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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP



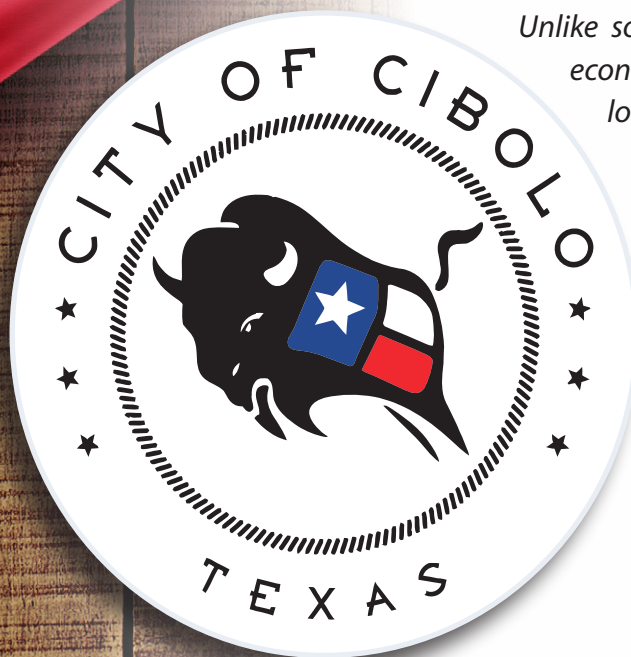


small town

Charm

big city

VISION



Unlike some parts of the United States which are at an economic standstill, Cibolo is one of the fastest-growing locations in the Lone Star State, and boasts plenty of amenities found in much larger cities like Austin, but without the traffic congestion and high costs. Many businesses are choosing the city for its easy access to Interstate 10 and Interstate 35, low energy costs, a 160-acre business park under development, an educated workforce, over 400,000 square feet of new and future retail development, mixed-use projects, reasonably-priced housing, and more.

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Written by Robert Hoshowsky

Just sixteen miles northeast of the San Antonio International Airport and only sixty-five miles from the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is the City of Cibolo. From a population of just one hundred back in 1890, Cibolo has expanded in both population and area and now covers thirty-four square miles and has 29,249 people, with projections of reaching 34,000 next year. As it grows, it is actively planning for the future.

The Cibolo Economic Development Corporation is dedicated to building upon the area's reputation as an ideal place to start or grow a business. The city has a median household income of \$93,000, much higher than San Antonio at \$49,000, and with a median age of thirty-four, and over forty percent of residents holding bachelors' degrees or higher, has resulted in a low unemployment rate of just 3.1 percent.

"You don't have a large labor pool, but for the person who wants a job, they can have a job," says Mark Luft. He has been the director of the Cibolo Economic Development Corporation (EDC) for the past nine years.

The Cibolo Economic Development Corporation is attracting general manufacturing companies, medical businesses, educational institutions, and advanced learning universities to work with community colleges, local school districts, and the public school system. This serves to encourage and motivate young minds for the technologically-advanced jobs of the future.

"We are trying to get the workforce prepared for the new generation – the new century – because artificial intelligence is going to trump physical labor with robotics and things like that," states Luft. "Right now, seventy percent of the workforce is human touch, but as things change, more artificial intelligence will replace the workload, with companies like Amazon replacing brick and mortar." ►►



► The area has room for expansion, a host of incentives, and support from the Cibolo Economic Development Corporation. Major employers include custom shipping solutions and packaging company AGE Industries, Inc., Builders First Source, Casa Mechanical, Independent Rough Terrain Center LLC, Liberty Oilfield Services, and Walmart.

Independent Rough Terrain Center (IRTC), an American-owned manufacturer of heavy-duty rough-terrain mobile products for mining, forestry, oil and gas, and other industries. The company – previously known as Kalmar Rough Terrain Center (KRTC) – has had a presence here since 2002 and has been under the leadership of President and Chief Executive Officer Stephen M. Speakes since 2013.

The company built a new manufacturing facility in 2008 and has a current workforce of seventy-three full-time employees, twenty percent of whom are veterans. “Our mutual goals of providing a great work environment to the Cibolo community is something we have strived for, we continually support, and we have been recipients of a tax abatement in the past,” states Speakes.

“By being in this area, IRTC has benefitted from hiring a skilled and diverse workforce from the Cibolo area as well as the San Antonio metro area. With our location and proximity to U.S. suppliers, we have gained some advantage in becoming a ‘U.S. built’ manufacturer and a customer solutions and service provider for our clients,” he adds.

While the company does not have any short-term plans for facility expansion, it is strategically positioned for future growth. “With our current business development opportunities, we understand there would be an increase in revenue which could lead to the addition of headcount, and we welcome the assistance of the Cibolo EDC.”

Other companies, like FHE USA, LLC – a well-known designer and maker of highly dependable pressure control equipment – expanded to the San Antonio area in 2011.

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“Relocating to the Cibolo area was a win for FHE,” says FHE USA Texas and Ohio Operations Manager Darcalee Debogorski. “We were growing a faster rate than our current building would allow. We looked for about a year before deciding to settle in Cibolo. We decided to move there because the building was a perfect fit. The opportunity to get in and out of the location with ease was a huge selling point. The fact that there were similar businesses in the same area was an added bonus.”

Before the move, FHW reached out to Luft for his expertise and advice. “Mark introduced us to many key people such as the fire chief and building and development leads,” states Debogorski. “Over the next several weeks, continued to email me contacts and share networking opportunities. Moving in has never been easier. We felt we had support and were very much welcomed to the area.”

Being conveniently sited just off of a freeway also makes it easy for customers to access FHE. Like IRTC, it also moved into its current building with expansion in mind. It has thirty-two employees but expects to double its output and staff numbers.

Among the city’s recent projects is Cibolo Crossing, an innovative \$300 million mixed-use development that broke ground last May and is set to open this year.

The city, San Antonio-based movie chain Santikos Entertainment, and Fasken Oil are behind the massive undertaking. Cibolo Crossing will boast a twelve-screen movie theatre complex, bowling alley, laser quest, restaurants, retail components, medical, and bars all under roof. The area will also have Solara at Cibolo Crossing, multifamily housing, complete with landscaped walking trails.



Santikos Entertainment was named after John L. Santikos, who made his fortune in movie theatres and real estate before he passed in December of 2014. A gift of \$605 million in business assets was made by his company to the San Antonio Area Foundation, “as a demonstration of his love for his city,” according to the foundation.

“With the movie theatre, all their profits go to the foundation, and they administer millions of dollars to the San Antonio Area Foundation and other non-profit organizations for the elderly, for education, the environment, and more,” states Luft.

The area is going to house other new projects like Cibolo Bend, retail and small medical urgent care complex that is about ninety-five percent complete. Cibolo Bend, at Cibolo Valley Drive and North Main Street, across the street from a Walmart Supercenter, is part of the strong growth in the area and demonstrates the need for more retailers, restaurants, and service providers.

The city also has a new, 160-acre business park under development. The still-unnamed area will be home to a massive industrial park to be built on land owned by the Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative.

In partnership with the state highway department, Cibolo’s Farm to Market Road, from I-35 to Rodeo Drive, will increase from a two-lane to a five-lane highway. “That’s addressing our



challenges too, for the added population,” says Luft of the project, which will see construction begin in late 2020 and end by mid-2023. “I think we’re going to grow 2,000 to 2,500 people every year, conservatively. In ten years, we will probably double in population.”

The Cibolo Parkway project aims to use parkways to connect Interstate 35, which goes from Mexico to Canada from Minnesota and St. Paul, and Interstate 10, which goes from Florida to California.

Through annexation, some rural areas are becoming suburban and acquiring services. The city plans to make transportation smarter, better, and faster to the local area, and provide a speedier route for first responders such as police and fire. “Transportation is important for human life in general,” says Luft.

Mindful that life is not just about work, the city has a great deal to offer families of all ages. It has a great climate with much to see and do. A 28,000-square-foot community center with the local YMCA is in the works, and the recently-completed first phase of a soccer and baseball sports complex will continue to grow as new fields are added.

Housing prices remain reasonable, with existing homes prices at about \$225,000, and brand-new houses in the \$250,000 to \$275,000 range, making the area affordable and inviting for both businesses and families.

Cibolo Economic Development Corporation Director Luft welcomes the future of the city. “I would like to see a diversity of housing opportunities for everyone to live here,” he says. “I want to see a university here, a major hospital, the highway system improved, and safe transportation. I want to see culture and arts here, an influx of art and music to bring people together. And I would like to see faith-based organizations involved to cultivate young people to have patience and understanding and understand what is going to be expected of them in the future.” ■



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200 South Main Street, Cibolo, TX 78108 | P: 210-658-9900

www.cibolotx.gov

