

## **13. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic development often means different things to different people. It is often defined as the creation of new business and industrial activity within the community as measured by increases in employment. The creation of new manufacturing jobs, or service jobs which bring investment from outside the community, are a measure of economic investment in the local economy. For example, one study showed that 100 new manufacturing jobs resulted in the creation of an additional 64 new nonmanufacturing jobs. The total increase in personal income to the community would be nearly \$2 million and the total increase in retail sales would be almost \$1.5 million for every 100 new manufacturing jobs created.

In Benbrook, increases in employment are less important because of its strong history of full employment. Unemployment rates in Benbrook are generally lower than surrounding communities and in recent years has been less than three percent. For that reason, increases in community wealth, as measured by net taxable value, is a more important measure of economic growth. As an overall goal, the City seeks to transform the existing 2,400 acres of land classified as vacant or rangeland into more productive urban uses.

Continued economic development is important to all citizens, even though some residents may object to the greater numbers of people, traffic and the loss of their rural surroundings that result from development. New employment provides a direct source of income to Benbrook residents, plus additional business revenues to Benbrook merchants. New business also lessens the tax burden on existing residents. Business and industrial property generate ad valorem tax revenues, while requiring fewer city services than residential properties. Retail sales also generate considerable sales tax revenues. Benbrook currently collects the lowest sales tax per capita of Tarrant County cities with populations between 15,000 and 40,000 people and only 51 percent of the average. By comparison, White Settlement receives almost 120 percent more sales tax revenue per capita as Benbrook. This inevitably causes property taxes in Benbrook to be higher than would otherwise be necessary.

### **13.1 Partners in Economic Development**

Successful economic development is the responsibility of several organizations within the community. City government has an interest in promoting economic development to improve social conditions and to spread the City's tax burden proportionately between businesses and residences.

The Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce has an interest in promoting economic growth in an effort to expand the overall economy and increase business activity. Land developers have an interest in economic development as a means of selling their product. And finally, the residents of Benbrook have an interest in promoting economic development to provide employment, shopping, and to reduce residential tax burdens.

In the past, economic development in Benbrook has consisted of passive and fragmented efforts by the City and Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce. The City established an Industrial Development Authority in 1980 for the purpose of issuing low interest industrial revenue bonds to promote economic development. Only one bond agreement, with Wal-Mart, was executed. The Federal government has since changed the tax laws making industrial revenue bonds less attractive as a development tool.

The Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce was established in 1986 and has an economic development committee. Both the Chamber and City have performed limited economic development activities during the past 17 years, but both programs have been understaffed and under-funded.

Until 1995, there have been only two major players in economic development. The Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce has been best positioned to organize existing businesses and to conduct citywide festivals. The City has been best positioned to collect, manage and analyze statistical data, and correct structural or regulatory hindrances to development. Until 1994, the City of Benbrook provided financial support to the Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce for the provision of economic development services.

In 1995, the voters approved the creation of a 4b Economic Development Corporation funded by a half-cent sales tax, and the Industrial Development Authority was converted into the Benbrook Economic Development Corporation. The EDC has taken an aggressive approach to marketing the City and the recruiting of commercial and industrial facilities to the City. In 1997, the EDC purchased the remainder of the Benbrook Industrial Park and completed its development. The EDC has an annual budget of approximately \$580,000, which is used primarily for economic development, marketing and research activities. The EDC also funded the Chamber's Business Retention Survey work between 1995 and 2002. It is expected that the Economic Development Corporation will continue to take the lead in marketing the City while the City will continue to provide statistical and technical support.

## **13.2 Business Climate**

### **13.2.1 Historical Economic Development in Benbrook**

To understand existing economic conditions, one must also understand the historical development of the local economy. Benbrook originally developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a ranching and agricultural community. During World War I, a training field for pilots supplemented the community's economy, but the Army closed this airfield shortly after the end of the war. The railroad station that was established in 1876 closed in the 1940s.

The economy in Benbrook began to change during the 1950s. The construction of Benbrook Lake by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers brought tourism and water-oriented recreation, while the General Dynamics plant at Carswell Air Force Base increased the defense industry. In 1958, a geophysical manufacturer located in Benbrook and a concrete tilt-wall manufacturer opened a plant in the 1960s.

By the 1980s, the economy of Benbrook was primarily service-oriented with relatively few manufacturers. The completion of Interstate 20/Loop 820 has opened large areas of land for development, but development has been slow to occur. In 1980, the City created an Industrial Development Authority for the primary purpose of issuing industrial revenue bonds for the construction of a WalMart store.

The federal Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission voted to close Carswell AFB in 1991, but then recommended realignment as a reserve facility known as Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base. The realignment has softened the expected adverse economic impact that might have occurred with a complete closure of the facility. At the same time as the Carswell AFB closure and realignment were being considered, General Dynamics was purchased by Lockheed and production of the F-16 fighter began to decline, resulting in areawide layoffs. Despite these two trends in the defense industry, the direct effect on employment, housing vacancy rates, and retail sales in Benbrook has been less than expected. Property values, however, appear to have declined at a greater rate in western Tarrant County than the county as a whole. In 1994, Wal-Mart relocated its Benbrook store to southwest Fort Worth for greater land area and traffic.

In 1995, the voters approved the creation of a 4b Economic Development Corporation funded by a half-cent sales tax. The EDC has taken an aggressive approach to marketing the City and the recruiting of commercial and industrial facilities to the City. In 1997, the EDC purchased the remainder of the Benbrook Industrial Park and completed its development. In 2001, the EDC commissioned a study of the I-20 Corridor.

### **13.2.2 Existing Economic Base**

In 2002, Benbrook was primarily a service-based economy. Only 16 percent of the employment in Benbrook is in the basic industries of manufacturing, construction, mining and agriculture. Table 13.1 presents a breakdown of firms and employees by type of industry. Nearly 65 percent of total employment is in service industries, while 13 percent is in retail trade.

In previous decades (e.g. 1970-1980), the economic development of Benbrook has lagged behind its population growth. In the 1990s, that trend was reversed and jobs increased at ten times the rate (3.7 percent annually) than population (0.3 percent annually.) Even so, most of the employment for residents has been in Fort Worth, White Settlement and other cities. There are approximately 10,872 residents in the labor force within the City. However, only 4,579 employees, or about 42 percent, work within Benbrook. Of the people who have registered with the Rideshare program of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority as living in Benbrook but working elsewhere, approximately 60 percent work at Lockheed Martin or NAS Fort Worth JRB, 20 percent work in the Fort Worth central business district, and 20 percent work elsewhere including places as far as Dallas, Denton, and Glen Rose.

In an annual survey of businesses within Benbrook in 2002, a total of 632 firms or governmental agencies employed workers in Benbrook. The average business employs approximately 7.2 workers, but the large majority of firms consist of only one to four employees (See Table 13.2). Sixty-seven percent of the firms report only one to five employees. Sixteen percent reported five to nine employees, eight percent had 10 to 19 employees, and eight percent reported 20 or more employees.

The ten largest employers in Benbrook are listed in Table 13.3. Computalog Wireline Services manufactures geophysical equipment for the petroleum exploration industry. Among the largest employers is the municipal government, one is the local high school, two are retirement homes, one is the local recreation center, one is a restaurant and one grocery store.

Of the approximately 7,762 acres of land available within the City, approximately 955 acres or 12.3 percent has been zoned or planned for commercial or industrial use. This corresponds well with the principles of the Comprehensive Plan and the relative allocation for other cities within the Metroplex. However, only 283 acres, or 30 percent of the available commercial and industrial land has been developed. This represents one of the lowest developed commercial/industrial bases of any of the 25 largest cities in the Metroplex.

Since sales tax revenues to the City are a fixed percentage of total retail sales, the annual sales tax revenues represent the growth of retail sales in the City. Table 13.4 presents the annual retail sales for Benbrook for the fiscal years from 1983 through 2002. The increase over the last ten years represents an average annual growth of 4.7 percent. Adjusted for inflation, this represents a real growth rate in retail sales of 2.2 percent annually. While this represents a moderate increase, the sales per capita remains relatively low compared to other cities in the area.

**Table 13.1**  
**EMPLOYERS BY TYPE OF BUSINESS**  
**October 2002**

Industrial Classification (North American Industrial Classification System)	Number of Firms	Number of Employees
Agricultural services	1	2
Oil and gas Extraction	1	1
Utilities	1	31
Construction	47	257
Manufacturing	29	432
Wholesale trade	18	130
Retail trade	163	597
Transportation and storage	5	39
Information	11	45
Finance, Insurance	37	243
Real Estate	31	170
Professional services	59	407
Management services	1	3
Support services	34	266
Education services	11	272
Health care	41	574
Arts, Entertainment and recreation	24	190
Hotel and Food services	32	396
Other services	83	404
Public Administration	3	120
Totals	632	4,579

**Table 13.2  
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYERS BY SIZE  
2002**

Number of Employees	Number of Firms
1 to 4	425
5 to 9	104
10 to 19	48
20 to 49	40
Over 50	15

**Table 13.3  
TEN LARGEST EMPLOYERS IN BENBROOK  
2002**

Company Name	Number of Employees
1. Computalog Wireline Services	176
2. Western Hills High School	130
3. Renaissance Park Retirement Home	110
4. Benbrook Community Center/YMCA	104
5. Benbrook Nursing and Rehabilitation	100
6. Cracker Barrel Old Country Store	100
7. City of Benbrook	95
8. Albertson's, Inc.	91
9. Fowlkes Norman & Associates	75
10. Lockheed-Brownlee Training	60

Benbrook is served by Interstate 20, Loop 820, Benbrook Boulevard (U.S. 377), Camp Bowie West (U.S. 80) and Southwest Boulevard (State Highway 183.) U.S. 377 from Interstate 20 to Cozby South Street serves as the core of the commercial district. Highway 80 and State Highway 183 support smaller shopping areas. Most of the existing industrial area is along Vickery Boulevard, Winscott Road and Old Benbrook Road. The major areas that are undeveloped are along the frontage roads of Interstate 20/Loop 820, which were completed in the early 1980s.

Benbrook continues to strive to improve its public image. Having grown from a small rural town to a major suburban community in the past 20 years, Benbrook occasionally is still perceived as the rural town it once was and not the vibrant progressive community that exists today. Benbrook also is seeking to enhance its visibility and recognition beyond Tarrant County.

**Table 13.4  
RETAIL SALES IN BENBROOK**

Year	Retail Sales
1983	\$50,849,200
1984	45,231,500
1985	46,476,700
1986	53,854,500
1987	51,069,100
1988	57,531,700
1989	73,145,700
1990	65,638,600
1991	61,482,400
1992	63,666,000
1993	76,555,300
1994	80,410,500
1995	67,759,600
1996	\$74,440,866
1997	\$84,537,533
1998	\$91,745,866
1999	\$92,027,400
2000	\$101,982,066
2001	\$128,406,333
2002	\$121,407,066

In addition to the large population growth of Benbrook itself, the surrounding area has also grown substantially. In 2000 approximately 63,951 people lived within one mile of Benbrook, 102,952 people lived within two miles, 155,942 people lived within three miles, 215,373 lived within four miles, and 279,007 people lived within five miles of the City limits of Benbrook. Most of these people live to the north or east of the City where other shopping opportunities are available. Thus, merchants in Benbrook have limited market areas beyond their immediate neighborhoods. An additional problem is the number of Benbrook residents who shop in other cities. A recent survey estimates that at least one half of all purchases by Benbrook residents are from stores outside of Benbrook.

The Union Pacific Railroad operates a main trunk line through Benbrook, but currently does not provide local service. A small spur is located between U.S. 377 and Loop 820, but the adjacent land is vacant.

The nearest airfield to Benbrook is Bourland Field, a private general aviation landing strip approximately six miles southwest of the City on U.S. 377. Meacham Field is located approximately eight miles to the northeast, but currently does not provide scheduled air service. Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, one of the largest commercial airports in the world, is located approximately 24 miles to the northeast. Alliance Airport, an airport designed primarily for freight and cargo, is located approximately 20 miles to the north-northeast.

Benbrook continues to review any hindrances to development and is seeking ways of promoting continued economic development. Among the positive steps being taken to remove constraints on development, include improving the image of the Fort Worth Independent School District, improving coordination between the City and the Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority to streamline permitting, and encouraging property owners to consolidate small parcels to create more marketable sites.

Benbrook offers several benefits to future commercial development. Its location at the intersection of Interstate 20 and Loop 820 provides an opportunity for distribution services. Its proximity to NAS-Fort Worth JRB and the associated Lockheed-Fort Worth plant provide opportunity for aerospace and defense related industries. The ad valorem tax rate in Benbrook is competitive with neighboring jurisdictions, and the City offers a tax abatement program for qualifying industries. Benbrook has a low crime rate and amenities for residential living including recreational opportunities at nearby Benbrook Lake.

### **13.2.3 Regional Economic Climate**

The economic development of Benbrook cannot be fostered without recognizing the importance of the regional, statewide, national and international economies. Although the external economies are outside the control of Benbrook, they directly affect the viability of Benbrook's economy. With increasing use of communications and foreign investment, the world market plays a significant effect on the local economy.

Benbrook is located within an area of north central Texas known as the "Metroplex." The Metroplex includes 12 to 16 counties (depending on the data source) with a population that exceeds 34 states of the United States. The Metroplex population is projected to increase from 5.5 million in 2000 to almost nine million in 2030. It has the largest labor force in the South and a projected annual job growth rate of 1.7 percent. Employment increased three to five percent annually between 1993 and 2001 before the recent economic slow down. Total employment is projected to increase by 1.7 percent annually through 2005. The Dallas/Fort Worth area has headquarters for 16 of the Fortune 500 companies. The area is located almost equidistant between the east and west coasts and is served by 24 airlines at the 17,800 acre Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Table 13.5 presents a comparison at the employment distributions between Benbrook, Texas and the National economies. The analysis indicates that Benbrook's economic strengths are in finance and insurance, real estate, professional services, education, health care, arts and entertainment, and other services.

Texas is the second most populous state in the country. It is the second fastest growing state with an 18 percent increase in population between 1980 and 1987. It has the third largest labor force

with 8.2 million workers and is increasing at double the national rate. Texas has the lowest cost of living among the 50 states. Texas is a right-to-work state and has no corporate or personal income tax. The state franchise tax is \$6.70/\$1,000 of capital, surplus and undivided profits employed in the state.

**Table 13.5**  
**PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY**

Employment Sector	U.S.	Texas	Employed in Benbrook
Agriculture	0.2 %	0.1 %	0.0 %
Mining	0.4 %	1.3 %	0.0 %
Utilities	0.6 %	0.6 %	0.7 %
Construction	5.8 %	6.5 %	5.6 %
Manufacturing	14.4 %	12.0 %	9.4 %
Wholesale trade	5.4 %	5.7 %	2.8 %
Retail trade	13.0 %	12.7 %	13.0 %
Transportation & Warehousing	3.3 %	3.9 %	0.9 %
Information	3.1 %	3.1 %	1.0 %
Finance & Insurance	5.2 %	4.8 %	5.3 %
Real Estate	1.7 %	1.8 %	3.7 %
Professional services	6.0 %	5.5 %	8.9 %
Management	2.5 %	3.2 %	0.1 %
Administrative support	8.0 %	9.9 %	5.8 %
Education	2.2 %	1.4 %	5.9 %
Health Care	12.4 %	11.5 %	12.5 %
Arts & Entertainment	1.5 %	1.1 %	4.1 %
Lodging and Food	8.7 %	8.8 %	8.6 %
Other services (exclud. public admin)	4.6 %	4.9%	8.8 %
Auxiliaries	0.9 %	1.0 %	-
Unclassified	0.1 %	0.1 %	-
Government	-	-%	2.6 %

Despite recent fluctuations in the petroleum industry, the national trend of relocation from the northeast to the south and southwest continues. The shift from a heavy industrial concentration to an information and service-based economy has caused more businesses to move to the south where the cost of business is less.

Foreign investment and activity is also increasing. Texas leads the country in foreign investment and the recent relocation of several Japanese companies to the Dallas/Fort Worth area continues that trend. Cities must recognize the value of foreign investment as part of their economic development if they are to successfully maintain their local economy.

## **13.3 Previous Economic Development Plans**

### **13.3.1 1991 City Plan**

In 1991, the City adopted its original Economic Development element of the Comprehensive Plan. In that plan, there were two major thrusts to Benbrook's economic development plan: 1) retention and expansion of existing businesses and 2) the attraction of new businesses and industry to Benbrook. It is expected that this approach will continue.

In 1991, the City Council adopted a number of specific objectives and strategies for the promotion of economic development. These were later converted to tenets and principles in Section 5.2 of the Comprehensive Plan. These basic strategies can be divided into four general categories: those addressing the general need to promote population and business growth, those addressing the allocation of land to commercial and industrial uses, those addressing the regulatory environment, and those addressing the need for joint cooperation between the City and the Chamber of Commerce.

First, for a business to expand or relocate to Benbrook, the City and the community must welcome them. The City and community must recognize that development is beneficial, particularly when proper planning and regulations are present to protect neighboring areas. This approach is addressed in the following objectives and strategies:

**OBJECTIVE 2.2: The City should encourage increases in population and economic development that are in the best interests of the City. Growth that conforms to the Comprehensive Plan generally meets this criterion.**

**Strategy 2.3.4: The City should recognize that increased population growth is necessary for increased commerce and take measures to increase residential development.**

The second major area of basic strategies is in the proper allocation and development of land within the City. Some cities have zoned more or less land for commercial or industrial uses than the market requires. Occasionally, the land may be zoned in an improper location that is not economically viable or is inadequate to protect adjacent residential areas. The following objectives and strategies address the interrelationship between land use and economic development:

**OBJECTIVES: 2.1. The City should provide sufficient land within the City for commercial and industrial uses.**

**Strategy 2.1.1: The City should allocate approximately 10 percent of the developable land within the City to commercial uses.**

**Strategy 2.1.4: Commercial areas should be located within designated corridors along thoroughfares.**

The third area is the improvement of the regulatory environment and the removal of hindrances to development. Business succeeds by increasing revenues while reducing the costs of business. To a developer or businessperson, time is money and delays in proceeding with a project can often determine its economic viability. This does not mean that the City should remove all regulations on development, since those regulations were established to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community. Some regulations or procedural steps may prove to be so burdensome or unnecessary that it stifles economic growth. The following strategies address that need:

**OBJECTIVE 2.3: The City should provide a regulatory environment that encourages continued viability and expansion of existing conforming businesses and establishment of new business and industry.**

**Strategy 2.3.1: The City should review its developmental regulatory process to identify and implement measures which would reduce the time and expense of development while continuing to protect other City interests. A one-stop permitting process in conjunction with BWSA should be investigated.**

**Strategy 2.1.5: The City should discourage the rezoning of property solely for the intent of increasing the property's value.**

**Strategy 2.3.2: Zoning and development regulations should be reviewed and revised to allow flexibility to develop within established constraints and to minimize review and approval time by the City.**

**Strategy 2.3.3: The City should encourage appropriate design of commercial corridors which reduce the congestion and land use conflicts associated with strip commercial development.**

**Strategy 2.3.5: The City Council should review the strategies and actions of the Council, Boards and Commissions, City staff, Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority, and franchised utilities to identify hindrances to economic development and whether they are justified. Unnecessary hindrances should be removed to the extent possible.**

**Strategy 2.1.2: The City should approve commercial zoning requests and development proposals that conform to the Comprehensive Plan.**

**Strategy 2.1.3: Land development standards in commercial areas should provide for a variety of flexible development options to allow creativity, enhance stability and strengthen the City's economic base, while minimizing the adverse effects on adjacent noncommercial**

**uses.**

The City has reviewed and improved the City's regulations and standards with an aim of reducing development time and cost while protecting the adjacent land uses. Design standards for buffers have been adopted that allowed the removal of otherwise unnecessary Planned Development zoning designations. Previous contacts with the Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority to establish a "one-stop shop" have proven unfeasible as long as the two entities remain separate, but this will continue to be pursued.

Finally, the City, BWSA and Chamber of Commerce recognize the need for mutual and coordinated efforts in economic development. Business will not thrive if each group is working at cross-purposes with each other. To this end, the City Council has adopted the following strategies:

**Strategy 2.4.1: The City should work with the Benbrook area Chamber of Commerce to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. The goals should be developed as part of a joint City/Chamber work session.**

**Strategy 2.4.3: The City, through its City Council and staff, should represent the City at Chamber of Commerce meetings and functions.**

**13.3.1.A Retention and Expansion of Existing Business**

Approximately 80 percent of all new jobs are created by expansion of existing businesses. Most businesses prefer to expand in their present location rather than move to a new site and lose their previous investment in facilities. Conversely, the closing or relocation of a business out of Benbrook results in a direct loss of employment and idle investment.

The business retention and expansion program consisted of two types of activities. The first identified and communicated the resources within the existing business community of Benbrook, while the second group of activities consisted of actions to foster increased business activity. The following is a list of activities designed to gain an understanding of existing businesses and their needs:

ACTIVITIES TO IDENTIFY EXISTING BUSINESS RESOURCES:

- A. The City and Chamber should annually update an inventory of existing businesses within Benbrook including name, location and products. The City should organize and maintain this information for analysis.
- B. Using the inventory of businesses, the City and Chamber should develop a catalogue of products and services available from Benbrook businesses. This information will be used in marketing efforts.
- C. The City should facilitate a dialogue between local businesses, Chamber officers and City officials to gather and disseminate information about expansion plans, potential closing or layoffs, or hindrances to continued business. The City and Chamber should also express appreciation to existing businesses for their location and activity in Benbrook.

The City annually updates a list of existing businesses within Benbrook. The Chamber of Commerce has also conducted a survey of businesses as part of their Business Retention and Expansion Program.

ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER INCREASED BUSINESS ACTIVITY:

- A. The City and Chamber should organize periodic meetings of business leaders located along U.S. 377 from I-20/Loop 820 to Cozby South Street to discuss mutual interests and needs of business along the commercial corridor. Possible topics include corridor design, beautification and coordinated sales programs.

The City and Chamber convened several meetings regarding U.S. 377, including meetings to discuss the U.S. 377 corridor study prepared by the University of Texas at Arlington. The City continues to investigate the potential impact of any future widening of U.S. 377, along with possible design features that would enhance the corridors appearance.

- B. The City and Chamber should conduct a marketing program through various media to encourage residents to shop in Benbrook.

This activity was supported by a City Council strategy stating:

**Strategy 2.4.8: The City should encourage and promote retail sales within Benbrook through various promotional activities.**

In the past, the City has funded a "Shop Benbrook First" advertising campaign as part of its contract with the Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce. Since detailed comparisons have not been made, the effectiveness of this program cannot be determined.

- C. The City and Chamber should continue to investigate the feasibility of sponsoring annual events that increase tourism to the City, such as holiday celebrations or athletic events.

In 1990 and 1991, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored a Lakefest and power boat race on Benbrook Lake but these were discontinued in part because of financial considerations. From 1998 to 2002, the Chamber sponsored Summerfest.

- D. The City and Chamber should evaluate the City's image and identify and implement programs to improve and enhance that image.

This activity item was supported by a City Council strategy stating:

**Strategy 2.4.9: The City should review its image as a community and seek to improve any negative aspects where possible.**

- E. The City should identify incentives and programs to assist businesses desiring to expand or remain in Benbrook.

The City's tax abatement program applies to industry expansion as well as new industry relocations.

### 13.3.1 B. Attraction of New Industry

Although most new jobs are created by local industrial expansion, the more visible economic development success comes from new industry construction. Often, the entry of a new industry will stimulate existing industry and business to expand. The process of attracting new industry can be divided into three activities: identifying available resources and potential prospects, implementing a marketing program, and responding to prospects. The following activities address each of these three areas:

#### ACTIVITIES TO IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND POTENTIAL PROSPECTS

- A. The City and Chamber should develop and maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial sites for use in marketing. The City should seek to automate this inventory through a geographic information system when feasible.
- B. The City and Chamber should enumerate the reasons why an industrial prospect should locate in Benbrook. The Chamber should implement a public relations and training program, such as the Texas Hospitality Training Program, to train service personnel and citizens on presenting a positive image of Benbrook.
- C. The City, along with the Chamber's Economic Development Committee, should develop a program of identifying and targeting specific industries for marketing purposes.
- D. The City and Chamber should establish contacts and relationships with local real estate developers and major industrial site selection consultants.

The City developed inventory sheets describing each undeveloped commercial and industrial tract within the City. The City also analyzed possible industries on a periodic basis to target industries for recruitment.

These activities were supported by the following City Council strategy:

**Strategy 2.4.6: The City should fully utilize the services of the Texas Department of Commerce and North Central Texas Council of Governments and other organizations to assist in economic development activities.**

The City discontinued its membership in the North Texas Commission, a regional economic development organization, over ten years ago as a budget cutting measure.

#### ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A MARKETING PROGRAM

- A. The City and Chamber of Commerce should prepare high quality materials for marketing Benbrook, including a general brochure, promotional video, and foreign language materials.

This activity was supported by the following City Council strategy:

**Strategy 2.4.3: The City should encourage and participate in the development of quality promotional materials for the City.**

The Chamber of Commerce prepared a brochure and videotape over ten years ago, while the City has prepared a demographic summary and a city street map.

- B. The City and Chamber should identify appropriate media for advertising Benbrook such as trade journals serving the targeted industries.
- C. The City and Chamber should investigate the feasibility of direct mail and telemarketing campaigns for industrial relocations.

#### ACTIVITIES TO RESPOND TO PROSPECTIVE INDUSTRIES

- A. The City and Chamber should develop a plan for responding to a prospective industry's information needs including preparation of specific proposals, training of a prospect response team, and prospect follow-up efforts.
- B. The City should identify specific incentive programs to encourage industries to locate in Benbrook. Benbrook currently offers a limited tax abatement program, but does not assist in infrastructure or financing programs.

The following City Council strategies supported this activity:

**Strategy 2.4.7: The City should investigate development inducements, such as tax abatements, infrastructure assistance, and development incentives to attract certain types of business development.**

**Strategy 2.4.10: Capital expenditures by the City should provide a high quality of service to commercial corridors and encourage additional private investment in property improvements.**

#### **13.3.2 1994 Strategic Plan for Economic Development**

In September 1993, the City and Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority jointly hired a consultant to prepare an Economic Development Strategic Plan for the City of Benbrook. The plan was developed in three phases: an interview process with various stakeholders in the community, an assessment of existing conditions that affect economic development in the City, and development of a plan to promote economic development. Preparation of the Strategic Plan was guided by a 17-member Economic Development Task Force, jointly appointed by the City Council and BWSA Board of Directors.

The consultant interviewed approximately 90 individuals that represented the City Council, City staff, Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority, Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce, business leaders, neighborhood association officers, and randomly selected residents and business owners. In addition, a community forum was held in December 1993 to solicit additional community input. The interview process identified the following comments and concerns:

- . There is concern about the future economy of the area, and therefore economic and business development is desired,
- . Retail, office and light industry were identified as acceptable development,
- . Expanded recreational opportunities are desired,
- . Community infrastructure and services were praised,
- . Clean-up of the community and particularly U.S. 377 should be a priority,
- . There is a concern about public education in the community,
- . There is a concern about the development process in the community, and
- . There is a need for greater consensus in the community and better definition of the role in economic development taken by each group (City, Chamber, etc.)

The assessment of conditions affecting economic development found that Benbrook could be competitive in economic development, but that the City and its available sites needed to be marketed more aggressively. It found that Benbrook's development process was comparable to most other cities, but that there was a perception promoted by some that it was difficult to work with the City staff. The consultant recommended efforts to dispel this perception by preparing a user-friendly development handbook and working toward a single permitting office between the City and BWSA. Finally, the consultant strongly recommended that the City adopt a one-half cent sales tax for economic development so that it could compete with better financed communities.

The consultant then developed, in consultation with the Task Force, a list of goals and objectives for economic development in Benbrook. These were:

**Goal 1:** The government, businesses and residents of Benbrook will work to find a common ground in regard to community development issues. This common ground will be achieved through cooperation, communication, dialogue, and negotiation. All community leaders that play a role in community and economic development will be responsible for respecting and evaluating all viewpoints that will lead to positive solutions and actions.

**Objective 1A:** Educate the community about the economic development program and process and encourage citizen input into economic development activities. Develop communication tools (such as a quarterly newsletter) to assist in informing the public regarding community affairs.

**Objective 1B:** Develop an economic development organizational structure that will be comprised of representatives of the City Council, Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority, Chamber of Commerce Board, private businesses, residents and homeowners, and other entities affected by the economic development program (school district, utilities, civic organizations, etc.) The organizational structure should ensure a public/private partnership and should hold open meetings and encourage

dialogue in the community. The existing Economic Development Task Force should investigate the use of the half-cent sales tax as a means of funding economic development.

**Goal 2:** Benbrook will work to enhance the character, quality of life, and appearance of the community through good planning practices, and by developing and adhering to high development standards. All entities involved in permitting and economic development should agree to and work toward cooperation, and make it their goal to assist the business community in the development process.

**Objective 2A:** Examine the development process of the City to determine if the process is fair, timely, and cost-effective without sacrificing the high development standards of the community. Explore fast-track development procedures and development fees and establish clear criteria. Ensure that business regulations are fair and clear, again upholding high standards. Publish a "user-friendly" development handbook.

**Objective 2B:** Communicate ordinance changes to the business community and encourage their participation in contemplating ordinance changes.

**Objective 2C:** Encourage citizen participation in public hearings, government planning meetings, and voting. Encourage citizens to get involved and serve on public committees/commissions/boards. Encourage citizens to work together with the government to lessen adversarial relationships.

**Goal 3:** Benbrook will work to retain, assist and support its local businesses.

**Objective 3A:** Conduct a complete survey of all businesses to have a better understanding of their products, services and economic impact to the community, while also determining their needs, problems and growth opportunities. Update information on an annual basis and maintain a database profiling all businesses. The economic development entity should act as a facilitator between local regulatory authorities and businesses.

**Objective 3B:** Develop programs aimed at addressing problems identified by local businesses which could include training seminars that would educate businesses about more effective marketing techniques, financial management, job training, employee benefit programs, and government law and regulations (especially new EPA regulations that will affect small businesses.) Lobby for legislative change where needed. Evaluate programs on an ongoing basis, making changes as appropriate.

**Objective 3C:** Strengthen relationships within the business community by providing opportunities for businesses to meet together and share ideas and success stories (small, relaxed breakfast meetings or a similar type of meeting environment tend to be the most effective.) Conduct an annual business appreciation event. Recognize innovative and successful

businesses with award programs. If local businesses fail, follow-up and analyze the situation with an exit interview.

**Objective 3D:** Identify possible business start-up programs by researching how start-up is induced in other communities. Explore business development opportunities with local citizens from within the community.

**Goal 4:** Benbrook will market itself as a high quality business location and work to recruit high quality businesses to the community.

**Objective 4A:** Research and identify targeted industries (retail, commercial, office and other commerce) that would fit well in the community. Recruit and maintain contact with developers who have standards consistent with community values defined in the goals.

**Objective 4B:** Identify the community's best marketing image and design marketing and advertising programs to promote that image. Develop high quality marketing materials, both general and industry-specific that include current and complete market data on the community and show why Benbrook is a good and profitable business location.

**Objective 4C:** Identify and participate in marketing opportunities such as trade shows, advertising opportunities, media opportunities and joint promotions with other regional economic development agencies. Recruit targeted businesses and developers to local events that emphasize long-term successful business ventures.

**Goal 5:** Develop the necessary support structure to ensure implementation of the strategic plan for economic development.

**Objective 5A:** Design an economic development organizational structure that will allow for input and oversight from the City of Benbrook, Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority, Benbrook Area Chamber of Commerce, the business community at large, and neighborhood/citizen groups. Ensure that funding for the economic development program is in place, and that staff support is provided. Explore sales tax option for funding.

**Objective 5B:** Conduct an in-depth inventory of all current and potential business sites that will result in a community-wide site map and a catalogue of specific site plats, zoning, infrastructure, traffic counts and access, development constraints, ownership and broker. Establish strong relationships within commercial and industrial property owners, developers and brokers, and assist in marketing sites in Benbrook.

**Objective 5C:** Explore public and private inducements and incentives that have resulted in beneficial development activities in other areas to determine their feasibility for Benbrook. Identify the financial needs of businesses and research financing techniques used elsewhere.

**Objective 5D:** Continually update economic, demographic, and

infrastructure data and present it in a clear and professional manner for use by local businesses, potential businesses, developers and brokers.

The Strategic Plan for Economic Development was adopted by the Task Force, City Council and BWSA Board of Directors in March 1994. In June, the Economic Development Task Force began studying the feasibility of adopting the half-cent sales tax to fund the economic development program, which led to an election where the voters approved the tax in January 1995. The tax began being collected in July 1995 with the first proceeds received in September.

Even before the new Economic Development Corporation began, the City staff had already accomplished many of the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. A Benbrook Community Newsletter was begun in December 1994 and includes articles from the City, BWSA, Chamber of Commerce, schools and neighborhood associations (see Objective 1A). The half-cent sales tax passed in January 1995 (see Objective 1B). The City began work on preparing a development handbook (see Objective 2A) and both the City and Chamber have conducted business surveys (Objective 3A). The City updates the inventory of available commercial and industrial sites (see Objective 5B) and publishes a demographic summary, called Benbrook in Brief, on an annual basis.

### **13.3.3 1999 Economic Development Corporation Strategic Plan**

In 1999, the Benbrook Economic Development Corporation engaged The Management Connection in College Station to prepare a community audit, conduct a survey of attitudes toward economic development, and to prepare a five-year strategic plan. As a result of that process, the EDC adopted the following mission statement:

**Mission Statement:** “The mission of the Benbrook Economic Development Corporation is to develop and strengthen the economy while enhancing the quality of life.”

To achieve that mission, the EDC adopted the following goals:

#### **One Year (2000)**

1. To develop a marketing plan that is more aggressive throughout the State of Texas and USA.
2. To complete the Industrial Business Park
3. To develop a strategy with the Chamber of Commerce on “Buy Benbrook First” campaign.
4. To move in with the Chamber of Commerce (a more natural relationship for recruiting business)
  - To establish a “Small Business Development Center”
  - To establish programs that will provide assistance in training, lending, etc., to small businesses
  - To be more “visible” within the community
5. To strengthen relationships between the Benbrook EDC, the City Council, Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority, Library District and the Chamber of Commerce.
6. To develop a strategy on how to better market the Benbrook Lake area.
7. To promote the building of higher income housing

8. To develop land along Benbrook Boulevard (U.S. 377) and in Whitestone Ranch

**Three Years (2002)**

1. To partner with the private sector with different methods to attract new business
2. To partner with the private sector for infrastructure purposes
3. To make choices in attracting businesses that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
4. Develop "Vista Way" street.

**Five Years (2004)**

1. To be more active in pursuing the Fort Worth ETJ issue.
2. To develop a strategy on how the board will be more active in developing the I-20 corridor.
3. To encourage the growth of existing businesses

### **13.4 2003 Economic Development Plan**

In January 2003, the City Council and the Board of Directors of the EDC met jointly for a strategic planning session. The group used a brainstorming process to identify assets and hindrances to development, potential businesses for targeting and recruitment, options and responsibilities for recruitment. The group also discussed ideas for site-specific activities in various areas of the City.

#### **13.4.1 Assets and Hindrances**

During the strategic planning session, the group identified the following advantages for development in Benbrook (in no order of importance):

- It's a great place to live, small town country atmosphere, its located in the Metroplex but without the urban problems
- There are amenities for employees, e.g. low crime rate, recreation resources, quality of life (entertainment, shopping, schools, medical), Lake Benbrook
- Its in the direction of regional growth
- Access to transportation (I-20 and U.S. 377)
- The City Council is pro-business; City staff is conservative, efficient City services, pro-business attitude
- Cooperation among entities
- There is plenty of traffic (i.e. customers), unserved rooftops, high income and education
- There is available, low-cost developable land; utilities are available, unlimited water
- There is a diverse work force available, education resources
- External defense contractor (Lockheed)

These assets should be built upon to enhance economic development activities.

The hindrances, in general order of importance (number in parentheses represents number of priority "votes"), were identified as:

- City is land-locked, may be by-passed by growth (8)

- Appearance of Benbrook Boulevard (U.S. 377)(6) (overhead wires, crooked poles, Westpark Wall, lack of landscaping, needs design standards, lack of median)
- Lack of developers/active land owners (5)
- Lack of funds for economic development/community development (3)
- Lack central post office (3)
- Limitation on lake development (2)
- Lack of available buildings (2)
- Disjointed geography, lack of identity, visibility (1)
- Viewed as “not developer friendly” (1)
- Image of Fort Worth ISD (1)

Each of these hindrances can be addressed to one degree or another. Strategies include:

**Strategy 1: City Council should meet with Fort Worth City Council members and Texas Legislators to discuss options for future expansion of Benbrook’s city limits.**

**Strategy 2: The City Council or EDC should fund a corridor design study for Benbrook Boulevard (U.S. 377) outlining proposed improvements to the appearance of the roadway corridor.**

**Strategy 3: The EDC should actively work with landowners and Realtors to actively and properly market vacant land.**

**Strategy 4: The City Council and EDC should work with the U.S. Postal Service to establish a new post office in the proposed Town Center.**

**Strategy 5: The City Council should establish a Task Force to meet with the Corps of Engineers and Congressional representatives to identify opportunities for preserving lake levels and increasing development opportunities along Lake Benbrook.**

**Strategy 6: The EDC should consider building speculative buildings within the Industrial Park if necessary to attract new industries.**

**Strategy 7: The City and EDC should continue to work on improving its identity and image.**

**Strategy 8: The City should work to improve its image with regard to development review, approval and inspections.**

Other hindrances identified included:

- Natural barriers (Clear Fork)
- Need to dress-up Benbrook bridges (1)
- Traffic problems
- Cost of development
- Lack of shopping opportunities
- Late in getting started (compared to Hulen and Bryant-Irvin)
- Higher property taxes

- No quality restaurants
- Difficulty of inspections
- Lack of a one-stop shop
- No public transportation
- Lack of a sense of community, lack of own school
- Lack of coordination in recruiting industries (need a “Tiger Team”)
- Lack of incentives
- Too close to major developed areas
- Lack of some recreational amenities (soccer, motocross, skate park, etc.)
- Foundation requirements
- Need to require developers to include “Benbrook” on signs

#### 13.4.2 Prospect Targeting and Response

With regard to targeting of industry types, the group recommended pursuing the following types of businesses, in order of priority:

- High sales tax generators (5)
- Apartments (5)
- Theater (4)
- Quality restaurant (4)
- Recreation opportunities (2)
- Water park (2)
- High tech (1)
- Back office (IT, Human resources) (1)
- Recreation developers to develop lake (1)
- Big box retailer (1)

Other potential targets identified included:

- Clean industries (no fumes, noise, etc.)
- Defense subcontractors
- High ad valorem value
- Medical
- Insurance
- Golf equipment manufacturers
- Retirement community
- Niche specialty shops

Interestingly, the group had a higher priority on attracting retail and entertainment uses, rather than traditional industrial uses. Possible strategies to address these targeted industries are:

**Strategy 9: The EDC should continue to work with commercial real estate brokers and the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) to attract quality retail and entertainment uses to Benbrook.**

**Strategy 10: The City should evaluate and promote areas of mixed use and higher density residential uses to create sufficient market demand for restaurants and entertainment uses.**

**Strategy 11: The City and EDC should investigate the creation of additional recreational resources within the community, including a water park, and lake-oriented recreation.**

**Strategy 12: The EDC should target high technology industries (including defense subcontractors) and back office industries to Benbrook.**

### 13.4.3 Recruitment and Incentive Strategies

The group considered the most desirable ways to recruit new industry and identified the following, in order of priority:

- Develop land first (8)
- Use Commerce Business Daily (1)
- Must have product (i.e. lot) available (1)
- Response to prospects, coordinated plan (1)
- Defense contractors; use informal contacts at Lockheed to identify suppliers, face to face with key decision makers.
- Trade shows, brokers
- Incentives

The same exercise was done for attracting retail uses, with the following results:

- Need developed lots (4)
- Encourage multifamily on Interstate (3)
- ICSC trade shows (1)
- Development billboards

Finally, the group addressed the need or desirability of using incentives to attract new business, with the following incentives proposed in order of priority:

- Provide infrastructure (9)
- Low cost financing (3)
- Freeport exemption (1)
- Tax abatement
- Low land costs
- Sales tax rebates
- Architectural and other soft costs
- Tax increment financing

Again, it was interesting to note that tax abatement and other commonly considered incentives were left at relatively low priority, while the provision of infrastructure to provide developed lots was the highest priority.

**Strategy 13: The City and EDC should assist in the installation of infrastructure when such action will induce quality development that might not otherwise occur. Use of the tax increment finance district and the half-cent sales tax are the most likely sources of funding.**

**Strategy 14: The EDC should develop a coordinated response to prospects.**

**Strategy 15: The EDC should continue to offer low-cost financing to prospects, where feasible and prudent.**

**Strategy 16: The City should consider establishing a Freeport exemption as an economic development incentive.**

#### **13.4.4 Area Specific Strategies**

The group then addressed specific strategies to develop various commercial/industrial areas within the community.

A. Town Center: For the Town Center, the group recommended the following activities, in order of priority:

- Infrastructure and streets (11)
- Multifamily commitment (7)
- Post office commitment (5)
- Buy land for civic center (4)
- Get land or landowner cooperation
- TIF projects
- Plat property
- Resolve water and sewer commitment

B. Industrial Area: For the industrial area north of I-20, the group had the following recommendations:

- Extend Benbrook Parkway to frontage road (9)
- Build spec building (9)

C. Benbrook Boulevard: For improvements and development of Benbrook Boulevard (U.S. 377) through Benbrook, the following activities were recommended:

- Build Vista Way (9)
- Landscape design for Boulevard (8)
- Relocate utility lines (5)
- Paint Westpark Wall (2)
- Build gateways
- Median
- TxDOT funding for widening
- Restaurants
- Incentives for beautification
- Change from rural to urban section (i.e. remove bar ditches)
- Tear down buildings

D. Benbrook Lake: For increased development around Benbrook Lake, the group recommended:

- Mini task force to investigate lake level restrictions (6)
- Comprehensive Development Plan, meet with Congress, Corps (4)

- Improve access to water (maps, signs, way-finding) (2)
- Dredge marina area (1)
- Identify congressional allies (1)
- Restaurant
- Prepare concept plan
- Raise lake level
- Water park

E. Camp Bowie West (Highway 80): For the commercial area fronting Camp Bowie west, the group recommended:

- Restaurant (2)
- Address vandalism
- Work with Fort Worth's Historic Camp Bowie Inc. and Public Improvement District to enhance appearance and economic vitality of area

F. Whitestone Ranch: For further development of the Whitestone Ranch area, the group had only one recommendation, revisit the flowage easement restrictions with the Corps of Engineers.

In the discussions about the roles and responsibilities of the various players in economic development, it was agreed that the City Council should address the annexation issue (Strategy 1), establish design standards for Benbrook Boulevard (Strategy 2), and appoint a bond committee to look at other infrastructure requirements. The EDC Board of Directors will provide oversight of the daily targeting and recruiting activities by EDC staff, and will coordinate meetings with landowners to enhance marketing efforts (Strategy 3). The EDC staff will continue to take the lead role in targeting industries and businesses (Strategies 9, 10, 11, and 12), provide infrastructure (Strategy 13), recruit multifamily developers (Strategy 10), and provide low-cost financing (Strategy 15). It was also agreed that there should be periodic meetings between the City Council and EDC Board to coordinate economic development activities.