



2025

GARLAND

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PLAN

REDEVELOP | REIMAGINE | REVITALIZE
STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT FOR LOCAL BUSINESS SUCCESS

Vision: To support, grow, and retain a diverse mix of Garland-based businesses through strategic engagement, proactive support, and collaborative redevelopment—ensuring long-term economic vitality for all corners of the city.

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STRATEGIES

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Overview

The Garland Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Plan is a collaborative, community-based initiative designed to strengthen communication and partnerships between the City and local businesses to support a thriving and inclusive economy.

The Garland Chamber of Commerce currently leads impactful BRE efforts, particularly in the industrial and manufacturing sectors — and plays a critical role in workforce development through initiatives like the Dallas County Manufacturers Association, as well as providing small business support through programs such as GrowGarland and Access Garland.

This City-led BRE Plan is not intended to duplicate those efforts, but to build upon the Chamber's strong foundation by identifying opportunities to fill gaps, support businesses in additional sectors and geographies, and align broader City resources around a shared vision for business success.

By leveraging tools such as business surveys, company visits, and formal and informal data collection, the BRE Plan will equip the City's Economic Development Department and partners with the business intelligence needed to remove barriers, strengthen retention, and drive sustainable growth citywide.

Short-term Objectives

- Provide community support for local business
- Identify and address immediate concerns of individual business
- Let local businesses know how much they are valued in the community
- Establish an implementation plan to improve the business climate
- Compile an inventory of existing businesses with contact information

Long-term Objectives

- Increase the competitiveness of local businesses
- Promote business development and job creation
- Establish an implementation plan of action for business growth

Goals

- Establish and build relationships with local employers to accurately assess their business needs, challenges, or opportunities for expansion and growth.
- Provide better information and understanding for all local leaders of the strengths and weaknesses of the business climate.
- Build cooperation and consensus among local government, economic development organizations, and businesses and support collective action focused on improving the local and regional business climate.
- Provide support for local, small businesses.



Recommended Program Components

1. Business Visitation Program

- Conduct targeted visits annually.
- Prioritize employers with:
 - Sales tax generating businesses
 - Businesses generating high property tax values (including BPP)
 - 25+ employees
 - Long-standing community presence
 - Active expansion or facility concerns
- Conduct visits with a standard BRE survey to capture:
 - Workforce needs
 - Infrastructure issues
 - Satisfaction with city services
 - Future expansion or relocation plans

2. Quarterly Roundtables

Host roundtables by industry sector to:

- Encourage peer networking
- Share city/regional updates
- Gather group-based feedback
- Highlight incentive and workforce programs

Partners: Dallas College, DCMA, Garland Chamber of Commerce

3. BRE Database & Tracking System

Expand use of current CRM system to track:

- Business contact history
- Issues raised and follow-up status
- Expansion indicators or risk factors to assist with identifying red and green flags

4. Rapid Response Team

Develop a cross-functional BRE response team to mobilize around urgent business concerns (e.g., layoffs, fire, zoning issues) composed of:

- City economic development staff
- Workforce partners (Workforce Solutions, colleges)
- Utilities and permitting staff
- Chamber & Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

This could include the informal task of creating a list of “emergency contacts” for business owners

5. BRE Resource Landing Page

Assist businesses in accessing:

- Local incentives (e.g., tax abatements, façade grants)
- State programs (Skills Development Fund, TWC resources)
- Workforce pipelines (school districts, Richland College)
- Certifications (NCTRCA, MWBE, HUB)
- Information about support offered by community partners including the Garland Chamber of Commerce



Business Visits

The City of Garland greatly values its existing businesses and is poised to assist in their growth and expansion. A key factor in the BRE Program is business visits. These are visits made to businesses to help build relationships between business leaders and the Economic Development team. These visits create a connection between staff and businesses so as problems or obstacles arise, businesses know who to contact for assistance. The information gathered during such visits typically provides insights on local business needs, plans for relocation, expansion, or closure, and perceptions or attitudes of the business community.

How does it work?

Economic Development Program staff will arrange a site visit (based on a defined list) with a designated company. Before the visit, staff will collect information from a pre-survey. Following the visit, staff will work to resolve any issues or questions that arise during the meeting, follow-up as needed, or make connections to other partners or resources. After the visit, the business is encouraged to contact staff as appropriate when assistance is needed. These efforts are meant to assist existing companies to ensure their retention and expansion within the community.

How many visits are scheduled and how do they occur?

- Visits: 10-15 targeted per size/focus area
- Visits may be conducted face-to-face or virtually

Who comes on the visit?

- City of Garland Economic Development staff
- Other business industry partners when applicable to address any needs of the business

What are the benefits?

- Provides companies with an economic development contact within the City to address issues or needs.
- Provides the City with greater insight and understanding of companies and their key decision makers.

The following section outlines the general steps in the BRE business visit process.

Introductory Contact

Initial contact with the businesses will be made by a staff member via the preferred contact method (typically phone or email) to schedule a visit. This allows staff to make introductions or get a preliminary idea of what information or resources will be helpful to have prepared for the visit.

Pre-Survey

Once a visit is scheduled, the business will receive an electronic copy of an optional pre-survey to complete in advance of the visit. The pre-survey will assist in determining what partners should join on the visit and better prepare the team in researching for resources to address any concerns and having them prepared for the visit.

Business Survey Form

A generic survey should be used during site visits to guide data collection and discussion. By using a consistent survey, staff are able to track businesses that have been contacted, categorize and better address concerns, and identify trends both within specific industries or other meaningful categories. Surveys can be sent via email in advance of the visit.



Follow-Up

A “thank you” email will be sent to each person interviewed after the meeting expressing the City’s appreciation for the business. Staff should utilize a Client Relationship Management (CRM) system for tracking and follow up. Staff will maintain a contact list by company and input all information gathered into the system. Staff can then re-evaluate any business needs at the end of the year. If concerns are brought up during the initial interview, they will be addressed afterward with the appropriate persons, and actions taken will be relayed to the business. When needed, an additional visit will be made with appropriate representatives from the BRE team to address the issues.

Business Selection Process

Staff will include a cross-section of businesses in Garland in the visitation cycle. The City of Garland Economic Development Department will devise a process for selecting which businesses receive a visit based on the Economic Development departments strategic plan, the City’s goals, and targeted industries. This process will allow for diversity and inclusion of particular subgroups of interest within the business community. Part of this process involves using the two-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) business sector coding to ensure adequate representation of businesses chosen from each sector of the local economy. Businesses will be prioritized using selection criteria including number of employees, building size, land and building space available for potential expansion, and other business factors. Although this method is not statistically representative of the greater business population, it will provide the team with information from businesses in the following sub-categories: large, medium, small, and start-up. Businesses may be chosen at random or may be selected based on key factors or economic criteria.

These businesses can include, but are not limited to:

- Garland’s “Top 100”;
- Businesses with high sales tax and real and business personal property valuations;
- Long-standing businesses in the community;
- Creative, model businesses;
- Large employers;
- New businesses with growth potential;
- Minority-owned businesses;
- Businesses that serve an ethnic market;
- Businesses that serve existing businesses; and
- Unusual businesses that add character;
- Businesses located in catalyst and TIF districts.





Targeted Industry Focus

Sector
Restaurants & Experiential Retail
Healthcare & Medical District
Light Industrial and Advanced Manufacturing
Data Centers
Professional Services & Creative Economy

Program Tactics

1. BRE Business Visitation Program

- Target businesses annually (emphasis on employers, legacy businesses, and overlooked segments like auto shops or immigrant-owned enterprises).
- Include simple questions: Why Garland? What would you change?

2. Business Listening & Engagement

- Rotate site visits, developer roundtables, and industry symposiums
- Incorporate surveys and virtual check-ins for those unable to attend in person
- Establish Real Estate Insight Group to track property sales/lease expirations early

3. Business Resource Portal

- Centralized portal for business resources
- Partner with local colleges and the Central Library for workshops and resource-sharing
- Add multilingual capabilities (Spanish, Vietnamese, etc.)

4. Corridor & Commercial Site Improvement Program

- Expand the Façade Improvement Grant
- Include beautification standards for industrial uses
- Target corridors in South Garland and key redevelopment nodes

5. Entrepreneur and Startup Support

- Launch “StartUp Garland” to connect entrepreneurs with space, mentors, and resources
- Use City-owned or vacant space creatively for pop-ups, co-working, and vendor incubation
- Explore creative financing initiatives with local funding partners and CDFI’s (i.e. Liftfund)
- Partner with the Garland Chamber of Commerce on their existing small biz workshops
- Market the incubator space at central library
- Partner with Dallas College to support entrepreneurship development, leveraging their existing tiered credentials. This partnership could include joint workshops, incubator access, mentorship opportunities, and co-branded programming.



Community & Strategic Partners

It takes a team of community and regional stakeholders to make a BRE program effective. A critical component of the Garland BRE Program will be to build a team of economic, community and workforce development organizations that provide programs, resources, and services to the business community. With a team of service and resource providers in place, we will more effectively build a cohesive, responsive approach to address the needs of businesses in Garland.

The following groups/organizations should be utilized to assist in successfully supporting the business community:

- Garland Chamber of Commerce
- Garland ISD
- Dallas College
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas
- North Texas SBDC
- Local developers and leasing brokers
- Utility companies
- UT Dallas Institute for Innovation

Activities & Initiatives

Fostering relationships with businesses and business leaders requires intentional engagement and support. It is integral to go beyond the basic business surveys and visitation model to a more comprehensive, value-added model that can address various aspects of business operations, including marketing, finances, workforce training and development, and strategic planning.

Therefore, in addition to the business visits, there are other factors to the BRE plan that will be added to strengthen engagement within the business community. These include:

- Business newsletter and online information
- Annual Business Survey
- Networking opportunities/Peer roundtables
- Workforce development
- MBE/HUB support
- Business Recognition Awards
- Access to local business resources
- Access to funding sources
- Disaster recovery assistance



Timeline

Successful BRE programs are cyclical and continuous. Knowing what the issues are for businesses is an ongoing process for business and economic support organizations. Throughout the BRE cycle, there are months devoted to collecting and assessing data, providing reports to stakeholders, evaluating the effectiveness of the program, and making any needed adjustments. The cycle concludes with an evaluation period that includes follow-up on immediate ‘red flag’ issues in addition to short and long terms action plans. The follow-up phase is ongoing and includes action throughout the year to address concerns or needs.

BRE visitation cycle

January – August

Evaluation period

September – December

Performance Metrics

The information gathered from visits and surveys can provide valuable intelligence on the successes and obstacles facing businesses in Garland. This information then helps the Economic Development team identify the key issues that need to be addressed. It also helps to tailor the programs and support services that provide the most value to local businesses.

The goal of the program is to capture both quantitative and qualitative data regarding business operations, expansions, challenges, and the overall business climate.

The following are EXAMPLES of the type of data sets that should be collected.

Quantitative Measures

- Number jobs created/retained
- Number of retained businesses
- Cost per job created/retained
- Number of businesses visited
- Number of businesses surveyed
- Number of businesses assisted
- Percent of jobs held by local residents/LMI
- Average salary of jobs created

Qualitative Measures

- Business perceptions of local government
- Business perceptions of the community
- Relationship between business retention programs and City services available to businesses (e.g. workforce development initiatives)
- Involvement of assisted businesses in other community activities

All reported data should be results that are directly tied to the work and activities conducted by the Economic Development Department.



Assessing Results

During the evaluation period (September-December), the information gathered during the visit cycle will be evaluated for general needs the businesses may have as well as to assess the success of our approach to supporting the business community. For example, tracking how many businesses have remained open and how many have expanded their activities can indicate whether or not the BRE program efforts are producing results.

An annual assessment of the program will provide information on which aspects of the program worked well and which did not.

Questions to be considered in evaluating the BRE Program

- To what extent was the BRE initiative effective in retaining and/or expanding business in our community?
- What changes occurred in the community as a result of BRE? Why?
 - What statistics or stories (e.g. a business did not relocate because of the program) can we report back to the community?
- What objectives were not achieved? Why not?
- What challenges or opportunities did we experience in terms of implementing the project?

Reporting Results

The Economic Development Department will communicate BRE results through periodic reports that summarize the BRE activities. BRE visit and survey data, along with other reports, will be compiled into discernible trends to inform City Council, stakeholders, and the public. These periodic reports will be used to help track progress and identify things that require attention, as well as acknowledge achievements. Relevant information in these reports may include number of BRE visits, expansion plans, perception of the area's business climate, utilization of economic development programs, and more.

Conclusion

The Garland BRE Plan embraces revitalization, equity, and growth. It is rooted in community voice and designed to elevate the local business climate through engagement, infrastructure, and access. With bold partnerships and responsive programming, Garland is positioned to be a North Texas leader in sustainable economic development.



GARLAND

Contributions

Special thanks to the many stakeholders who generously contributed their time, insights, and expertise throughout the development of this Business Retention & Expansion Plan. Your thoughtful feedback helped us identify real challenges, uncover new opportunities, and ensure the plan reflects the diverse needs of Garland's business community. This collaborative effort would not have been possible without your engagement, and we are deeply grateful for your continued partnership in building a stronger, more resilient local economy.



Garland
Chamber of
Commerce



GARLAND

LIBRARY



Appendix A

Strategic Priorities

1. Revitalization & Redevelopment

- Expand façade improvement grants and corridor beautification efforts to more areas, especially small shopping centers and industrial districts.
- Promote destination zones that attract regional visitors and increase sales tax (e.g., Firewheel Mall, South Garland, Centerville Crossing).
- Incentivize revitalization through performance-based grants and reduced permit fees.

2. Support for Small & Diverse Businesses

- Provide marketing, digital tools, and education to help small businesses adapt and thrive (e.g., Canva, Fiverr, multilingual training).
- Proactively engage Hispanic and Vietnamese business corridors with customized outreach and translated resources.
- Launch a loan program with forgivable grants for qualifying small businesses—modeled after successful Chamber initiatives or partner with local CDFI's to provide programming and low interest business loans.

3. Workforce & Income Mobility

- Invest in non-traditional workforce pathways that raise median household income by equipping residents with high-demand skills.
- Collaborate with Texas Instruments and local training institutions to create industry-led workforce pipelines, especially in skilled trades, auto repair, and logistics.

4. Attraction of Quality Employers

- Focus on retention and attraction of large employers that offer career-wage jobs.
- Promote data centers, light industrial, and advanced manufacturing in Districts 5 & 6.
- Reframe and rebrand the Industrial District as a Business Innovation Corridor with enhanced curb appeal and marketing.