

2025

Strategic Plan



Howe
Economic
Development
Corporation

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Acknowledgements

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First and foremost, we extend our deepest thanks to the residents, business owners, and community leaders who participated in surveys, focus groups, and public meetings. Your input and passion for the city have been invaluable in shaping the vision and priorities of this plan.

Special acknowledgment goes to the City Council, Howe Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) and the City Administrator's Office for their leadership and support throughout this initiative. Your dedication to fostering economic growth and enhancing the quality of life in our community has been inspiring.

Prepared for:
City of Howe

and

Howe Economic
Development Corporation

Prepared by:
Civic Connection Group

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Introduction

This Strategic plan presents a visionary roadmap for shaping the future of Howe, Texas, as a thriving hub of economic growth, community development, and enhanced quality of life. Rooted in the town's historical strengths, strong sense of community, and strategic location within the dynamic and fast-growing North Texas region, this plan lays the foundation for a prosperous future. By identifying clear, actionable goals and embracing collaborative, forward-thinking strategies, Howe is poised to attract new opportunities while preserving its unique small-town charm. This plan prioritizes fostering a vibrant local economy, upgrading infrastructure, enhancing educational pathways, and cultivating an environment where both residents and businesses can flourish. With input from key stakeholders, this strategic vision reflects the shared aspirations of the community and serves as a guide to ensure economic growth and success for Howe.





Howe's Strategic Compass

➔ Vision

Howe, Texas seeks sustainable growth that protects our natural and historic resources while preserving our values, qualities, and culture.

➔ Mission

The Howe EDC promotes economic strength for the City of Howe by expanding and diversifying the local tax base through business development and community partnerships, meanwhile enhancing the sense of community and preserving the integrity of our heritage.



Planning for Howe's Future

➔ Anticipating Regional Growth Opportunities

- Howe stands at the crossroads of progress, positioned between the booming development to the north in Sherman and the expanding Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex to the south. Proactive strategic planning will enable the community to harness these opportunities and shape its growth intentionally.

➔ Preparing for Population Migration

- According to NCESC.com, "The population shift in the southern U.S. is putting the Dallas region on track to become the third-largest metropolitan area in the country, surpassing Chicago."

➔ Building a Vibrant Community

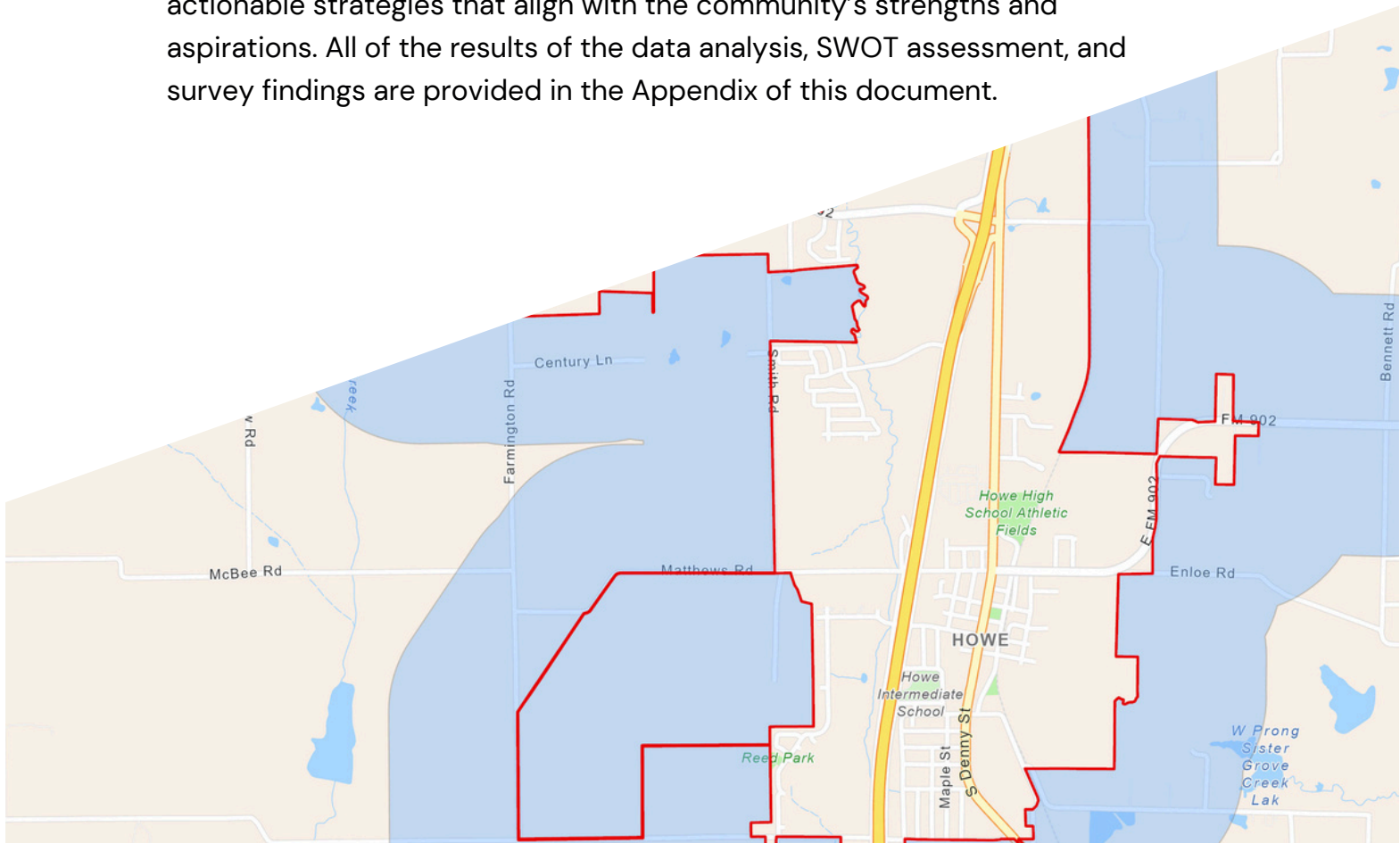
- By strategically planning for infrastructure, housing, and economic development, Howe is creating an environment that attracts families, businesses, and investment while preserving its small-town charm and sense of community.

Planning Process



Data Analysis

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the community's economic landscape, a thorough data analysis of key demographic trends, business activity, and market conditions was analyzed. The consultant also utilized information using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) framework. This process involved identifying the community's unique assets, such as a quaint downtown and strategic location, that can be leveraged for growth. Weaknesses, such as gaps in infrastructure, workforce challenges, and limited access to capital, were also evaluated to address barriers to economic success. Opportunities, including emerging industries, potential partnerships, and untapped markets, were explored to position the community for future growth. Additionally, external threats, such as regional competition, economic downturns, and regulatory challenges were assessed to develop strategies. The planning process provided a data-driven foundation for setting priorities and crafting actionable strategies that align with the community's strengths and aspirations. All of the results of the data analysis, SWOT assessment, and survey findings are provided in the Appendix of this document.



Stakeholder Engagement

➔ Details

The consultant conducted workshops, meetings, and surveys as an essential part of developing Howe's strategic plan to ensure it reflects the community's unique needs, priorities, and aspirations. By gathering input from a diverse range of stakeholders, these efforts created a foundation for a reality-based plan grounded in the city's current opportunities and challenges. The process was designed to establish clear objectives that are both actionable and achievable, providing a roadmap that the community can confidently pursue. Most importantly, this is Howe's plan—it belongs to the people of the community, and their active participation was vital to ensure it aligns with their vision for the future.

➔ Workshops and meetings

➔ Questionnaire & SWOT analysis

➔ Interactive polling

➔ Small group exercises



October 29, 2024 workshop

Summary of Engagement Activities

➡ Questionnaire/SWOT Analysis

To initiate the strategic planning process and assess the current state of Howe, the consultant distributed a set of eleven carefully crafted questions to board members and city leaders. These questions were designed to gather valuable insights into the community's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and priorities. The full list of questions, along with the detailed responses provided by participants, can be found in the Appendix of this report. Their thoughtful and candid feedback has laid the foundation for discussions and strategic recommendations.

Some of the most noteworthy findings from the responses include the following: Participants highlighted the town's strong school system, ideal location, and tight-knit community as key strengths. However, they also identified critical weaknesses, including the lack of a grocery store, infrastructure concerns, and limited job opportunities. Looking ahead, revitalizing downtown, supporting local businesses, and leveraging Howe's proximity to Sherman were seen as major opportunities for growth. At the same time, residents expressed concerns about the potential loss of Howe's small-town identity due to uncontrolled development. As a top priority, the community emphasized the need for infrastructure improvements while strategically attracting both national retailers along Highway 75 and small independent businesses downtown.

These insights will help guide the city's planning efforts and future investments.

Summary of Engagement Activities

➔ Interactive Polling

The following results provide a snapshot of the collective vision and values of the Howe community gathered during the planning process. Participants shared their thoughts on what makes Howe unique, what the town is most passionate about, and how it can position itself for future success. Through interactive discussions, key themes emerged, including a deep pride in Howe's small-town charm, strong community connections, and commitment to preserving its heritage while embracing growth. Additionally, participants identified potential economic opportunities and outlined aspirations for Howe to become a leader in areas such as community involvement, education, and strategic development. These insights serve as a foundation for shaping Howe's strategic plan and guiding its path forward.

What Howe is Deeply Passionate About:

- Maintaining its small-town feel while fostering growth.
- Supporting youth sports and school programs.
- Emphasizing family-centric values and strong community connections.
- Preserving its heritage while welcoming new citizens.

What Howe Can Be the Best At:

- Community involvement and maintaining its small-town charm.
- Balancing growth while preserving Howe's identity and quality of life.
- Encouraging a healthy lifestyle by providing access to outdoor recreational spaces.
- Demonstrating leadership in education and historical appreciation.
- Attracting small-to-mid-size service companies and creating welcoming spaces (e.g., downtown).

Economic Drivers:

- Blend of small businesses, manufacturing, and retail to leverage its proximity to Highway 75.
- Family-owned generational companies and agriculture remain significant.
- Strategic mix of national and local businesses, with emphasis on light industrial and specialty shops.

Howe's Why

➔ Rooted in Community

When the stakeholders of Howe, Texas, were asked to share three words that come to mind when thinking about their community, the most common responses were community, home, family, pride, and friendly. These words reflect a deep sense of connection and belonging that defines life in Howe. Residents see their town as a welcoming place where relationships thrive, families grow, and shared pride in their heritage and future unites them. This strong foundation of community values serves as "Howe's Why" — the heart of what makes Howe a special place to call home.



Howe's Why

➡ Tagline as a Strategic Asset

A well-crafted tagline is a powerful branding tool that captures a community's identity, reflecting its values and vision while resonating with both residents and visitors. It also serves as a strategic marketing asset, helping to attract new businesses, families, and tourists by highlighting what makes the community unique. During the interactive polling session (see page 11), "Howe: The Heart of North Texas" emerged as the preferred tagline, effectively signifying Howe's central location, strong community spirit, and future potential.

This tagline highlights Howe's central role as a connected, vibrant, and welcoming community in the region. It could be used across various marketing tools, such as on signage, social media, and promotional materials to showcase Howe as a place where relationships, opportunities, and pride come together. It could anchor a branding campaign emphasizing Howe's ideal location, strong community spirit, and family-friendly atmosphere, appealing to potential residents, businesses, and visitors. Whether displayed on banners at local events or featured on a city website, the tagline reinforces Howe's identity as the beating heart of North Texas.



Howe's Why

➡ Howe: The Heart of North Texas

Below are three initiatives for the HEDC to leverage the tagline "Howe: The Heart of North Texas" to develop a strong branding and marketing campaign aimed at attracting visitors and businesses to the city

1. "Heart of North Texas" Events Series

Support city events that highlight Howe's community spirit, central location, and family-friendly atmosphere. These events would engage residents and attract visitors, reinforcing the tagline's message.

Event Ideas:

- "Heart & Soul Festival" – A community celebration with entertainment, food, and activities that showcase Howe's culture.
- "Heart Walk of Howe" – A fitness-focused event, such as a charity walk or run, that brings the community together and emphasizes Howe's commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- Incorporating a graphic heart as a recurring visual element at any of the City's events.

2. "At the Heart of Opportunity" Business Campaign

Promote Howe as a desirable location for business growth by using the tagline to attract entrepreneurs and investment.

Initiatives:

- Marketing Campaign – Develop messaging that highlights Howe's potential for business success.
- Business Incentive Program – Offer support or incentives for businesses that align with community goals.
- Showcasing Success – Highlight local business achievements to build excitement and reinforce the tagline on the HEDC website and social media.

3. "Heart of Connection" Community Branding Campaign

Use the tagline as a foundation for building a unified community identity that resonates with residents, businesses, and visitors.

Key Efforts:

- Citywide Branding – Incorporate the heart graphic into signage and public spaces to create a consistent visual identity.
- Social Media Engagement – Encourage the community to share their pride in Howe through online platforms using the hashtag #howetheheartofnorthtexas.
- Community Partnerships – Collaborate with local organizations to promote the tagline and strengthen community ties.

Strategic Priorities

This strategic plan outlines five key priorities that will guide Howe's economic growth over the next five years.



Economic Development
and Business Attraction



Infrastructure
Improvement



Quality of Life



Education and
Workforce



Proactive Growth

Economic Development and Business Attraction

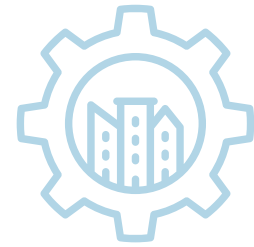


Goal: Attract and retain businesses that align with Howe's values and complement the region's economic growth.

Key Initiatives:

1. Support Small Businesses and Downtown Revitalization
 - Develop and implement incentive programs (e.g. grants) tailored for small businesses.
 - Promote downtown revitalization by:
 - Investing in beautification efforts.
 - Purchasing land or working with land owners to prioritize key areas for growth.
2. Targeted Industry Development
 - Focus on attracting light industrial businesses that add jobs and sales tax to Howe.
 - Pursue industries such as technology and agribusiness that align with regional strengths.
 - Incentivize service businesses essential to quality of life, such as:
 - Grocery stores, restaurants, childcare facilities, and personal services.
 - Support local entrepreneurs to fill gaps in retail and hospitality.
3. Community Engagement and Promotion
 - Actively promote Howe as a business-friendly community through online campaigns, showcasing available incentives, and emphasizing quality of life.
 - Highlight success stories of local businesses to attract similar ventures.

Infrastructure Improvement



Goal: Recommend and advocate for infrastructure improvements that attract and support business investment and establish a foundation for long-term economic growth.

Key Initiatives:

1. Water and Sewer Infrastructure
 - Waste Treatment Facility:
 - Support upgrades to the Waste Treatment Facility to increase capacity.
 - Water Systems:
 - Assist with upgrades on a case-by-case basis when a development project aligns with HEDC goals.
2. Transportation and Thoroughfare Planning
 - Thoroughfare Plan:
 - Support projects that align with the city and county thoroughfare plan to ensure smooth traffic flow and safe travel through the community.
 - Road and Sidewalk Improvements:
 - Identify and prioritize key projects to support community growth and development.
 - Support projects in Downtown that include sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly pathways for safe and accessible movement to encourage shopping and dining.
3. Funding and Partnerships
 - Explore state and federal funding opportunities for major infrastructure projects, including grants and public-private partnerships.
4. Comprehensive Plan
 - Assist with the development of a Comprehensive Plan for the City. This plan should include a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that identifies and prioritizes essential infrastructure projects.

Quality of Life



Goal: Utilize available funding to create an environment where residents and visitors enjoy a high quality of life, embrace a healthy lifestyle, are actively engaged in community activities, and economic development aligns with family-oriented values

Key Initiatives:

1. Enhance Recreational Facilities with Strategic Investments

- Support Key Upgrades to Existing Parks:
 - Fund small but impactful enhancements, such as adding shaded picnic areas, benches, upgraded playground equipment, and improved walking trails.
- Focus on Community Gathering Spaces:
 - Enhance community connections by supporting versatile spaces that can host events, markets, and local activities, fostering a hub for residents and businesses.
- Leverage Public-Private Partnerships:
 - Partner with local businesses or organizations to sponsor recreational projects.

2. Increase Community Events

- Sponsor Economic-Impact Events:
 - Fund annual or semi-annual events like food truck festivals, small business expos, and seasonal markets that bring visitors to Howe, benefiting local businesses.
- Create Low-Cost, High-Impact Programs:
 - Support initiatives like outdoor movie nights, community fitness classes, or holiday parades to foster a sense of community and encourage local spending.
- Promote Events that Boost Local Commerce:
 - Support events that feature local vendors, farmer markets, artists, and musicians to stimulate the local economy.

Quality of Life – Cont.

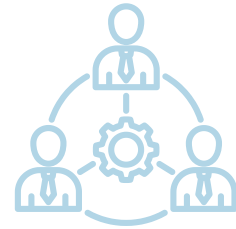


3. Promote Housing Development to Support Economic Growth

- Encourage Single-Family Housing:
 - Market Howe's quality of life, small-town charm, and proximity to major cities as a selling point for families seeking to relocate to single-family homes in a suburban setting.
- Identify Strategic Sites:
 - Work with developers and city officials to identify locations for residential growth and ensure alignment with Howe's vision.



Education and Workforce



Goal: Enhance Howe’s economic growth by equipping residents with the skills needed for the modern workforce and addressing any educational needs. This ensures a ready workforce and supports the community’s long-term prosperity.

Initiatives:

1. Engage Local Businesses for Workforce Development
 - Internships and Mentorship Programs:
 - Coordinate with businesses to create internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship opportunities for students, fostering connections between education and employment.
 - Career Fairs:
 - Host an annual career fair in partnership with local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce to connect students, job seekers, and employers.
2. Community Involvement and Lifelong Learning
 - Citizen Police Academy:
 - Support a Citizen Police Academy by partnering with local law enforcement to develop a program that educates residents about police operations and strengthens community relations.
 - Engage 55+ Residents:
 - Work with 55+ residents to foster volunteer opportunities, such as tutoring students, leading workshops, or mentoring young professionals.
3. Young Entrepreneurs
 - ISD:
 - Partnering with the ISD to host a young entrepreneur event provides students with hands-on business experience, mentorship opportunities, and a platform to showcase their innovative ideas.

Proactive Growth



Goal: Collaborate with city leadership to plan and manage Howe's growth in a way that respects the town's heritage and supports economic development. Encouraging growth that maintains family values while offering opportunities for businesses, residents, and visitors.

Key Initiatives:

1. Implement Zoning Practices to Guide Development

- Business-Friendly Zoning Adjustments:
 - Collaborate with city staff to create zoning policies that support diverse businesses while preserving the town's character. Ensure that growth accommodates essential industries like retail, hospitality, and manufacturing, while keeping Howe's small town charm intact.
 - Creation of a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) or Overlay District Along Highway 75.
 - Consider establishing an overlay district to provide additional incentives and guidelines for development along Highway 75, ensuring that new developments complement the community's goals for growth. Should include design standards for signage, landscaping, and building materials.

2. Incentivize Development in Key Areas:

- Strategic Focus on Growth Zones:
 - Prioritize commercial development in key areas that align with Howe's economic vision, particularly downtown and Highway 75, which are prime locations for fostering business growth and enhancing the town's appeal.
 - Offer targeted incentives for businesses to establish themselves in these areas, infrastructure improvements, and grants for facade upgrades or building renovations.

Proactive Growth – Cont.



-
- Downtown Development:
 - Encourage the revitalization of Howe's downtown area by attracting small businesses, restaurants, and entertainment. Offer incentives for businesses that complement the town's family-friendly atmosphere and historical charm, ensuring that new businesses enhance the vibrancy of the area.
 - Focus on drawing a regional business, such as a well-known restaurant or chain with a strong following, to create a destination that attracts visitors from neighboring communities and boosts local traffic.
 - Highway 75 Corridor Development:
 - Capitalize on the growth potential happening along Highway 75, targeting commercial and light industrial development that can benefit from high visibility and easy access to transportation corridors.
 - Encourage infrastructure support or expedited permitting, to attract businesses that align with the region's growth sectors, including retail, technology, and logistics.

Implementation

➔ Quick Wins

- Identify relevant training for HEDC board members.
- Attend state conferences; TML, Texas Downtown, ICSC, and TEDC.
- Create incentives application and guidebook.
- Implement marketing strategies.
- Revise City's Comprehensive Plan.

➔ Short Term

- Identify and fund quick-impact projects, such as community events.
- Work with the city to prioritize infrastructure projects.
- Develop a marketing strategy to highlight new tagline, events and initiatives.
- Identify land acquisition opportunities.

➔ Mid Term

- Invest in a catalyst project, such as a sports complex, to serve as a long-term asset for the community and events.
- Expand sponsorships and partnerships to stretch funding for larger-scale community initiatives.
- Actively support infrastructure extensions or improvements tied to new residential developments.

➔ Long Term

- Continue assessing community needs and leveraging sales tax funds for impactful projects that align with growth and economic goals.

Appendix

Appendices have been omitted from this version due to file size limitations. A full version, including appendices, is available.

