantage of state and federal grants and leveraging those dollars. For example, we leveraged $60 million for the development of several hotel projects downtown. Currently, we are one of 60 finalist cities across the US competing for a $100 million grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA). We believe that leveraging state and federal investments are key to our economic recovery and growth.

We also know that it is important to focus on the continued development of the advanced manufacturing sector, which is going to be key in 2023. We are determined to attract more big companies to invest here. We have already landed T.J. Maxx, an investment that will create almost 1,500 new jobs.

You were appointed City Manager back in 2014. How much has the city changed in the past 8 years in terms of its development?
We have a strategic plan that we put in place in 2015. We have a City Council that is very committed to this plan and look to it not only for economic development improvements but also to guide amenity improvements that have served us well in terms of attracting more businesses and creating new, better quality jobs. One of our main ongoing priorities is to increase local wages and we have increased them by almost 20%. Another ongoing priority is improving our residents' quality of life to attract businesses to El Paso. We have made many improvements to make the city more attractive: we continue to improve our downtown, our streets are in better shape, and we have safer and more beautiful neighborhoods. Nationally, we are one of the safest cities for our size and this fact is a huge marketing tool, especially when you see the violence happening in other parts of the country.

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and has long been recognized as an important economic development tool for the Texas economy in terms of revenue and jobs creation. What is unique in El Paso for tourists to visit?
Our tourism numbers have grown and, as a result, we are in the top tier for hotel/motel tax revenue and sales tax for the State of Texas. These metrics demonstrate that we are attracting more visitors to El Paso.
We have great outdoor opportunities with trails in our mountains and a thriving and revitalized downtown with great restaurants, a restored vintage streetcar system, and three historic hotels, two of which have recently been restored. Visitors can also enjoy nationally recognized offerings including Topgolf and iFLY.
What draws people to El Paso, though, is our small-town feel and homegrown small businesses that provide the unique flavor of our food and culture. We have a variety of restaurants that are unique to El Paso and very different from what you find in other cities. Even though we are a big city with almost three-quarters of a million people, we have a small-town flavor, and people not only like that, but they come back for that!



A few years ago, El Paso was ranked # 1 city with the lowest cost of living. What makes El Paso one of the best places to live, work and play in the country?
El Paso still has a very low cost of living, which is a big draw. But people are figuring this out, so home prices are going up like in other places because we have more people coming to live here. However, our low cost of living continues to attract people because it is still a lot less expensive to live here than in other big cities.
Our airport is one of the best airports in the United States. It was ranked the best mid-sized airport in North America for the last two years. Having a great airport is crucial because it supports our goal to retain and attract business to our community. Cultural offerings and events including our annual WinterFest, a 60-day holiday event that brings people together, also make El Paso an attractive place to live.
To continue to make sure that our city is a location of choice to live, work, and play, we continue making improvements in those areas we hear are important to both our citizens and our visitors.

How would you describe the people from El Paso?
The people of El Paso are unique, reflecting the special region in which we live: three states right next to each other and two countries that are very close. We are a very compassionate community with a strong family culture and neighborhood feel. We are committed to taking care of everyone in the city regardless of their background.



What is your vision for El Paso 2030?
Our vision statement for 2030 states we will have safe and beautiful neighborhoods; a vibrant regional economy; exceptional recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities with a high-performing organization.
What I tell our people and our team all the time is when we look back 10 or 15 years from now, we can say and show how we made El Paso one of the safest cities for our size in the United States; how we made our neighborhoods more beautiful; how we created a vibrant regional economy with better wages, focused on advanced manufacturing; and how we have great recreational offerings with four water parks, eight spray parks for people and one for dogs, a Children's Museum and a Mexican-American Cultural Center.
When we talk about exceptional cultural opportunities, we are talking about a variety of programs including our annual Día de los Muertos event, facilities including our Mexican American Cultural Center that will be completed in 2023, and our Children's Museum & Science Center, La Nube.
When we talk about educational opportunities, we are talking about programs including the free Career Online High School program that helps residents get their high school diploma and helps the people of our community learn English; and our tuition assistance for employees at the City of El Paso, providing opportunities to obtain higher education and to develop as leaders.

What do you enjoy most about El Paso?
I really enjoy spending time in our thriving downtown. The Paseo de Las Luces, located in the heart of the downtown, is a path of lights that connects us to Mexico directly. It is a unique way to enjoy our beautiful downtown and cross the border to have amazing food and enjoy the Mexican culture, all on the same day! I also enjoy spending time outdoors, hiking or biking our trails, and enjoying the sunshine and great weather we have almost every day throughout the year.

FACTS

+700 K
CITY RESIDENTS

$259 M
REVENUE SOURCE FROM INNOVATION & COLLABORATION

255
TOTAL AREA IN SQ. MILES

22nd
LARGEST CITY IN THE US

EL PASO ELECTRIC
PROPELLING GROWTH IN WEST TEXAS



KELLY TOMBLIN
President & CEO
El Paso Electric (EPE)

As the largest city in West Texas, what role does El Paso, Texas play in the Borderplex region?
El Paso plays an important role in a few key areas. We have the largest bilingual, bicultural and youngest demographic workforce that can be the human capital not just for West Texas but for the entire state of Texas.
El Paso has one of the largest army bases in the country and that positions us not just economically well, but also from a security standpoint. We're also among one of the largest manufacturing regions in the nation. Additionally, El Paso thrives in logistics, warehousing, and transportation and in the future, will also be widely involved in reshoring. We're also focusing on automated manufacturing and additive manufacturing (AM) or 3D printing. Our educational and medical institutions also play an important role in the economy of Texas and southern New Mexico. Then we have the economy related to the border crossing because we have the busiest and largest border crossing in the United States.

Do you think businesses are back to where they were before COVID? What did EPE learn from this pandemic?
Utilities in general have been somewhat more resilient to COVID than other industries. We are in an unusual position because we are an essential service, so we did not close during COVID. A vast majority of our employees worked as usual every day. Our core businesses - the running of power plants and keeping the grid up - went on as usual, but we had to implement new safety protocols like social distancing.
Our main challenge post-COVID is related to supply chain. We lacked equipment needed to do our work, like transformers for example, because national and international plants were shutting down or their workers were getting sick. Supply chain challenges is where COVID hit us most significantly because once you get behind, it's hard to catch up. We were fortunate to not have to face the same human capital challenges that other companies are facing.
As far as businesses in El Paso being back to normal, it's my understanding we're almost there. Regarding EPE, it's growing way beyond what we saw before COVID, and we continue to see this trajectory.



You have been providing electrical power to El Paso and the region for more than 100 years. How much has EPE been contributing to the city's progress and changes?
The way that we've contributed to the region is by being historically the most reliable energy provider company. EPE continues to add technology to our infrastructure with innovative approaches to power generation. We eliminated using coal six years ago; we now have half the carbon footprint than other utilities in Texas. Soon, we will be

FACTS

1901
STARTED SERVICING ITS CUSTOMERS

450,000
RETAIL & WHOLESALE CUSTOMERS

80%
CARBON-FREE BY 2035

115
MEGAWATTS OF SOLAR CAPACITY



installing smart meters which generates other opportunities for the city and creates the concept of a smart city.
We've also contributed by keeping electric prices moderated. When businesses want to come to El Paso they ask questions, and some are always about energy. What's your reliability? Have you been able to keep pace and improve every year? What is your sustainability? How's your carbon footprint? What's your affordability? We can answer all these questions in a positive way and guarantee to newcomers that they will have reliable and clean energy.
Another way that we've helped the region is by unleashing human capital. We've been giving jobs to people who stay here and do really interesting, exciting things such as working in automating substations or a nuclear facility, providing 40% of our power during low peak and 23% during high peak, battery storage or renewables often partnered with New Mexico State University (NMSU), University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) or Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. We help the people working in the world of energy!

You mention clean energy. What is your strategy regarding that?
We've declared that we'll be 80% carbon-free by 2035 and in pursuit of 100% carbon-free generation by 2045. We are now taking steps to make that happen. It might sound counter intuitive when I say we're building a new power plant that runs on gas, but it will be the most efficient plant in our fleet, saving 600 million gallons of water a year. We've issued requests for proposals (RFPs) for a lot of renewable projects, which unfortunately due to supply chain challenges did not come in on time, however, we are moving forward and in the process to bring 270 MW of solar generation and 50 MW of battery storage to our region.
Safe, reliable and sustainable, this is the kind of energy the company aims and continues to provide to its customers.

How do you envision the changes and energy landscape in the next few years?
In the generation spectrum, there's three things we're doing. Number one: we're adding more renewables and to achieve that we're issuing request for proposals to bring on new generation sources that are cleaner and more efficient. Number two: we are going to retire plants in favor of more efficient sources. Number three: investing in technology to have different demand-supply partnerships. All these measures aim at being the most efficient energy company for our customers.
I like to tell our customers: you're in demand for a lot of energy, so let's work together to find a way to use less energy, the most efficient way. We need to bring on the technology that lets people have that information. Right now, our customers don't know what they're paying until they get a bill at the end of the month. I'm used to seeing what I'm using every day because I have a smart app on my phone that gives me that information and that's what we're going to provide our customers. That's really the future: provide more information so customers could be smarter about their energy usage and understand how they use their energy outside of electrification.

Your strategic plan has 5 main points: build a trusted partnership with customers and community; propel growth in the region; leverage technology to drive efficiency and security; lead environmental sustainability and drive a culture of empowerment, accountability and inclusion. Which is your top priority, and which is the most difficult to achieve?
The same answer to both questions: growth. Both our vision and mission are to be a catalyst for growth and help economic development in our region. Utilities only really grow effectively when the economy grows.
Bringing more businesses, commercial transactions, jobs and technology to our region is really our focus. We need to provide an energy sector that can be trusted because for most businesses, energy and reliability is a big part of their business. Also, if we help the economy grow, we become more affordable, and we can afford to do the things we need to do.
It's important to note that to grow you need the best human capital and we're excited to be a part of a region where you see so many people investing in the human capital.

You are one of the top employers in the region so your economic and social impact and contribution to El Paso's economy is huge. Can you expand on that?
EPE has the most engaged workforce I've ever worked for. The character and caliber of our people is immense: we sit on boards, contribute to society, volunteer more than 10,000 hours a year, we're everywhere in our community! We're all contributing both personally and from a corporate perspective. We're such a prominent employer not because we're doing great, but because we are doing meaningful work and people know it. There's no party without power, no school, no medical industry, no transportation so we take our responsibility very seriously. Nothing works if we don't work, and this became apparent during COVID when people were afraid that we would turn off their power.



Odessa offers the best medical & educational facilities with a great family atmosphere.

OIL-RICH ODESSA SEIZES THE MOMENT TO GROW & DIVERSIFY

On the backbone of its oil and gas resources, Odessa is creating new business opportunities, diversifying its economy and creating jobs for the city's growing population



Major companies within the oil & gas industry are present in Odessa.

Odessa is the undisputed oil capital of West Texas and accounts for an estimated 20% of total Texan economic output. With oil prices at around the $100 a barrel mark, this hard-working, resourceful and community-minded city is attracting a new wave of investment in the energy sector.

At the same time, and with an eye on the future, Odessa is carefully investing the proceeds of the current energy boom into diversifying the economy in areas such as logistics and healthcare. The city is also investing in improving infrastructure and is taking new measures to support the growth of small and medium-sized businesses.

In the all-important oil and gas sector, the Odessa Development Corporation (ODC) is helping major energy companies set up state-of-the-art facilities in the city, such as Nacero's $7 billion gas-to-gasoline plant and a mooted $1 billion carbon capture facility that has been proposed by Occidental Petroleum and its partners. If approved, the plant would be able to remove 500,000 tons of carbon dioxide from the air every year and be the largest facility using Direct Air Capture (DAC) technology anywhere in the world.

In the oilfield services sector that dominates the Odessa economy, suppliers are rapidly expanding their operations and creating new jobs in response to the resurgence of activity in the Permian Basin. In 2022, the Odessa Development Corporation agreed to award a grant to help Downing Wellhead Equipment expand its business and create 110 jobs in the city with a total payroll of $27 million.

To make sure that smaller services companies in Odessa benefit from the renewal in upstream activity and get their fair share of the pie, city mayor Javier Joven has far-reaching plans for directing public funding towards small and medium-sized local enterprises.

"The majority of our oil-based companies provide support services to the oil industry," Mayor Joven explains. "They support their drilling, exploration and pipeline activities. In Odessa we have the equipment, the expertise and the labor. What small and mid-sized companies need now is tax dollars for capital investment."

By making funds raised by the city sales tax available to smaller companies, Joven says these companies will be able to expand their workforces, invest in new equipment, grow their businesses, create new jobs and generate higher tax revenues for the people of Odessa.

"We are leading the way and we will get there sooner rather than later," Mayor Joven says. "It will make us even more competitive as a city."

Meanwhile, away from the energy sector, economic diversification is continuing at pace. Odessa may have no major agricultural resources or military bases, but its competitive advantages in industries such as logistics and healthcare are second to none. Of the top ten employers in the city, four are in the healthcare field, while the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) in Odessa provides world-class access to primary and specialized care for patients across the Permian Basin.

Located at the midpoint between Fort Worth and El Paso, the city is easily accessible from the I-20 Highway and provides manufacturers and distributors with excellent opportunities to trade with major domestic and international markets. As well as the interstate, Odessa is served by regular flights at nearby Midland International Airport and by Class I railroad carrier services.

The city is also prioritizing investment in lower-profile infrastructure such as water treatment plants, sewerage networks, affordable housing and local roads. Mayor Joven is planning new bond issuance to raise funds. "Keeping up our infrastructure is very critical and it should always be priority one," he says.

As any visitor will soon realize, maintaining a high quality of life is something that everyone in Odessa takes very seriously. With a low cost of living, a thriving jobs market and attractive cultural and recreational facilities, such as an all-new conference center, an art museum and even a replica of Stonehenge, the city is an unexpected delight to people of all ages and interests.

As more and more people enjoy the charms of Odessa, the city is poised to grow to new heights. According to the ODC, the population of the Odessa area will expand by approximately 57,700 by 2040 and bring the total number of residents to over 215,000. Supported by rising levels of employment, a varied cultural life and increasing household income, living standards will continue to improve and give more reason than ever for Americans to come and discover Odessa for themselves. ●

ODESSA

GENUINE TEXAS

BIG VIEWS. BIGGER BUSINESS.



When it comes to Big Business and Big Adventure, the place to be in West Texas is Odessa - the Energy Epicenter of the United States.

BIG BUSINESS

Odessa and the Permian Basin lead the nation in oil and gas production with a can-do spirit (we proudly call it **grit**), skilled workforce, business incentives, and a work ethic second to none. That's why innovative companies like the United States' first manufacturing facility powered by wind and solar to produce lower carbon, zero-sulfur gasoline from natural gas, are setting down stakes in Odessa and the surrounding area. There's unlimited opportunity for your business in Odessa, too.

LAND WITH OPPORTUNITY PEOPLE WITH GRIT ODESSA, TEXAS

BIG ADVENTURE

With an international airport and ideal location on Interstate 20, Odessa's a great place to start your next family vacation. It's an easy drive to three national parks (Big Bend, Guadalupe Mountains, and Carlsbad Caverns) and a host of wonderful state parks where adventure awaits your every turn. Plus you'll find top-notch entertainment at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center and our authentic replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. There are rodeos, Texas BBQ, wide open spaces, Old West history, real cowboys and football…everything you'd expect in a trip to the **REAL** Texas.

Odessa

So head to Odessa, Texas. We'll help you plan your next company expansion or family vacation.

The Odessa Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development Department - **432-333-7880**
Discover Odessa Visitor's Bureau - **432-333-7870**
or visit **odessatex.com** and **discoverodessa.org**.

ODESSA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS



RENEÉ EARLS
President & CEO
Odessa Chamber of Commerce

How do you assess the state of the economy in Texas at the moment?
The entire world shut down with Covid and here in the Permian Basin, the heart of the energy industry, we were hit doubly hard because it also affected oil prices in a way we've never seen before. But Odessa has so much going on and many opportunities that we've really been able to work our way back up. We still have some unemployment numbers that are a little bit high, so we need to address that. Back in 2018 we were going gangbusters, but we didn't have the infrastructure really to keep up with it. We had great demand for housing that was not there, we did not have enough workers, so our economy was really strained. Now, we are somewhat stabilized, and we feel confident about our economy. We have positive things happening now like the groundbreaking of a $7 billion project from Nacero, a carbon capture renewable natural gas facility that chose West Odessa in Ector County as their very first United States facility within the next couple of months. And that will bring many more ancillary services. We feel very confident about our future.

Why is your city "The right place in Texas"?
Odessa has an incredible work ethic. We are used to rolling up our sleeves and getting the job done, whatever it takes. We have a lot of grit; we have great hospitality. Our landscape may not be aesthetically beautiful, but our people are absolutely, hands down, our best attribute. We have incredible sunsets and beautiful sunrises. There is nothing better than a Texas evening under the stars. When it comes to skilled workforce, we have many workers that are educated and trained for those companies that want to come to Odessa or existing business that want to grow. I'm a born and raised Odessan and honestly, I would not live anywhere else.

The Odessa Chamber thrives on helping businesses and individuals reach their fullest potential. What are your priorities as the President of the Odessa Chamber of Commerce?
We want to be a resource to help businesses through Covid, help them not only to survive; we want businesses to thrive. We are here to help with marketing and networking. We feel like one of the best things that we can do is bring the right people to the table and to start the conversations. We are working on what is needed in terms of infrastructure, transportation, education, work skills, tourism, etc. Much of the work that we do here at the Chamber is to help promote our community. We must all work together. We have different entities working in unison: the city, the county, the school district, the University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa College, two hospitals, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, our chamber. All of these entities have to work together and partner to make a better Odessa. Communication and collaboration are imperative. All the entities in Odesa have a common goal: to improve Odessa and make Odessa a better place. Our community is really good at collaborating to attract new businesses to come here.



What are the key sectors in Odessa?
Obviously, oil & gas is our number one economic driver and it has been for many decades. While we tried to diversify in the past and we've done so, healthcare is a great example, we can't forget what brought us here and what our number one industry is. Healthcare, education and manufacturing are also very important. Odessa also has a lot of the service providers for our oil & gas business like welding, technology used in drilling, completion and capping of wells, etc. We don't have as much agriculture nor a military base within a couple of hours like some parts of Texas, but we're very supportive of the various businesses that we have here and want to help however we can to make the area continue to grow.

How important has workforce development been for both the public and private sector in West Texas?
We are so fortunate to have a great relationship with Odessa College, the University of Texas Permian Basin as well as Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center which are based right here in our community. We work closely with these institutions to provide education and workforce training for our companies.

One of the first things that a company will talk to us about when they're looking at coming to our community is education. They also want to know about healthcare, but they want to know that they're able to get an educated workforce for their company once they're here. They want to know if training for some specific skill for their employees is available if needed. Our Economic Development Department focuses on attracting and retaining businesses, promoting investment opportunities and supporting developments that create jobs and expand the tax base to support and enhance the city's economy.



Who is helping the city's economic development?
Back in the 1990s, the citizens of Odessa created the Odessa Development Corporation (ODC) which falls under the City of Odessa. Our Chamber contracts with the City of Odessa to provide economic development services. ODC is able to provide incentives to companies that are looking at not only expanding, but also new companies looking into the area to set up their business. We also have Grow Odessa, which is an organization made up of a variety of businesses and individuals in the community that is privately financed. Grow Odessa can offer discounts on land, and oftentimes they'll donate property to encourage those companies to come to Odessa.

What are the unique points and competitive advantages of the tourism sector in Odessa?
We are proud to be the home of Friday Night Lights. The book, the movie and the show are big attractions. We love our football in West Texas and we are so proud that we are known for that. However, we're also known for so much more. We have arts and culture and some fabulous museums. Our art museum is a Smithsonian affiliated museum. We have our own version of Stonehenge. We have a replica of the Globe Theater. We have the Ector Theatre that has been completely refurbished. We have the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center that can be put up against any performing arts center throughout the country. And because we're centrally located, within two hours you can be in the mountains, within four hours you can go snow skiing, within a couple of hours you can go to several different lakes if you want to fish or go boating. We also have an incredible airport that's just 10 miles away from our community. Texas and Odessa in particular are open for business. We want you to come see what we have to offer. You will be interested in us because of not only the incentives that we're able to provide, but also because of our work ethic, hospitality and friendliness. There's a saying that when you're not from here, sometimes you come here kicking and screaming but when it's time to leave, you also leave kicking and screaming.

FACTS

88th
ANNIVERSARY IN 2022

+725
MEMBERS

$7 billion
NACERO PROJECT IN WEST ODESSA

ODESSA
PRIME LOCATION FOR BUSINESS & FAMILIES TO THRIVE



TOM MANSKEY
Director
Odessa Development Corporation (ODC)

Odessa is in the heart of the energy industry. What role does the city play in this vital sector of the West Texas economy?
The Permian Basin, Odessa being a part of it, is the heart of the energy industry in Texas. We produce and extract a large portion of what helps run the entire country, if not the entire globe: oil and natural gas. Energy is a dominant player in our economy, and this also includes solar and wind as part of the equation. Certainly, you want to diversify as much as you possibly can and slowly diversification is taking place with logistics and distribution increasing their presence in our economy. Odessa and Ector County have also become a leader in healthcare for West Texas.

How much did the COVID pandemic affect Odessa's businesses?
Like everywhere else, there was a slowdown followed by the supply chain issues. Odessa and other parts of the Permian Basin probably got back on its feet quicker than a lot of places simply because you can't drill for oil from your house, you have to be out in the field. The energy companies out here handled the pandemic very well. They were already running very efficient operations, so they didn't have to make drastic changes although some companies had to make some cuts and a few business ventures that were planned to get off the ground did not due to the pandemic. We are starting to see some of these ventures being push forward since we've gotten past the worst of the pandemic and we've kind of figured out how to deal with it. COVID is probably not going to go away, but maybe now it'll be treated more like a flu, and we can live with it. We are now seeing companies hire again and the unemployment rate has dropped dramatically since the peak of the pandemic. I believe that if you want to come out to West Texas and make some good money, there's plenty of opportunity for that right now.

What sort of opportunities?
Odessa already has a lot of manufacturing related to and used in the energy industry. But healthcare is the sector that is growing because our population is growing and part of the population is getting older so we're seeing a steady growth in healthcare. There are plenty of opportunities for continued growth in that segment. Logistics is also a growing sector. We're at a good spot right here on the interstate with I-20 running right through our community. Interstate 20 also gives us great access to both the east and west coasts. Union Pacific Railroad also provides great access to both coasts along with easy access to the Port of Houston and other Gulf Coast Ports. We have numerous large distribution centers here with Family Dollar being the largest; they have their Texas distribution center here in Odessa. There's certainly room for more growth in this sector too.

What is more important: location, incentives, or people?
Incentives are great, they get you in the game, but I don't think that's the most important thing. Regarding location, we are centrally located, in the central time zone, we've got great interstate access. But at the end of the day skilled labor and a population with can-do spirit is what is important.

FACTS

1926
OIL WAS DISCOVERED IN THE REGION

3
LOCAL HOSPITALS OFFERING + 600 BEDS

4
LOCAL INSTITUTES OFFERING HIGHER EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES



There's a gritty attitude in Odessa, people can get things done so in my opinion what makes Odessa special is the people.

What are the best business opportunities in the city for both national and foreign investors?
There are a lot of opportunities in clean energy and the technology being used to obtain clean energy. Last year, Nacero announced it was placing a $7 billion investment in Odessa. They're building a facility that will convert natural gas to gas that you can put in your automobile, and they're even going to establish retail outlets after that. This is new technology, no one is doing this yet. I think there are more opportunities to provide clean energy that reduces the carbon footprint around the world and they can take place right here in Odessa.

What is your assessment on the workforce available for new investors and businesses willing to come to Odessa?
We have a good, qualified workforce, but we need more because we are experiencing a lot of growth. Right now, labor is a little tight because we need more people, but as more projects start, we're finding the people to come and move out here. As I mentioned, there are industries, especially in clean energy, that are looking at Odessa, so we can always utilize more labor. The construction of Nacero's project could take 5 to 6 years and they are going to need 2,500 to 3,000 people in various crafts. Then, once it's done, there will be approximately 350 new full-time positions. The good thing is that we have a lot of training opportunities out here with our educational institutions. In Odessa alone, we have Odessa College, which is a two-year institution with a lot of trades and the University of Texas Permian Basin (UTPB) that can provide a four-year education. This is great for employers because these institutions are cranking out people for the local workforce every year. And then we also have Midland College, our neighbor to the east. So there are a number of institutions in the area that are developing workforce every day.

How will innovation and technology transform the main driver of the West Texan economy?
We are seeing innovation change things daily. Nacero is a good example with new clean energy manufacturing that can turn natural gas into gas for automobiles. We're also talking to a couple of other companies that are also going to utilize carbon capture with their manufacturing process. We may have the opportunity, from an innovation standpoint, to be the carbon capture capital of the world. Clean energy is one of our greatest opportunities just because we're already in the energy sector. There's a growing push among US corporations to reduce their carbon footprint on the environment. You're going to see technology and innovation develop and help to achieve this goal of developing more clean energy.

Why should one choose Odessa as a place to live, work and to do business with?
First, there are so many things to do in Odessa; we've got a growing population so more and more things are available now. We have sports, a lot of recreation, an arts scene, good schools with a university and various colleges. We offer a fun lifestyle in West Texas. There are very interesting areas to visit and travel to from Odessa within four or five hours. We've got an airport that's equally between Odessa and Midland where you can fly anywhere you want to. We've got a great entrepreneurial spirit; we're seeing companies grow and companies start up. It's a great business environment if you have an investment that makes sense in this area. In Texas we have a "can do" attitude and nowhere is that more evident than Odessa. If people are considering a place to relocate or start up, they will find a lot to benefit from looking at Odessa and Ector County. ●



ODESSA
A CITY FULL OF DISCOVERY



MONICA TSCHAUNER
Director
Discover Odessa

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and has long been recognized as an important economic development tool for the Texas economy in terms of revenue and job creation. How important is the tourism industry for the economy of Odessa?
It's very important. We had an oil & gas boom some years ago and several of the companies operating in this sector had to house their employees in our hotels which were almost always completely occupied. Having many people staying at the hotels brought a lot of hotel-occupancy tax as well as sales tax into our community. Visitor dollars are vital. Visitors fully rely on the community they are staying in. They need a place to stay, eat, shop and fill their cars with gasoline.

Last year, the UNWTO asked the world to be patient, responsible and "travel tomorrow". Now the restart of tourism is underway. What is your strategy to get visitors to come to Odessa again?
Several years ago, the City of Odessa established a public/private partnership to begin the revitalization of Downtown Odessa. A brand-new downtown Marriott Hotel & Conference Center was built that is just incredible. It is one of the best hotels in Texas. This new facility has given the Discover Odessa sales team a great marketing tool to promote for events and conferences. Our strategy is to promote our hotels, meeting space, and unique attractions. The Discover Odessa staff is committed to providing meaningful events, meetings and experiences.

What makes Odessa unique and worth a visit?
We have a replica of Stonehenge. Most people may not get to go to England and visit the original one, but they can see what it is like here. It was built with stones from a local quarry of rocks, and it is the exact diameter of Stonehenge though it's not as tall as the original. We are also known for jackrabbits which is Odessa's mascot. We have 33 uniquely painted jackrabbit statues spread about the city and we have a neat map to follow and see all of them. During COVID, several families took their children to find and take pictures with the rabbits. It is a fun activity that we have promoted to all, especially because people were wanting to get outside again, and it's something that we can do to attract tourists. Now we even have an app that you can download with the jackrabbit trail to follow. We also have a replica of the Globe Theater here and our oldest residence is the White-Pool House which is a museum now that you can visit and see the original furnishings and clothing from 1930. This is neat because it takes you back in time. We have a Presidential Archives Museum and George Bush House in Odessa. President Bush grew up here and their family house was moved to the museum to be part of it now. We have a great art museum, the Ellen Noël Art Museum, which is one of the very few Smithsonian-affiliated museums so a lot of times we get a Smithsonian exhibit. The Smithsonian is located in Washington D.C. and not everybody can get to Washington D.C. to see the Smithsonian Museum, so it is great that our residents and those near us can have something locally that's approved by Smithsonian.



What is better, promoting the region or your city on its own?
Collaborating with our neighboring cities is the best way to promote our region. Partnering with cities such as Midland and San Angelo is key in bringing awareness to our area. Each city has something to offer and collaboration gives us a stronger presence to compete with larger cities that are east of Interstate 35 such as Dallas, San Antonio and Houston

Your website says: Odessa, a city full of discovery. Does it have enough to please all kind of visitors?
Odessa has enough to please all kinds of visitors. People are pleasantly surprised when they visit Odessa. We recently held a conference with people from across the state. A part of their agenda consisted of a bus tour of our city with several of our unique attractions such as the White-Pool House, Ratliff Stadium, The Ellen Noel Art Museum and the Presidential Archives and George Bush House. The feedback we received was very favorable. Many of times, locals take for granted what's around them but only realize they are special when visitors tell us they how much they enjoyed them.

How important is the MICE market for you?
We have a database that allows our sales team to reach out to hotels any time a meeting planner is looking to host an event here. The Discover Odessa website is filled with information about the city that visitors can use as a resource. Discover Odessa is funded through the hotel-occupancy tax, so the hotel-occupancy tax money is reinvested to the benefit of the visitors and residents. We help with financial sponsorships, transportation, welcome bags with promotional giveaways, Odessa literature and much more. Our job is to work with meeting planners looking to bring their events to Odessa. We want to make it an enjoyable experience and provide as much support to them as possible.



Looking forward to the next 5 years, what is your expectation for tourism economic development in West Texas?
Discover Odessa would like to attract more people from around not only Texas and the United States, but also from around the world. Odessa is an easy drive to three national parks such as Big Bend, Guadalupe Mountains and the Carlsbad Caverns. We continue to promote our top-notch entertainment venues such as the Wagner Noel Performing Arts Center and The Ector Theater. We hope to give visitors the expected experience of a West Texas lifestyle such as Texas barbeque, Friday night football, rodeos and wide-open spaces!



What would be your final message to our readers?
I would encourage you to plan your next trip to Odessa, Texas and gain that true West Texas experience of our booming city. Discover many of Odessa's historical sites, attend a rodeo or Friday night football game, enjoy Texas BBQ, explore the arts, experience the culture, shop western boutiques and unwind with our breath-taking sunsets. From our oil & gas infrastructure to our arts & culture scene, you will be guaranteed to fall in love with our warm West Texas hospitality! ●

FACTS

33
UNIQUE PAINTED JACKRABBIT STATUES

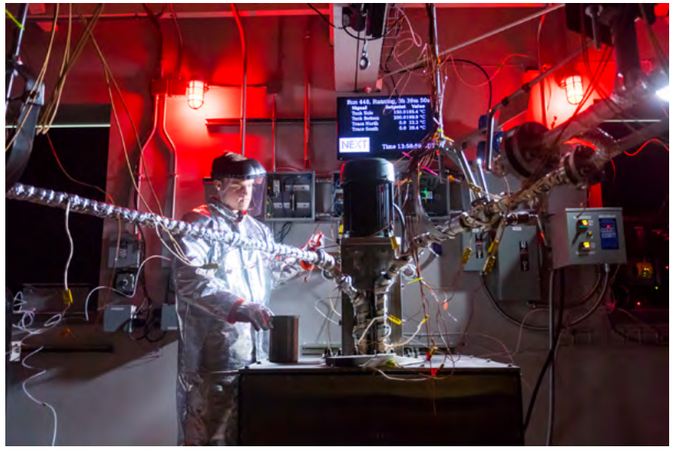
1985
ELLEN NOËL ART MUSEUM (ENAM) OPENED

10 miles
FROM THE MIDLAND INT'L AIR & SPACE PORT

183 miles
TO BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

INVESTMENT HITS NEW RECORDS
IN MIGHTY, MID-SIZED ABILENE

At the heart of the booming Texan economy, in enterprising Abilene businesses enjoy easy access to major markets, low-cost land & a talented workforce





Booming industries & strong infrastructure are the main assets for Abilene.

Just a short drive from Dallas/Fort Worth, Abilene is becoming a firm favorite for businesses who want to be close to major cities while enjoying all the benefits of being based in a mid-sized community.

In 2021 alone, the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) recorded seven investment projects consisting of over $2.6 billion of capital investment and generating some $5.7 billion in economic impact. Nationwide, the city has been recognized as number 8 in the country in terms of economic development for populations under 200,000, according to annual rankings published by Site Selection Magazine in early 2022.

With a labor pool of more than 140,000 talented people, proximity to three international business hubs, outstanding road, rail and air connections, and a business-friendly environment, Abilene is attracting high-value investors across a number of sectors.

Major companies which are choosing to set up in the city include e-commerce giant Amazon, which is opening a 71,000 square foot logistics and distribution center.

"Abilene's strategic location in south central United States with access to major highways is a key factor in the location of Amazon's new facility," DCOA President and CEO Misty Mayo says.

Amazon is joining a host of other well-known names who have responded to the call of Abilene. Last year Great Lakes Cheese broke ground on a $184.5 million cheese packaging and distribution facility in the city, while Primal Pet Group started work on a $31.6 million expansion of its pet food manufacturing plant.

Offering thousands of acres of affordable land and two industrial parks, and with more than 25% of the population having a bachelor's degree or higher, Abilene is also of increasing interest to high-technology sectors.

The city's flagship initiative in the technology space is Project Future Hope, a landmark agreement with Abilene Christian University's (ACU) NEXT Lab to expand research and development for advanced nuclear technology. The $30.5 million project at NEXT Lab (the Nuclear Energy eXperimental Testing Laboratory) aims to design, license and commission a molten salt research reactor that will be hosted on ACU's campus.

And at the end of 2021, supported by the DCOA, Houston-based energy technology company Lancium announced plans to develop a $2.4 billion data center campus that will be powered by renewable energy and will host energy-intensive computing applications. With 200 megawatts of capacity, the Clean Compute Campus will extend over 800 acres in Abilene and Taylor County. Civil work on the site began in June 2022.

"We chose Abilene because of its ideal location, proximity to abundant wind and solar generation, high-quality workforce and the opportunities to grow in the future," said Michael McNamara, Co-founder and CEO of Lancium.

"Lancium's development is a tremendous opportunity to ensure the viability of the community for years to come through the diversification of our economy," Misty Mayo says. ●

ABILENE | TEXAS
HERE YOU GROW

Abilene, Texas has thousands of acres of land, direct access to Dallas/Fort Worth, and the infrastructure your business needs to thrive. Nationally recognized for attracting high-value projects, **The Development Corporation of Abilene** is the premier partner to help your business expand. Grow in a place you can call home.

Build your business at DevelopAbilene.com/Grow

DevelopAbilene
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF ABILENE

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF ABILENE

BRIGHT PRESENT, BRIGHTER FUTURE



MISTY MAYO
President & CEO
Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA)

What role does Abilene play in the West Texas economy?
As the mid-sized and mighty regional hub, Abilene is the primary trade, innovation, and educational hub for the 19-county region.

Some of your colleagues mentioned that labor shortage is the main issue for businesses in their cities nowadays. What are the current challenges the business community and administration need to address today, two years after the COVID pandemic started?
When people talk about challenges, I prefer to talk about labor solutions. Our goal is to listen to the companies in the Abilene region and provide solutions. For example, diversification is a key part of our growth strategy, both in the types of industries we attract to Abilene, and the labor force itself. We are continually working to help our business community grow and build the future of Abilene.

The economy in Abilene was originally based on the livestock and agricultural sectors, but is now based strongly on government, education, healthcare and manufacturing. What sector is your economic development agency pushing to be the new drivers of economic growth?
In addition to these critical areas, we are focused on bringing advanced manufacturing to the region and retaining our military presence. Dyess Air Force Base plays a vital role to our local economy. Additionally, we are growing innovation, research, and development within our healthcare and life sciences sectors. Our goal is to remain the regional hub for healthcare and education. We know that education will help us face future challenges regarding workforce and labor. Partnering with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Texas State Technical College, and Cisco College, as well as Abilene's three private universities, Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, and McMurry University, we are well positioned to recruit and retain local talent.

The city is the first major city in West Texas you come to if you are going west from Dallas. How has this strategic location helped Abilene economic development?
Located just two and a half hours from Dallas-Fort Worth, our strategic location is a huge benefit and enables Abilene to be mid-sized and mighty. In addition to our proximity to DFW, we are in the heart of West-Central Texas. This proximity is a value-add that we can offer companies who ultimately choose to call Abilene home. I hear from company leaders who say they appreciate having the support of suppliers and vendors from a major city, while also having the convenience and exceptional opportunities of living and working in a mid-sized community. We pride ourselves on connecting companies with resources and support to ensure they grow and prosper in Abilene.



FACTS

19
COUNTY-REGION HUB

2.5
HOUR-DRIVE FROM DALLAS

1989
INCEPTION OF DCOA

165
PROJECTS SECURED

$3.275
BILLION IN CAPITAL INVESTMENT GENERATED



Abilene is known as the "Official Storybook Capital of America" because it has the largest public collection of sculptural storybook characters in the state. How much can tourism contribute to the city's economic development?
Our tourism base is extremely critical to our community. So much so that we are building a new convention center hotel and remodeling our existing convention center. As the regional hub, we serve as the larger city to those smaller communities that utilize Abilene for their conventions and conferences. We are the "Storybook Capital of America." We also have national signature events like Western Heritage Classic and the West Texas Rodeo which displays our rich history and heritage and are significant ways to build economic development through travel.

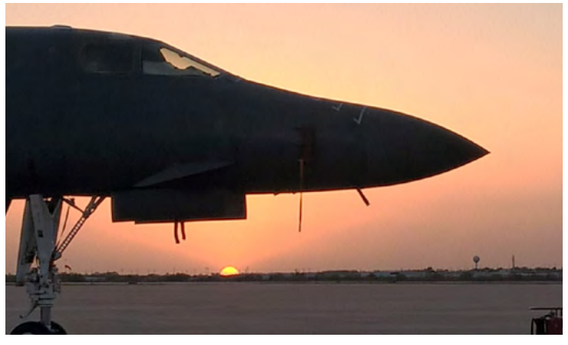
In your opinion, what makes your city unique?
Home to booming industries, an abundance of land, and strong infrastructure, success begins in Abilene, Texas. With our West Texas hospitality and attitude, Abilene embraces both new people and new ideas. Abilene's historical heritage roots are related to many cultures. We have a state-of-the-art museum, Frontier Texas!, that is dedicated to telling the last 150 years of history in this area through holograms, fine art, and artifacts. When companies move to Abilene, they find a home unlike any other.

Abilene has recently received national recognition as a top 10 city for economic development. What does it have to offer investors that come to help the city progress?
There are several things, but our strategic location is an enormous asset for Abilene, and we utilize it to attract new investors. Additionally, our skilled and dedicated workforce, in conjunction with our strategic investments in education that complement our existing educational structure, enable growth and new business opportunities at every turn. All this combined helps fill the need for a diverse and skilled workforce. The Development Corporation of Abilene is committed to ensuring that our future and existing local companies will continue to grow and prosper in Abilene.

Over 140,000 is the estimate of the labor force around the city. Can these people fulfill the jobs businesses have on offer? Especially the more qualified ones?
Yes, we have a strategic commitment to growing and upskilling our labor force with innovative actions. For example, a multi-million-dollar investment in a new facility for the Abilene Independent School District, called the Leadership and Innovation in Future Technologies (LIFT) Center, offers career and technical education programs. This beautiful state-of-the-art facility helps prepare those interested in working in a variety of fields, including advanced manufacturing, engineering, and technology. The LIFT Center is proof that Abilene finds solutions and is forward-looking; and is a perfect example of effective implementation behind strategy. The LIFT Center combined with Abilene's educational institutions and many other efforts enables us to build our workforce locally, preparing the future of Abilene.

Why is Abilene the city: Always Moving!?
Because Abilene literally is always moving. And when you think about it, the word "moving" exemplifies many things, including our commitment to growth, innovation, and diversification. We have prepared Abilene to be agile and adaptable to meet the needs of our current and future companies.

Why would one want to invest in West Texas? Why Abilene and why now?
Abilene, Texas is on the move. I invite everyone to visit our mid-sized and mighty city to experience what makes Abilene unique. Our West Texas hospitality combined with a strategic focus on our city's growth makes it an exceptional place to live, work, and prosper. The future is bright, come and join us in Abilene, Texas. ●



FAST-GROWING BUSINESSES MAKE THEIR WAY TO AMARILLO

Dominating the economy of the Texas Panhandle, and home to an award-winning community college, Amarillo is creating thousands of well-paying jobs for its talented & hard-working residents

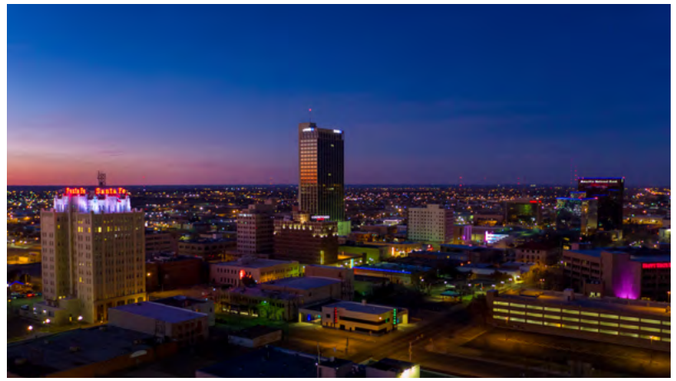
A historic ranching and cattle-marketing town located on historic Route 66, and the largest city in the Texas Panhandle, Amarillo is fast evolving into one of the most dynamic and forward-looking small cities anywhere in the country.

One of the largest meat-packing centers in the US and an agricultural and food processing powerhouse, Amarillo has diversified successfully into high-technology industries such as aviation. It is at the Military Aircraft Assembly Center in Amarillo that Bell Textron builds the revolutionary V-22 Osprey aircraft and is upgrading its legendary military helicopters.

Aerospace is not the only industry in which Amarillo is playing an increasingly strategic role for the whole country. In 2022, rare minerals company CVMR broke ground at the site of what will be the first environmentally neutral industrial-scale critical minerals refinery in the country.

"The addition of CVMR to our city will have a tremendous impact on the local, national, and international level," says Kevin Carter, President and CEO of the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation (AEDC). "CVMR is set to change the landscape of employment and business opportunities in Amarillo. This is the biggest project the AEDC has ever been a part of, and we're proud to welcome CVMR to our great city."

As the largest city between Dallas and Denver, Albuquerque and Oklahoma City, Amarillo has an enduring appeal for logistics and distribution companies.



Amarillo, a popular stop along Route 66, is home to many theatres and art shows.

Leading the way to Amarillo is Amazon, which is creating around 500 full-time jobs at a new fulfillment center in the city.

True to Amarillo's heritage, with nearly 28 % of cattle fed in the US coming from the Panhandle, the city also remains a major force in the cattle industry. In 2022, Producer Owned Beef (POB) said it would build a $670 million beef packing plant that will handle around 3,000 head of cattle per day when it begins operations in 2025. With a payroll estimated at $120 million, POB will create more than 1,500 jobs in the city.

"This project further positions Amarillo as a global leader in food processing. Being selected as POB's location for operation signifies that Amarillo is and will continue to be an ideal location to do business," Carter says.

Elsewhere in the food sector, cheesemaker Cacique Foods plans to open a $88 million dairy processing facility that will employ some 200 people initially and another 300 workers at a later stage. Meanwhile Tyson Foods is planning a $200 million expansion of its existing beef plant in Amarillo, which already employs around 4,000 people.

These labor-intensive businesses are drawn to Amarillo not just because of its central location, its abundant low-cost land, and its agricultural resources. It is the ample supply of local talent and the city's extensive workforce training and development programs, overseen by institutions such as Amarillo College and AmTech Career Academy, that may be Amarillo's most important competitive advantage.

Amarillo College, rated a Top 5 community college by the Aspen Excellence Program, is the jewel in the city's crown. With a mission of "transforming our community and economy through learning, innovation, and achievement," the college has won nationwide plaudits for its compassionate, student-focused model. The institution is one of ten finalists for the 2023 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

Under its strategic plan for 2025, the college is aiming for an 80% completion rate. It is also increasing the alignment of degrees and certificates with labor market demand and creating specialized training programs to meet the specific needs of large local employers such as Bell.

In downtown Amarillo, the college is opening an Innovation Outpost that will be dedicated to training students in the skills they need to fill a new wave of technology jobs, including robotics, data analytics, cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence and cloud computing.

As part of its commitment to prepare students



The city is proud of its strong transportation infrastructure & young, educated workforce.



for 21st century careers, Amarillo College recently launched a pioneering course in visual effects. Designed to enable students to understand the entire spectrum of VFX techniques and strategies, it is just one example of how Amarillo is preparing to seize all the opportunities of the economy of the future.

"We are always looking for new opportunities that enable students to pursue their dreams," says Amarillo College President Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart. "The launch of this unique program allows Amarillo to step boldly into the ever-expanding digital content space, while creating a pipeline for young professionals in the growing VFX and film industry." ●





AMARILLO
WHERE YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL!



KEVIN CARTER
President & CEO
Amarillo Economic Development Corporation

You have worked at The High Ground of Texas, so you are very familiar with West Texas. What role does Amarillo play in theregional economy?
Amarillo is the economic powerhouse and the largest city of the Texas Panhandle, which covers roughly a 26-county area, about 25,000 square miles, in the most northern part of West Texas. Amarillo is probably 10 times larger than any of the other cities in the Texas Panhandle. We're the economic powerhouse in a number of different industries, but especially healthcare. We really are a healthcare hub for four states: Southeastern Colorado, the Oklahoma Panhandle, Southwestern Kansans, and also Eastern New Mexico.

How do you assess the economy in Amarillo after almost two years into the COVID pandemic?
In Amarillo, we have been very blessed and lucky and managed to navigate the pandemic with a strong work ethic.
There is no denying that everyone faced challenges during the pandemic, but our community remained resilient. Amarillo is not in recovery mode, we're in a growth mode. We've had 19 months of continuous sales tax and economic growth. Amarillo is one of the few cities in the state that can make that claim.

Your website talks about opportunities in 9 different sectors: value-added agriculture, manufacturing, aviation & aerospace, technology, food processing, bioscience, logistic distribution, personal services and energy. In which of these sectors does Amarillo have a competitive advantage?
Amarillo is a hub for those industries, and we're continuing to grow and build on the businesses and natural resources we have here. In the last three years, we've seen a large interest in food processing and during the pandemic we announced a number of food-processing projects, big projects that represent well over $75 million in capital investment. One of those is already operating, another will be operating by the fourth quarter of this year, and there's one that is being currently built which will be the largest maker of Latin cheese in the country. They are going to make their queso fresco here in Amarillo; we're very excited about that.
Logistics is also an important industry for us. Amazon has chosen Amarillo to build a new one million-square foot fulfillment facility that will open in the second quarter of this year. And Amazon is not the only one, we've seen other logistics companies expanding their business in our area because of Amarillo's access to transportation. Value-added agriculture is also a large industry here because we still rely heavily on our agricultural roots in our local economy.

Amarillo is in the middle of everywhere. How connected is Amarillo?
A common misconception about Amarillo is that most people believe we're in the "middle of nowhere." That simply isn't true, we're actually "in the middle of everywhere."
We're right along one of the busiest east-west corridors on Interstate Highway 40, so we're right in the center of the United States. We're also on the east, close to the north-south route, the Interstate Highway 27 corridor.
We're also on the main transcontinental line of Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad that goes from Long Beach to Chicago. The route comes into Amarillo and splits off and goes to BNSF's large intermodal facility at Alliance Airport in Fort Worth. We're also on the Union Pacific (UP) line as well on the north-south UP line. And we're closer to three state capitals than closer to our own, Austin. Amarillo may seem like it's in the "middle of nowhere," but we're extremely connected.



Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world and has long been recognized as an important economic development tool for the Texas economy. Is the sector improving to its full potential in Amarillo?
Tourism is a massive economic driver in the city of Amarillo. In 2019 and 2020 tourism in Amarillo accounted for over $1.6 billion in direct spending. The travel industry also accounted for $445.8 million dollars in direct earnings for employees and business owners in the tourism sector.
Amarillo's geographic positioning and attractions cater to current traveler interests, such as outdoors and road trip enthusiasts. Amarillo is continuing to see growth in the tourism sector and is shifting from a pass-through city to a destination city.

What sets Amarillo apart from all of other places in West Texas?
West Texas has a rich history, but we're very unique. We're the only major city in Texas that is part of the original east-west corridor in the United States, the very first highway, Route 66, that was built in the 1930s. We are where the Old West meets the New West.
Amarillo is home to Palo Duro Canyon, the second largest canyon in the United States after the Grand Canyon.
We have a thriving downtown, with a new multipurpose event venue that hosts our Minor League Baseball team, the Sod Poodles. Amarillo has a vibrant food scene with the city being made up of more locally owned restaurants than chain restaurants. In Amarillo you're able to have the quality of life that you want – we have a low cost of living and plenty of activities and restaurants for each person to find their community here.



The Texas Workforce Commission is part of a local/state network dedicated to developing the workforce of Texas. Can businesses and investors rely on the local workforce if they want to establish themselves in Amarillo?
Yes, absolutely. We're always very excited to partner with Workforce Solutions Panhandle, that's our local workforce board.

We always partner with them when we bring a new company to the city. Workforce Solutions has worked along with us and our community college on developing curriculum that upskills our current workforce, as well as, our future workforce for any potential employer that wants to make Amarillo their home.

How is innovation and technology changing Amarillo?
Amarillo College is focused on bringing innovation into the city. In fact, they're investing $10 million in a new innovation district in our downtown area that's going to focus on career accelerating, integrating technology and innovation into our current workforce and into our current businesses. The aim is to make sure that our industries are state-of-the-art and are on top of all the technological advances and innovation that our world has to offer, because things change on a daily basis.

Why is Amarillo the city where you can have it all?
We really do say that you can have it all in Amarillo and the reason is that we have an abundance of land that can be developed. Amarillo has always been aggressive in offering incentives and that is why we have a business-friendly climate. Our population has grown to over 200,000 people but we have that small town feel where you go to the grocery store and you're bound to see a neighbor. Even though we're a larger city compared to some the surrounding cities, we still have that small town American feel. In Amarillo you're able to have the quality of life you want and it is a great city to plant your roots.

FACTS

10 times
LARGER THAN ANY OTHER CITY IN THE TEXAS PANHANDLE

$75 million
IN CAPITAL INVESTMENT FROM FOOD-PROCESSING PROJECTS

$1.6 billion
IN DIRECT SPENDING RELATED TO TOURISM IN 2019 & 2020

AMARILLO COLLEGE
MAKING SURE ITS STUDENTS GET A DEGREE THAT'S HIREABLE



RUSSELL LOWERY-HART
President
Amarillo College

What is the importance of community colleges for the state's economic development?
I think community colleges are the key to innovation in the higher educational sector. And I see that across the board and I particularly see it at Amarillo College (AC). I think what our sector will focus the most on is building out new avenues for skill building that may not be tied to a traditional degree experience. For example, we have launched career accelerators in cybersecurity, coding and cloud architecture that are 10-week sprints which immediately lead to a job, not just for companies in our community, but working for some of the world's biggest companies across the globe.

What are the college's guiding principles?
Everything we do is about improving economic development and diversifying the economy and our community. What's driven our success and made us recognized as one of the Top 5 colleges by the Aspen Excellence Program is a clear theory of change. If we can remove a life barrier in an accelerated learning environment with a college that deeply cares about and serves our students, then our students will complete their course or degree with the skills that are employable, and that's how we've moved our completion rates from 19% seven years ago to 65% right now.

The college recently tweeted that the communications and marketing team has received two gold and three silver national accolades from the Education Digital Marketing awards, including a gold award for total digital marketing program. What are you most proud of achieving since you took the position of president of the institution?
We have achieved so much and have had an unusual amount of national and international recognition for our work on addressing poverty barriers in our work on accelerated learning, getting away from the traditional 16-week semester, and focusing on getting students in and out with a degree that's hireable. I think what I'm most proud of is being named a Rising Star and an Aspen Top 5 School by the Aspen College Excellence program. This is truly data driven and it compares us with all 1,200 community colleges in the country. And I think we were recognized for being one of the Top 5 colleges in the country because we are innovators. We are innovators in learning. We are innovators in communication and marketing, and we are innovators in reimagining the structures of higher education. We just know that for our local economy and our regional economy to grow, we've got to make sure that students get a degree that's hireable.

What undergraduate programs are the most popular and what are the courses you would like to develop and improve?
The degrees and courses that attract the most attention from our students and our workforce are in healthcare. Over 90% of the healthcare workers in our region come through AC. We also are the workforce provider for first responders – police, firefighters and EMTs – those foundational elements that make a community function and thrive; the workers come through AC. We are really excited about developing our online programs and fields that will diversify the economy throughout our region and beyond. For example, we're launching a VFX gaming online degree that's connected to meeting workforce needs in an affordable



way, where we're building out experiences that allow students to learn in the workplace, not just in the classroom, and get paid by employers while they're earning credit with us.

What are your priorities now so you can continue receiving accolades like the ones you mentioned?
We place our students at the center of everything. We are really clear on who our students are. We have named our typical student María. She epitomizes not only the student who comes to AC, but the typical citizen living in our community. She is a Hispanic female, raising 1.2 kids, working two part-time jobs. She is a first-generation college student, 27 years of age. We have reimagined ourselves for her and once we understood who she was and what she needed from us, we built structures to support her learning. She has thrived and is one of the reasons why we're a Top 5 school and so moving forward, she will continue to be the focus that our college embraces.
What are the pros and cons of online versus in-person learning?
What we've learned from our students is that they are most successful in a hybrid environment where the majority of their content is delivered online, but they have in-person interactive face-to-face projects that they work on, too. So those are the learning experiences that we're expanding and scaling for student impact. But there are students, especially our students who are working while they go to school, that need the flexibility of an online degree, and we have to ensure that they learn in that environment, just like they would in a face-to-face environment. For us, learning is going to have to look different over the next decade. It may not be tied to a 16-week semester, it may not even be tied to a series of courses. It may be tied to experiences that build skills in 2 weeks or 10 weeks or 12 weeks. The key is building skills tied to what employers are needing more than focusing on a degree that we want to award. We're really aligning skill building to employer needs, and giving students those experiences, with the employers building the curriculum with us, and then offering a classroom experience in the workplace that the employer is a part of creating and evaluating.

What importance does AC place on the transferability of students to four-year universities?
Almost 60% of students at AC indicate their desire to transfer their credits to a university. That's why AC is laser-focused on creating a seamless and navigable system of transfer and advising so students can optimally proceed to four-year universities without loss of credits or valuable time. Students who hope to transfer work closely with both AC and university transfer advisors from the beginning to discuss career programs, admissions requirements and financial assistance. We strive to make the transfer process seamless and simple.

Why should potential students come study with you?
As a leader college, as an Aspen Top 5 school, we tell our students that AC is going to love you to success. We know that our students need relationships and need support to be successful in the classroom and in the workplace. So we have reimagined ourselves around the concept of love and support and help. Our students wrote the values for our school. Those values are integrated into our hiring and evaluation processes so that we can ensure we are the school where students can find success and when students come to us they find people that will do whatever it takes to love them to success.



FACTS

1929
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COLLEGE

Top 5
COLLEGES BY THE ASPEN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

65%
COMPLETION RATES

90% OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN WEST TEXAS COME THROUGH AC