Georgetown, Texas

Economic Development Strategic Plan 2018

Background

The City of Georgetown, Texas has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years. Among cities with a population over 50,000, Georgetown has ranked among the top fastest growing cities for three consecutive years (according to the U.S. Census Bureau). The City's population growth, combined with an availability of land, access to Interstate 35, and proximity to Austin, competitively position Georgetown as a location for the next wave of commercial development.

With this growth, the City has become more attractive to young professionals and young families looking for a place to call home outside of the urban city environment. Retail and restaurants have followed rooftops, complementing the City's existing lifestyle amenities. The historic downtown continues to thrive, providing an authentic, non-replicable sense of place for people of all ages. The next phase of growth for Georgetown will undoubtedly leverage these qualities to foster further commercial growth and job creation across a diverse mix of industries.

With this transition in the City's growth cycle, the time is right to develop a comprehensive economic development strategy. The foundational elements include a reassessment of Georgetown's opportunities and challenges, an in-depth workforce analysis, and purposeful identification of targeted industries. The 2017 Workforce and Target Industry Analysis completed by Avalanche Consulting serves as the basis of the strategic plan, along with a 2016 Retail Analysis and 2013 Downtown Master Plan.

The goal of this strategic planning process is to create a comprehensive strategic plan for the Georgetown Economic Development Program for the next three to five years. It is intended to align with the City's vision and direct the goals and objectives of the economic development department.

Georgetown is part of a dynamically growing metropolitan region. It will be important to continue to build and sustain partnerships with other organizations and institutions to obtain the identified strategic goals. Throughout the strategic plan the value of these partnerships is recognized.

City Council Vision

Georgetown: A caring community honoring our past and innovating for the future

Economic Development Mission

To purposefully support a business friendly environment where companies can and want to grow

Our Strategy

Strategic Goal 1: Support existing businesses and industries.

Strategic Goal 2: Enhance targeted recruitment of identified industries.

Strategic Goal 3: Diversify workforce development and recruitment initiatives.

Strategic Goal 4: Encourage speculative development.

Tell our story to a broader local audience.

Georgetown's Opportunities

(Source: Georgetown Target Industry Analysis, Avalanche Consulting, 2017)

Business Climate

- In recent years, the City has seen rapid job and population growth. As central Austin and the inner ring of metropolitan area communities became highly developed, **Georgetown is increasingly viewed as an attractive and affordable location** for a range of industries.
- Local elected leaders and City staff are **proactively supportive of growing new businesses** in the City.
- Georgetown has a relatively **large manufacturing sector** for a community of its size. Alongside this employment base, the City also has a **surprisingly strong maker culture** (entrepreneurs producing goods) that encourages experimentation and development in skilled manufacturing.
- Georgetown Electric Utility's **commitment to renewable energy resources** is attractive to many businesses – especially in clean energy.

Workforce

- Georgetown is home to a **wealth of talent**. Residents are highly educated – with 44% holding a bachelor's degree or higher – but a majority (75%) of working residents commute out of the City to their jobs each day.
- In addition to out-commuting residents, employers in Georgetown are able to draw from **a labor force of 700,000 workers** spread across the City's North and South labor sheds. Each labor shed has unique characteristics – including high concentrations of Medical and Construction occupations in the North and a high concentration of Computer occupations in the South.
- Georgetown is home to a **large veteran population**, and the North labor shed encompasses Fort Hood.
- Education is a major strength for Georgetown. **Southwestern University** is located in the City, and an **Austin Community College** campus is located in Round Rock. The **East Williamson County Higher Education Center** has campuses in Hutto and Taylor. In recent years, the **Georgetown Independent School District** has also made significant gains in STEM education and Career & Technical Education programs.
- **Retired residents** of Georgetown are highly active in the community and regularly volunteer their time and skills. This large population is highly educated and many have retired from successful business careers. They can offer tremendous benefit to local companies and entrepreneurs as part-time **employees, advisors, and mentors**.

Location

- Georgetown's proximity to Austin and **location along Interstate 35 and Toll 130** provides easy-access to workforce as well as distribution and transportation facilities. Austin Bergstrom International Airport and Downtown Austin are a quick 25 minutes away from Georgetown.

Quality of Life

- Georgetown offers a **high quality of life**, and employers report high success recruiting workers from outside the region to live in the City. Employers generally reported that finding skilled trade workers was relatively easy, but some worry that rising cost of living and traffic congestion are making it harder to find lower-skilled workers.

Georgetown's Challenges

Growth

- Georgetown's **extremely low unemployment rate** (below 4%) may force employers to compete for a smaller pool of available employees. In entry-level and low skill positions in the manufacturing and services industries, local employers voiced concern about a workforce stretched thin.
- Strong business growth during the past decade has resulted in **low vacancy rates** (below 5%) for buildings across all industries, **limiting options for companies looking for existing space.**

Perception

- Although the **perception of Georgetown as solely a retirement community** is changing, some of that reputation remains in the region among business people.
- Despite its proximity to Austin and the ease of access on Interstate 35, Georgetown can still be **viewed as being "too far north"** by some businesses and commercial brokers that stay within the urban center of the Austin metro area.

Our Vision & Mission

The City Council's Vision is *"Georgetown: A caring community preserving our past and innovating for the future."* Councilmembers developed this statement as part of a visioning process for the City in 2017 and have adopted it to signify their goal as a council for the City of Georgetown.

The mission of the Georgetown Economic Development Department is to purposefully support a business-friendly environment where companies can and want to grow.

What does business-friendly mean in Georgetown?

A "business friendly" environment can mean varying things to different people. In Georgetown, "business friendly" is often described as **predictable** and **solution-oriented**. It is a **culture of consistency, collaboration, and problem-solving**. It does not mean saying "yes" to every request, but rather seeking to understand what makes a project successful and looking for ways to align the goals of the business and the City's Vision and long range plans.

When a community is seen as being "business-friendly" it becomes a destination for organizations and workforce. The collaborative culture extends outside of City staff, through elected and appointed officials, and into the business community and workforce. By seeking to be "business-friendly," Georgetown seeks to be a unique destination for companies and their employees.

Our Strategy

Georgetown's strategic four strategic goals that are identified and a final, over-arching objective. These strategic goals describe major themes from the findings of the planning process for which specific improvements and innovative practices have been identified. In addition to the strategic goals, best practices in each area have been identified as a way to spur creation of new initiatives and action items in Georgetown.

The Economic Development Department will focus its resources to achieve these goals in the coming years, while continuously tracking and evaluating the action items in each strategic goal. The strategy will be revisited each year and action items may be updated and changed to be more effective.

Strategic Goal 1: Support Existing Businesses and Industries.

An effective economic development program starts with a strong business retention program. Without understanding the local business climate, it is difficult to identify the needs and assets of a community for future growth. Georgetown's business retention and expansion program provides an opportunity to partner with the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce to utilize the strengths of both organizations to build relationships with and assist Georgetown businesses.

1.1 *Build strong relationships with businesses through the business retention and expansion program visits.*
Identify and contact Georgetown businesses for formal business retention visits to build relationships and collect information on the business climate. Target major employers, businesses within the identified target industries, and businesses located in the Historic Downtown Overlay District. Partner with chamber volunteers and Main Street Advisory Board members, when appropriate, for business visits. Monitor trends and issues that come from the visits and look for ways the City can assist with needs.

1.2 *Enhance industry cluster groups.*
Look to extend industry cluster groups into other industries within Georgetown, in addition to the Georgetown Manufacturers Alliance. Explore creating a life science industry group as well as other industries where clusters exist within Georgetown. Use the group to maintain contact with local businesses, identify industry trends, and bring in relevant guest speakers.

1.3   *Continue to develop and refine the Breakfast Bites event for downtown stakeholders.*
        Look for ways to increase attendance and value for the events. Combining Breakfast
        Bites and Downtown Lowdown increases the reach of both events, but stakeholders
        must be kept engaged. Seek out speakers and topics that are relevant to the
        audience and provide economic value to businesses and developers.

1.4   *Grow the Annual Business Appreciation event.*
        Continue hosting an Annual Business Appreciation event to serve as an outlet to
        connect with businesses and maintain relationships. Look for creative ways to
        encourage attendance and promote the event (i.e. tournaments or competitions).

1.5   *Create a resource for small businesses and entrepreneurs.*
        Work with the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and other agencies to create an
        all-inclusive resource event and/or directory for small businesses and
        entrepreneurs. Explore speakers for specific programs.

        Work with the Georgetown Public Library to cross-promote small business
        resources including public computer access and meeting rooms.

> ### *Best Practice Example: Kansas City, MO - KCBizcare*
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> The Kansas City Business Customer Service Center or "KCBizcare" opened June 1, 2009, and was established as a separate entity under the City Manager's Office to provide enhanced services to new and existing small businesses in the community.
>
> KCBizcare, with a staff of three, provides business-specific "roadmaps" for opening a business; public access to city computers to look up property and zoning information, access city records, and submit applications online; referrals to city departments, agencies, and partner organizations involved in regulation or business assistance; and guidance and assistance in navigating the city's licensing, permitting, and approval processes. This information has also been compiled into a Business Resource Guide by KCBizcare to help reduce obstacles to starting and operating a business within the community.
>
> Ultimately, KCBizcare makes it easier for businesses to understand and comply with city, state, and federal regulations regarding opening and operating a small business.
>
> *(Source: Avalanche Consulting, 2017)*

1.6   *Enhance the program's online presence and develop a printed marketing piece.*
Outline the purpose of the Business Retention and Expansion Program and improve the online information and collateral materials to help promote the program and answer the question "why would I want to meet with the City?" Utilize testimonials to show examples of the program's needs and prior successes. Use the materials to promote the program at events and meet with Georgetown companies.

Best Practice Example: Richmond, VA - Business First

Recognizing a need to better support businesses already operating within the region, the Greater Richmond Partnership created a premier BR&E program. Greater Richmond Partnership developed their Business First Program as a collaboration between the regional Partnership, economic development organizations, local governments, and chambers of commerce. Business First is funded by public and private investors, and most Business First services are provided at little to no cost to the region's businesses.

The Business First Program places a strong emphasis on customer service. Business First has a dedicated, professional staff that meets with local companies on a regular schedule and provides training options. Primary business retention visits are conducted by the Partnership staff, but they share their survey with local partners and train them to conduct independent visits with primary employers to maintain relationships and show appreciation.

Ultimately, the Greater Richmond Partnership uses information gathered through their company visits to identify interventions for companies and inform and update their strategic plan.

(Source: Avalanche Consulting, 2017)

Strategic Goal 2: Enhance targeted recruitment of identified industries.

2.1   *Work to grow and locate companies in Georgetown to create jobs.*
         Responding to leads and directly targeting businesses within the identified
         industries of advanced manufacturing, life sciences, professional development, and
         destination retail. Use targeted recruitment techniques to pinpoint potential
         companies within the City's target industries in areas that are favorable for
         relocation or expansion into Georgetown.

2.2   *Continue developing and maintaining relationships with businesses, site selectors,*
         brokers, developers, and land owners.
         Continuously work to identify ways to maintain relationships and "tell our story" to
         people that have roles in the development and recruitment process, such as
         businesses, site selectors, brokers, developers, and land owners. Keep them
         updated on activity and opportunities in Georgetown.

2.3   *Create a signature commercial broker event.*
         Create an event that attracts commercial brokers and developers to Georgetown for
         a unique experience to expose them to the opportunities the City can provide for
         their clients. This event, or events, could take the form of a VIP table at the annual
         Red Poppy Festival and/or "Fam Tours" for brokerage offices.

2.4   *Enhance our online presence.*
         With the majority of site selection performed online by businesses and site
         selectors, it is vital for the City's online presence to be clear, concise, and readily
         available. Work to regularly refresh the City's economic development online
         materials to maintain up-to-date information in a dynamic and user-friendly
         interface. Look for new and innovative ways to display information and showcase
         Georgetown's unique identity.

Strategic Goal 3: Diversify workforce development and recruitment initiatives.

3.1 *Develop stronger relationships with educational institutions that serve Georgetown's workforce.*
Explore workforce training, internship, and project opportunities through partnership with the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Workforce Alliance. Seek to utilize the Georgetown Independent School District and regional colleges, including Southwestern University, Texas State Technical College, Texas State University Round Rock, Texas A&M Health Science Center, Austin Community College, and the University of Texas.

Best Practice Example: Miami, FL - Academic Leaders Council

In 2012 regional leaders in Miami launched the One Community One Goal initiative to reinvigorate Miami's economy. The initiative identified 7 specific target industries—aviation, creative design, hospitality & tourism, information technology, international banking & finance, life sciences & health care, and trade & logistics. The availability of an enhanced workforce development pipeline across each of these industries was critical to the project's success. Only by embracing a regional approach to talent production could Miami's colleges and universities meet the needs of local employers. Historically, however, the region's many colleges and universities were defined more by fierce competition than close collaboration.

The creation of an Academic Leaders Council helped usher in a new climate of cooperation within the community. The Council is comprised of the Presidents of six local institutions of higher learning, including Barry University, Florida International University, Florida Memorial University, Miami Dade College, St. Thomas University and the University of Miami. The Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public School is also a member. Together, the Council works to ensure that academic programs at participating schools are aligned with employer needs and support target industry growth. Members also meet regularly with industry representatives to identify areas of strength, as well as potential weaknesses. The Council has also helped launch a regional talent development network that provides internships to students in target industries.

(Source: Avalanche Consulting, 2017)

3.2   *Tap into the veteran population in Georgetown's northern labor shed.*
Partner with the Texas Workforce Commission's veteran's program to look for ways to engage with the veteran population outside of Georgetown and expose them to opportunities within the City. Explore local and on-site job fairs, job placement programs, and available incentives for businesses that hire veterans.

3.3   *Work to make Georgetown more desirable and well-known to young professionals.*
Support the creation of a young professionals association that can be used to expose participants to employment and leadership possibilities in Georgetown. Use the association as a resource for new initiatives and to promote Georgetown outside of the community to reach a larger audience.

> ### *Best Practice Example: Nashville, TN - WorkIT Nashville*
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> WorkIT Nashville is a multi-pronged approach toward talent recruitment. WorkIT Nashville is a collaborative community initiative managed by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. Partners include the Chamber, the Nashville Technology Council, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, and Williamson County. WorkIT Nashville helps recruit skilled professionals to fill the growing number of positions in the IT industry and thus advance the local economy.
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> Attracting talent to the region is as much about livability amenities and community culture as it is about having a thriving industry sector and job opportunities. The WorkIT Nashville campaign employs an omnichannel strategy to communicate its message to job seekers and their families across multiple mediums. An online job-matching portal, The WorkIT Nashville Guidebook: A Guide for Recruiting Tech Talent provides a comprehensive guide to the Nashville region and its abundant livability offerings. Social media messaging, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+, helps reinforce this message.
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> In its first year, the WorkIT Nashville campaign reached over 3,600 cities and 130 countries. Over 200 businesses posted jobs on the site and over 180,000 job searches were conducted. Nearly 2,000 people across 42 states and 45 countries registered on the site.
>
> *(Source: Avalanche Consulting, 2017)*

3.4   *Utilize partnerships to aid in the creation apprenticeship program framework.*
Work with the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Manufacturers and Workforce Alliances to bring together manufacturers in Georgetown that have expressed the desire for an apprenticeship program. Partner with workforce organizations that have experience in this area to work with the manufacturers to create an apprenticeship framework that they can take advantage of. The program would aid in filling vacant entry-level positions in the Georgetown manufacturing sector.

3.5   *Create an executive relocation portal.*
Collaborate with local businesses, real estate agents, and title companies to develop a comprehensive executive relocation portal on the economic development with a robust index of information designed to recruit employees and assist with relocation. Provide information in an electronic portal that can be accessed by multiple parties and updated regularly.

3.6   *Better engage active retirees in existing programs.*
The City will continue to seek out opportunities to engage active retirees in existing programs including the manufacturers or workforce alliances, as well as others that have yet to be developed. Typically, the people that attend these are currently working in the industry, but attendance by knowledgeable retirees when their availability allows would be beneficial to the group for advice on issues that they have experience with.

> ### *Best Practice Example: Broward County, FL – Re-engage for Good*
>
> Broward County, Florida is home to a sizable population of retirees. Too often, however, retirees and baby boomers nearing retirement are disconnected from the broader community. Recognizing that seniors have a lot to offer, including years of professional experience and plentiful free time, the Community Foundation of Broward County, Florida developed a program to help seniors engage in new opportunities after retiring.
>
> To promote part-time jobs and volunteer opportunities available to seniors in the community, the Foundation created a community plan of action. Dubbed "Re-engage for Good," the initiative helps coordinate funding and community efforts towards engaging retirees or soon-to-be retirees with professional, civic, and volunteer opportunities in Broward County. The plan emphasizes opportunities for seniors planning to pursue "encore careers," flexible, part-time positions that provide a continuing source of income and personal fulfillment, as well as creating opportunities for seniors to volunteer. The plan includes strategies to help seniors and retirees transition from full time employment to retirement, while encouraging them to be an active member of the community.
>
> *(Source: Avalanche Consulting, 2017)*

Strategic Goal 4: Encourage speculative development.

4.1 *Evaluate incentive programs for speculative development.*
Approach speculative development incentives creatively, without relying on initial job creation. Look for appropriate mechanisms to assist with and encourage speculative development across all industry sectors in Georgetown.

4.2 *Identify and vet available land favorable for development.*
Work in partnership with landowners and developers to identify favorable land sites in Georgetown. Complete due diligence and assist in preparing sites for potential development projects. Highlight development-ready sites on the economic development website.

> ### *Best Practice Example: The Woodlands, TX*
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> The Woodlands is a master planned community located 45-minutes from downtown Houston. Since its initial development more than 40 years ago, the Woodlands has carefully and intentionally adhered to a master plan to create a quality location for people to live, work, and recreate.
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> Notably, the Woodlands has achieved it vision while also remaining flexible and responsive to economic changes during the past several decades. When the Lone Star Community College was developed, for example, the Woodlands renamed the surrounding area College Park to provide a cohesive brand identity to adjacent education and residential facilities.
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> Similarly, over time the Woodlands has shifted its economic development focus towards encouraging more commercial and office development to complement existing residential development. With changing market demand, it is now also focusing on creating a Town Center with mixed-use residential, commercial, and office.
>
> Throughout the 40 years of development, one constant has been the careful planning of road, water, and sewer infrastructure to serve the existing population growth and encourage commercial and office development in preferred areas.
>
> *(Source: Avalanche Consulting, 2017)*

Tell our story to a broader local audience.

The most recurring theme with the community leaders in the strategic planning sessions was that residents and outsiders alike were often unaware of the Economic Development Department's initiatives and the opportunities available to the City of Georgetown. To combat this, one of the over-arching objectives through all of the strategic goals for the economic development strategy will be to effectively "tell our story" to a broader local and regional audience. While prospective and existing businesses may have heard Georgetown's opportunities promoted, that same message has not been effectively broadcasted to the broader local and regional audience. There are several ways this can be accomplished, including the action items below.

A.1   *Continue to grow the Annual Economic Development Symposium.*
        Increase the reach of the audience by scheduling national speakers with a regional pull on timely topics. Seek out ways to continue to add value to the program and present the Georgetown story in unique and innovative ways.

A.2   *Grow the quarterly Twelve@12 roundtable program.*
        Hold quarterly small-group, diverse, invite-only, roundtable discussions with specific groups including downtown property owners, commercial developers, residential developers, large property owners, major employers. Create a setting where candid conversations can take place and their needs can be addressed to enable future development in Georgetown.

A.3   *Utilize the annual Swirl event to promote Georgetown.*
        Look for ways to add elements to the annual Swirl wine walk event in Downtown Georgetown. This event has the potential to be a draw for young professionals and brokers. Utilize VIP tickets for prospects and brokers to continue building relationships and exposing people to Georgetown's character.

A.4   *Continue to participate in regional partnerships.*
        Continue participation in Opportunity Austin and the Williamson County Economic Development Partnership to reach a larger audience.

A.5   *Develop a quarterly newsletter.*
        Use the newsletter as a communication tool with existing companies, community leaders, and site selectors. Highlight recent announcements, ground breakings, programs, and business retention projects.

Economic Trend Metrics

Goal Area	Performance Metrics
Overall Strategy	Total employment
	Annual new jobs
	Ratio of Jobs per 10 Residents
	Total new business establishments
	Small business (<10 employees) establishments
	Target industry employment
	Advanced Manufacturing
	Life Sciences
	Professional Services
	Total corporate investment by all target industries
	Total announcements in target industries
	Engagements through internal communication campaign
Objective 1: Support Existing Businesses and Industries.	Total annual BR&E visits with existing businesses
	Tracking of jobs added/lost with existing businesses
	Attendance at industry cluster groups
	Attendance at Breakfast Bites event
	Attendance at Annual Business Appreciation Event
	Establishment of a small business and entrepreneur resource
	Number of requests for small business assistance
	Tracking of hits to the small business program website
Objective 2: Enhance targeted recruitment of identified industries.	Number of new firms in targets established in Georgetown
	Number of leads in the pipeline
	Number of active prospects
	Number of announcements
	Number of direct contacts with site selectors
	Number of target related conferences attended

Goal Area	Performance Metrics
Objective 3: Diversify workforce development and recruitment initiatives.	Number of students enrolled in local post-secondary school programs
	Post-secondary education institution expansion and new program/facility establishment
	Post-secondary educational attainment of population
	Number of internship and apprenticeship participants
	Students enrolled in CTE programs
	Contacts with the veteran population
	Establishment and size of young professionals association
	Creation of and hits to executive relocation portal
Objective 4: Encourage speculative development.	Square footage of office space available
	Square footage of office space under construction
	Square footage of office space coming online
	Square footage of industrial space available
	Square footage of industrial space under construction
	Square footage of industrial space coming online
	Tracking of incentives used and resulting footage built
	Tracking of available, appropriately zoned land for development
	New housing construction by type - i.e. multifamily, single-family, mixed-use, executive

Goal Area	Performance Metrics
Tell our story to a broader local audience.	Number of local events created or sponsored by the City's economic development office
	Attendance of Annual Economic Development Symposium
	Attendance of Twelve@12 roundtable
	Social media posts
	Tracking of website and social media visits
	Number of earned media mentions and articles
	Number of social media followers
	Other marketing and business dev metrics currently tracked by City

*Listing of the above metrics is intended to reflect potential measurements for each strategic goal, but is not intended to suggest the Economic Development Department will collect or track data on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis for publication.