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killeen, texas (fort hood region)

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY



The Challenge > For over 60 years, economic development in Bell, Coryell, and Lampasas Counties has been strongly influenced by the growth and expansion of Fort Hood – the largest active duty armored installation in the United States Armed Services. As the mission and scale of the Post has grown and evolved over the years, so has the population and economy of the region. Cities such as Killeen, Copperas Cove, and Harker Heights have benefited economically, socially, and culturally from the thousands of soldiers, civilian contractors, and their families that have lived in the area. TIP Strategies was engaged by the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce (administrator of an Office of Economic Adjustment grant) to develop an economic diversification plan for the area. Central to this plan was developing a mechanism for assessing the skill sets of both military retirees and those separating from service. Another important consideration for the plan was gauging the feasibility and impact of establishing Texas A&M–Central Texas.

The Approach > An assessment of the area's economic base helped the consulting team understand the opportunities available and identify the most pressing challenges facing Killeen and the area surrounding Fort Hood. The results of this work were refined based on input from city officials and other key stakeholders. To maximize participation in the process, the consulting team conducted individual and group interviews with representatives of industry, retail, transportation, education, economic development, military retirees, city government, and others. The results of the assessment, coupled with information on existing skills sets gathered from the veterans inventory, provided the foundation for the design of strategies that will secure the economic vitality of the Fort Hood region for future generations.

The economic impact of the proposed Texas A&M campus was modeled using IMPLAN, an input-output based model. In the absence of specific information about the campus, the primary inputs for the model were based on estimates of enrollment and operating expenditures, as well as student and visitor spending. These estimates were based on published information regarding other Texas colleges or universities. Two institutions were used as the primary benchmarks: Tarleton State University in Stephenville (which has an existing campus in Killeen), and Texas A&M University–Texarkana (a facility similar to the proposed TAMU–Central Texas campus).

The Outcome > The resulting plan, *Operation Economic Transformation*, was recently presented to city officials. Once finalized, the plan will serve as a guide for the allocation of resources and provide a framework for the chamber and its stakeholders for achieving diversified economic growth in the future. The impact analysis of the proposed Texas A&M campus will be used to gain support for funding. Meetings will be scheduled with the Texas A&M University System and the state legislature to accomplish this goal.

