



1962  
1963  
1964  
1965  
1966  
1967  
1968  
1969  
1970  
1971  
1972  
1973  
1974  
1975  
1976  
1977  
1978  
1979  
1980  
1981  
1982  
1983  
1984  
1985  
1986  
1987

1994  
1995  
1996  
1997  
1998  
1999  
2000  
2001  
2002  
2003  
2004  
2005  
2006  
2007  
2008  
2009  
2010  
2011  
2012  
2013  
2014  
2015  
2016  
2017  
2018  
2019



**REPORTING PERIOD**  
**10/1/22-3/30/23**

Abilene Industrial Foundation dba Abilene  
Regional Growth Alliance

# DEAR INVESTOR -

Wow - what a productive and fruitful quarter your volunteer leadership and team of professionals have had! As you are aware, our work has been focused on three main initiatives:

- Growing and retaining existing business
- Expanding key industry sectors
- Enhancing community infrastructure

In addition to working toward our three main initiatives, the Abilene Industrial Foundation (AIF) went through a re-brand. While the AIF will always be the AIF, its brand has changed to support its realigned role in community economic development. Effective in January 2023, the AIF board voted unanimously to adopt a brand that better defines who we are and what we do. That brand, established as a "DBA," is the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance. As we considered the brand, we considered the following:

**Abilene** will always be the regional hub that drives the Big Country economy and the communities which benefit from it. **Regional** was added because no community is defined by an artificial geographic boundary – the more successful the region, the more successful the communities within it. What's good for Abilene is good for our neighbors – and vice versa. You get it. **Growth** was an integral part of the brand because that's what AIF has always been about. Helping our community thrive has been central to the AIF's work since its inception. We want to help grow jobs. And workforce. And all the things that help us to attract and retain investment in our area. **Alliance**, simply put, was the easy part. Nothing the Chamber or the AIF has accomplished has been on its own. We are committed to remaining the single most collaborative and cooperative partner in the area by bringing the horsepower and influence of the private sector to any opportunity that falls within our mission.

Throughout this report, we hope you will enjoy learning about the significant impact the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance has made. While LEADAbi is a five-year plan, we feel confident in our great start toward accomplishing our goals in large part thanks to you, our partner.



*Shaun Martin*  
SHAUN MARTIN

2022-2024 Chair,  
Abilene Regional Growth Alliance  
Atmos Energy



*Doug Peters*  
DOUG PETERS

Abilene Regional Growth  
Alliance President

The plan seeks to deliver needed services by leveraging resources to grow our economy without duplication of efforts.

For every 100 jobs this plan fosters, the economic impact is estimated to be

# \$4.4 M

With an additional **85 to 95** jobs created.

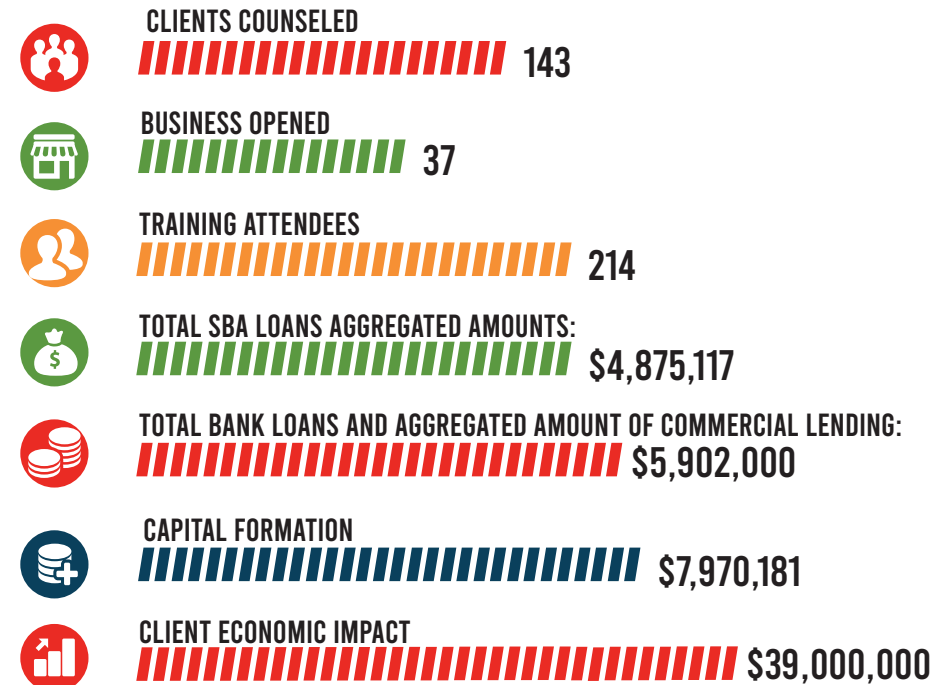
# HOW YOU CAN SHARE THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK



With a re-brand comes a new opportunity to share the story of the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance and our allied partners. As proud investors and supporters of our work, we've taken this opportunity to make your life a little easier by sharing fast facts you can use when helping to share our story across the Big Country region.

Reporting period: 10/1/22-3/30/23

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP



\*THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICA'S SBDC AT TEXAS TECH

## INCREASE THE NUMBER OF RETAIL/ RESTAURANT ESTABLISHMENTS



## TARGET THE NUMBER OF JOB OPENINGS TO FALL BETWEEN 3,500 TO 5,000



## GROW THE NUMBER OF BUSINESSES IN ABILENE



GRAPH KEY:  
■ BASELINE ■ CURRENT

SOURCES: TEXAS COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE & WORK IN TEXAS

## TELLING OUR ABILENE STORY

As we work towards talent attraction, ensuring that we're telling our Abilene story across vast platforms for the largest reach possible is an important piece to the overall workforce puzzle. That's why we partnered with livability.com to help tell our story on a national scale. As we begin our second year of the three year agreement, here are a few notable analytics.

- 10 Reasons Abilene, Texas, Is a Great Place To Live** | 1,057 pageviews; 4:27 avg time on page
- 12 Things You Must Do in Abilene, Texas** | 454 pageviews; 3:17 avg time on page
- Why Abilene Is a Great Place To Launch Your Small Business** | 78 pageviews; 3:47 avg time on page
- The Cost of Living Diaries: Abilene, Texas** | 57 pageview; 3:00 avg time on page
- Why Abilene, Texas, Is a Mecca for Young Professionals** | 28 pageviews; 1:55 avg time on page

## CITIES WHERE TRAFFIC IS COMING FROM:

- Q1: Abilene, Dallas, Indianapolis, Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Houston, New York
- Q2: Abilene, Dallas, Austin, Los Angeles, Orlando, San Angelo, Estes Park, Houston, New York
- Q3: Dallas, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Austin, Denver, Seattle, Phoenix, Fort Worth

**\$31,305,552**

Increase to the assessed property value in the TIRZ district which provides a dependable source of economic development funds which can be allocated to stimulate new development and redevelopment over the years.

SOURCE: CAD

**90+**

Net new jobs created - non-Type A

## INITIATIVE I: GROW AND RETAIN EXISTING BUSINESS

■ We will increase our economic prosperity by providing resources, support, and opportunities for local businesses in Abilene and the region.



PHOTO: The group of delegates who joined us on our Advocacy trip to Austin in 2023. To view a recap of the trip, click the video link in the "Impact at a glance" section.

### Build and maintain a health business climate:

Ensuring Abilene, Texas, remains a business friendly community is essential to our forward growth. In Q1, the Abilene Regional Growth Alliance had the opportunity to participate in Big Country Day at the Capitol. Over **15 community members** from a vast array of industries traveled to Austin to share with legislators our organizational **76 point legislative agenda**. To date, we are monitoring progress on more than **100 active bills in Austin** and have signed on to these coalitions: Texas Employers Coalition, Texas Opportunity Coalition, Aim Higher Texas Policy Coalition and Texas 2036.

A newly revamped Business Brief was re-launched for the business community and is sent to an email list of over 2,100 representatives to a vast array of industry types and includes key information for business growth such as grant opportunities, access to capital, workforce, and legislative policy updates.

### Help local and regional businesses address workforce challenges by:

Of all the priorities that hold the focus of the Growth Alliance, none are more timely or critical than available workforce. Progress in this important effort continues to unfold and, as of late, focus has been placed on the critical need to help the restaurant and service sector fill immediate openings. A series of efforts have been undertaken, connecting this sector of our local economy with service providers who specialize in re-entry, at-risk youth, and transportation providers.

Here's what you can anticipate on the horizon for workforce in this calendar year:

- A locally-focused talent attraction program showcasing high-demand job opportunities to job seekers
- A revamp of abilenejobs.com
- A "Come Home" campaign targeting workers with a previous tie to the area
- A highly focused approach to internships connecting college students to the business community

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE



22 GRANT OPPORTUNITIES SHARED WITH BUSINESS AS OF 3/13/23

OVER 24 YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PARTICIPATED IN A FOCUS GROUP RELATED TO CHILDCARE

WORKFORCE IN THE NEWS - [CLICK HERE](#)

OVER 20 COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS COLLECTIVELY WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP FILL SERVICE INDUSTRY WORKFORCE NEEDS TARGETING RE-ENTRY

98 NEW JOBS POSTED WITH 3,720 VIEWS ON ABILENEWORKS.COM

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS I

FOCUS ON ASSISTING BUSINESSES AND EXECUTING ANNUAL RETENTION CONSULTATIONS

CURRENT = 226  
FY TARGET = 210

GROW THE NUMBER OF BUSINESSES IN ABILENE SOURCE: TEXAS COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE

2021 BASELINE = 3,454  
CURRENT = 3,744  
FY TARGET = 2% GROWTH

INCREASE REFERRALS TO STATE BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER

2021 BASELINE = 15  
CURRENT = 24  
FY TARGET = 5%

TARGET THE NUMBER OF JOB OPENINGS TO FALL BETWEEN 3,500 TO 5,000

CURRENT = 3,506  
TARGET = B/W 3,500-5,000

INCREASE NUMBER OF COMPANIES SUCCESSFULLY USING SKILLBRIDGE

CURRENT = 6  
FY TARGET = 3

AMONG NON-TYPE A BUSINESSES

## INITIATIVE II: EXPAND KEY INDUSTRY SECTORS

■ We will grow key business sectors that will add jobs and capital investment to the area as well as enhance community-building efforts and quality of life.

PHOTO: Drs. Emily and Alejandro Elias of Victory Spinal Care in Abilene, Texas

### Build a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem:

Now in its second year, the West Texas Business Navigator Program is hitting its stride. Funded through close to a one million dollar grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration, the program aims to provide training to historically underserved businesses in the Big Country region.

A key strength of the LEADAbi program is our ability to work with community partners to bring a one-stop approach to entrepreneurship helping stimulate our local entrepreneurial ecosystem. Our hope is to cut out the confusion when starting a small business by creating a road map from when a business idea sparks, to navigating funding, to understanding regulations, to coaching, to implementation.

Currently, our partners include:

- Dr. Doug McIntyre to provide mentorship and intro to entrepreneurship courses.
- America's SBDC at Texas Tech to provide business counseling.
- Cisco College to provide on-going business training courses.
- West Central Texas Council of Governments to ensure our rural businesses are gaining resources.
- Black Chamber of Commerce to provide this important growing sector of our community resources.
- HERU Development Corp. to provide financial training assistance programs.
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

### Support existing and expanding regional retail opportunities for the Abilene area:

Currently, there is two developing catalytic retail and commercial projects that your team of professionals are working on related to infill development for the community. Most recently, team members traveled to the International Council of Shopping Centers Red River Conference to share the Abilene story with over 125 potential developers.

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**GOVERNOR'S SMALL BUSINESS SUMMIT - MAY 18**

WILL MAKE A STOP IN ABILENE - THIS IS THE FIRST STOP OF THEIR SERIES AND THE FIRST TIME FOR ABILENE TO HOST THE SUMMIT.

**CAPITAL FORMATION - \$7,970,181**

**CLIENTS COUNSELED - 143**  
**COUNSELING HOURS - 442**  
**BUSINESS OPENED - 37**

**TRAINING ATTENDEES - 214**  
THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICA'S SBDC AT TEXAS TECH

**72 INDIVIDUALS!**

PARTICIPATED IN TRAININGS RELATED TO THE WEST TEXAS BUSINESS NAVIGATOR PROGRAM FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERUTILIZED BUSINESSES (HUB) FROM 2/1/22-2/28/23

**14 DIVERSE**

**BUSINESS TRAINING**  
TOPICS OFFERED BY THE WEST TEXAS BUSINESS NAVIGATOR PROGRAM FROM 2/1/22-2/28/23

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS II



INCREASE THE # OF NET NEW JOBS CREATED

CURRENT = 92



INCREASE THE # OF ENTREPRENEURS ASSISTED

2021 BASELINE = 117  
CURRENT = 375  
TARGET = 10% GROWTH



INCREASE THE # OF EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED FOR ENTREPRENEURS

CURRENT = 34



INCREASE THE NUMBER OF RETAIL/RESTAURANT ESTABLISHMENTS  
SOURCE: TEXAS COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE

2021 BASELINE = 1,588  
CURRENT = 1,763  
TARGET = 2% GROWTH

AMONG NON-TYPE A BUSINESSES

## INITIATIVE III: ENHANCE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

■ We will build a vibrant community that attracts jobs, investment, and people.



PHOTO: The primary goal of the Downtown Initiative is to build confidence in downtown Abilene as a destination to live, work, play and, most importantly, invest. Singer/songwriter Jackie Venson plays at the Open Road Music series.

### Lead downtown Abilene's redevelopment in partnership with the City of Abilene and stakeholders:

New look, same objective. The Downtown Initiative recently went through an identity update. Pictured in the "Impact at a Glance" section, the new identity gives tribute to the historic T&P Railway in our beloved central business district. This identity will ensure we market the heart of our community for future investment while sharing the story with newcomers of how our community got its start. The identity will be complete with a re-launch of a brand new website set to go live in April 2023.

### Improve infrastructure to better access markets:

Activity around infrastructure in our community continues to be explored. In early December 2022, the Chamber and Growth Alliance were proud to sign onto a coalition to help avert a nationwide rail shutdown at a request from our friends at GoRail. We know the importance of ensuring the least disruption as possible related to supply chains.

Additionally related to infrastructure, as part of our 76-point Legislative Agenda, we're working with our elected officials to hopefully add a full-time permanent Texas A&M Forest Service fire base at Abilene Regional Airport. The infrastructure that would be put in place to house the aircraft would additionally open our airport up to having the ability for large aircraft diversions enhancing amenities at ABI.

We will be participating in the Texas Department of Transportation statewide long-range transportation plan, called Connecting Texas 2050. Through these focus groups, TxDOT will establish the vision, objectives, performance measures, and strategic recommendations for the state's transportation system through 2050 for all modes. We look forward to updating you on this progress.

### Advocate and support Dyess AFB to ensure its stability and growth:

- DC Advocacy trip for B-21 Military Construction dollar focus.
- Attended the Dyess Small Business Roadshow educating Abilene small business with Dyess contracting.
- Coordinated exiting Dyess airmen to a hiring reception with local aerospace industry.
- Jump Start held January 4th and February 15th with a tour size average of 50 airmen.

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE



THREE COALITION LETTERS SIGNED ON TO RELATED TO GORAIL ACTIVITIES AND SUPPLY CHAIN MATTERS

**\$31,305,552**  
INCREASE TO THE TIRZ DISTRICT WHICH PROVIDES A DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUNDS WHICH CAN BE ALLOCATED TO STIMULATE NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT OVER THE YEARS

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS III



INCREASE THE ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE  
TIRZ DISTRICT: CITY OF ABILENE

2021 BASELINE = \$689,757,181  
CURRENT = \$721,062,733



NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE PROJECTS YTD

CURRENT = 6

## ADDITIONAL IMPACT #'S



316,462 SQUARE FEET AVAILABLE FOR REDEVELOPMENT IN THE PINE STREET CORRIDOR WITH AN ESTIMATED LAND VALUE OF \$2,531,696 IN CAPITAL INVESTMENT TO DOWNTOWN

AMONG NON-TYPE A BUSINESSES

# VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

## LEAD ABI CO-CHAIRS



**NORM ARCHIBALD**  
Former City of Abilene Mayor



**SCOTT DUESER**  
First Financial Bankshares, Inc.



**MITCH BARNETT**  
Barnett & Hill



**YVONNE BATTS**  
Batts Communications LP



**JOHN BECKHAM**  
Beckham, Rector & Eargle, L.L.P.



**CHARLIE BLACK**  
Wagstaff Law Firm

## CAMPAIGN CABINET CONT.



**DARRIN BLACK**  
Pennye Lane Properties



**GREG BLAIR**  
AEP Texas



**RON BUTLER**  
First Financial Bank



**WILL DUGGER**  
Jacob & Martin, Ltd.



**MIKE FERNANDEZ**  
Texas National Bank



**GARY GRUBBS**  
Lawrence Hall Abilene



**JAY HARDAWAY**  
West Texas Strategies



**SCOTT HIBBS**  
Enprotec / Hibbs & Todd, Inc.



**BRAD HOLLAND**  
Hendrick Health



**SHAUN MARTIN**  
Atmos Energy



**DEE MOORE**  
Retired Professional



**LAURA MOORE**  
The Grace Museum



**DANI RAMSAY**  
First National Bank Albany



**SCOTT SENTER**  
Better Homes and Gardens  
Real Estate Senter, REALTORS



**MARELYN SHEDD**  
First Financial Bank



**SAM VINSON**  
Lease Management Services



**DOUG PETERS**  
President & CEO  
Abilene Chamber

**Honorary Campaign Members**  
Katie Alford, Community Foundation of Abilene  
Joey Light, Wylie Independent School District  
Rep. Stan Lambert, Texas State House of Representatives  
Cynthia Pearson, Day Nursery of Abilene  
Kris Seale, Funeral Directors Life  
Commissioner Chuck Statler, Taylor County  
Mayor Anthony Williams, City of Abilene  
Dr. David Young, Abilene Independent School District  
H.C. Zachry, Zachry Associates, Inc.

### 2023-2025 Abilene Regional Growth Alliance Executive Committee

- Shaun Martin, Atmos Energy, Chair
- Will Dugger, Jacob & Martin, Ltd., Vice Chair
- Ted Evans, Lone Star Canvas & Sign Works, Secretary/Treasurer
- Gary Grubbs, Lawrence Hall Abilene, Past Chair
- Greg Blair, AEP Texas, Member At-Large
- Larry Gill, Retired, Member At-Large
- Scott Hibbs, Enprotec / Hibbs & Todd, Inc. (eHT), Member At-Large
- Michael Bob Starr, Retired, Member At-Large

Doug Peters, Abilene Regional Growth Alliance President

### Data sources:

Texas Comptroller's Office, City of Abilene, Internal