



Introduction

With its enormous size, large and diverse population and vast array of natural resources, Texas plays a significant role in the nation's economy. And Texas continues to grow, generating new jobs and providing better opportunities for its citizens to prosper.

It is important to all Texans that the state continue its economic growth and seek out new opportunities. And the role of state government is to help create an environment in which this can happen.

The Texas Comptroller's office analyzes factors affecting the state's economy and uses this information to prepare its biennial fore-

cast of state revenue. To perform this task, the agency's economists keep their fingers on the pulse of the state, detecting changes as they occur and identifying trends that will affect our common future.

In January 2008, the Comptroller released *Texas in Focus: A Statewide View of Opportunities*, a report examining a series of issues affecting the state and the state's economy as a whole. This report, *Texas in Focus: High Plains*, examines issues affecting this economic region of Texas, which includes the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission and South Plains Association of Governments. The High Plains region is made up of 41 counties that stretch from the Panhandle through the South Plains (**Exhibit 1**), a region including the cities of Amarillo and Lubbock.

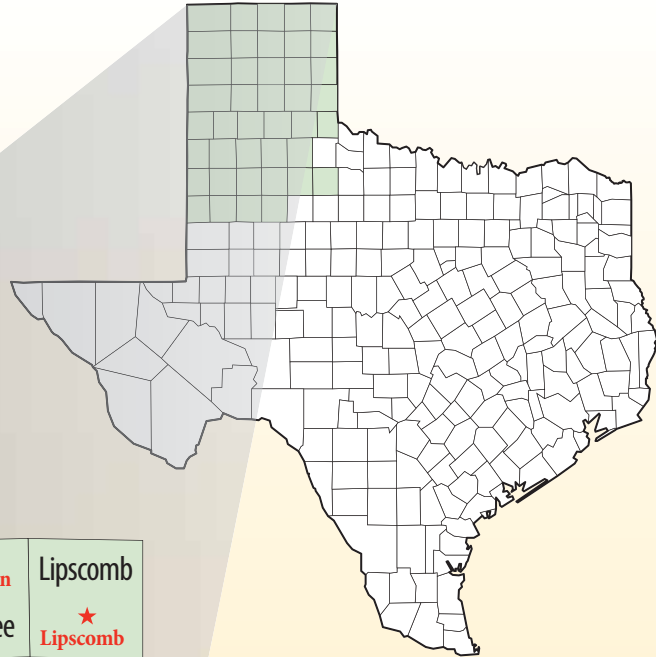


Cotton fields near Lubbock, Texas

PHOTO: Philip Brown/Texas Tech University

Exhibit 1

High Plains Region



Dallam Dalhart ★	★ Stratford Sherman	Hansford Spearman ★	★ Perryton Ochiltree	Lipscomb ★ Lipscomb	
Hartley Channing ★	Dumas ★ Moore	Hutchinson ★ Stunnett	Roberts Miami ★	Canadian ★ Hemphill	
Oldham ★ Vega	Potter Amarillo ★	Carson ★ Panhandle	★ Pampa Gray	★ Wheeler Wheeler	
Deaf Smith Hereford ★	Randall ★ Canyon	★ Claude Armstrong	Donley ★ Clarendon	Collingsworth ★ Wellington	
Parmer ★ Farwell	Castro ★ Dimmitt	Swisher ★ Tulia	Briscoe ★ Silverton	Memphis ★ Hall	Childress ★ Childress
Muleshoe ★	Lamb ★ Littlefield	Plainview ★	Floyd ★ Floydada	Motley ★ Matador	
Bailey Morton ★	Hockley ★ Levelland	Lubbock ★ Lubbock	Crosbyton ★ Crosby	Dickens ★ Dickens	King ★ Guthrie
Plains ★ Yoakum	Terry ★ Brownfield	Lynn ★ Tahoka	Garza ★ Post		

★ = County Seat

Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.



This report provides information on the forces driving change in the High Plains, and examines factors that may affect the development of the region's economy. State leaders, county and city officials, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations and many others may use this report as a tool to stay on top of important issues as they work to keep their local economies thriving. Areas explored in this report include:

Economic Development

The High Plains region's economic outlook is promising. The region's rate of job growth will nearly match that of the state as a whole through 2012, with Amarillo creating jobs at a slightly faster rate than Lubbock. Though the region traditionally has been dominated by agriculture and oil and gas, a broader economy is emerging from growth in the service industries.

Demographics

A slightly greater share of the region's population is between the ages of 10 and 24 than is the state's. A young population means more people will be entering the job market and filling many of the newly created service jobs.

Infrastructure

The High Plains' infrastructure provides the region with a solid basis for future economic growth. Its abundant natural resources will continue to meet the demands of the region's industries, rural communities and urban centers during the near future.

Health Care

Delivering health care in an area such as the High Plains, with its widely dispersed rural population, presents a challenge for the region's families and medical professionals. But innovations such as telemedicine and telepharmacy are shrinking these distances and improving access to health care, while new educational opportunities are increasing the region's number of nurses.

Education

The skills needed to prosper in an expanding and increasingly technology-based economy come from a good education. The High Plains region is fortunate to have school districts that outperform the state in several areas and offer lower-than-average class sizes, as well as affordable institutions of higher education, including Texas Tech University.

"Texas" Musical Drama

Summer visitors to Palo Duro Canyon in Armstrong County can be entertained with a musical version of the history of Texas performed on an open-air stage. For 41 years, the show has told the story of the settlers of the Panhandle in the 1800s; highlights include impressive special effects, a fireworks display and the ride of a cowboy carrying a large Texas flag across the cliff ridge. The stage is located at the base of a 600-foot cliff, a dramatic backdrop for singing and dancing cowboys and cowgirls performing each night from June to August.¹

In 2007, "Texas" drew 58,000 visitors, 10 percent more than in the previous year. More than half of the visitors traveled more than 100 miles to attend the show. The play has contributed more than \$30 million to the local economy since its first performance in 1966.²

ABC Pro Rodeo

The Lubbock Boys & Girls Club and other local charities are beneficiaries of the popularity of Lubbock's rodeo. Since the ABC rodeo began in 1941, it has donated more than \$1 million dollars to the community. Professional cowboys and cowgirls travel from as far away as Florida and California to be a part of this Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) event. A weekend of calf roping, bull riding, barrel racing and even bull fighting draw more than 10,000 visitors. Aside from the funds raised for charity, the event generates more than \$190,000 in the local economy each year. The 66th Annual ABC Pro Rodeo was held April 3rd through 5th, 2008.³

Endnotes

- ¹ AmericanProfile.com, "Staging a Texas Legacy," by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers (April 16, 2007), <http://www.americanprofile.com/spotlights/article/5273.html>; and Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation, "Texas Musical Drama in Palo Duro Canyon," <http://www.texas-show.com/about.html>. (Last visited November 2, 2007.)
- ² Interview with Bill Anderson, executive director, Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation, Canyon, Texas, November 29, 2007.
- ³ Interview with Ray Short, chairman, ABC Pro Rodeo, Lubbock, Texas, November 27, 2007.