

Agenda for Economic Vitality



THE CHAMBER
ROUND ROCK TEXAS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Business Success Starts Here.

Agenda for Economic Vitality

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Agenda for Economic Vitality

With a population of more than 100,000 residents, Round Rock is the largest city in Williamson County, Texas, and is one of America's fastest-growing and most economically vibrant cities. Round Rock is home to several thousand businesses of all sizes, including Fortune 500 companies and thriving small, locally owned businesses.

The Round Rock Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is the largest business organization in Round Rock, and one of the largest business organizations in Central Texas. The Chamber's goal is to serve as the accelerator for economic growth and business success. Business advocacy is an important part of the Chamber's mission and vision because public policy has a profound impact upon a community's ability to grow and prosper.

This Agenda for Economic Vitality therefore outlines the public policy priorities that the Chamber supports to ensure that Texas, in general, and Round Rock, specifically, are optimally positioned for continued growth, business success, economic opportunity, and a high quality of life.

The Chamber encourages businesspersons to play an active role in shaping the business climate through Chamber membership, contacting their elected officials about the issues outlined in this document, and considering the possibility of public service.

Economic Development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber believes that Texas businesses, government, education, healthcare, and non-profit groups, working together to pursue a shared vision, are true engines of economic growth, which drive the state economy. In order to accomplish our mission of positioning Round Rock as the city of choice, we must help provide an environment that enables our businesses to thrive. To further that effort, these priorities describe the things that will best help our community grow and prosper.

The Chamber supports:

- Maintaining and strengthening the Texas Economic Development Act (Chapter 313, Texas Tax Code) to promote continued investment in large scale projects in manufacturing, R&D, and energy.
- Continued appropriations to the Emerging Technology Fund (ETF) in order to provide investment in cutting edge technologies for our future.
- Continued appropriations to the Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) in order to support the cities of Texas in their ability to close deals important to the prosperity of our state.
- Programs, as permissible under Texas law, to encourage the purchasing departments of Williamson County, the City of Round Rock and Round Rock ISD to fully consider the economic benefit of using local vendors when making procurement decisions.
- Promoting small business growth and innovation through policies that increase access to capital, markets and modern technology.

Employment Law

EMPLOYMENT LAW

The Chamber believes that all businesses must employ sound human resource practices to promote a healthy work environment. Labor laws should encourage a strong economy by allowing businesses to adapt quickly to changing market conditions and providing ample job opportunities.

SUPPORT

- Maintaining our strong right-to-work law in Texas.
- An unemployment system that emphasizes expeditious job referral, job training, and volunteer opportunities for Texans who collect unemployment benefits.
- Heavy sanctions and aggressive prosecution of workers compensation fraud by both employers and employees.

OPPOSE

- Wage and price controls of any kind.
- Private sector benefits being mandated by government.
- Any state or federal effort to weaken the rights of employees to a secret ballot unionization election process that is free from intimidation and coercion.

Healthcare

HEALTHCARE

The Round Rock Chamber of Commerce has a strong interest in healthcare policy for two fundamental reasons. First is the fact that public health is a key component of high quality of life standards for any community. The second is that employers are the major purchaser of healthcare benefits, and providing and/or administering these benefits is often a major cost for employers.

The Chamber supports:

- Reforms to the 2010 federal healthcare law, as needed, to further the goal of affordable, high-quality healthcare.
- Improved access and affordability of healthcare insurance for employers, as well as reasonable efforts to reduce healthcare costs, such as incentive programs for healthy lifestyles.
- Availability of health savings accounts.
- Medical malpractice tort reform to help control healthcare costs.
- Improving efficiencies in the Medicaid program.
- Reforming government health program reimbursement procedures to reduce cost shifting onto employers and other health coverage purchasers.
- Appropriate incentives to encourage employers to voluntarily provide health insurance.
- Allowing individuals and small businesses to deduct the full cost of insurance expenses from their federal tax liability.

The Chamber opposes:

- Mandating that businesses purchase health insurance for their workers, cover certain conditions, or require businesses to purchase health insurance from the government.
- Creation of multiple layers of bureaucracy for healthcare and health insurance financing and delivery.

Higher Education

HIGHER EDUCATION

The future workforce of our state and community is dependent on the vitality of our higher education system. We need to continue to produce the entrepreneurs, innovators and workforce that have given us the reputation of a creative community. We also need to continue to train the healthcare workforce needed to serve our growing population.

The Chamber supports:

- Providing more sustainable and predictable methods of funding higher education.
- Providing for a finance method to support the construction and renovation of university facilities.
- Adding more Graduate Medical Education (GME) slots to ensure adequate residency training position opportunities in Texas. Without more slots, many Texas graduates are forced to go out of state to finish their training, and many do not return to practice in Texas.
- Continued state investment in the highly efficient Texas A&M Health Science Center in Round Rock, and expeditious expansion of the College of Medicine curriculum at the Round Rock campus.
- Partnering with our local educational institutions to develop local, industry-specific training so businesses have maximum access to a trained workforce.

Natural Resources

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Chamber agrees that air quality presents our area, as well as our state, with a significant challenge to providing a good environment for our citizens. Our overall economy is dependent on regulations that help us maintain air quality standards and a competitive arena for economic development.

The Chamber supports:

- Adoption of TCEQ's legislative appropriations request for air quality planning activities.
- Adjustments to the Texas Emissions Reductions Plan (TERP) provided that they improve air quality, enhance public health, and promote economic prosperity.
- Changes to the Endangered Species Act statute and regulations so as to ensure that sound science, economic impacts, and cost-benefit considerations are the foundation of species-protection strategies.
- Proactive local and regional planning, incorporating cost-benefit analyses, for long-term and short-term water needs. This should include supply, delivery infrastructure and conservation.
- Consistency in water restrictions imposed on neighboring communities that draw water from the same source, so as to ensure Round Rock businesses are not disproportionately impacted.
- Maintaining the statewide water plan.
- Policies designed to provide realistic provision of adequate supplies and necessary fire flows for future development in growing areas.

Public Education

PUBLIC EDUCATION

One of the attractions of our regional economy is the strength of our workforce. In order for that to continue into the future the public education of our students must remain at a high level. We must continue to increase the readiness of our students not only for higher education but also for the workforce of Central Texas.

The Chamber supports:

- A consistent system of measurement that truly represents the accomplishments of our students.
- Providing a strong K-12 academic foundation that will improve overall student success in higher education.
- Allowing local control by school board members to provide for adequate funding of necessary programs.
- Adequate, appropriate state funding for K-12 education.
- Allowing local school administrators flexibility to deliver education efficiently in their own districts.
- Developing 21st century skills for college and career readiness, with a focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The Chamber opposes:

- Unfunded requirements imposed on districts including teacher salary hikes.

Tax Policy

TAX POLICY

Our quality of life in Round Rock depends on the job creation and tax revenue that only a vibrant business sector can generate. It is therefore important that tax policy at all levels of government supports economic growth and creation of jobs.

The Chamber strongly opposes the Streamlined Sales Tax Project, which could require sales taxes to be distributed at the point of purchase, rather than the point of sale. Adopting such a change would be harmful and disruptive to the economies of Round Rock and other Texas cities that are home to productive businesses.

The Chamber supports the following tax policies:

- Continued efforts to ensure a stable, pro-growth, and predictable tax climate in Texas.
- Taxation should be broad based. One specific industry should not be a tax or fee target for a service or program provided to the general public.
- Maintaining a low tax burden for small businesses by retaining the no tax due threshold of \$1,000,000 for franchise tax reports.
- Making federal and state R&D incentives permanent so as to make the tax climate for innovation more predictable.
- Comprehensive reform of the U.S. Tax Code, including lowering the corporate income tax rate (currently the world's second-highest) and adopting a territorial tax system (which would tax U.S. profits only, like nearly all of our major competitors.)

In addition to the Streamlined Sales Tax, the Chamber opposes:

- Putting business in a position of being a non-transparent, hidden tax collector.
- State income taxes, which would lead to a less stable and predictable tax climate.
- Increasing federal tax rates on carried interest and investment partnerships, which would have an adverse impact on economic development.
- Instituting appraisal and revenue caps.

Transportation & Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

The Chamber recognizes that our transportation infrastructure is a key to commerce in our city and the Central Texas region. The strength of the economy depends on a well-maintained system of roads, highways, and other transportation options.

The Chamber supports:

- Government policies that encourage a smooth and expeditious flow of vehicle traffic and prevents/discourages bottlenecks and delays.
- User-based financial support of roadways.
- Detailed cost-benefit analyses of regional transportation initiatives and options; and regional planning based on the premise that different parts of the region may be best served by different types of solutions.
- Active participation by Round Rock officials and business representatives in regional transportation and infrastructure planning.
- Consideration of steps to encourage long-haul truck traffic to use Toll I-130.
- The use of public-private partnerships in finding innovative solutions for road building.
- Identifying the specific uses of any new revenue available for transportation projects.
- Greater flexibility in funding local transportation projects.
- Aggressive efforts by Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and businesses to ensure Austin-Round Rock has as much domestic and international air service as the size of our market warrants.

The Chamber opposes:

- Increased impact fees not supported by transparent, relevant data.
- State mandates for new sources of funding transportation without first exploring better utilization of existing resources.
- The diversion of revenues intended for transportation purposes to non-transportation projects.

This document was approved by the Board of Directors
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**Round Rock Chamber of Commerce &
Economic Development Partnership**

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