



## CURRENT CONDITIONS

Palestine is located almost midway between Dallas and Houston, and east of Interstate 45, the principal traffic artery between the two large metropolitan areas. Palestine's location offers access to numerous larger markets in the state. Palestine also has a long history of excellent rail service. Current service is provided through BNSF and the Union Pacific railroads. Its location and transportation infrastructure have resulted in a thriving distribution sector in Palestine.

Palestine's rich history also offers opportunities for tourists. The annual Dogwood Festival, the Museum of East Texas Culture, and the many activities at the Texas State Railroad Park offer a chance to enjoy the history and natural beauty of East Texas. Palestine's historic downtown has bakeries, antique stores and restaurants to visit.

Palestine is also becoming a regional center for medical care. Palestine Regional Medical Center and Palestine Regional Rehabilitation Hospital employ over 80 physicians offering a full range of care. In addition, Palestine is recognized as an Official Retirement Community, and has several assisted living and resident nursing care facilities.

As noted in the Economy section of the Community Analysis, Palestine's location, history, and medical care sector account for a large proportion of its most promising employment sectors. In the past several years, General Freight Trucking has produced over 80% employment growth, while paying well over the Anderson County average weekly wage (see Figure 43).

Average weekly wages for Anderson County are \$830. This is 85% of the average weekly wage for the state as a whole (\$973). The average weekly wage for Texas is 3% higher than for the nation as a whole. While Palestine should seek industries that pay above the average weekly wage for the area, it should be noted that Anderson County's average pay can be presented as a cost advantage to potential employers.

Palestine's retail and restaurant business clusters along major highway corridors, especially the southeastern portion of Loop 256. Downtown also retains significant retail and restaurant business.



FIGURE 41: DOWNTOWN PALESTINE RETAIL



FIGURE 42: PALESTINE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Palestine’s hospital and medical office clusters along Loop 256 between Highway 79/82 and S. Sycamore Street/322. Several retirement/nursing/rehabilitation facilities also cluster in this area. Note that there is demand for medical services in counties adjacent to Palestine, with all of the immediately adjacent counties to the south and west of Anderson County designated as medically underserved areas by the Texas State Office for Rural Health.

Citizen input about business activity generally focused on providing access to a wider variety of services and more employment opportunity, especially more opportunity for younger residents to stay in Palestine.

Specific ideas mentioned include:

- Allow restaurants and retail to “think outside the box”

- Offer ‘high-end’ retail choices
- Empower and encourage small family businesses
- Generate efficient traffic flow on the loop
- Encourage signage, lighting, and street beautification
- Encourage development of employment opportunities for younger residents
- Generate more diverse job training, especially skilled trades
- Reduce “red-tape” for developing or redeveloping commercial/retail properties
- Encourage the development of business districts
- Enhance the overall tax base

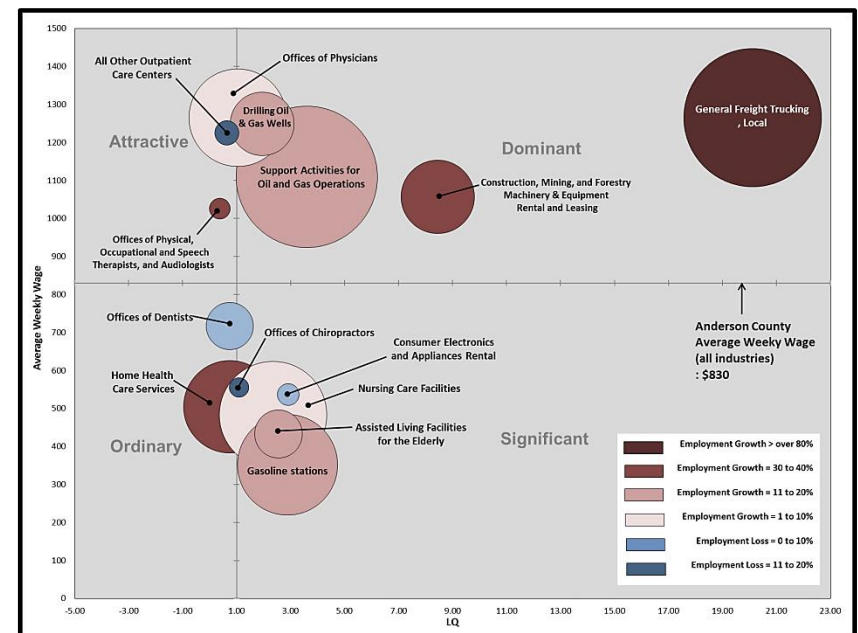


FIGURE 43: HIGH IMPACT INDUSTRIES

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

*Business and Employment goals and strategies for this comprehensive plan are derived from citizen input and baseline information. They are:*

**Goal B1: Develop a sound local economy which attracts investment, increases the tax base, creates employment opportunities for Palestine residents and generates public revenues.**

### **Strategies:**

**B1.1:** Revitalize the downtown commercial/retail core through cooperation with business owners and relevant organizations such as Main Street Palestine

**B1.2:** Develop a comprehensive branding and tourism campaign in cooperation with relevant groups such as Palestine Economic Development Corporation as well as State and Federal organizations in order to expand visitor and tourism activity.

**B1.3:** Increase cooperation and coordination between public and private sectors in the formulation of economic development plans and programs.

**B1.4:** Develop a priority project list and budget to improve infrastructure capacity to support existing and new development by including closer coordination between economic development and capital improvements programming.

**B1.5:** Identify location for Medical District designation, and develop appropriate infrastructure and development regulations for expansion of existing commercial uses and attraction of new establishments and projects.

**B1.6:** Develop a strategy to enhance the retention and expansion of small, entrepreneurial businesses.

**B1.7:** Create departmental branding that coordinates with overall city objectives (increased patrols in hotspots, higher visibility/decreased response times, increased rates of problem solving at lower organizational level, community oriented policing perspective) with overall goal of increased in quality of life, a decrease in crime rates, and a reduction in the fear of crime within the community.

**Goal B2: Develop an economic development strategy which balances the need for development with other City goals and objectives.**

### **Strategies:**

**B2.1:** Ensure the preservation and enhancement of Palestine's historic and natural assets and character which make it attractive both as a quality residential community and as an economic investment.

**B2.2:** Encourage adaptive reuse of older commercial structures and complementary and compatible new developments of superior quality.

**B2.3:** Encourage development opportunities which result in minimal adverse impacts to the City's environment and housing supply.

**B2.4:** Craft development regulations that encourage an equitable sharing between the public and private sectors of the full costs of public improvements and services specifically and uniquely attributable to individual new developments.

**Goal B3: Develop an increased flow of public revenues accruing from economic development.**

**Strategies:**

**B3.1:** Increase retail tax revenues through development of industries paying higher than average weekly wages.

**B3.2:** Increase retail tax revenues through expansion of the retail tax base and/or increase in the number of potential shoppers.

**B3.3:** Develop, retain and use, to the maximum extent practicable and feasible, tax increment revenues for development activities as permitted by law.

**Goal B4: Provide increased opportunities for personal growth of current and potential Palestine residents through productive and satisfying employment.**

**Strategies:**

**B4.1:** Work with local industries and organizations such as the Texas Workforce Commission to identify the skills and training needed to retain and attract key industries to Palestine.

**B4.2:** Encourage greater coordination between existing and future employment needs, educational curricula and job training programs.