

BUSINESS ATTRACTION PLAN

City of Harker Heights, Texas



Acknowledgments

TIP Strategies, Inc., would like to thank the members of the Harker Heights City Council and the City staff for providing guidance and feedback that shaped this plan. TIP is also grateful to the many residents and stakeholders of Harker Heights who shared their thoughts and contributed valuable insights during the planning process.

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- Brian Burt, Place 1 Council Member
- Shane Hodyniak, Place 2 Council Member
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TIP Strategies, Inc., is a privately held Austin-based firm providing consulting and advisory services to public and private sector clients. Established in 1995, the firm has spent 30 years partnering with communities, turning insights into strategies that shape tomorrow. Its core competencies are strategic planning for economic development, talent strategies, organizational development, resiliency planning, and equity initiatives.

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Project Overview

The landscape of economic development in Harker Heights (the City) has shifted. Twenty years ago, the City’s emphasis was on rooftops—growing the population and the property tax base through residential development. The priority then shifted to ensuring Harker Heights had the retail amenities to support those residents. Now the City is focusing on the attraction of quality jobs and employers. This employment-centered approach will allow the City to diversify its tax base to ease the burden placed on residential taxpayers.

In late 2024, the City of Harker Heights engaged TIP Strategies (TIP) to create a *Business Attraction Plan* that identified potential industry targets and prioritized areas of town ripe for development and redevelopment. This plan is intended to attract high-wage jobs for Harker Heights residents and help balance the tax base.

TIP’s work, based on thorough quantitative analysis and qualitative input, provides the City with a comprehensive business attraction approach centered on six recommendations. Each recommendation centers on a target industry area (TIA) and the real estate opportunities associated with attracting that target industry to Harker Heights (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. BUSINESS ATTRACTION PLAN OVERVIEW



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Traditional targets build on an existing base of assets and employers. Aspirational targets represent industries for which the City and surrounding region lack an existing foundation but have assets that could be leveraged for competitive advantage.

During the engagement, TIP conducted a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the workforce pipeline, potential redevelopment opportunities, and strategic growth options in Harker Heights. The workforce analysis captured information on regional degrees and awards and an overview of military personnel exiting service at Fort Cavazos. Fiscal trends and commercial property indicators informed TIP’s understanding of redevelopment opportunities and priority areas. The strategic growth options analysis used carefully selected job postings to gauge current employer demand in each of the six TIAs.¹ The results of the *City of Harker Heights Strategic Analysis* were delivered as an interactive data visualization, the menu of which is shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. OVERVIEW OF INTERACTIVE DELIVERABLE MENU



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

The quantitative analysis was complemented by stakeholder engagement to gather qualitative feedback on the target industry areas, possible real estate developments, and regional workforce. Stakeholder engagement was accomplished through several one-on-one interviews with Harker Heights leaders and stakeholders, including leaders from Seton Medical Center Harker Heights, Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce, City Planning and Development Department, business owners, property owners, hotel developers, and real estate professionals. Several common themes emerged from these interviews that shed light on Harker Heights strengths and the challenges the City faces as it works to attract target industry businesses to the community. These themes included a lack of organizational capacity to fulfill economic development roles like business attraction and recruitment, challenges with redeveloping blighted properties around town, and a need for a city identity and a city center.

Along with these organizational capacity constraints, several additional themes emerged that informed the planning process and the final plan, including the following.

- **Bedroom Community.** Harker Heights has historically been a bedroom community, having prioritized residential and retail development creating a growing tax burden for residents.

¹ This method identifies in-demand occupations more accurately than traditional industry staffing patterns by pinpointing the most sought-after roles and specialized skills among regional employers. A list of the top 10 in-demand occupations by TIA is provided in Figure 12, page 21.

- **Incentives.** In the past, Harker Heights has not competed well with other communities when recruiting businesses, largely due to a lack of incentives and economic development organizational focus.
- **Regional Workforce.** Harker Heights benefits from a strong regional workforce, driven largely by Fort Cavazos and supported by institutions like Texas A&M University Central Texas and Central Texas College. With no significant employment prospects locally, the regional talent pool is recruited elsewhere in the state and beyond.
- **Central Location.** Access to interstates like I-14 and I-35, an affordable cost of living, and an abundance of retail amenities make Harker Heights an ideal location for businesses interested in connectivity across the state and an attractive quality of life for their employees.
- **Aging Real Estate.** Because the City is largely landlocked, possibilities for land assembly and redevelopment are limited. Veterans Memorial Boulevard, the former Winn-Dixie Plaza, and the Knight's Way/FM 2410 Corridor are critical to attract businesses and quality jobs to the City.
- **Quality-of-Place Perceptions.** Stakeholders, residents, and City Council members mentioned the lack of a distinct City image. This is largely due to the absence of a city center to unify residents. Despite a strong retail presence, the City has room to grow in terms of family entertainment offerings.
- **Unbalanced Tax Base.** City funding is constrained by insufficient relief from the state of Texas to account for the loss of revenue from the disabled veterans property tax exemption, limiting the City's ability to offer public services.

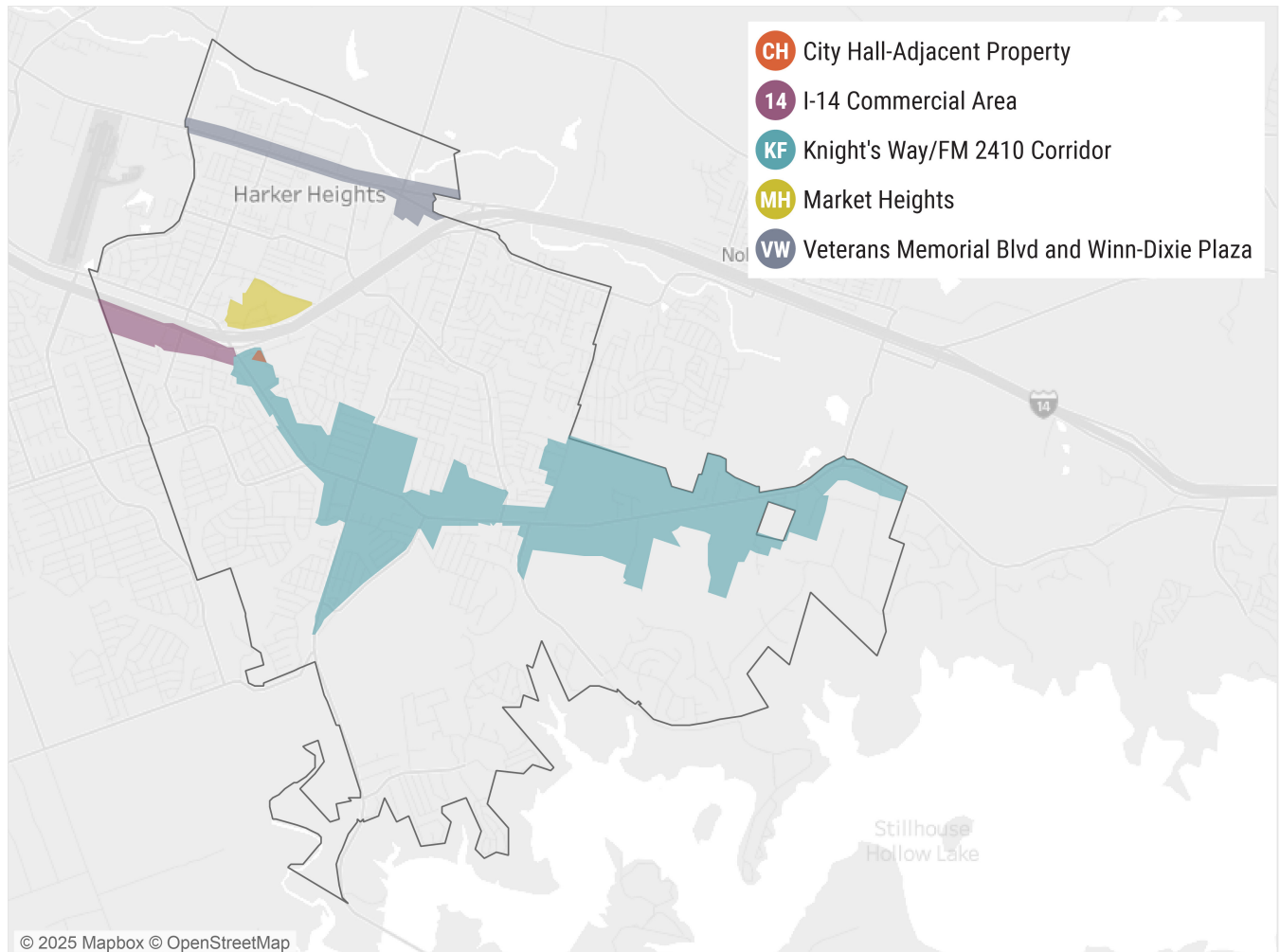
The resulting recommendations are outlined in more detail in the following section and are designed to guide Harker Heights in its target industry attraction efforts. Recommendations include summaries of supporting data and qualitative input, detailed strategies for implementation, illustrative case studies, and priority target areas of town. These recommendations, based on extensive community input and a thorough data analysis, provide a framework for the City's business attraction efforts. With these recommendations, along with a commitment to strengthening economic development, Harker Heights will be well equipped to attract high paying jobs and balance the City's tax base.

Recommendations

The following six recommendations offer the City of Harker Heights a comprehensive strategy to drive future business attraction. These recommendations relate to specific target industries and the priority target areas of town for business attraction (shown in Figure 3). There are, however, core business development approaches the implementing team should adopt to retain, expand, and attract desirable businesses. These core practices can be summarized in three broad strategies.

1. First are **regular site visits** to support existing businesses and to understand their ease of doing business with the City, employment needs, and industry trends.
2. Second, the City should **promote its target industries on its website**, including summaries of each target industry, the City's competitive advantages, and available property listings.
3. Finally, the City's economic development leaders should **build relationships with site selectors and regional developers** related to the target industries, including industry trends and shovel-ready site needs.

FIGURE 3. PRIORITY TARGET AREAS MAP



Sources: Tax Appraisal District of Bell County; City of Harker Heights; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Recommendation 1. Higher Education

Attract programs focused on advanced skills to support local industry.

Postsecondary institutions, such as technical colleges and universities, play a pivotal role in equipping students with the skills needed for high-paying careers. Access to postsecondary education is important to meet the talent needs of future employers in Harker Heights, especially careers related to the cybersecurity target industry (see Recommendation 6, page 16).

Harker Heights is home to the Training Center of Central Texas, which offers hands-on training and credentials for careers in the renewable energy, electrical, and medical fields. While these programs offer students an entry point into relevant regional careers, there are no avenues within Harker Heights for students to obtain the higher education awards that offer broader career opportunities than these certifications, and are required for many target industry jobs (see Figure 10, page 17). While the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Statistical Area (Killeen-Temple MSA) has several postsecondary institutions, including four-year universities and community colleges, none of these programs are based in Harker Heights (see Figure 4, page 6).

With specialized skills, such as computer science, programming languages, and systems engineering, needed to support aspirational target industries, attracting a higher education program to Harker Heights can ensure that local workers are equipped with the qualifications required to fill top jobs in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity.

For example, there were 211 Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services program completions in the Killeen-Temple MSA in 2023, making up only 4.2 percent of all program completions in the region. MSA-wide, completions in this program have fallen significantly since their peak in 2016 (see Figure 5, page 7). The proximity of Harker Heights to Fort Cavazos and its skilled defense workforce makes the City an ideal location for expanding education in programs related to cybersecurity. Looking forward, recruiting a higher education satellite program to Harker Heights can lead to stronger career options for residents and individuals across the Central Texas region.

In order to recruit a higher education satellite campus, it is critical that the City of Harker Heights builds relationships with the leadership at existing institutions in the region. Special attention should be given to existing programs like the Subhani Department of Computer Information Systems at Texas A&M University Central Texas and the Cyberdefense Pathway at Central Texas College.

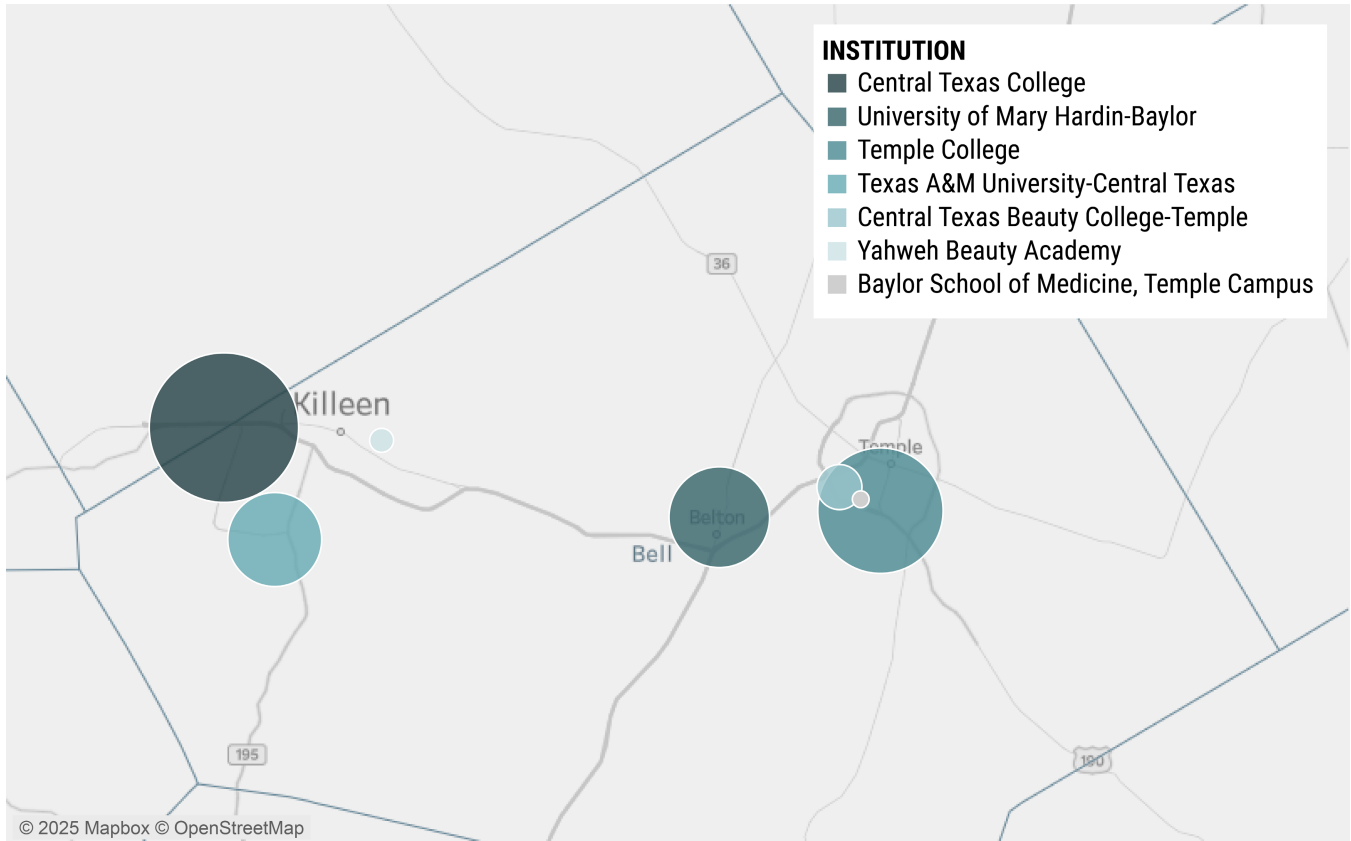
PRIORITY AREA(S)

MH Market Heights

STRATEGIES

- 1.1. Establish partner relationships with higher education institutions to align program offerings with the skills needed by employers in the target industries.
- 1.2. Partner with the Subhani Department of Computer Information Systems at Texas A&M University Central Texas to explore a satellite campus with an innovation center for cybersecurity in Harker Heights.
- 1.3. Recruit a satellite higher education campus to Harker Heights that includes lab space.
- 1.4. Promote a diverse range of accessible higher education awards offered at the satellite campus in Harker Heights.
- 1.5. Prioritize the practical utilization of skills developed in the cybersecurity program by directly partnering with Fort Cavazos and prospective employers to ensure students have a college-to-career pathway that keeps them in Central Texas.

FIGURE 4. AWARDING INSTITUTIONS IN THE KILLEEN-TEMPLE MSA
GENERAL PROGRAM COMPLETIONS BY LOCATION



COMPLETIONS BY LEVEL

Award Type	% of Total
Awards of Less than 2 Years	22.1%
Associate's Degrees	48.1%
Bachelor's Degrees	22.0%
Graduate Degrees	7.9%

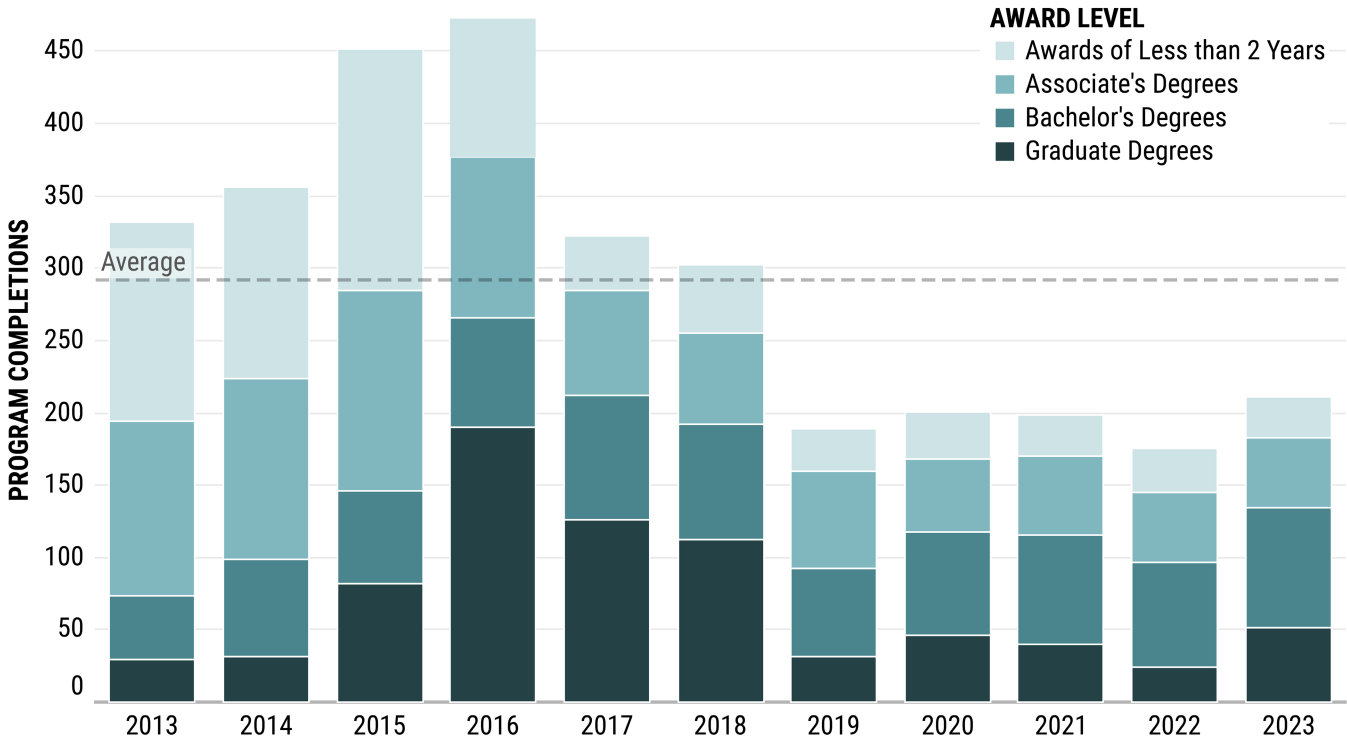
COMPLETIONS BY FIVE LARGEST DETAILED PROGRAMS

Program Name	% of Total
General Studies	22.1%
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	7.2%
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	6.4%
Business/Commerce, General	5.1%
Business Admin. and Mgmt., General	5.0%

Source(s): National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Lightcast 2024.3—Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Student and Exchange Visitor Program; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Includes only general programs with at least 25 average annual completions between 2013 and 2023. Associate's degrees include certificates earned in more than two years and less than four years. Graduate degrees include professional certificates, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. Completions at multi-campus institutions are reported at their institution's main campus location. The Killeen-Temple MSA consists of Bell, Coryell, and Lampasas Counties. Figures may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

FIGURE 5. COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SCIENCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM COMPLETIONS IN THE KILLEEN-TEMPLE MSA



COMPLETIONS BY INSTITUTION

Institution Name	% of Total
Central Texas College	40.6%
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor	25.7%
Texas A&M University-Central Texas	22.5%
Temple College	11.2%

COMPLETIONS BY FIVE LARGEST DETAILED PROGRAMS

Program Name	% of Total
Information Science/Studies	23.8%
Computer and Information Sciences, General	20.9%
Computer Programming/Programmer, General	17.8%
System, Networking, and LAN/WAN Mgmt.	9.5%
Computer and Info. Sys. Security/Auditing/Info. Assur.	8.0%

Source(s): NCES, IPEDS; Lightcast 2024.3—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; DHS, Student and Exchange Visitor Program; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Includes only general programs with at least 25 average annual completions between 2013 and 2023. Associate's degrees include certificates earned in more than two years and less than four years. Graduate degrees include professional certificates, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees.

Ohio State University at Marion

In 1957, the Ohio State University school system opened a satellite campus in Marion, Ohio, about 45 minutes north of Columbus, to bring higher education opportunities closer to all Ohioans. Initially a technical college, Ohio State University at Marion now includes a health technologies center and a science and engineering building. The satellite campus has catalyzed access to training and upskilling in high-growth sectors, daily serving 3,000 to 3,500 students and staff in a town of just 35,000 residents. Students can complete an entire undergraduate degree in selected fields, including biology and engineering technology. The campus also features a library (which offers access to the full Ohio State University collection) and hosts workforce training and innovation workshops at its corporate enterprise center.

Recommendation 2. Medical

Continue to grow the medical sector.

Harker Heights is home to a major anchor institution in Seton Medical Center Harker Heights (SMCHH). SMCHH offers a range of services from a Level IV Trauma Designated Emergency Room to orthopedic surgery, to a dedicated Women’s Center. SMCHH serves not only Harker Heights residents, but also individuals and families across Central Texas. With SMCHH as a local anchor, the medical sector represents a strategic target industry for future businesses attraction.

This industry is further supported by an eager workforce interested in pursuing careers in the medical field. From the start of 2019 through the first quarter of 2024, nearly 1,500 servicemembers (1,464) and their spouses who left the Central Texas region after departing from Fort Cavazos were surveyed about their desired employment. Of these, 20 percent (301 respondents) indicated that they would have chosen to remain in Central Texas if there was desirable employment in the Healthcare and Life Sciences sector (see Figure 6, page 9). More than one-quarter of surveyed departing servicemembers across all destinations were exiting military occupations with the potential to map to the civilian positions in the Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations group.

In order to foster growth in the medical industry, the City must engage regularly with SMCHH to ensure the center has the qualified workforce it needs and to advocate for the adoption of relevant programs at regional higher education institutions. The City should also leverage its relationship with SMCHH to identify the specific medical services needed in proximity to the SMCHH facility. Larger statewide and regional opportunities, including a medical terminal at Killeen Regional Airport, should also be supported.

PRIORITY AREA(S)	
MH	Market Heights
14	I-14 Commercial Area
KW	Knight’s Way/FM 2410 Corridor

STRATEGIES	
2.1.	Partner with Seton Medical Center Harker Heights and area higher education institutions to ensure program offerings align with employment demand in medical fields in Harker Heights.
2.2.	Build the medical services industry locally by collaborating with Seton to attract other medical businesses that bolster the industry and offer services needed by local and regional residents.
2.3.	Create a mixed-use space in the I-14 commercial area to house a collection of medical offices, such as clinics and physical therapy centers.
2.4.	Develop a relationship with Killeen Regional Airport and advocate for a medical terminal traveling to Houston and Dallas to elevate the medical sector and access across the region and state.

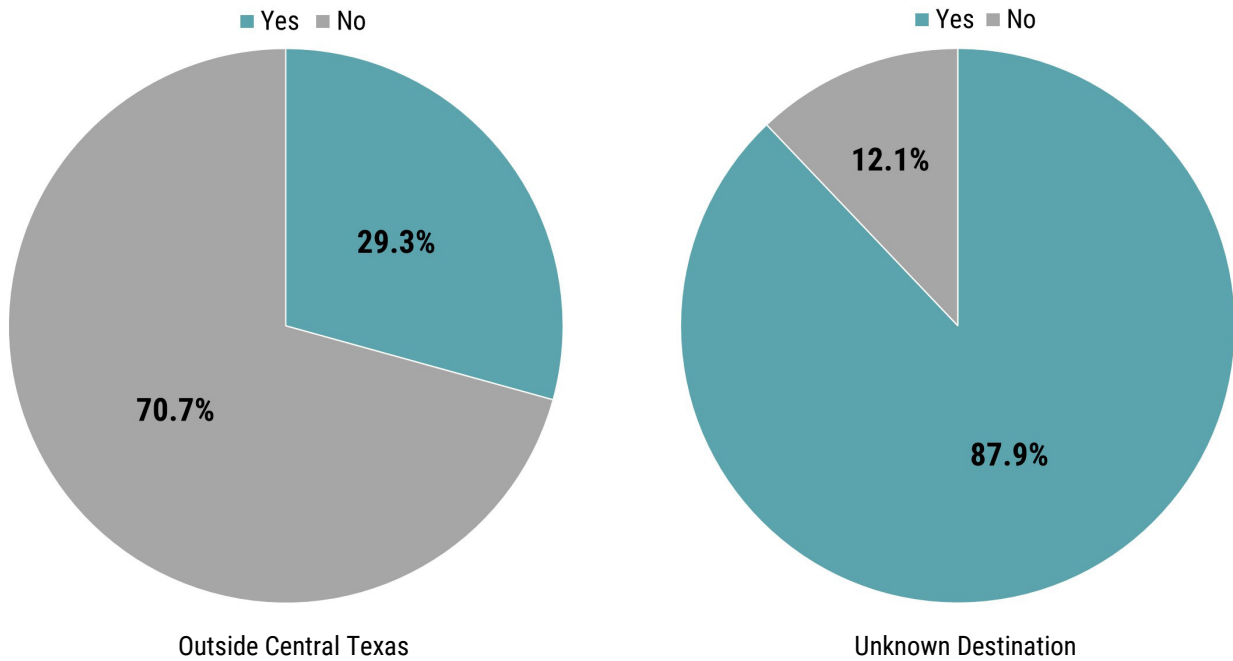
Learn More: Fort Cavazos Region Veterans Inventory Initiative

As part of *Operation Economic Transformation*, a 2006 economic development strategy for the greater Killeen area, TIP Strategies helped officials at Fort Hood (now Fort Cavazos) set up a system for capturing critical information about servicemembers separating from active duty. Responses to the survey are compiled and published quarterly. Having up-to-date information on this pool of skilled, disciplined, and motivated workers provides a valuable resource in the recruitment of companies. In addition to providing enhanced employment opportunities for area residents by aiding in the retention and recruitment of companies, the Fort Cavazos Region Veterans Inventory Initiative also provides a mechanism for soliciting valuable feedback on issues related to quality of place—information that is critical to successfully retaining the best and the brightest in the community.

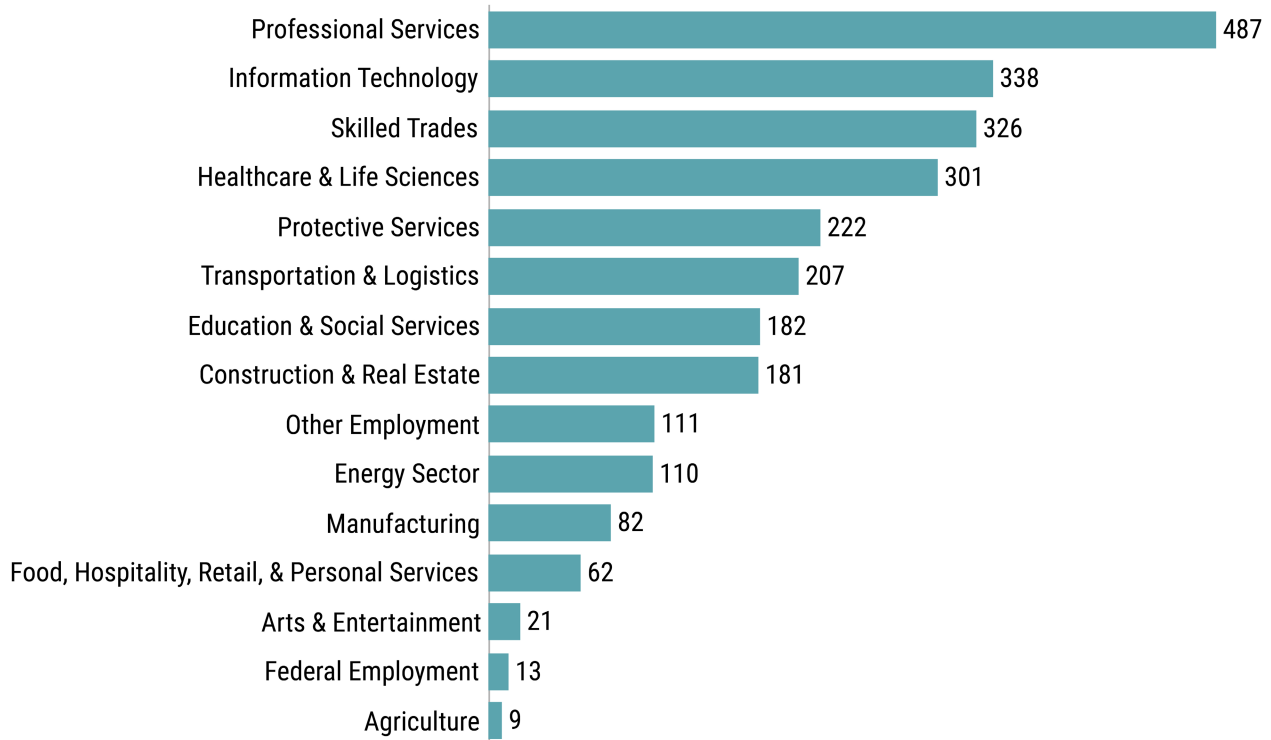
FIGURE 6. RETENTION POTENTIAL FOR DEPARTING SERVICEMEMBERS AND SPOUSES

POTENTIAL TO STAY IN CENTRAL TEXAS

Would you stay in the region if desirable employment were available?



DESIRED EMPLOYMENT SECTOR



Source(s): Heart of Texas Defense Alliance, Fort Cavazos Region Veterans Inventory Initiative; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Respondents had the option to select more than one field of desired employment for themselves and their spouse/partner. Excludes contradictory responses and respondents who indicated spouse/partner would not seek employment.

Recommendation 3. Professional Services

Develop real estate opportunities to attract professional services.

Professional services, representing opportunities in fields like legal, engineering, and information technology, was the top desired employment sector for servicemembers and their spouses leaving Central Texas upon departure from Fort Cavazos. This industry sector was selected by 487 out of 1,464 respondents (33 percent) who chose to move outside of the Central Texas region but would have stayed had there been desirable professional services employment opportunities (see Figure 6, page 9). Harker Heights can be the community that closes the gap between the supply and demand of professional services jobs in Central Texas.

The professional services sector is directly tied to the inventory of office real estate. While the COVID pandemic accelerated the remote work trend and slowed the demand for office space in general, the demand for Class A office space remains high. The office market has become bifurcated between Class A office space, representing the newest and most modern developments, and everything else.

In Figure 7 (page 11), the dark teal bubbles represent Harker Heights' newest office buildings. While there are some new office offerings, largely along the I-14 corridor, the City is not meeting the market need for new, high-quality spaces. As real estate development efforts have historically centered around residential and retail properties, the City has seen limited office construction over the past 15 years. To attract businesses in the professional services sector, the top employment area of interest for exiting Fort Cavazos servicemembers and their spouses, Harker Heights must prioritize the development of attractive office spaces.

This means that the City must gain an understanding of the shifting preferences and needs of office tenants. Through issuing a request for qualifications, the City can host a design workshop focused on Class A office space, with an emphasis on specific properties in the identified priority target areas. This will allow the City to consider its best options for creating the physical environment needed to attract employers.

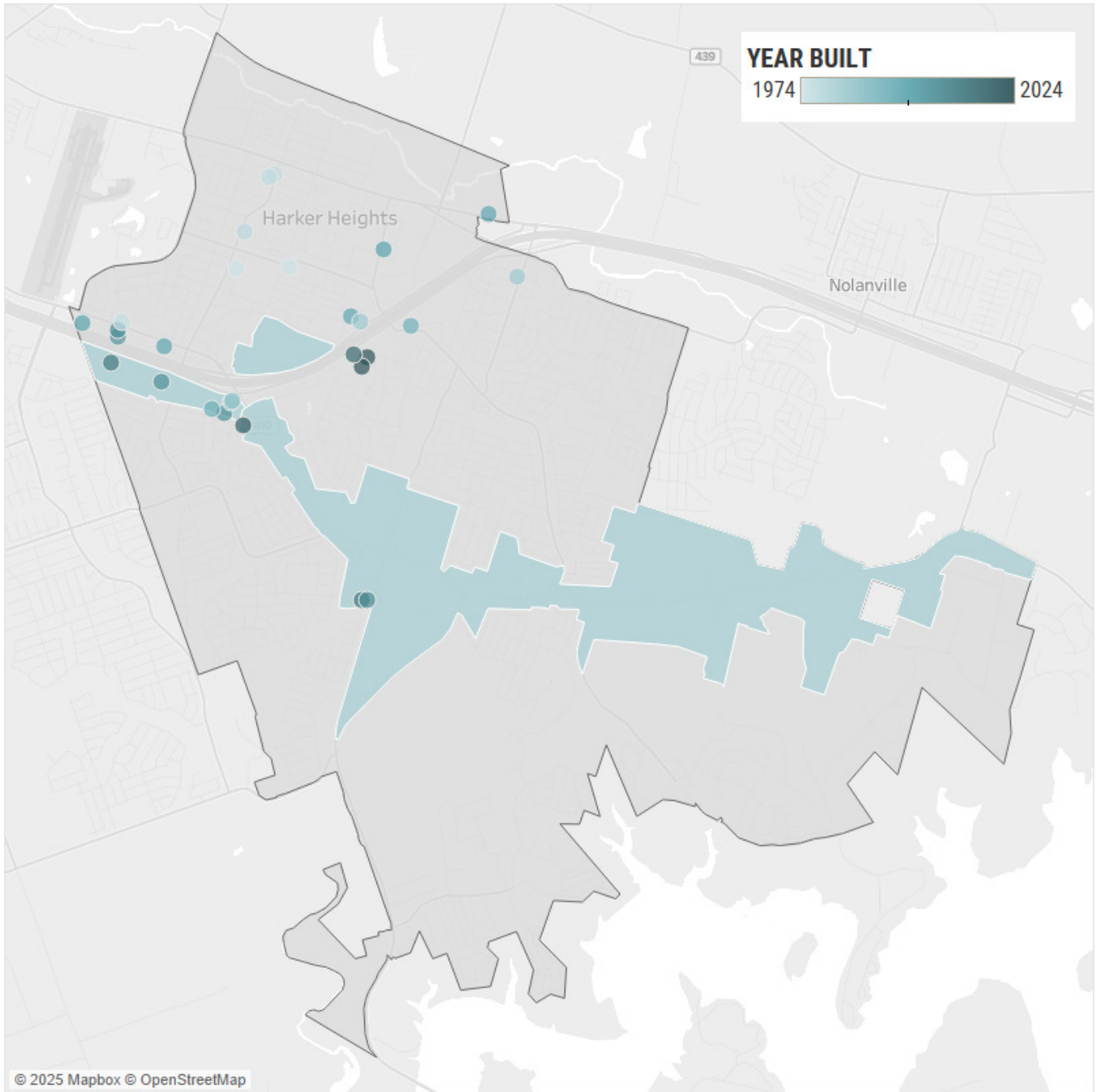
PRIORITY AREA(S)

- MH** Market Heights
- 14** I-14 Commercial Area
- KW** Knight's Way/FM 2410 Corridor

STRATEGIES

- 3.1.** Partner with property owners in the target areas of town to identify potential acreage for a mixed-use development to include commercial office space, high-end residential, and retail offerings.
- 3.2.** Host a design workshop focused on developing 10,000 square feet of Class A office space to create a better environment for attracting businesses and high wage jobs to Harker Heights to retain resident workers.

FIGURE 7. AGE OF HARKER HEIGHTS OFFICE INVENTORY
PRIORITY TARGET AREAS SHOWN IN TEAL (SEE FIGURE 3, PAGE 4)



Source(s): CoStar Group; City of Harker Heights; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Darker teal circles indicate newer buildings. All data are estimated by CoStar as of early October 2024 and represent a snapshot in time.

Recommendation 4. Retail and Accommodations

Expand on Harker Heights' thriving retail market to develop a welcoming city center.

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, including comments from the City Council, there was a consensus that Harker Heights is at a competitive disadvantage without a designated downtown. Despite the robust presence of retail amenities in Harker Heights, the lack of a city center makes it difficult to have a clear identity and makes it challenging to attract visitors. Additionally, interviewees emphasized that, while Harker Heights has many retail strengths, it continues to lack family-friendly spaces and entertainment.

“We need some kind of entertainment venue and space that is family friendly and creates a great community feel and sense of identity for the City and its residents.”

—Harker Heights residents

Though major retail developments like Market Heights have historically bolstered the City’s retail offerings, Harker Heights’ investment in retail has lagged compared to that of its peers, as construction rates have diminished in recent years (see Figure 8, page 13).

Attracting and retaining businesses and the talent to support them is essential for Harker Heights’ competitiveness. While many cities face challenges in growing and keeping their workforce, investing in quality of place can significantly enhance Harker Heights’ appeal to current and prospective employers and employees.

The City has a jewel in its backyard, with roughly three acres sitting adjacent to City Hall and the Carl Levin Park. While the City has faced challenges in the past with identifying the right attraction and incentives for this property, this is an ideal space to create a city center. Past recruitment efforts by the City Council for this property have laid the groundwork for a successful public-private partnership. When choosing a private sector partner, multiple factors come into play, including the portfolio of the partner and their experience in working with public entities around a specific development scenario. The City will need to emphasize the reservation of space for City events, the capital required for the development to move forward, the investment split between the public and private sectors, and the tax impact of the development on the City’s property and sales tax.

PRIORITY AREA(S)	
CH	City Hall Adjacent Property
KW	Knight’s Way/FM 2410 Corridor

STRATEGIES	
4.1.	Maximize opportunities for temporary activation of sites around town that can be utilized for special events to bring people to a curated city center adjacent to amenities like retail, city hall, and the Carl Levin Park. Consider both indoor, covered, and outdoor spaces to facilitate year-round use.
4.2.	Utilize the land adjacent to City Hall through creating a public-private partnership that allows for a venue that expands the cultural and entertainment options available to families, aligns with the City’s values, and increases tax revenues for the City.
4.3.	Coordinate with the Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to market retail amenities and event offerings in Harker Heights.

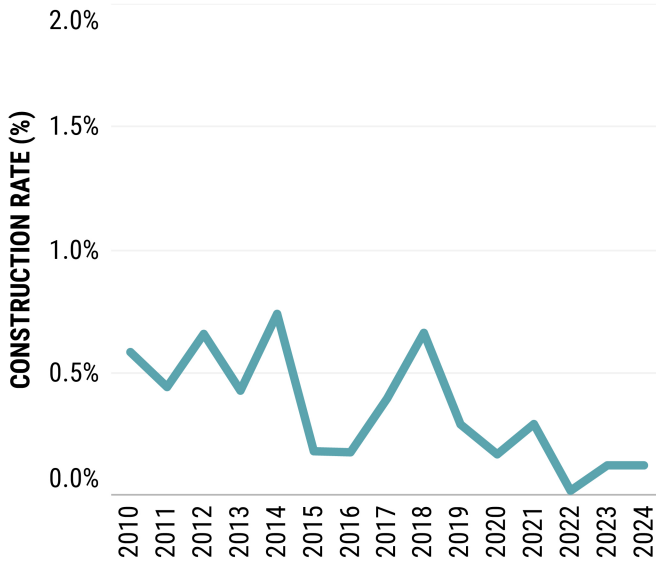
Learn More: Public-Private Partnerships

A public-private partnership is a long-term contractual agreement between a government entity and a company. The partnership involves sharing risks, resources, and expertise to deliver a public service. Typically, the private company provides the financing, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the facility. The government partner provides regulatory oversight, policy direction, and access to the public’s use of the facility.

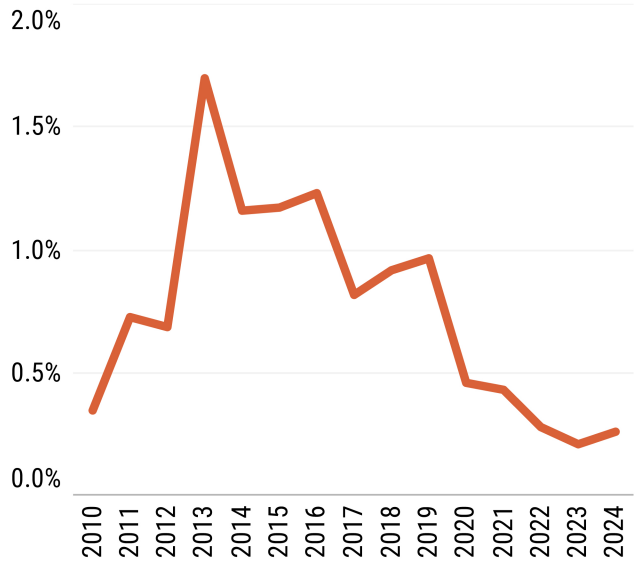
For example, a brewery as part of the development would potentially alleviate some of the tax burden that falls on residents. A brewery is considered a manufacturer and is taxed as such, offering a more balanced tax base for the City. It is also important to choose a private sector partner and developer who will continue to collaborate with the City. Bringing family-centric programming that attracts residents and visitors (such as a regular farmers’ market) would be a fiscal—and social—win. The City can also take advantage of its ability to rezone and redevelop two sites near Market Heights for future retail, accommodations, or mixed-use purposes.

FIGURE 8. RETAIL CONSTRUCTION RATE

HARKER HEIGHTS, TEXAS



KILLEEN-TEMPLE MSA



Source(s): CoStar Group; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): All data are estimated by CoStar as of early October 2024. The construction rate for any given property type is calculated as the total amount of space underway divided by the inventory of space in the same market.

Columbus, Georgia—Uptown Columbus

Columbus, Georgia, is on the Chattahoochee River and is located just north of Fort Benning. Uptown Columbus is the commercial and governmental center of the city. This area has expanded in recent years and with that development along the Chattahoochee River, the entertainment district, specialty shopping, pubs, and restaurants have grown around it. It has become a tourist destination offering whitewater rafting, zip lining, outdoor concerts, market days, and other events. In its 2023 comprehensive plan, the city committed to more urban, dense mixed-use development; the utilization of incentives for reinvestment and rehabilitation; and the interconnection of greenspaces and trails in the Uptown Columbus area.

Alpharetta, Georgia

In 2011, Alpharetta proposed a plan to redevelop its property holdings with the goal of creating a city center that would serve as a gathering place for citizens and an attractive setting for businesses. This project involved a public-private partnership where the city collaborated with private developers. The development includes a new city hall, a Fulton County library, a five-acre park, a town green, and commercial spaces. The city provided infrastructure improvements and created development guidelines to attract private investment, resulting in a pedestrian-friendly district with residential, retail, and dining options. This project won multiple awards for its context-sensitive development and excellence in town center development.

Recommendation 5. Advanced Manufacturing Suppliers

Prepare land to meet the needs of regional advanced manufacturing supply chains.

With its convenient location offering easy access to I-14 and I-35 coupled with more reasonably priced properties relative to regional peers, Harker Heights is primed to attract advanced manufacturing suppliers. This would include both industrial employers as well as distribution and logistics businesses that need access up to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and down to San Antonio. Mega projects, like those located to the south of Harker Heights in the Austin region, require a network of advanced manufacturing suppliers. These large-scale manufacturing projects rely on an intricate supply chain network that often needs to be close to the mega project facilities with interstate connectivity. Harker Heights offers the proximity and connectivity that is ideal to support Austin-area projects.

However, Harker Heights has a sparse offering of industrial buildings around the City and limited land zoned for light manufacturing (see Figure 9, page 15). The City contains just 1.3 percent of the Killeen-Temple MSA’s square footage of industrial space.

North Harker Heights is ripe with redevelopment possibilities. The former Winn-Dixie site is a flagship opportunity, one which could serve as an anchor for the rest of the northside with the establishment of a clean industrial or logistics and distribution employer. However, with properties across Veterans Memorial Boulevard divided between multiple property owners, it is a challenge for the City to move forward with a redevelopment vision. Therefore, it is critical for the City to leverage its land use policies to facilitate industrial growth. This includes acquiring, assembling, and marketing properties along Veterans Memorial Boulevard. Through land assembly, the City can create a property with larger acreage available for redevelopment and the recruitment of future industrial employers. The City can also protect its existing commercial and industrial land and advocate for the rezoning of land to allow for more industrial growth in the priority target areas.

PRIORITY AREA(S)

- KW** Knight’s Way/FM 2410 Corridor
- VW** Veterans Memorial Blvd. & Winn-Dixie Plz.

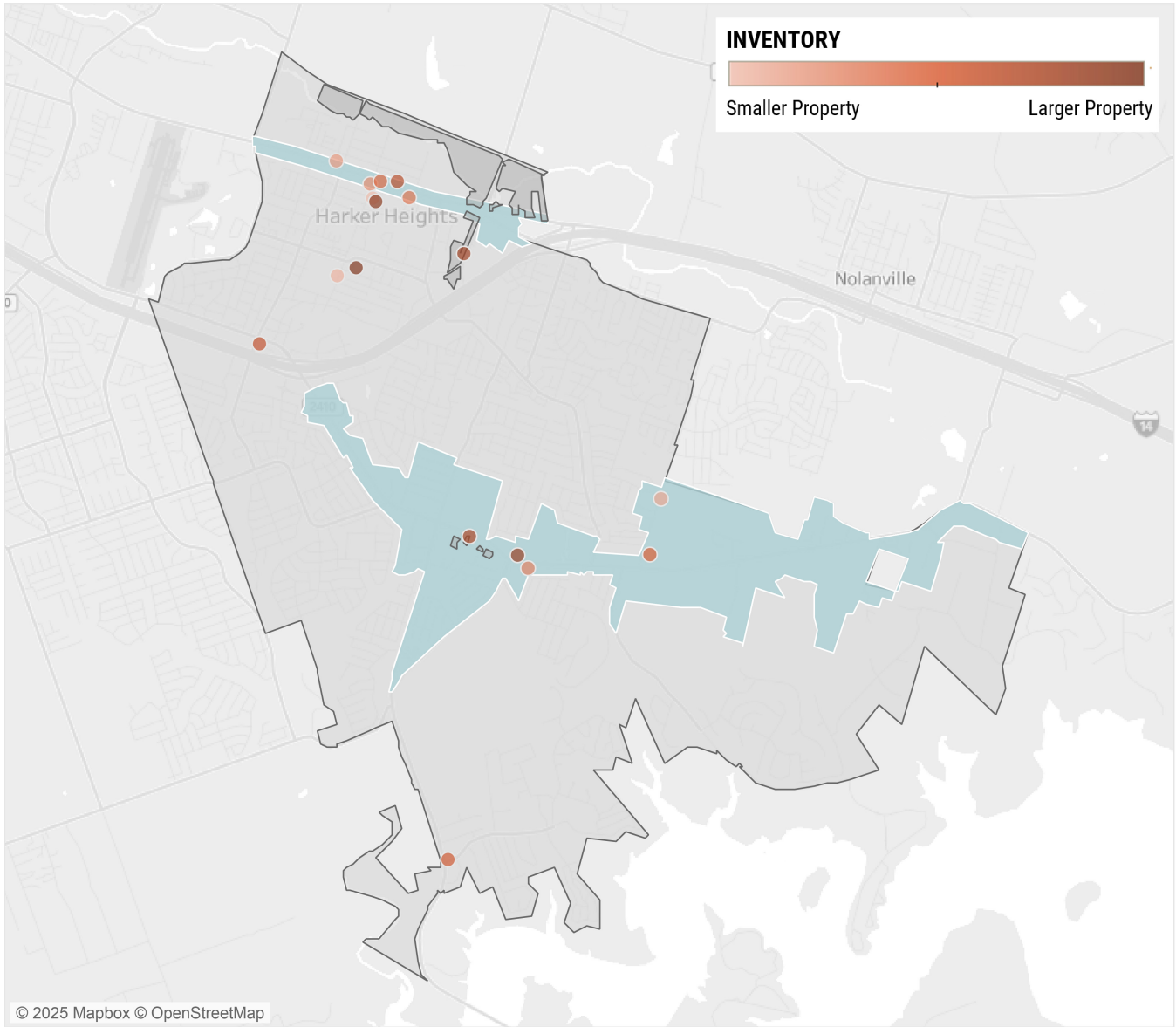
STRATEGIES

- 5.1. Assemble land to create employment nodes for advanced manufacturing suppliers by acquiring adjacent properties strategically for development and redevelopment through public-private partnerships. Give special attention to direct connections to the interstate.
- 5.2. Rezone land to allow for more industrial zoning to facilitate business attraction and tax base balance.
- 5.3. Increase awareness and exposure to careers in advanced manufacturing through career fairs and speaking opportunities in classrooms.
- 5.4. Engage with regional education partnerships to build the advanced manufacturing education-to-career pipeline in Harker Heights and throughout Central Texas.

Learn More: Land Assembly

Land assembly is the process of a city acquiring and combining multiple individual land parcels into a single tract of land for a specific development purpose, like creating commercial centers, industrial parks, or sites for large-scale projects. This tool allows a city to create a larger more strategic site for a development opportunity that otherwise would not be possible on smaller, individual tracts of land. A city can engage in a public-private partnership with a developer to more efficiently and affordably conduct the development process.

FIGURE 9. HARKER HEIGHTS INDUSTRIAL INVENTORY
 PRIORITY TARGET AREAS SHOWN IN TEAL (SEE FIGURE 3, PAGE 4)



Source(s): CoStar Group; City of Harker Heights; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Darker red circles indicate larger properties. Inventories are measured in square feet for industrial. All data are estimated by CoStar as of early October 2024 and represent a snapshot in time.

Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA)

BCMA is an organization composed of manufacturers in the Big Country (a multicounty region in northwest central Texas centered on Abilene) that aims to improve the regional industry’s talent attraction, retention, and development efforts. BCMA hosts industry roundtables and recruitment events, offers scholarships for manufacturing-related higher education, and promotes workshops and job openings via social media. BCMA’s board is led by local manufacturing firms and includes supporting partners, such as Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, the Region 14 Education Service Center, and a local community college.

Recommendation 6. Cybersecurity

Explore the City’s competitive advantages in the industry with Fort Cavazos and others.

Cybersecurity is a highly sought-after target industry. Most communities, however, lack the workforce and infrastructure to support cybersecurity-related businesses. Harker Heights is an exception. It has a foundation to build on with Fort Cavazos. Active-duty military, spouses and family members, civilian contractors, and retirees offer a skilled workforce in the region.

Despite Harker Heights’ exceptional advantage with access to a robust regional workforce, the minimum qualifications for jobs in this sector are steep. Nearly 80 percent of cybersecurity job postings over the past three years in the US required a bachelor’s degree at minimum. Roughly three-quarters of cybersecurity job postings required four or more years of experience (see Figure 10, page 17). This poses a challenge for Harker Heights. Only 19 percent of Fort Cavazos departing servicemembers choosing to stay in Central Texas had at least a bachelor’s degree.²

In order to understand and address the gaps Harker Heights faces in attracting cybersecurity employers, it is important that along with Fort Cavazos, business leaders and regional education institutions collaborate. This can be accomplished through a leadership council responsible for aligning educational programs with industry employer needs. Aligning with Fort Cavazos to create work-based learning programs for exiting servicemembers is a vital step. This will ensure Harker Heights has a workforce at the ready to meet the needs of cybersecurity employers but will also build a strong foundation to attract employers to Harker Heights.

PRIORITY AREA(S)

- KW** Knight’s Way/FM 2410 Corridor
- VW** Veterans Memorial Blvd. & Winn-Dixie Plz.

STRATEGIES

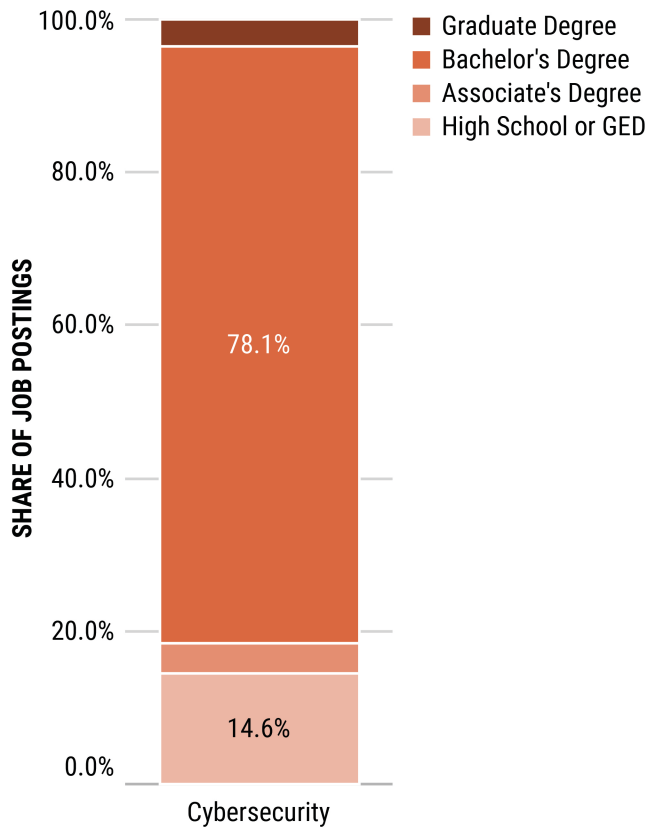
- 6.1.** Establish a council of business leaders, Fort Cavazos, and regional higher education institutions to develop industry and educational alignment for the cybersecurity sector.
- 6.2.** Partner with Fort Cavazos to develop a cybersecurity focused SkillBridge Program (offered through the US Department of Defense) to recruit soldiers in their last six months of military service to cybersecurity jobs in the region.
- 6.3.** Encourage programs of study related to the talent demands of the cybersecurity target industry at a Harker Heights satellite campus (see Recommendation 1, page 5).

² Based on all survey responses from the 2019 Q1 to 2024 Q1 Heart of Texas Defense Alliance, Fort Cavazos Region [Veterans Inventory Initiative](#).

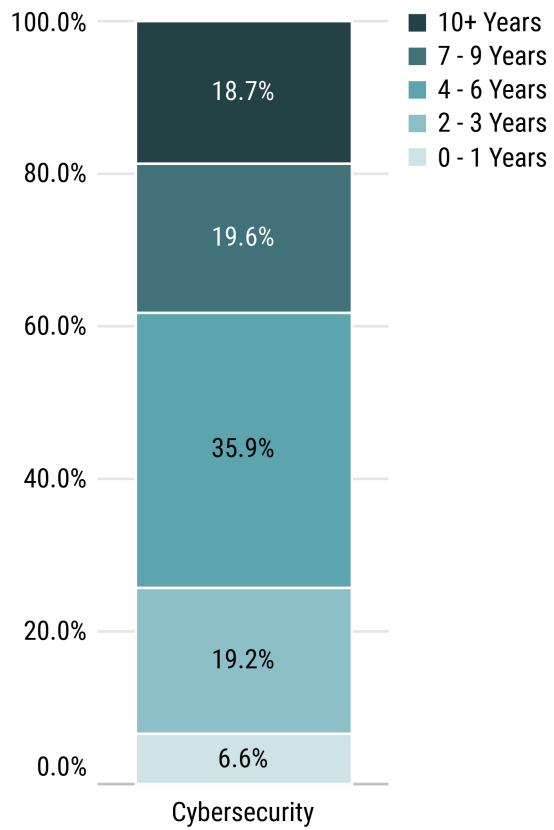
FIGURE 10. NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY JOB QUALIFICATIONS

BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THREE YEARS OF JOB POSTINGS, FEBRUARY 2022–JANUARY 2025

MINIMUM EDUCATION REQUESTED



MINIMUM EXPERIENCE REQUESTED



Source(s): US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); Lightcast 2024.3–QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Job postings include nonstaffing, unique, newly posted job postings for permanent full-time, part-time, and flexible positions, excluding internships, in the US between February 2022 and January 2025.

Racine, Wisconsin—Cluster Group Development

Racine, Wisconsin, has become an attractive destination for advanced manufacturing, technology sectors, and logistics facilities. In 2023, *Business Facilities* magazine ranked Wisconsin and Southeastern Wisconsin highly for their manufacturing sector and affordability. This outcome is due to the commitment the region made to support business growth. The region brought together a network of organizations like the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Milwaukee 7, local municipalities, and Gateway Technical College to spur innovation, productivity, and long-term sustainability for companies.

Appendix A: Organizational Capacity

With this *Business Attraction Plan*, the City has specific industries to target and priority areas of town to attract those industries. However, the City lacks dedicated staff and funding related to economic development. The question remains: Who will execute this plan and other economic development roles for the City?

Potential Organizational Structures

There are four possibilities for developing this organizational capacity.

- Option 1:** The City of Harker Heights creates a City economic development department to be staffed by a newly hired team. This option means building a new department from the ground up and hiring new staff with economic development experience who may not have direct experience in Harker Heights.
- Option 2:** The City creates a formal economic development corporation, funded by a sales tax. However, the existing sales tax in Harker Heights is already at its maximum amount, so this option would require an overhaul of the sales tax structure in the City.
- Option 3:** The City invests in the Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce to reinvent its core goals to include economic development. This option will require financial support by the City and, potentially, a capital campaign. Unlike the prior options, this approach would allow the City to use an existing and trusted community organization rather than starting an organization or city department from . It would also have the advantage of a staff familiar with Harker Heights and the Central Texas region. This option does require a financial commitment from the City but would likely have the most positive public reaction compared to the options, which require a larger investment to stand up a new organization. Figure 11 shares examples of other cities in Texas that have adopted an agreement with their local chamber of commerce to handle economic development and business attraction efforts.
- Option 4:** The City commits resources, along with other peer cities, to fund a regional organization focused on business attraction. This option could potentially have the greatest impact for driving business attraction to the Fort Cavazos region but requires equal collaboration from all regional partners, financial buy-in, and an organizational structure with a staff and budget, which are all long-term ambitions.

FIGURE 11. EXAMPLES OF CITY AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS

	NEW BRAUNFELS CHAMBER	IRVING-LAS COLINAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Overview	The New Braunfels Chamber provides a confidential, single point of contact to businesses looking to create new jobs or expand their existing presence in the city. The chamber manages partnerships with businesses and local government and operates a shared strategic plan.	Through a contractual agreement with the City of Irving, the Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce serves as the main economic development entity in the city. With this partnership, the chamber and the city are able to leverage their expertise in business relocation and expansion.
Services Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS-driven real estate and site selection. • Assistance navigating taxes and incentives. • Dedicated workforce development support. • Coordination with community stakeholders. • Data-driven community insights and publications. • Business development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site selection assistance. • Real estate searches. • Confidential project management. • Labor market data. • Networking. • Assistance and advice with incentives.

NEW BRAUNFELS CHAMBER	IRVING-LAS COLINAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
<p>Additional Details</p> <p>The chamber has a contract with the 4B board, approved by the city council, which spells out allowable expenditures. Under the agreement, the chamber must (1) deliver monthly invoices to the city for reimbursement of economic development services (based on 1.6 FTEs); (2) make quarterly reports to the 4B board and semiannual reports to the city council; and (3) conduct monthly briefings with the Advisory Team, comprised of the mayor, city manager, New Braunfels Utilities CEO, county judge, Economic Development Foundation chair, and 4B president.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce training referrals. • City liaison. • Key introductions. <p>In September 2024, the Irving City Council adopted the annual work plan from the Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce to provide economic development services for the 2024–2025 fiscal year in the amount of \$2,664,515. The chamber operates as part of the Irving Economic Development Partnership, a strategic collaboration that also includes the city, the Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Las Colinas Association, the Dallas County Utility and Reclamation District, and private investors and employers.</p>

Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

Regional Collaboration

While it is critical that Harker Heights has its own economic development initiatives, the City does not exist in a vacuum. Harker Heights is one of many cities in the Fort Cavazos and Central Texas region that relies on a network of regional education and training providers, for example. Collaborating on workforce and education initiatives within this regional provider network to address common challenges helps multiply limited resources across communities. Taking a regional approach to marketing and promotion is another win-win. Promoting the region’s assets ultimately raises awareness of the advantages of investing in Harker Heights, conferring a competitive edge not easily attained otherwise. As a result, the City’s business recruitment efforts must be pursued in tandem with the efforts of peer cities and in partnership with regional postsecondary institutions.

Improving regional efforts in the following three areas would benefit Harker Heights in its business attraction efforts. Each area includes an example of potential strategies for improving collaboration and, where applicable, a local example.

1. **Relationships and Resources.** Enhance relationships with regional partners to pool resources, streamline deal flow, market the region, and develop the workforce.
 - Leverage the existing [Grand Central Texas](#) economic development partnership to share information in facilitation of business attraction efforts. This should include the marketing of the skilled veteran workforce found across the region and a streamlined site map for shovel-ready properties across the region.
 - Collaborate with regional partners to brand the Fort Cavazos region as a business-friendly climate supported by education, training, and economic development partners committed to meeting employers’ needs. This should include developing external marketing materials, offering regional familiarization tours, coordinating outbound missions, and establishing relationships with brokers and real estate professionals.

Williamson County Economic Development Partnership

The [Williamson County Economic Development Partnership](#) (Wilco EDP) is a self-funded collaboration among Williamson County and its communities. County and city leaders act together to speak as a cohesive entity to attract new business development opportunities throughout the county. Central to the partnership is the belief that when one community sees success, everyone benefits. Wilco EDP’s mission is to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for the region. Under the values of strategic growth, professionalism, and integrity, and a shared pro-business mentality, the partnership works to build shared prosperity in the region.

2. **Collaboration and Competitiveness.** Encourage collaboration among the regional economic development community and education, workforce, and nonprofit leaders to enhance regional economic competitiveness.
 - Partner with peer cities to create a coalition of regional education, workforce, and relevant nonprofit leaders, with the intention of enhancing the workforce development opportunities as they relate to the interests of the regional economic development community.
 - Align the coalition with the [P20 Central Texas Regional Council](#), the [Central Texas Regional Pathways Council](#), and nonprofit organizations providing wraparound services to veteran populations, in addition to higher education and training institutions.

The Training Center of Central Texas

[The Training Center of Central Texas](#) is already one of the top career schools in the Central Texas area, offering training in healthcare and construction occupations, such as clinical medical assistant, dental assistant, phlebotomy technician, patient care technician, electrician, and solar energy technician roles. Students take classes and complete an externship to receive a certification in as little as six months. The program accommodates financial assistance options for military members, as it works with US Department of Veterans Affairs to accept My Career Advancement Account scholarships, which provide \$4,000 in financial assistance for military spouses/partners, as well as the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to fund veterans with disabilities.

3. **Job Quality and Access.** Enhance the partnership with regional education and workforce development organizations to improve the quantity and quality of labor available for regional employers.
 - Promote the existing educational programs offered by regional higher education and training providers like Central Texas College, Texas A&M University Central Texas, the Training Center of Central Texas, and Workforce Solutions of Central Texas.
 - Collaborate regionally to leverage the educational and career data provided through the Fort Cavazos Region Veterans Inventory Initiative to inform the development of future postsecondary programming.
 - Work regionally to expand the job training capacity of postsecondary programs to meet target employers’ needs. This should include pathway connections between K–12 schools and higher education programs, the development of apprenticeships and internships, and relationship building among regional postsecondary institutions and target employers.

Appendix B: In-Demand Occupations

FIGURE 12. IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS IN HARKER HEIGHTS' TARGET INDUSTRIES
 BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF JOB POSTINGS, FEBRUARY 2022–JANUARY 2025

TYPE	TARGET	IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS
TRADITIONAL TARGETS	Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postsecondary Teachers • Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, All Other • Career Counselors & Advisors • Education Administrators, Postsecondary • Instructional Coordinators • Personal Financial Advisors • Coaches & Scouts • Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary • Adult Basic Education & ESL* Instructors • Self-Enrichment Teachers
	Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Nurses • Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses • Home Health & Personal Care Aides • Medical & Health Services Managers • Health Technicians, All Other • Nurse Practitioners • Medical Assistants • Nursing Assistants • Dental Assistants • Physician Assistants
	Professional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software Developers • Customer Service Representatives • Computer, All Other • Computer User Support Specialists • Data Scientists • Industrial Engineers • General & Operations Managers • Training & Development Specialists • Computer Systems Analysts • Logisticians
	Retail and Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Salespersons • First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers • Food Service Managers • Fast Food & Counter Workers • First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep & Services • Waiters & Waitresses • Cashiers

TYPE	TARGET	IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General & Operations Managers • Customer Service Representatives • Driver/Sales Workers
ASPIRATIONAL TARGETS	Advanced Manufacturing Suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Engineers • Electronics Engineers, Except Computer • Maintenance & Repair Workers, General • Mechanical Engineers • Sales Engineers • Computer, All Other • Software Developers • Industrial Production Managers • Architectural & Engineering Managers • Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, & Weighers
	Cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer, All Other • Software Developers • Sales Reps, Non-Technical & Scientific Products • Information Security Analysts • Network & Computer Systems Administrators • Computer User Support Specialists • Computer Network Architects • Sales Managers • Marketing Managers • Data Scientists

*ESL = English as a Second Language

Source(s): BLS; Lightcast 2024.3—Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; US Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration, Occupational Information Network (O*NET) version 29; TIP Strategies, Inc.
 Note(s): Job postings include nonstaffing, unique, newly posted job postings for full-time, part-time, and flexible positions, excluding internships, between February 2022 and January 2025 in the Killeen-Temple MSA or the US. The Killeen-Temple MSA consists of Bell, Coryell, and Lampasas Counties. In light of recent and proposed investments, job postings for the advanced manufacturing suppliers target industry area include employers in Killeen-Temple MSA as well as the greater Austin area (Travis and Williamson Counties).



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