



June 21, 2011

Mr. Pedro R. Garza
Austin Regional Office
U.S. Department of Commerce
Economic Development Administration
504 Lavaca, Suite 1100
Austin, TX 78701-2858

Dear Mr. Garza:

Enclosed is the result of the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update for the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission. If you should have any questions please feel free to contact us at (806) 372-3381.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kyle Ingham", is written over a horizontal line.

Kyle Ingham
Economic Development Director

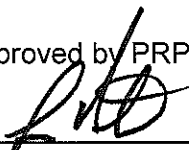
Enclosure

PANHANDLE REGIONAL
PLANNING COMMISSION

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
UPDATE

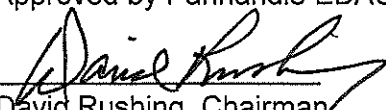
June 30, 2011

Approved by PRPC Board of Directors on 5-19-11



Gary Pitner, Executive Director

Approved by Panhandle EDAC on 6-14-11



David Rushing, Chairman

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ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The State of the Regional Economy

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission is the designated Economic Development District for the Panhandle Region. This region is the largest planning region in Texas because it encompasses 26 counties and almost 26,000 square miles. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy applies to the entire region that has a population of 427,927 (United States 2010 Census estimates). This is an increase from 402,862 as listed in the United States 2000 Census.

The Planning Commission assists in creating partnerships, which develop regional solutions for economic development and assists in developing enterprise zones and enterprise zone projects that support innovative approaches to economic development.

The unemployment rate of the Texas Panhandle region is low overall. However, these numbers are skewed due to the major problem of out-migration. There is a lack of high quality jobs and, as such, has caused many people to leave the area. This out-migration has led to lower unemployment rates, but these numbers do not reflect the true unemployment rates. The population in many counties in the Panhandle is low and is another reason why the unemployment rates are low.

Historically the Texas Panhandle, as a whole, has had low per-capita income numbers compared with the rest of Texas and the nation. During the past few years this has seen little change. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Panhandle has 21 out of 26 counties that had incomes of 80% or less than the national average. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Fact Finder)

For a county to be considered distressed due to per-capita income, the EDA guidelines states that the county must have a level that is 80% or less than the national per-capita income for the year in which the most recent data is available. For a county to be considered distressed due to unemployment rate, the EDA guidelines states that the county must have an unemployment rate 1% above the national unemployment rate. Until new 2010 census data is released, Twenty-One of our counties qualify as distressed under these guidelines. The twenty-one counties are as follows: Armstrong, Briscoe, Castro, Childress, Collingsworth, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Donley, Gray, Hall, Hemphill, Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Moore, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Sherman, Swisher, and Wheeler. (See next page for table and Appendix F for map)

EDA Distressed Counties Per Capita Income				
County	Per Capita Income	U.S. Average	80% U.S. Average	Status
Armstrong	\$17,151	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Briscoe	\$14,218	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Carson	\$19,368	\$21,587	\$17,270	Non Distressed
Castro	\$14,457	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Childress	\$12,452	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Collingsworth	\$15,318	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Dallam	\$13,653	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Deaf Smith	\$13,119	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Donley	\$15,958	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Gray	\$21,229	\$27,466	\$21,973	Distressed
Hall	\$13,210	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Hansford	\$17,408	\$21,587	\$17,270	Non Distressed
Hartley	\$18,067	\$21,587	\$17,270	Non Distressed
Hemphill	\$16,929	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Hutchinson	\$21,008	\$27,466	\$21,973	Distressed
Lipscomb	\$16,328	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Moore	\$17,771	\$27,466	\$21,973	Distressed
Ochiltree	\$16,707	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Oldham	\$14,806	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Parmer	\$14,184	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Potter	\$18,438	\$27,466	\$21,973	Distressed
Randall	\$28,318	\$27,466	\$21,973	Non Distressed
Roberts	\$20,923	\$21,587	\$17,270	Non Distressed
Sherman	\$17,210	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Swisher	\$14,326	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed
Wheeler	\$16,083	\$21,587	\$17,270	Distressed

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Fact Finder

Area	Unemployment Rate: 24 Month Average (January 2010 – March 2011)
United States	9.55%
Armstrong	4.66
Briscoe	5.95
Carson	5.30
Castro	5.63
Childress	7.20
Collingsworth	5.75
Dallam	4.90
Deaf Smith	5.75
Donley	6.36
Gray	7.23
Hall	9.16
Hansford	4.73
Hartley	5.12
Hemphill	3.15
Hutchinson	7.48
Lipscomb	5.25
Moore	4.85
Ochiltree	5.82
Oldham	6.97
Parmer	4.68
Potter	6.43
Randall	4.98
Roberts	5.00
Sherman	4.77
Swisher	6.40
Wheeler	4.42

Source: Texas Workforce Commission

Another staggering statistic for population change in the Panhandle region is that between the 2000 census and 2010 estimates. It shows that 15 of the 21 distressed rural counties declined in population during that time. Also, of the 26 counties in the Panhandle region, 18 of the counties have seen a decline in population. In addition, the majority of the 26 counties have low population figures. Based on the 2010 estimates, 12 of the counties have fewer than 5,000 people, 8 of the counties have between 5,000 and 15,000, 4 have between 15,000 and 25,000, and only 2 counties have above 25,000 persons.

The 2010 estimates show that the population in the Texas Panhandle to be 427,927. Five of the top six most populous counties in the Panhandle qualify as distressed under EDA guidelines. Twenty-One of the 26 counties qualify as distressed; an estimated 282,011 people live in these 21 counties. This means that 68% of the citizens of the Texas Panhandle qualify as living in a distressed county according to 2009 census data estimates.

COUNTY	2000	2010	2000-2010 Increase/Decrease
Armstrong County	2,148	1,901	-11.50%
Briscoe County	1,790	1,637	-8.55%
Carson County	6,516	6,182	-5.13%
Castro County	8,285	8,062	-2.69%
Childress County	7,688	7,041	-8.42%
Collingsworth County	3,206	3,057	-4.65%
Dallam County	6,222	6,703	7.73%
Deaf Smith County	18,561	19,372	4.37%
Donley County	3,828	3,677	-3.94%
Gray County	22,744	22,535	-0.92%
Hall County	3,782	3,353	-11.34%
Hansford County	5,369	5,613	4.54%
Hartley County	5,537	6,062	9.48%
Hemphill County	3,351	3,807	13.61%
Hutchinson County	23,857	22,150	-7.16%
Lipscomb County	3,057	3,302	8.01%
Moore County	20,121	21,904	8.86%
Ochiltree County	9,006	10,223	13.51%
Oldham County	2,185	2,052	-6.09%
Parmer County	10,016	10,269	2.53%
Potter County	113,546	121,073	6.63%
Randall County	104,312	120,725	15.73%
Roberts County	887	929	4.74%
Sherman County	3,186	3,034	-4.77%
Swisher County	8,378	7,854	-6.25%
Wheeler County	5,284	5,410	2.38%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

External Trends and Forces

Oil, cattle, and agriculture have historically driven the Texas Panhandle economy. There have been a few changes in some of our historically driven markets in the last couple of years. In 2010 the number of drillings rigs in the Panhandle consistently rose. The average number of drilling rigs in the Panhandle for the year was at 70, while the number of drilling rigs currently operational in the month of March 2011 is at 72 and ending at 75 at the end of April 2011. This rise in drilling rigs is directly correlated with the rising cost in the price of oil per barrel.

The price of oil has been increasing and this has had a profound effect on the economy in the area. The price per barrel of oil at the beginning of 2009 was \$38.11. This price continued to increase throughout the year and ended the year at \$65.00 per barrel of oil. Throughout 2010 the price continued steadily increased. Oil prices remained strong in 2010 and averaged at \$86.57 a barrel. Throughout the year in 2011 it eventually increased, ending at \$104.23 in April of 2011.

The price of natural gas has fluctuated quite a bit in the last two years. At the beginning of 2009 the price of natural gas was \$4.33 per MMBTU and by the end of 2009 the price dropped slightly to \$4.10 per MMBTU. The average for 2010 was at \$4.56 per MMBTU, while gas prices have slightly decreased to \$4.21 by April 2011.

The price per bushel of wheat has also fluctuated a great deal during the past 4 years. At the end of 2007 the price per bushel of wheat was \$9.03, and dropped to \$4.83 by the end of 2008. In 2009 the price per bushel of wheat continued to decline and ended the year at \$4.46. As of April 2011, wheat per bushel has increased to \$7.71.

The price of fed cattle per CWT The price of fed cattle per CWT in April 2011 was 104.23, which was a significant gain from the closing price of \$84.00 at year end 2009 and \$90.00 at year end 2010.

PRPC promotes the commercialization and deployment of technology in the region by continually informing business groups of the opportunities in technology transfer at the Pantex Plant, Sandia National Lab, Kirtland AFB (Phillips Lab), and White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. The wind industry is also beginning to bring more high tech business in the region.

A Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee was formed in order to examine the issues of solid waste management. They make recommendations based on their findings for future actions. A Comprehensive Regional Plan was written in 2000 to provide the best approach to, or give direction to, the solid waste problem in the region.

The issue of solid waste management was once a threat to economic development in the Texas Panhandle, but now it has become more of an opportunity. The Regional Plan that was established along with new government regulations set forth strict guidelines for cities and counties to follow when setting up landfills and disposing of solid waste. As these guidelines have been followed the issue of recycling has become a priority for much of the Panhandle.

The Panhandle Tourism Marketing Council (PTMC) was formed in 1993 to promote the regions 26 counties of the Panhandle and surrounding areas attractiveness to tourists. Tourism's value to this region is recognized by the Panhandle communities as a key opportunity to increase sales tax revenue and increase awareness to the area. The PTMC publicizes the Alibates National Monument, Lake Meredith, Palo Duro Canyon, the American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum, and the famous Red River Wars to attract people living outside of the region to visit.

Other areas of economic opportunity are:

- Continued marketing of the areas pig and dairy farmers;
- Relatively low unemployment in the region;
- Rise in the price of commodities;
- Continued growth in building permits;
- Increased retail sales; and
- Wind energy marketing.

A concern to Panhandles residents is the possibility of groundwater contamination. The Ogallala Aquifer is the major source of municipal and irrigation water for the region and pollution from underground gasoline storage tanks, hazardous waste, and abandoned oil and gas wells is a potential danger. The pollution of groundwater is a particularly dangerous situation because once the pollutants are in the aquifer they can travel for hundreds of miles, and capturing these pollutants in an aquifer is difficult or impossible with the current technology.

The Wellhead Protection Program is designed to encourage local communities to institute groundwater management controls to protect drinking water supplies and is supported by the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission and the Texas Department of Health. There is assistance provided to any interested communities in well-data collection, the inventory of potential contamination sources, and in the improvement of better management practices regarding municipal groundwater supplies.

Other areas that threaten the economy of the region are:

- Availability of water;
- Low stock market returns;
- Higher inflation than the national average;
- Availability of consumer financing for small businesses;
- High gasoline and utility costs;
- Threat of layoffs by large firms;
- Drought during the crop growing season;
- Adequate available housing in rural areas; and
- State and federal political policies.

Partners for Economic Development

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission participates in a number of capacities: Economic Development, Community Development, Aging, Criminal Justice, Workforce Development, Dispute Resolution, Emergency Communications, Solid Waste Management, Water Planning, Regional Services, and Special Projects.

The Planning Commission is directly or indirectly tied to thirteen standing committees. The committees are:

- Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Regional Criminal Justice Advisory Committee
- Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council
- Regional Community Development Review Committee
- Panhandle Rural Planning Organization Advisory Committee
- Rolling Plains Organization for Rural Transportation Advisory Committee
- Workforce Development Board
- Workforce Development Governing Body
- Dispute Resolution Advisory Board
- Regional 9-1-1 Network Advisory Board
- Panhandle Water Planning Group
- Regional Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee
- Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation, Board of Directors

PRPC, with the assistance of local banks, operates the Amarillo MSA Micro-Loan Program. This program supplies small businesses with increased access to capital in Potter County (an economically distressed county) and Randall County. The program is aimed at the low to moderate-income individuals of the Potter and Randall County area who require business financing. To date, 29 loans have been funded for this program, totaling \$469,698 in total capital investments. Additionally, 45 jobs are estimated to have been created.

The PRPC was approved for a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant that set up the Rural Micro-Loan Program on October 1, 2001 to help the rural counties of our region. This program is similar in nature to the program used for Potter and Randall Counties except its focus is on jobs created/retained rather than the low-to-moderate income requirements. Since this program was implemented there have been 24 loans funded by the PRPC. To date the loan amount for this program totals \$466,268 and has created an estimated 34 new jobs.

Resources for Economic Development

Flexible financing is needed in the region to assist with businesses opportunities. Reasonable termed financing is needed for small businesses that must deal with cash flow problems, new accounts, increased demand, and expansion space to name a few. A variety of different programs have been introduced to the communities that are trying to deal with assisting small businesses. These programs include: EDA grant programs, Texas Capital Fund projects,

USDA Rural Development programs, and others. Communities can effectively deal with many of the challenges of the region by working with these programs.

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission's track record is excellent with assisting business and financial providers with pertinent information and the necessary tools to make a project work. The following programs and activities are coordinated for district/county improvement and development throughout the Panhandle:

- PRPC Rural Micro Loan Program
- Amarillo MSA Micro Loan Program
- Workforce Development
- Texas Department of Economic Development
 - Rural Loan Fund
 - Export Guaranteed Loan Program
 - Enterprise Zone Program
 - Quality Texas Program
 - Texas Capital Fund
- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
 - Community Development Block Grant Program
- Texas Department of Agriculture
 - Agricultural Finance Authority
 - Linked Deposit Program
 - Diversification Matching Grant Program
 - Micro Enterprise Program
- Small Business Administration
 - 504 Loan Program
 - Guaranteed Loan Program
 - SCORE and ACE
- Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation
- Rural Economic and Community Development Service
 - Business and Industry Program
 - Industrial Development Grant Program
 - Intermediary Relending Program
 - Community Facilities Program
- Panhandle Small Business Development Center
- Panhandle Tourism Marketing Council
- Panhandle International Business Forum
- Area Chambers of Commerce
- Area industrial development groups
- Area banks
- Amarillo Economic Development Corporation
- Booker E. D. C.
- Borger E. D. C.
- Bovina E. D. C.
- Canadian E. D. C.
- Canyon E. D. C.

- Childress E. D. C.
- Clarendon E. D. C.
- Dalhart E. D. C.
- Dumas E. D. C.
- Friona E. D. C.
- Fritch E. D. C.
- Groom E. D. C.
- Gruver E. D. C.
- Hereford E. D. C.
- McLean E. D. C.
- Memphis E. D. C.
- Miami E. D. C.
- Pampa E. D. C.
- Panhandle E. D. C.
- Perryton E. D. C.
- Quitaque E. D. C.
- Shamrock E. D. C.
- Spearman E. D. C.
- Stinnett E. D. C.
- Stratford E. D. C.
- Turkey E. D. C.
- Wellington E. D. C.
- Wheeler E. D. C.
- White Deer E. D. C.
- Texas A & M Extension Centers
- Institutions of higher learning
 - West Texas A & M University
 - Amarillo College
 - Frank Phillips College
 - Clarendon College
- Excel Energy
- West Texas Utilities
- Texas – New Mexico Power Company
- High Ground of Texas Program
- Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center
- Sherman County Development Committee

A vital part of economic development is “Networking.” The District staff coordinates and works with agencies in the region on accessing the programs available for economic development. The staff has been, and continues to be, extremely successful in their efforts. Several networking workshops were sponsored in order to address economic development incentives, government contracting, and SBA small business programs.

One program that The PRPC consistently networks with is the Texas Panhandle Regional Development Corporation (TPRDC). The U.S. Small Business Administration established the TPRDC in 1982 as a Certified Development Company. The creation of the TPRDC was to

operate the SBA 504 Loan Program to primarily service the 26 counties of the region. The PRPC had a profound effect on the creation and substantial growth of the program, and it currently operates in conjunction with the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation. The TPRDC is one of the PRPC's leading partners in economic growth for the region. The TPRDC Board of Directors acts as a conduit in oversight of the Micro Loan programs that the PRPC administers. This program offers great economic development opportunities to the general public in the Texas Panhandle.

The PRPC is also actively involved with the High Ground of Texas. The High Ground of Texas is a coalition of communities and organizations that cooperatively market the Panhandle, South Plains, and Permian Basin. The main purpose of the High Ground is to create jobs and increase the tax base of the region. The organization continually has a definite presence on the regional, state, and national level with an emphasis on marketing the region to prospective new industry, networking, and economic development. The High Ground is currently made up of over 75 members with development interests in the region. Membership includes cities ranging in population from 250,000 to less than 5,000, as well as partnering organizations like the PRPC.

The district uses the PRPC Board of Directors as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee. Also, the board members approve the design and development of the CEDS package. Assisting the PRPC Board of Directors is the Economic Development Advisory Committee. They help with increasing public and private participation in the economic development program.

The CEDS is put together by PRPC with vital input from the staff, community leaders in the district, the Board of Directors, and the CEDS Advisory Committee. The staff and local elements of government start the program strategies, goals, and objectives. Then they are talked about and later approved by the CEDS Advisory Committee and the PRPC Board of Directors. The county members of the PRPC have agreed with the district's CEDS. Contacts at the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission for economic development activities and programs are:

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Vision Statement

The objectives of the PRPC are to encourage and allow local units of government to join and cooperate with one another. This allows for the improvement of health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of the Panhandle by planning for the future in an efficient manner eliminating duplication. The Planning Commission is an organization of, by, and for local

governments. It is used in creating the concept that local governments acting cooperatively, rather than alone, can accomplish more.

The main objective of the PRPC economic development programs is to support the formulation and implementation of economic development planning programs. These programs are designed to create or retain permanent jobs and income, with the focus primarily upon the unemployed, underemployed, low per-capita income persons, and otherwise distressed counties of the Panhandle.

The heart of our economic development initiatives is providing long-term economic development benefits through sustainable growth. As an outcome of their operations the EDA grant programs, the Amarillo MSA Micro-Loan Program, and the Rural Micro-Loan Program, strive to provide long-term economic development benefits for the Panhandle.

Issues and Needs of the Counties in the Texas Panhandle

In extensive meetings that were held with each of the 26, distressed and non-distressed, counties of the Panhandle the top five issues, problems, concerns, and needs were identified and prioritized. Additionally, surveys were issued to each county to review, complete, and provide additional comment on some of the issues facing their specific area. These needs are prioritized as follows:

Distressed Counties

Armstrong County

1. Attract businesses
2. Upgrade and expand sewer system
3. Expand water system
4. County and city square beautification
5. Increase night security patrols

Briscoe County

1. Economic diversification and development
2. Housing
3. Improvement of infrastructure
4. Local medical service
5. Attract and expand business in the area

Castro County

1. Business promotion – economic development
2. Medical expansion
3. Small business retention
4. Water conservation/quality rights
5. Infrastructure improvements

Childress County

1. Attract and expand business in the area

2. Affordable housing
3. Local medical services
4. Improvements of infrastructure
5. Park improvements

Collingsworth County

1. Affordable housing
2. Value added agriculture expansion
3. Park improvements
4. Job training programs
5. Expansion of infrastructure

Dallam County

1. Affordable housing
2. Expansion of infrastructure
3. Access to higher education
4. Job training
5. Radio communication

Deaf Smith County

1. Water availability
1. Amarillo College Hereford campus expansion
2. Infrastructure improvements (streets/roads & sewer systems)
3. Business expansion/new business attraction – Value added agriculture expansion
4. Recruit/retain/train/work ethic for employees of existing businesses

Donley County

1. Value added agriculture expansion
2. Economic diversification and development
3. Attract and expand business in the area
4. Improvements of infrastructure
5. Expansion of infrastructure

Gray County

1. Expansion of infrastructure
2. Job training programs
3. Economic diversification and development
4. Attract and expand businesses in the area.
5. Affordable housing

Hall County

1. Youth center
2. Attract and expand businesses in the area
3. Local medical services
4. Job training programs
5. Access to higher education

Hemphill County

1. Affordable housing
2. Expansion of infrastructure
3. Economic diversification and development
4. Improvements in infrastructure
5. Attract and expand business in the area

Hutchinson County

1. Improvements in infrastructure
2. Expansion of infrastructure
3. Maintaining public funding for college
4. Economic diversification and development
5. Attract and expand businesses in the area

Lipscomb County

1. Affordable housing
2. Value added agriculture expansion
3. Economic diversification and development
4. Attract and expand businesses in the area
5. Improvements of infrastructure

Moore County

1. Economic diversity
2. Transportation issues
3. Infrastructure improvements/expansion
4. Water improvements
5. Housing

Ochiltree County

1. Affordable housing
2. Improvements of infrastructure
3. Expansion of infrastructure
4. Attract and expand business
5. Economic diversification and development

Oldham County

1. Economic diversification and development
2. Attract and expand businesses in the area
3. Local medical services

4. Value added agriculture expansion
5. Affordable housing

Parmer County

1. Improvements of Infrastructure
2. Affordable Housing
3. Economic diversification and development
4. Park improvement
5. Job training

Potter County

1. Water quality and conservation
2. Economic development
3. Implement quality education system
4. Access to low-interest money
5. Public infrastructure improvements

Sherman County

1. Local medical services
2. Attract and expand businesses in the area
3. Expansion of infrastructure
4. Improvements of infrastructure
5. Affordable housing

Swisher County

1. Affordable Housing
2. Value added agriculture expansion
3. Economic diversification and development
4. Attract and expand businesses in the area
5. Improvements of infrastructure

Wheeler County

1. Affordable housing
2. Improvements of infrastructure
3. Affordable housing
4. Value added agriculture expansion
5. Attract and expand businesses in the area

Non-Distressed Counties

Carson County

1. Attract and expand business in the area
2. Value added agriculture expansion
3. Economic diversification and development
4. Improvements of infrastructure
5. Local medical services

Hansford County

1. Local medical services
2. Attract and expand businesses in the area
3. Improvements of infrastructure
4. Value added agriculture expansion
5. Economic diversification and development

Hartley County

1. Youth activities; community building
2. Water
3. Commodity prices
4. Housing needs
5. Infrastructure improvements

Randall County

1. Water supply
2. Planned growth and county zoning
3. Quality education
4. Economic development
5. Quality health care

Roberts County

1. Affordable housing
2. Local medical services
3. Economic diversification & development
4. Attract & expand area business
5. Expansion & improvement of infrastructure

Legislative Recommendation

As the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), along with representatives from each of the Distressed and Non-Distressed Counties has reviewed this document and discussed their priorities as listed above, there seems to be some consistent concerns in the region that the group wants to discuss individually. Hopefully, by discussing these issues individually the committee hopes to make a direct legislative recommendation.

Upon discussion from a regional basis, the EDAC feels that two of the main consistent concerns within the region are in the dilapidation of aging infrastructure and the inability to supply affordable housing for their citizens. The EDAC feels that these two issues are directly correlated with economic and community development within the region. The main intent of

discussing these separate items is to assist in the formulation of policy on the state and federal level through a regional effort. By providing ongoing and increased support to rural communities in the development and revitalization of aging infrastructure and the creation of affordable housing in the region, the EDAC feels this will have a profoundly positive effect on their constituency.

The committee is concerned with water and sewer infrastructure in the region. Most of this aging infrastructure in the Texas Panhandle was built in the 1920's as a way of facilitating growth in the region. As time has passed, cities and counties have strived to maintain the infrastructure in their respective districts, however, the only grant funds available that provide direct assistance to these projects are Community Development Block Grant Funds as apportioned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Nonetheless, these funds have become increasingly competitive, decreasingly available, and are becoming more difficult to acquire. The EDAC proposes that these funds become more plentiful and accessible in order to promote economic growth and community development within the region.

Rural counties and cities within the Texas Panhandle are also facing a critical housing shortage for middle class workers within their respective municipalities. Companies, in some instances, are willing to relocate to the area because of regional marketing incentives, skilled labor forces, and abundant resources but can't because of lack of housing for the companies prospective employees. One of the main concerns is public assistance through the Texas Department of Rural Affairs, which has housing measures in place, but generally provides housing assistance for very low individuals. Once the low individuals have lifted themselves out of poverty there are no housing measures in place to supply the demand, which creates a difficult situation for employers in the region who are considering expanding their operations to accommodate successful growth. Most city and county officials, along with The PRPC, are looking at ways to create affordable housing for the constituency to promote community development. This has a direct impact on economic growth because it hinders rural America's attempt at being solvent and economically fortified. The EDAC proposes that the federal and state legislatures promulgate policies that directly contribute to fair and affordable housing in this region.

The EDAC, along with representatives from each of the Distressed and Non-Distressed Counties, feel that these apparent discrepancies in the region need to be addressed by legislative action. Accordingly, The PRPC hopes that by serving as the Economic Development District we can assist in these inquiries.

The legislative recommendations of the Economic Development Advisory Committee are as follows:

1. Broaden the parameters of the U.S. Department of Agriculture programs to allow truly moderately income families to be accommodated with housing assistance in an effort to enable rural communities to meet the housing needs associated with economic development.

2. Increase rural funding assistance for infrastructure improvement through programs like the Community Development Block Grant program to enable communities to update aging infrastructure to accommodate population and business growth.

ACTION PLAN

Work Elements

Some work elements used in performing the task of benefiting distressed areas are:

- Implementing the CEDS through networking with economic development organizations and other groups
- Provide training and workshops to local governments, businesses, and economic development groups
- Perform activities necessary to maintain the economic development process
- Increase economic development opportunities for severely distressed communities by providing staff support to develop and monitor projects and programs

Prioritization of Programs and Activities

Economic Development District Core Initiatives

To respond to inquiries from member counties and cities for economic development related projects – As in the past, the staff will respond to inquiries, provide technical assistance, and submit applications for economic development related projects. The PRPC staff will also continue to focus on working with the distressed counties in the Panhandle, as defined by EDA. The staff utilizes the following programs to help accomplish this: numerous EDA grant programs, Texas Capital Fund programs, USDA rural programs, Texas Department of Economic Development (TDED) programs, etc.

Amarillo MSA Micro-Loan Program

To maintain the Amarillo MSA Micro-Loan Program and to locate viable projects in Potter and Randall Counties for the expansion of the program – Staff will respond to inquiries, prepare loan applications, service all loans, and provided assistance. Staff will continue to aim for the low-to-moderate income individuals for use of this loan program for Potter and Randall Counties.

PRPC Rural Micro-Loan Program

To maintain the Rural Micro-Loan Program and to locate viable projects in the 24 outlying counties for the expansion of the program – Staff will respond to inquiries, prepare loan applications, service all loans, and provided assistance. The program priority is to create jobs through this loan program in our rural areas.

Regional Marketing

To continue to assist the High Ground of Texas with its regional marketing program – The High Ground of Texas is a regional economic development marketing partnership of Texas Panhandle and the South Plains communities and businesses. Staff will continue to support and contribute in activities that help in the marketing of the region and in attracting business and service industries that are necessary for an expanded economy.

Economic Development Technical Assistance for Businesses

To broaden the scope of assistance to businesses in the area – Staff will continue to assist with loan packaging, provide training, and help with other economic development assistance on a need-to-need basis. The continuation of referrals for appropriate funding and other types of business assistance, i.e., Small Business Development Center, SCORE, SBA loan programs, The Entrepreneurial Alliance.

Economic Development Technical Assistance for Cities & Counties

To aide the counties and cities of the Texas Panhandle with their respective economic development efforts – Staff will continue to analyze all data required to prepare a continuing economic development program and coordinate local efforts. Staff will continue to commence with studies of resources, labor force and income data, census information, economic development activities, and/or other topics to provide the needed data and analysis. We will identify federal and state assistance programs that aid in carrying out the local development program.

Economic Development Training

To sponsor, or conduct, workshops for county and city officials along with others interested in economic development – Continued invitation to area businesses, community-based organizations, professionals in economic development, and other areas of interest to participate in regional seminars/workshops. Bi-monthly business luncheons will continue for small, minority, and women-owned businesses focusing on contracting opportunities for these businesses. As in the past, staff will participate and attend workshops and seminars on economic development issues and opportunities. Staff will continue to work with the West Texas A&M University Small Business Development Center on education programs for small businesses. The staff also plans to attend and actively engage in Economic Development Administration training and Texas Capital Fund seminars.

Planning and Management

To coordinate the work of special-purpose groups – Continue to host and conduct meetings, guide the discussion, and help with the decision-making at these meetings. Every quarter the Economic Development Advisory Committee meets, and at these meetings each member makes us, along with the other committee members, aware of the economic condition of their respective communities/counties. This process also helps with the development of the CEDS in future years.

Tourism Promotion

To assist with the tourism industry in the Panhandle – Staff will help local communities/counties explore new ways of attracting visitors from outside the area. We will continue to be present at meetings held by the Panhandle Tourism Marketing Council.

Financing

To identify sources of financial assistance for local business, counties, and cities – Staff will research topics to discover the specific financing needs for businesses in our area, counties, and member cities. We will continue to create and submit these financial packages to the proper agencies. Staff will continue to write Texas Capital Fund and Economic Development Administration grant applications.

Natural Resources

To preserve the natural resources that the Panhandle possesses – Staff will continue to encourage the appropriate development, conservation, and economic use of all available resources in the region. Furthermore, the staff will actively work with each groundwater district in the region to implement strategies that are beneficial to the region.

Implementation Schedule

The following is the strategy and implementation schedule for the activities mentioned in the above Action Plan:

EVALUATION

Performance Measures

As a part of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission's Strategic Work Program and Budget, the Economic Development Department had to highlight their principle performance measures for the year. This included the programs involved with the Economic Development Administration. The measures were reviewed and approved by the PRPC Board of Directors. The following is a list of the performance measures broken down by the different programs in the department:

Economic Development Administration Programs

- submission of 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update,
- conduct a minimum of four CEDS Committee meetings,
- provision of two workshops on regional economic development issues,
- participate in the High Ground Program, the Panhandle Tourism Marketing Council, and the Panhandle Area Chamber of Executives Association, and
- submission of two progress reports.

APPENDIX A
PRPC Board of Directors

**2010 - 2011 PANHANDLE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

NAME	SEX	RACE	COUNTY RESIDENCE	TERM EXPIRES September 30
<i>Elected Public Officials</i>				
Don Allred	M	Anglo	Oldham County	2012
Debra McCartt* (Vice Chairman)	F	Anglo	Randall-Potter County	2011
Vernon Cook	M	Anglo	Roberts County	2012
Brian Gillispie	M	Anglo	Hansford County	2013
Jay Mayden***	M	Anglo	Childress County	2012
Ronnie Gordon	M	Anglo	Hartley County	2013
Jeff Brain	M	Anglo	Hutchinson County	2011
Jack Hall	M	Anglo	Donley County	2011
Ernie Houdashell	M	Anglo	Randall County	2012
Tom Simons	M	Anglo	Deaf Smith County	2013
John James	M	Anglo	Collingsworth County	2013
Wayne Nance* (Chairman)	M	Anglo	Briscoe County	2012
Arthur Ware	M	Anglo	Potter County	2013
Harold Keeter* (Treasurer)	M	Anglo	Swisher County	2011
Jed Welch	M	Anglo	Randall County	2011
<i>Minority Elected Officials</i>				
Cleo Castro	M	Hispanic	Moore County	2013
Juan Cantu	M	Hispanic	Lipscomb County	2013
<i>Minority Representatives*</i>				
Harvey Perez	M	Hispanic	Castro County	2011
Saul Hernandez***	M	Hispanic	Potter County	2012
Pete DeSantiago	M	Hispanic	Ochiltree County	2013
Tom Velasquez	M	Hispanic	Wheeler County	2013
<i>Special District Representatives</i>				
Bob Gober	M	Anglo	Hemphill County	2013
Tom Bailliff	M	Anglo	Childress County	2012
** Officers				
*** Executive Committee				

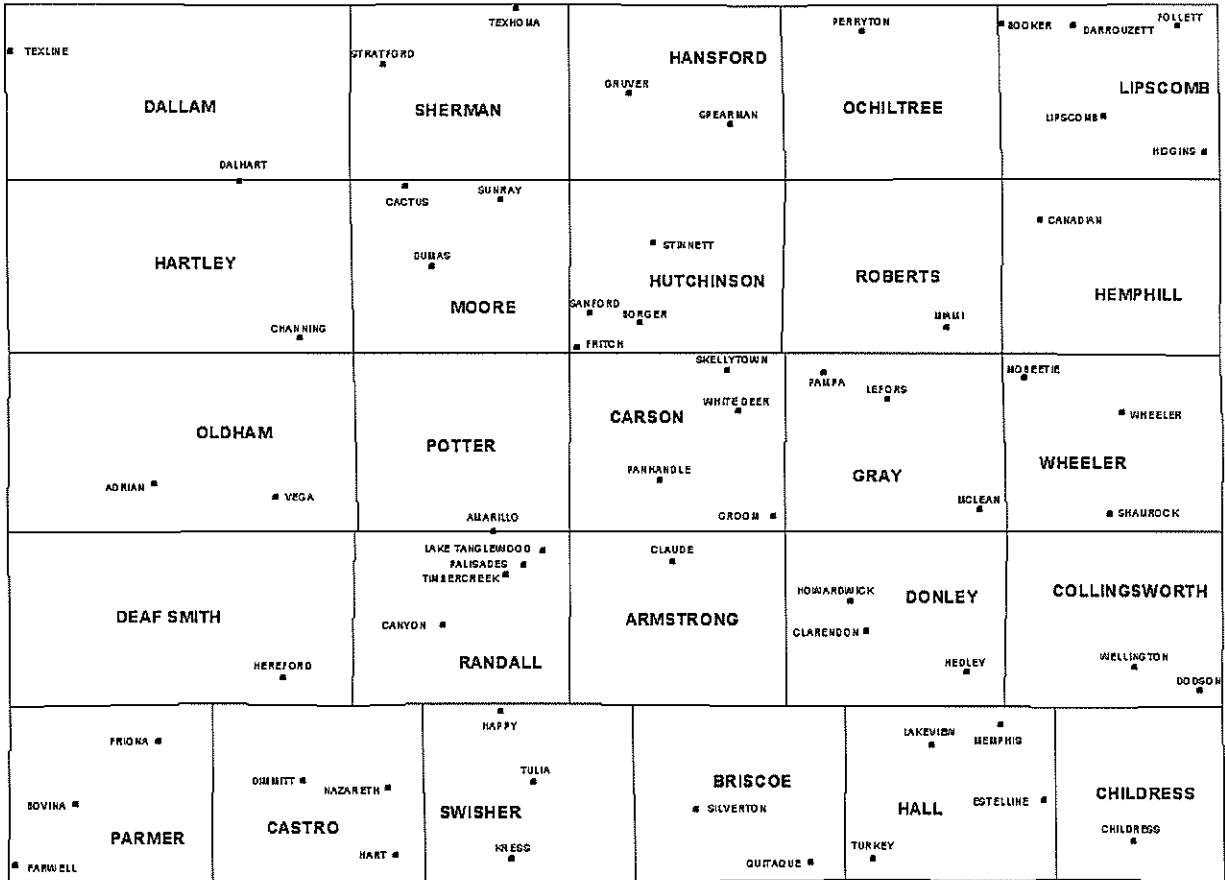
APPENDIX B
PRPC CEDS Advisory Committee

2011 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NAME	SEX	RACE	COUNTY	TERM EXPIRES
Shelia Quirk	F	Anglo	Deaf Smith County	2013
Randy Stark	M	Anglo	Briscoe County	2009
Jason Harrison	M	Anglo	Potter County	2013
Linda Drake	F	Anglo	Oldham County	2013
Russell Graves	M	Anglo	Childress County	2013
Woodrow Richardson	M	Black	Hall County	2010
Chris Alexander	F	Anglo	Parmer County	2010
Sam Cartwright	M	Anglo	Moore County	2010
Beverly Benton	F	Anglo	Hutchinson County	2011
Judy Burlin	F	Anglo	Donley	2011
Shelly Bogart	F	Anglo	Swisher County	2013
Kristine Olsen	F	Anglo	Dallam County	2013
Kathy Allen	F	Anglo	Sherman County	2013
Sheryl Hardy	F	Anglo	Ochiltree County	2013
Don Kerns	M	Anglo	Lipscomb County	2013
Tamera Julian	F	Anglo	Hemphill County	2013
Clay Rice	M	Anglo	Gray County	2013
David Rushing	M	Anglo	Wheeler County	2013
Sarah Elizabeth Kendall	F	Anglo	Armstrong County	2013
Doris Stallings	F	Anglo	Collingsworth County	2013

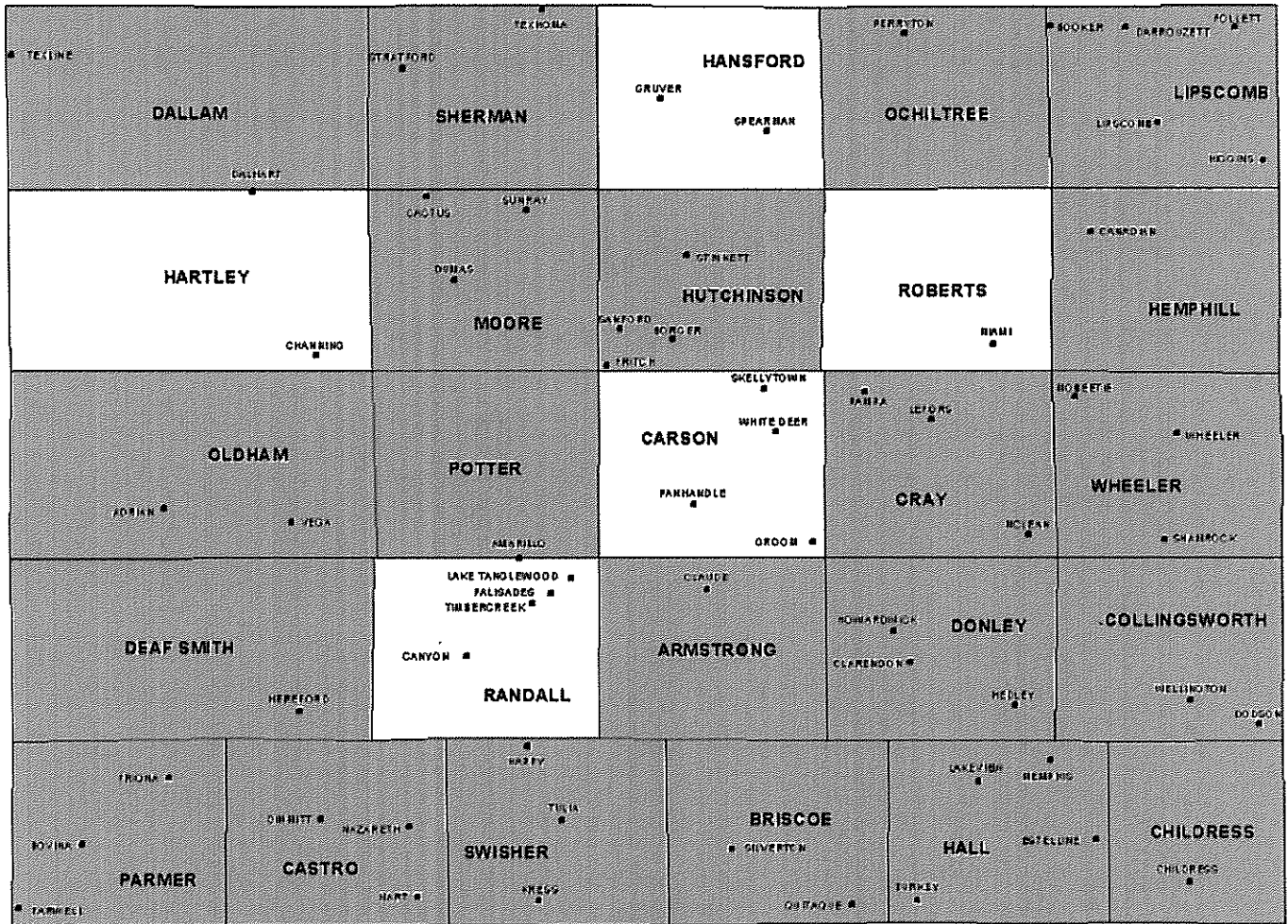
APPENDIX C
Unemployment Rate Table & Map

2011 Texas Panhandle Distressed Counties (Unemployment)



APPENDIX D
Per-Capita Income Table & Map

2011 Texas Panhandle Distressed Counties (Per-Capita Income)



APPENDIX E
Map of the Distressed Counties in the Texas Panhandle

2011 Texas Panhandle Distressed Counties

(Per-Capita Income & Unemployment)

