

**Economic Development**

Economic development refers to progress toward a community’s economic goals, including increases in economic productivity and competitiveness; employment; and business activity and investment. Economic development reflects qualitative factors such as human health, environmental quality and social equity, community development. When describing economic development, it is common to think of a series of job creation, retention, and training programs; a series of public and private capital investments; and a process of capacity building that allows a community to influence its economic future. This chapter details the current economic conditions and business environment in Airline. In addition, a market analysis was conducted analyzing the profitability of the Airline community to sustain retail (re)development.

**Labor Force Characteristics**

Labor force characteristics illustrate the economic vitality/health of a community and expose opportunities for growth and redevelopment to strengthen an economic base.

*Wages*

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Harris County’s average weekly wage has been increasing at a modest rate. As of 2002, the data show a consistent increase in annual average weekly wages. This bodes well for the Airline community as it indicates economic growth and general enhancements of the quality of life for residents in the community and Harris County.

Table 6.1: Harris County Average Weekly Wage by Quarter, 2001 – 2005

<b>Year</b>	<b>Quarter 1</b>	<b>Quarter 2</b>	<b>Quarter 3</b>	<b>Quarter 4</b>	<b>Annual</b>
2001	\$892	\$800	\$792	\$882	\$841
2002	\$864	\$802	\$805	\$887	\$840
2003	\$858	\$820	\$824	\$906	\$852
2004	\$898	\$847	\$862	\$978	\$896
2005	\$950	\$892	***	***	***

\*\*\*Data has not been released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; 2001-2005

*Employment/Unemployment in Airline*

According to the 2000 Census, the eligible Airline labor force consisted of 11,565 persons; men comprised 50.05 percent, or 5,788 persons, of the eligible civilian workforce and women totaled 49.95 percent, or 5,777 persons of all eligible laborers. More than 67 percent of all males in the Airline community 16 years and older are in the labor force. Comparably, 73.92 percent of all males in Harris County are in the labor force. More than 94 percent (94.11 percent) of Airline males are employed; 93.96 percent of Harris County males are employed. Only 6 percent of Airline males are unemployed; 5.91 percent of Harris County males are unemployed. Nonetheless, nearly one-third of Airline males are not in the labor force; 26.08 percent of County males are not in the labor force.

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Table 7.2.: Employment Status for Airline Population 16 Years and Older, 2000

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Airline</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Harris County</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>5,788</b>	<b>50.05%</b>	<b>1,241,016</b>	<b>49.25%</b>
In Labor Force	3,920	67.73%	917,312	73.92%
In Armed Forces	0	0%	1,319	0.14%
Employed	3,689	94.11%	861,885	93.96%
Unemployed	231	5.89%	54,108	5.91%
Not in Labor Force	1,868	32.27%	323,704	26.08%
<b>Female</b>	<b>5,777</b>	<b>49.95%</b>	<b>1,278,921</b>	<b>50.75%</b>
In Labor Force	2,676	46.32%	736,580	57.59%
In Armed Forces	0	0%	272	0.04%
Employed	2,414	90.21%	684,048	92.90%
Unemployed	262	9.79%	52,260	7.10%
Not in Labor Force	3,101	53.68%	542,341	42.41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,565</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,519,937</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Approximately 49 percent of all females in the Airline community 16 years and older are in the labor force. In contrast, 57.59 percent of all females in Harris County are in the labor force. More than 90 percent of Airline females are employed; 92.90 of Harris County females are employed. Nearly 10 percent of Airline females are unemployed; 7.10 percent of Harris County females are unemployed. More than half of Airline females are not in the labor force; 42.41 percent of County females are not in the labor force. High female unemployment rates may be attributed to poverty; lack of affordable housing; access to childcare and high-wage specialized occupations; and lack of necessary skills or educational attainment.

### *Employment by Industry*

Table 7.3 illustrates how employment is distributed across industries in Airline and Harris County. Comparing employment by industry shows how imperative different industries are to a region's/community's economy. A locale focused on one or two industries is more vulnerable to economic cycles than a diverse economy. However, this is not the case for Airline or Harris County. Construction is the largest employment industry in Airline, supplying 13.50 percent of jobs, compared to 5.72 percent for Harris County. Manufacturing and retail trade supply 20.85 percent of jobs in Airline. Airline residents are commonly employed in the following industries: educational, health and social services (6.73 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (6.08 percent); professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services industry (5.80 percent); and accommodation and food services industry (5.31 percent).

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Table 7.3: Employment by Industry, 2000

Industry	Airline	Percent	Harris County	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	46	0.55%	34,617	1.47%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	5	0.06%	2,316	0.10%
Mining	41	0.49%	32,301	1.37%
Construction	1,132	13.50%	135,121	5.72%
Manufacturing	922	10.99%	181,748	7.69%
Wholesale trade	277	3.30%	75,831	3.21%
Retail trade	827	9.86%	170,821	7.23%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	366	4.36%	104,948	4.44%
Transportation and warehousing	293	3.49%	85,121	3.60%
Utilities	73	0.87%	19,827	0.84%
Information	124	1.48%	35,780	1.51%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	311	3.71%	108,456	4.59%
Finance and insurance	215	2.56%	70,789	3.00%
Real estate and rental and leasing	96	1.14%	37,667	1.59%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	486	5.80%	193,896	8.21%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	194	2.31%	120,374	5.10%
Management of companies and enterprises	7	0.08%	2,049	0.09%
Administrative and support and waste management services	285	3.40%	71,473	3.03%
Educational, health and social services	564	6.73%	263,289	11.14%
Educational services	220	2.62%	127,343	5.39%
Health care and social assistance	344	4.10%	135,946	5.75%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	510	6.08%	111,450	4.72%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	65	0.78%	18,212	0.77%
Accommodation and food services	445	5.31%	93,238	3.95%
Other services (except public administration)	423	5.04%	84,976	3.60%
Public administration	115	1.37%	45,000	1.90%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

### *Travel Time to Work and Means of Transportation to Work*

Table 7.4 illustrates the travel time to work for Airline and Harris County laborers. Approximately two-thirds of Airline workers (65.13 percent) have commute times between 15 and 45 minutes. Comparably, Harris County workers (59.57 percent) have travel times between 15 and 45 minutes. It is important to note that more than a quarter of workers in Airline and Harris County, 28.37 percent and 25.06 percent respectively, have work travel times between 30 and 44 minutes.

The 2000 Census also reveals the travel time to work and the number of residents that work at home has increased since 1990. As workers with a commute time less than 29 minutes decreased, travel times 30 minutes and greater have increased. Increased commute times can be attributed to the

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expansion and continuous construction of highways and major thoroughfares; traffic congestion; the movement of employment centers to suburban or rural communities; and the development of neighborhoods in exurban and rural communities in Harris County.

Table 7.4: Travel Time to Work, 2000

<b>Travel Time</b>	<b>Airline: Number of Workers</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Harris County: Number of Workers</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 15 minutes	893	15.04%	304,430	20.09%
15 to 20 minutes	2,182	36.76%	523,016	34.51%
30 to 44 minutes	1,684	28.37%	379,741	25.06%
45 to 59 minutes	617	10.39%	151,282	9.98%
60 to 89 minutes	301	5.07%	87,360	5.76%
90 or more minutes	98	1.65%	33,569	2.21%
Worked at home	161	2.71%	36,195	2.39%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The 2000 Census indicates that approximately 65 percent of Airline residents drive their own vehicle to work. Fully three-fourths of Harris County residents drive alone to work. It is important to note that more than 27 percent of Airline residents carpool to work; only 14.64 percent of Harris County residents carpool. Approximately 3 percent of Airline workers use public transportation to get to work.

Table 7.5: Means of Transportation to Work, 2000

<b>Method of Transportation</b>	<b>Airline: Number of Workers</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Harris County: Number of Workers</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Drove alone	3,823	64.40%	1,147,906	75.74%
Carpooled	1,607	27.07%	221,853	14.64%
Public Transportation	161	2.71%	62,052	4.09%
Bicycle/Walk	148	2.49%	31,547	2.08%
Other	36	0.61%	16,040	1.06%
Worked at home	161	2.71%	36,195	2.39%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

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Despite the increasing cost of gasoline, commute times, and more workers driving alone to work, an acceptable solution to reverse this trend is to vastly improve access to and efficiency of public transportation in Airline and Harris County. Additionally, the Airline Improvement District, community business owners, and the North Houston/Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce must cooperatively work together to locate more employers in northern Harris County and make the region a more dominant employment center.

### Business Environment

The Airline community is anchored by Airline Dr., Gulf Bank Rd., West Mt. Houston Rd., West Rd., Aldine Mail Rd., and East Canino Rd for commercial, office, and industrial uses. Nevertheless, there are many businesses intermingled throughout the community. Airline is home to a multitude of automotive-related businesses—auto salvage, auto repair, collision repair, paint and body, automotive sales, and tire shops; flea markets; childcare establishments; professional services—income tax, notary, real estate services; wholesale food distribution; United Parcel Service (UPS); trailer and boat storage; tractor sales; feed and supply stores; animal trapping; taqueria stands; gas stations and convenience stores; appliance stores; plumbing supply; carnicerías (meat markets); washaterias; bridal and quinceañera shops; and hair and beauty establishments.

Most commercial enterprises in Airline are free standing establishments, but there are a number of commercial strip centers throughout the community. Many of the retail sites are small establishments (less than 2,000 sq. feet) and are in need of façade improvements to make their physical appearance more inviting to consumers. Unlike most communities in Harris County, Airline is void of a grocery store, financial institutions, fast food restaurants, or big-box retail sites similar to Wal-Mart, Target or Home Depot. As such, Airline residents must travel to either the Fiesta grocery store located at the corner of West Rd. and Airline or several miles northwest of the target area at the Wal-Mart Supercenter.

Commercial centers are important hubs of business, social and civic life for communities. Successful commercial centers create a feeling of vitality and character as they draw citizens and residents to their locale. Airline Drive, the de facto “Main St.” and commercial hub of the Airline community serves as the principal locale for office and commercial businesses. Airline Dr. must function beyond simply that of transportation or economic development. To do this, Airline Drive must be:

1. *The heart of the community.* Airline Dr. must function as the focal point or center for community gatherings and civic life. This must extend further than the flea market enterprises.
2. *Create a sense of place and identity.* Airline Dr. must create a sense of place for the community—reflecting the community’s character and vision

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for the future. This makes the community unique and attractive to more than its residents and weekend flea market visitors.

To aid in this development, the Airline Improvement District and the North Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce should assist in the creation of a local economic development council and a flea market business development organization. This will assist the Airline community in its economic development and growth.

### *Permits*

Commercial building permits and the value of new construction can be accurate indicators of economic health. This data used in conjunction with other leading economic indicators—unemployment, wages, and employment by industry—policy makers, economists, politicians and other government agencies can determine appropriate fiscal and monetary decisions. Table 7.6 indicates the number of new commercial building permits authorized by Harris County PID – Permits Division from January 2000 – September 2005 in Airline.

**Table 7.6: Commercial Permits Issued in Airline, January 2000 - August 2005**

Description	Number Issued	Value	Square Footage	Permit Class	
				A	B
Amusement and Recreational Buildings	1	\$550,000	8,961	1	0
Service Stations and Repair Garages	7	\$296,801	29,623	4	3#
Office, Bank and Professional Buildings	3	\$24,500	1,168	2	1
Stores and Other Mercantile Buildings	4	\$1,310,700	37,662	3	1
Other Nonresidential Buildings on Commercial Property	13	\$211,200	16,288	9	4
Commercial 'Unenclosed' Structure	24	\$629,351	27,092*	12	12
Warehouse	13	\$823,000	132,300	10	3
Warehouse/Office Combination Structure	11	\$846,642	55,358	10	1

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Description	Number Issued	Value	Square Footage	Permit Class	
				A	B
Commercial, Restaurant	3	\$140,000	146,150	2	1
Commercial Lease Space Build-Out	5	\$202,000	344*	4	1
Manufactured Home Used as Office Bank or Professional Bldg	1	\$15,000	540	0	1
Manufactured Home Used as Mercantile Bldg	3	\$11,700	12,120	3	0
Manufactured Home Used as Nonresidential Bldg	3	\$8,500	1,694	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>\$5,069,394</b>	<b>469,300</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>28</b>

*\*Inaccurate due to omissions by Harris County PID – Permits Division*

*#Mismatched coding by Harris County PID – Permits Division*

*Permit Class A: Located in Flood Plain*

*Permit Class B: Located outside Flood Plain*

*Source: Harris County Public Infrastructure Department – Permits Division, 2005*

Note the number of warehouse and warehouse/office combination structure permits issued is Airline. More than one quarter (26.37 percent) of all permits issued in Airline over the past 5 ½ years have been for warehouse structures. As of 2000, much of the industrial and warehouse development in Harris County is situated in Precincts One and Two.

### *Light Rail in Airline*

While traditional modes of transportation are less important to many firms, the location of an area and its proximity to transportation links, both local and regional, play an integral role in location decisions. The condition of the transportation network is also an important consideration as is the availability and efficiency of local public transit.

As discussed in *Airline Today: Transportation & Infrastructure*, the METRO Solutions Phase 2 Implementation Plan, a revision of the METRO Solutions 2025 Transit System Plan, recommends 5 miles of bus rapid transit service on Airline Drive to Northline Mall; thus, effectively destroying Airline residents' aspirations of routing a more effective mode of public transportation through the community.

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Light rail or bus rapid transit service in Airline will increase its economic productivity, competitiveness and development. Improved travel options for residents and prospective consumers can increase business activity. Should light rail or bus rapid transit locate itself in Airline, businesses may expand their production; hire more local workers and purchase more equipment at local stores; thus increasing the community's economic wealth and visibility to the Gulf Coast region.

### *Flea Markets in Airline*

The cluster of flea markets along Airline Drive attracts tens of thousands of shoppers every weekend. Many Hispanic/Latino immigrants find the *pulgas* (Spanish for flea markets) and *mercados* (Spanish for markets) are more inviting than traditional malls and shopping centers because the vendors cater to the working-class immigrant and are reminiscent of traditional Mexican food, music, and culture. On a given weekend, flea market patrons are not only cajoled by the aromas of fajitas, gorditas, roasted corn, tamales, but the live Mexican bands and televised soccer games are reminiscent of their Mexican homeland.

The Airline flea market businesses are an integral economic entity in the community. The flea markets serve as business incubators for vendors and small business owners. Vendors and small business owners would greatly benefit from guidance in budgeting, marketing, product competition, pricing, and profit earning. The flea market business owners and the Airline Improvement District should partner with a local community college for guidance in business development as it will assist in improving commerce in the District and targeting consumers of all races and ethnicities.

### *Business Owners' Meeting*

Business owners, residents, clergy, and volunteers from the Little York Fire Department at the August 2005 Business Owners' meeting commented on the housing; transportation and infrastructure; community facilities and public services; public health and economic status of the community. Participants commented that abandoned and unkempt homes (particularly Tropical Storm Allison flood buyout homes and other homes with general neglect) in the community commonly attract gangs and criminal mischief, resulting in residents fleeing the community and business owners feeling unsafe. Discussions on housing in Airline also focused on the unsafe manner homes are enlarged to accommodate additional families and garages.

Participants discussed transportation and infrastructure issue in the community. Participants unanimously stated that the lack of water and sewer service is a deterrent to new business locating in Airline. Business owners also commented on how the weekend flea market traffic is a barrier to swift response times for the fire and police departments and threaten public safety for area business owners and their patrons. The Little York Fire Volunteer Department volunteers commented on the lack of fire hydrants in the community and the need for an emergency signal light at the fire department entrance on Airline Drive.

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Business owners noted that Airline Drive is not solely for the flea markets and its patrons. Participants commented that there are not enough parking spaces for shoppers and that the entry into available parking is unorganized. A suggestion was made to have an independent organization hire police Officers to patrol the flea markets and handle traffic control and parking for all of the flea markets.

Business owners stated that population growth is necessary to the economic health of businesses in the community. The economy is affected by the community's security issues. Residents regularly commented on the poor response time of the Harris County Sheriff's Department and the Sheriff Department's refusal of office space in the Little York Volunteer Fire Department. Several participants mentioned the automotive salvage yards proximity to schools and homes in the community and the dangerous piling of cars next to fences that do not secure schools, homes, and businesses. Residents stated that Harris County PID – Permits Department must do a better in enforcing the permitting process of automotive salvage yards. It is common for the salvage yards to be havens for fires. Fire personnel are usually hindered by mud and other automotive debris, thereby placing residents and personal property in a perilous predicament.

### Market Analysis

A market analysis consists of information that identifies potentially profitable market areas. This information influences the decisions of retail developers to locate retail establishments in communities. Retail developers often avoid urban areas because of a lack of information demonstrating the capacity of these communities to support retail establishments. The standard information utilized by developers, typically used for identifying suburban markets, reveals that market potential does not exist in cities or urban areas.

Many conventional market analyses underestimate urban markets because the data collection methods are insufficient for investigating urban areas. Insufficient, incomplete, and inaccurate information leads to the stereotyping of populations in certain areas and their behavior. Demographic information such as population, number of households, and median household income are three conventional indicators developers typically base retail site selection decisions. These indicators work well when applied to suburban communities because suburban areas are more demographically and economically similar than urban communities. However, these measurements often fail to acknowledge many characteristics that distinguish cities from suburbs, primarily race/ethnic diversity, size of underground economy, and population density, indicating a demographically heterogeneous population.

Counteracting stereotypes and retail underdevelopment in urban communities requires information that accurately identifies viable markets for retail development. Retail developers will pursue urban (re)development only if provided with facts demonstrating potential profitability. Healthy markets **do** exist in cities, they simply require 'rediscovering'.

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Identifying retail markets relies on comparing the measurement of existing retail supply and evidence of retail demand. The components of supply and demand explain market conditions in Airline and function as a set of criteria for determining selected areas with market potential for various types of retail.

### Demand

Demand is the measure of the capacity or potential capacity of a population to purchase goods and services. The following demand indicator provides evidence of demand for retail using a set of measurements more accurate for urban areas than what is offered in many conventional market analyses.

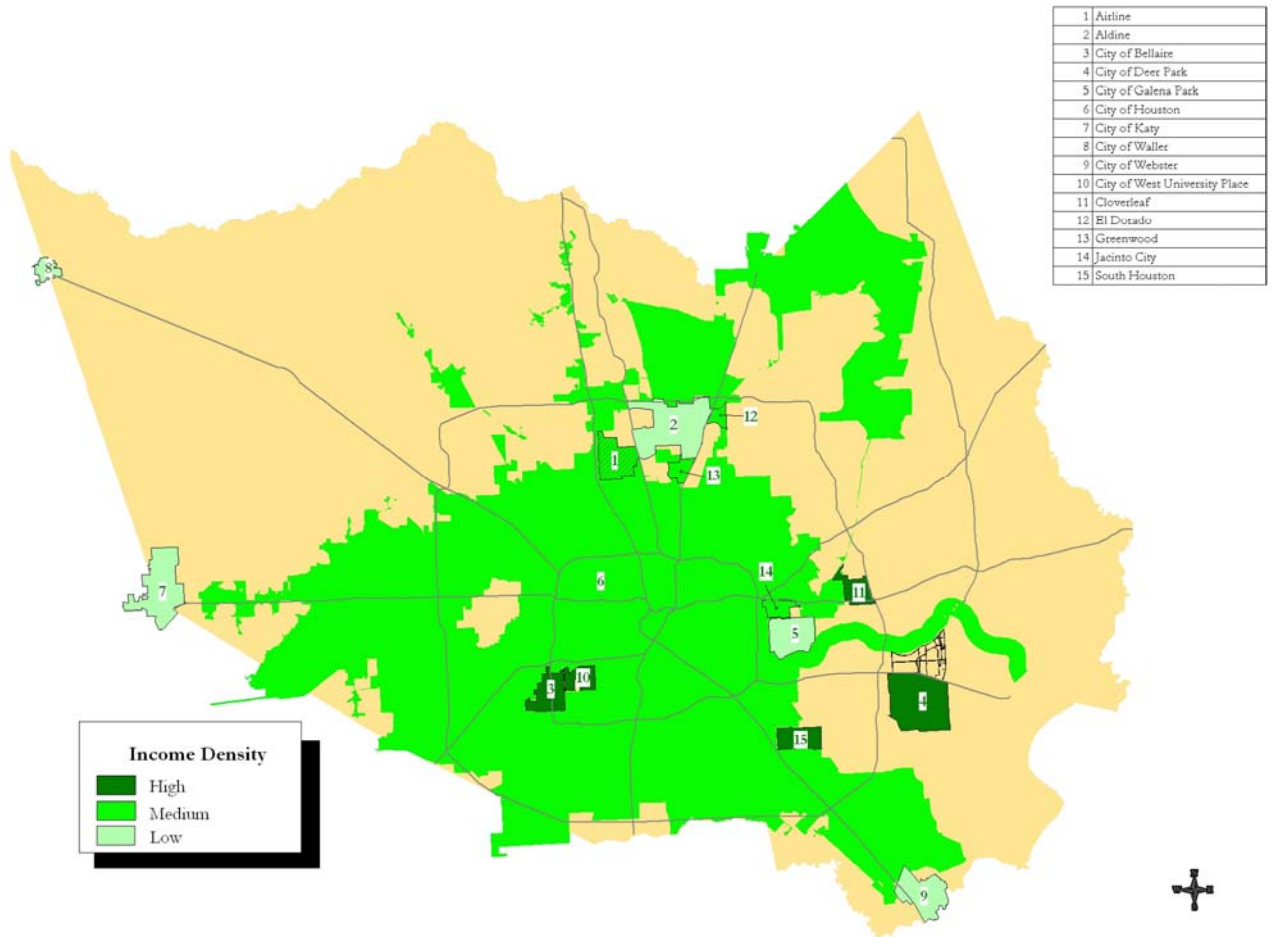
### *Income Density*

Income density indicates purchasing power by combining population, income, and land area with the greatest aggregate income per square mile. Comparing a community's purchasing power with the existing retail supply exposes underserved geographical areas. Many retail market studies consider population and income separately. This separation of factors is potentially misleading when applied to urban areas, as it does not accurately gauge the purchasing power of urban areas. Thus, many conventional market studies underestimate the purchasing power of urban communities. Income density provides more informative results than using population or income data alone. A high density population with a low level of per capita income might have more purchasing power than a low density population with a high per capita income. Greater density of population compensates for lower income levels; consolidating lower incomes of large communities may yield the same total buying power as fewer people with larger income.

Map 7.1 illustrates the income density of cities in Harris County and HUD-defined target areas in Harris County. The designations of low, medium, and high income density exemplify how the communities in Harris County compare to one another. After calculating income density, communities were assigned designations based on their respective income density (purchasing power) in Harris County. Thus, the classification of high income density means that a particular community is in the third of areas with the highest income density of the selected communities in Harris County.

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Map 7.1: Income Density of Cities and HUD-Defined Target Areas in County



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

As Table 7.7 demonstrates, Airline’s income density is greater than the City of Katy, the City of Waller, the City of Webster, the City of Galena Park and the HUD-Defined target area of Aldine. Airline has a comparable income density to the City of Houston and the HUD-Defined target areas of El Dorado, Greenwood, and Jacinto City.

A comparison of the selected communities further explains the significance of the income density findings. Table 6.7 compares the income density of select cities and HUD-Defined target areas in Harris County. The rationale behind the selection of these communities is their comparable total and Hispanic populations to Airline; percentage of residents below poverty level; possible designation as a low-moderate income community by HUD; location in the

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Harris County service area; access to major thoroughfares; and proximity to larger retail districts.

Total income represents one aspect of measuring income density. Many conventional market studies do not indicate whether the total income is spread out over a larger area or is densely confined. Income density makes a spatial comparison among potential markets by incorporating their varying land sizes (refer to Table 7.7).

Table 7.7: Income Density Comparisons of Communities in Harris County

<b>Community (City, County or a HUD - Defined target area)</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Per Capita Income</b>	<b>Total Income (millions)</b>	<b>Square Miles</b>	<b>Income Per Square Miles (millions)</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Airline	16,557	\$12,550	\$207.79	4.39	\$47.33	M
Aldine	28,157	\$11,547	\$325.13	10.54	\$30.85	L
City of Bellaire	15,581	\$46,674	\$727.23	3.60	\$202.01	H
City of Deer Park	28,392	\$24,440	\$693.90	10.38	\$66.85	H
City of Galena Park	10,587	\$12,207	\$129.24	4.99	\$25.90	L
City of Houston	1,954,848	\$20,101	\$39,294.40	601.70	\$65.31	M
City of Katy	11,730	\$21,192	\$248.58	8.04	\$30.92	L
City of Waller	2,073	\$14,860	\$30.80	1.39	\$22.16	L
City of Webster	8,882	\$21,964	\$193.77	6.51	\$29.76	L
City of West University Place	14,211	\$69,674	\$990.14	2.01	\$492.61	H
Cloverleaf	15,082	\$11,322	\$170.76	2.03	\$84.12	H
El Dorado	2,537	\$11,860	\$30.09	0.92	\$32.71	M
Greenwood	9,324	\$9,505	\$88.62	1.40	\$63.30	M
Jacinto City	8,070	\$11,556	\$93.26	1.46	\$63.87	M
South Houston	12,685	\$11,995	\$152.16	2.25	\$67.63	H

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

### Supply

Supply is the assessment of existing retail establishments in a community. It answers the questions: How much retail is currently in the area? What types of retail exist? Where do Airline residents shop for their retail needs? Determining the supply of existing retail identifies deficiencies in Airline.

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### *Retail Centers in Airline*

Retail centers within the boundaries of Airline function as destinations for multi-purpose shopping trips and attract more customers than stand alone businesses. There are several retail centers (commercial strip centers) interspersed throughout the Airline community. Their primary location along Airline Drive indicates access to available retail goods and services is centrally located in the community.

### *Retail Centers in proximity to Airline*

Large retail centers outside the Airline Improvement District and target area boundaries indicate the proximity of residents to a variety of shopping destinations. Big-box retail establishments and free-standing commercial strip sites are situated several miles northwest of the Airline target area. These establishments include: The Dump, Academy, Wal-Mart Supercenter, Office Depot, Fry's Electronics, Blockbuster, Panda Express, and a host of other shopping venues and restaurants. Greenspoint Mall is approximately 2 miles north of the Airline target area. A Fiesta grocery store is located at the corner of Airline Drive and West Road.

Picture 7.1: Retail Center in Proximity to Airline - The Dump



Source: HCCEDD, 2005

Picture 7.2.: Retail Center in Proximity to Airline – Fry's Electronics



Source: HCCEDD, 2005

The demand for retail goods is greater than the supply available in Airline, thus residents are spending their money at these other retail centers. Residents are willing to make these purchases closer to their homes if similar opportunities existed nearby.

### *Types of Retail Businesses*

The amount and location of certain types of retail businesses help identify deficiencies and/or over-supply in Airline. Airline is home to an abundance of automotive-related businesses—auto salvage, auto repair, collision repair, paint and body, automotive sales, tire shops. Other retail businesses situated in Airline include: flea markets; childcare; professional services—income tax, notary, real estate services; wholesale food distribution; United Parcel Service (UPS); trailer

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and boat storage; tractor sales; feed and supply stores; animal trapping; taqueria stands; gas stations and convenience stores; appliance stores; plumbing supply; carnicerías (meat markets); washaterias; bridal and quinceañera shops; and hair and beauty establishments. There is a dearth of family-oriented restaurants, fast-food restaurants, financial institutions, and a chain or independent grocery store (Fiesta is located outside of the target area).

Income density data and supply indicators demonstrate that Airline residents indeed have a lack of retail establishments and levels of purchasing power comparable to other suburban locations well-served by retail and could potentially support local retail establishments. Locating retail into underserved urban markets relies on demonstrating the ability of urban populations to support retail establishments. Income density uncovers markets that many conventional market studies fail to recognize, as population and income are accounted for separately. Thus, accurately reflecting potential purchasing power of a community contributes to the identification of potentially viable markets for retailers.

The Airline Improvement District is committed to improving the retail/commercial (re)investment and development in the Airline community. There are several overarching goals for strengthening and promoting retail development in Airline. These goals should inform the articulation of criteria for the selection of sites and choices of retail development.

1. Increase local access to goods and services at reasonable prices for Airline residents
2. Attract and retain businesses
3. Provide destinations and nodes to attract visitors/new residents to Airline
4. Reuse the existing commercial fabric in Airline
5. Provide employment for area residents
6. Increase the tax base
7. Reinforce and stimulate other investment in Airline
8. Encourage local entrepreneurship

## ***Recommendations***

The purpose of the following recommendations and goals is to support the Airline Improvement District commitment to sustainable economic development through the implementation and enforcement of appropriate organizations, incentives and programs, and legislation.

### **1. Economic Development Council**

The creation of a local economic development council will benefit the Airline business community by creating a more favorable business environment; enhancing communication between businesses, government, and residents; and attracting new industries and businesses. To develop this organization:

- Determine if the organization should become private, nonprofit, or a membership driven organization
- Determine the focus of the organization (attracting, strengthening, and recruiting new businesses; encourage public/private cooperative partnerships)
- Create partnerships with the civic associations, the Airline Improvement District, the North Harris Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce, schools, Harris County Precinct One, the Greater Houston Partnership, University of Houston Small Business Development Center, SCORE: Counselors to America's Small Businesses
- Seek funding (grants and loans) to pay for business development or expansion, employee and business training, G.E.D. courses, remedial education, vocational training, professional certification, and advanced degrees

An economic development council, separate, but in coordination with the Airline Improvement District and North Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce, will reinforce the Airline community's role in the regional business community. This organization will give citizens and business owners and employees the opportunity to enhance/improve local business networking opportunities and achieve greater economic prosperity for all business through a united and aggressive organization.

### **2. Enforcement of HB 414 (Junkyard Legislation)**

The uncontrolled growth of automotive salvage and junkyards adjacent to residential homes, schools, and churches over the years in unincorporated Harris County has lead to the violation of state laws regulating distance requirements. Junkyard owners routinely pay the occasional Class C misdemeanor fine and consider it an expense of doing business in Airline.

Residents in Airline and other affected communities commonly live on small lots with backyard water wells that are 25-50 feet deep. Several schools have encroaching junkyards moving closer with cars piled high above fences, if indeed the back of the salvage and/or junkyard is fenced. The chemicals used at these salvage and junkyards run-off into the local water table and penetrate the residents' shallow backyard water wells and cause other deleterious impacts to

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the potable water in the community. Rusting cars and automotive parts are commonly in violation of height requirements and are considered to be a visual blight on the community and threaten the public health and safety of all residents.

Thus, during the 79<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative session, State Representative Kevin Bailey introduced legislation aiding Harris County in enforcing current laws restricting automotive wrecking and salvage yards from violating regulations and requirements for distance from existing homes, schools, and churches. The legislation, passed into law in May 2005, provides injunctive relief that will give Harris County a much desired tool in enforcing the existing law (Chapter 397, Texas Transportation Code – Automotive Wrecking and Salvage Yards in Certain Counties).

Enforcement of this law will quell Airline residents concerns with the lack of aesthetic attention junkyard owners give to their property. Retail establishments commonly locate in communities with a strong and stable housing stock and high property values. Economic prosperity can occur in harmony with the natural environment. Prospective businesses will not establish themselves in Airline if the drinking water is negatively impacted by other businesses.

### **3. Locate a Chain or Independent Grocery Store in Airline**

The Airline Improvement District, in partnership with the North-Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce, Airline residents, Airline business owners, and other concerned individuals must unite to locate a chain or large, independent grocery store in Airline. The Fiesta grocery store at West Rd. and Airline Drive is the closest grocery store to Airline.

A chain or independent grocery store in Airline will fill the voids that small convenience stores and fast food restaurants leave in the community. A chain or independent grocery store with a varied target niche to the community will provide higher wages to workers, yet provide staple and ethnic foods to consumers at lower prices. To locate a chain or independent grocery store in Airline:

- Create a partnership with the North Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce, Airline business owners, residents, and other concerned individuals
- Seek subsidies and tax breaks from Harris County to locate a chain grocery store in Airline
- Locate vacant buildings/land for a grocery store
- Identify large developable parcels and parcel owners
- Raise support and interest of large land owners in redevelopment of land
- Gain control of land
- Issue a request for proposals to identify and attract potential developers
- Contract with a developer

Attempting to locate a large scale development in Airline will possibly take several years. While attempting to locate a chain grocery store in the community, ask independent grocers to begin carrying more staple foods at lower prices.

#### **4. Flea Market Business Development Organization**

A flea market business development organization/association will serve as a separate, but collaborative organization with the Airline Improvement District and the Airline Economic Development Council. This organization will benefit the community by regaining and maintaining public trust in Airline residents to engage in ethical businesses practices, controlling noise and traffic along major corridors and residential streets, providing greater police protection to consumers and community members, and facilitating revitalization in Airline.

#### **5. Enforcement of HB 2509 (Curbstoning Law)**

Curbstoning, or the illegal sale of automobiles on a street curb, right of way or in parking lots by individuals, licensed and unlicensed dealers, is a consumer protection issue. Not only does it reduce business of licensed dealers but it causes blight in local neighborhoods and brings an unsavory criminal element into communities. Curbstoners do not pay taxes on vehicle sales or transfer titles, thus creating a loss of revenue for the Airline Improvement District. Harris County has the power to adjudicate curbstoning cases.

#### **6. Small Business Education Workshops**

Small business education workshops strengthen local businesses and assist in attracting new and retaining businesses through employee and owner education and training. To develop these workshops in the Airline community:

- Determine the needs of the local businesses in the community
- Identify the types of workshops that need to be conducted (business plan development, budgeting, computer training, certifications, marketing, support services)
- Identify locations to conduct workshops
- Identify funding sources to finance workshops
- Partner with the North-Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce, the University of Houston Small Business Development Center, North Harris Montgomery Community College, SCORE: Counselors to America's Small Businesses, residents, other organizations, businesses, schools to assess job skills/training programs needed and currently available in the greater Houston area