

DRAFT

THREE-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

City of Abilene, Kansas

Introduction

The City of Abilene, in partnership with Dickinson County, the Abilene Area Chamber of Commerce, and various business stakeholders, has prepared this draft Economic Development Plan for review and comment by the business community and general public. The draft plan was developed through a series of forums and interactive sessions that sought to determine what are the main areas that the community should focus its efforts and resources to have the greatest possible return on investment.

The City's role throughout this process has been as convener and facilitator. This is an appropriate role since government, including local government, is not the driving force behind any community's growth and prosperity. Private businesses and entrepreneurs make the investments that create jobs, expand the local tax base and build wealth. Consequently, business and entrepreneurs are critical to ensure Abilene and Dickinson County's continued prosperity.

Local government's role is to create the conditions that best allow for business growth and prosperity throughout the community. There are many ways local governments create these conditions, including, but not limited to: 1) providing well-built and maintained infrastructure; 2) providing quality schools that prepare youth for the future; 3) preserving public safety; 4) protecting property rights; and 5) minimizing and streamlining regulations.

It is imperative that both the private and public sectors work together, as partners, to provide to forge a community-wide effort where all stakeholders have a role in and responsibility to the community's prosperity. The purpose of this plan is to provide a map to allow a course to be set for the journey ahead. Before the final plan can be adopted and set into motion, the City would like to receive feedback from the business community and the general public. Here's how to share your thoughts on the draft plan:

- **Attend the inaugural Business Summit** beginning at 7:00 pm on January 31st at the Eisenhower Visitors Center Auditorium located at 200 SE 4th Street, Abilene, KS 67410. Participants will have the opportunity to provide comments at the summit.
- **Provide written comments** by email to: citymgr@abilenecityhall.com or by mail to: ED Plan Comments, PO Box 519, Abilene, KS 67410. Comments may also be provided on the City's website at www.abilenecityhall.com/edplan.
- **Engage family, friends and businesses** in a community-wide dialogue about the future of Abilene and actions that can be done locally to ensure prosperity.

- **Tell your story** to everyone; family and friends within the community and people living or working outside of Abilene. Why do you live and/or work in Abilene? Share your story with others and you may influence someone to choose Abilene. The best marketing is word of mouth and everyone in Abilene is a spokesperson for Abilene.
- **Consider ways to invest locally and get involved** in economic development efforts to support of existing businesses, entrepreneurs and the general community.

The City will accept comments related to the proposed Economic Development Plan until **5:00 pm on March 4, 2013**. Following the public comment period, all comments will be reviewed to determine what modifications should be made to the final plan before review and consideration by the City Commission. The Board of County Commissioners will also have an opportunity to review the plan and provide an endorsement. Following the plan's adoption, the City and County will host bi-annual Business Summits to provide an overview of the progress of the plan's implementation.

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Economic Development Mission Statement

The City of Abilene's mission with respect to economic development is to be proactive in growing and sustaining an environment that promotes a healthy and diverse business community.

1. **Retain existing businesses and promote organic business growth within the community.**
 - a. City/County, Chamber, Others - Develop a marketing campaign for the community that tells a personalized story of why Abilene is a place of choice to locate a business, raise a family, or visit on a vacation. Deploy the campaign in strategic media outlets.
 - b. Chamber - Establish a concierge program to provide consistent, up-to-date information and assistance related to business and economic development.
 - c. All - Conduct 10 to 15 annual one-on-one meetings with businesses throughout the community to determine needs and assess the existing local economy.
 - d. City - Conduct bi-annual business summits to share information about the local economy and provide business leaders with an opportunity to directly engage each other and the local governments.
 - e. Chamber - Facilitate twelve business networking events that provide an opportunity for local business leaders to dialogue about the local economy.
 - f. Chamber - Encourage businesses to develop a business succession plan to allow their business to continue operations after a business owner's retirement.
 - g. City - Engage existing businesses with respect to the local regulatory environment to determine ways to streamline regulations and limit unnecessary government interference that may hinder business operations or expansion.
 - h. City - Build a community partnership between local businesses and the City to improve the look and feel of the streetscape and reduce code violations, especially along major business corridors and the downtown area.
 - i. City - Develop an improved set of standards to guide businesses with facade or external improvements.
2. **Recruit and grow new businesses.**
 - a. All - Identify resources to develop entrepreneurs within the community.
 - b. Chamber - Develop a program to assist local entrepreneurs with the various phases of growing a business.

- c. Chamber - Identify financial resources to provide entrepreneurs with access to capital for various phases of business development.
- d. City - Develop a list of specific industries to target with economic development recruitment efforts that would benefit from or are complemented by local economic synergies (i.e., strengths or assets).
- e. City - Develop business incentives that may be deployed to assist prospective businesses with the initial cost of relocation or to address market inefficiencies associated with specific, targeted industries.
- f. City/County, Chamber, Others - Develop a marketing campaign for the community that tells a personalized story of why Abilene is a place of choice to locate a business, raise a family, or visit on a vacation. Deploy the campaign in strategic media outlets.
- g. City - Establish a public-private partnership framework to assist in financing the development of the Abilene Business Park. Recruit an anchor tenant, such as a technical college, to begin to develop synergy within the geographic area of the park.

3. **Promote residential development in Abilene.**

- a. City/County, Chamber, Others - Develop a marketing campaign for the community that tells a personalized story of why Abilene is a place of choice to locate a business, raise a family, or visit on a vacation. Deploy the campaign in strategic media outlets.
- b. City - Research policies and programs that promote affordable housing and implement ones that are appropriate for Abilene.
- c. City - Develop a formal policy to guide the use of special benefit district financing to promote public-private partnerships in residential development.
- d. City - Review zoning regulations to create provisions that would allow for the development of residential lofts in the downtown area.
- e. City - Proactively market the availability of the Neighborhood Revitalization Programs to property owners with property located within the designated corridors.

4. **Collaborate with business partners to develop and grow events that draw visitors to the community.**

- a. City/County, Chamber, Others - Develop a marketing campaign for the community that tells a personalized story of why Abilene is a place of choice to locate a business, raise a family, or visit on a vacation. Deploy the campaign in strategic media outlets.
- b. Chamber - Create a community calendar for businesses and organizations to share information on upcoming events.

- c. Chamber, CVB - Conduct at least seven events each year and encourage businesses and organizations to integrate events with community assets such as the Great Plains Theater.
- d. Chamber, CVB - Develop an open communication system that promotes an engaging dialogue between businesses, organizations, and local government.