

ROCKDALE

— TEXAS —

A STONE'S THROW AWAY

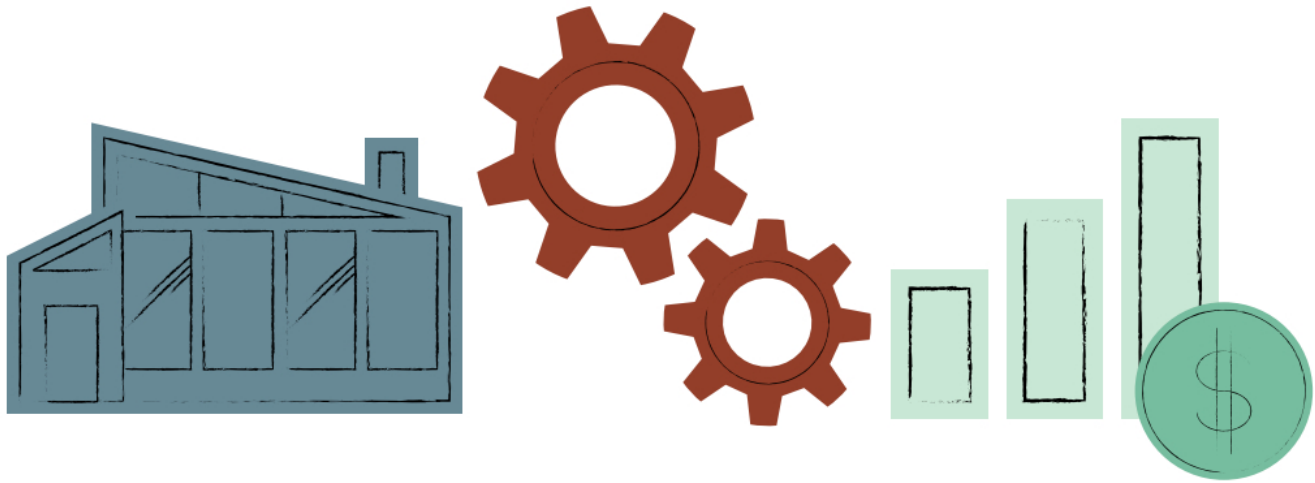
Located inside the Texas Golden Triangle, Rockdale is a Stone's Throw Away from the growing Austin market, with abundant water and utilities, available sites, and a talented workforce

2025 Annual Report

December 2025



Downtown Rockdale
July 2024



MAKING THE COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, AND DO BUSINESS

The Rockdale Municipal Development District is a one-stop resource for businesses of any type or size looking to take advantage of the City's unique location and assets by locating either inside the City limits or in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction.

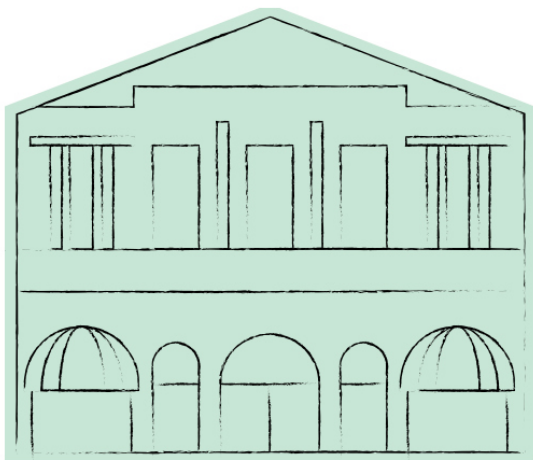
We leverage our regional and state economic development resources to tell Rockdale's story as a business investment opportunity that can provide business owners and employees with the best connection to join a vibrant community, find professional success and personal fulfillment, and benefit from a location proximate to an urban area but distant enough for a rural lifestyle.

This Annual Report shows the activities and progress made on the MDD Board's goals and objectives.



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The Rockdale MDD was created by the City of Rockdale voters in 2012. The seven-member Board is appointed by the Rockdale City Council for two-year staggered terms.

The Board is responsible for selecting and hiring an Economic Development Director, who is responsible for implementing an Economic Development Plan.

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor

Ward Roddam

Mayor Pro Tem

Lin Perry

Council Members

Scott Starnes

Brad Caffey

Esme Olivares-Rueles

Dave Melton

Daniel Willey

ROCKDALE LEADERSHIP

MDD BOARD

Board President

Nathan Bland

Board Vice President

John King

Board Secretary

Denise Wallace

Board Treasurer

Brian Wallis

Board Members

Joyce Dalley

Rebecca Luckey

Garrett Muston

MDD STAFF

Economic Development Director

James P. Gibson, Jr. CEcD MEDP

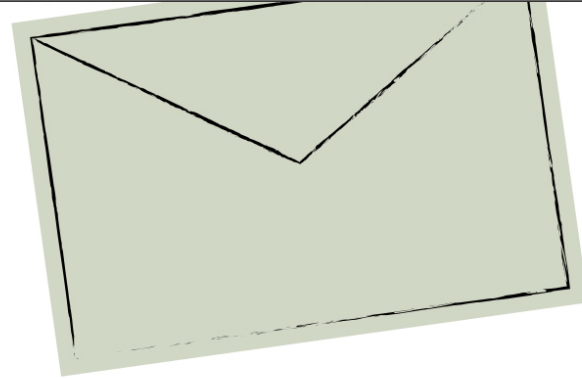
Executive Assistant

Michelle Toungate

Intern

Caroline Jayamaha

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



The Rockdale community is very close to realizing a full economic recovery from the ALCOA and Luminant closures and job losses.

The 2024 County gross domestic product (GDP) data will be released in February 2026 and we expect to see figures that show an economy of comparable size to 2008.

Two key projects were announced in 2025 that will trigger a Rockdale renaissance. In March 2025, Sandow Lakes Ranch announced that T1 Energy is going to be the first tenant in their new industrial park campus. This project alone will create 1,800 new manufacturing jobs when fully built out. Also in 2025, Samsung announced a chip customer, prompting them to complete the development of their Taylor facility. Both projects expect to be operational by the end of 2026.

These two development prompted the MDD to complete the purchase of a 100-acre site for a new industrial park. The MDD is actively working with an industrial developer to negotiate a master developer agreement and immediately start to improve the property.

This new job-creating activity is attracting other investment to Rockdale, notably the City's third new subdivision. Also, new businesses have located in Rockdale, particularly a new AutoZone, a new urgent care facility, and a couple of small, downtown businesses.

The Milam County labor market continues to get stronger, as Milam County further integrates into the regional economy. There are now as many residents in the labor market and working as when ALCOA was operating. Milam County is now only 911 jobs away from exceeding peak-ALCOA job levels. The unemployment rate continues to be below 5%.

As the T1, Samsung, and new subdivision projects make progress, retail and commercial activity will start to look at Rockdale.

The MDD joined Team Texas and started to prospect for business leads more aggressively in 2025. Relationships were build and awareness created among commercial developers and retailers.

The things that happened in 2025 are creating a virtuous cycle.

- Jobs are being created nearby
- Husetops are going up
- Industrial sites are being prepared
- Rockdale is getting recognized as player in the regional economy

Rockdale is in prime position to fully take advantage in 2026. The work done over the past four years will continue to set the community up for long term success in 2026 and beyond.

James P. Gibson, Jr CEcD MEDP
Economic Development Director
Rockdale Municipal Development District



VISION STATEMENT

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will be the premier economic development organization in the Central Texas region that helps businesses and residents prosper.

VALUES STATEMENT

STABILITY

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will be an organization that is financially stable by producing a balanced budget, engaging in long-term financial planning, and being prudent stewards of public funds. The MDD will be operationally secure by establishing sound financial and internal control policies and governance structures. The MDD will also carefully manage and consider the risks (operational and financial) inherent in managing an economic development organization.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will follow current economic development best practices. The MDD will strive to execute our mission to the best of everyone's ability. Any work product will be of the highest quality for our best efforts.

TRANSPARENCY

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will share all available information willingly and openly.

INNOVATION

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will be engaged in continuous learning. This learning will inspire everyone involved with the MDD to uniquely approach problems.

TENACITY

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will not give up until our mission is complete.

INSPIRING

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will be thought leaders for other community leaders and the broader business and economic development community.

COLLABORATION

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will openly and eagerly work as a resource with other economic development entities and local business and community organizations to help them achieve their goals.

PLANNING

The Rockdale Municipal Development District will view its work and actions in terms of a long range effort. This will include creating viable and realistic strategic plans that will secure the enduring success of the community.

STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

The 2023 Strategic Plan was developed to address the root cause of a market failure in Rockdale – an elevated investment risk profile. The plan action elements were designed around the concept of working to reduce that risk, whether that be actual or perceived.

Problem Summary

Rockdale presents a very high risk profile, as described in the plan's economic and risk assessment.

Elevated risk increases the cost of doing business in Rockdale.

The Opportunity Costs of investing in Rockdale are too high, relative to the lower risk profile offered by other communities.

Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that Rockdale's chief problem or barrier to economic development is: Investment risk/capital avoidance in Rockdale is too high. The opportunity costs of choosing Rockdale over a community that presents less risk is too great. The end result is a local market failure.

Strategic Plan Goal

The goal of the Economic Development Strategic Plan is for a significant deployment of public resources and leadership to reduce investment risk and ameliorate Rockdale's market failure so that capital investment will flow into Rockdale.

Strategic Plan Elements

The Economic Development Strategic Plan was organized around seven topical areas:

- *Community Leadership and Organizational Development*
- *Quality of Place/Life – Rockdale as an Investment Location*
- *Attracting New Industry*
- *Workforce Development*
- *Housing Development*
- *Entrepreneur Ecosystem*
- *Retail Expansion*

This report format is different from previous Annual Reports in that the sections are organized around the topical Strategic Plan elements. This allows for better understanding of progress towards the strategic plan goals.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Goal Statement

The Rockdale MDD will build consensus in the community around its vision and mission, its capacity to achieve the community's vision, and exhibit competence to the public.

Objectives

1. Achieve strategic alignment with other planning documents and efforts.
2. Maintain a quality governance structure
3. Demonstrate professionalism
4. Internally market to the community to create a high sense of community efficacy

Accomplishments

Planning

Created the Rockdale Growth Alliance, a group of representatives from the City of Rockdale, Milam County, the Rockdale Independent School District (RISD), and the Rockdale MDD to discuss and plan for community growth issues.

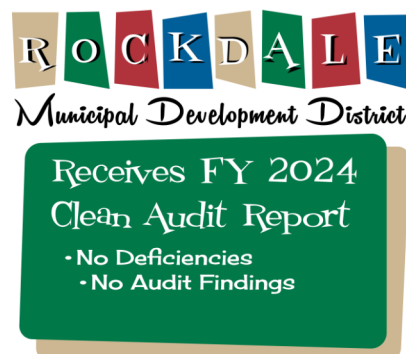
Governance

Adopted FY 2026 Budget

Met all reporting requirements – weekly and monthly staff report, quarterly council report, and annual report

Selected new auditing firm for the FY 2025 audit report

Received clean FY 2024 audit report



Demonstrate Professionalism

Won the TEDC 2024 Economic Excellence Award



Economic Excellence Recognition Program

Staff and Board Training

Staff attended three economic development conferences

Staff Training

- Community Development Institute

Internal Marketing

Issued 4 press releases

Continued a quarterly e-newsletter for the Rockdale community and site selection consultants reaching 870 contacts. Sent three times: March, September, and December

ROCKDALE
— R I S I N G —
A Community Economic Development Newsletter

2024 Community Business Survey Results

38% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Rockdale is an excellent place to have a business

50% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that local municipal services are well worth the level of local taxation

60% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are very satisfied with their business' present location

QUALITY OF PLACE/LIFE

Goal Statement

Rockdale will become an aesthetically pleasing community which will offer desirable community amenities with a reasonable tax rate.

Objectives

1. Improve Rockdale's physical appearance in Downtown and major corridors
2. Take measures to improve Rockdale's business operating environment
3. Create a reputation as being a developer-friendly community
4. Improve the quality of Rockdale's utility infrastructure
5. Improve Rockdale's physical infrastructure and amenities for residents
6. Begin an arts/cultural program to package the community's cultural capital
7. Be a welcoming community for new residents



Restoration of the historic 1895 City Hall bell tower

Accomplishments

New urgent care facility opened in December 2025.



The Downtown Revitalization Program grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture was completed. The MDD provided the \$75,000 match for reconstructed downtown sidewalks.

ATTRACTING NEW INDUSTRY

Goal Statement

Rockdale will take advantage of its strategic location and current industrial trends to attract other industry to the community.

Objectives

1. Create viable industrial real estate product for industrial absorption
2. Effectively market Rockdale's assets as an attractive industrial location
3. Ensure Rockdale's industrial market competitiveness is on parity with peer communities

Sandow Lakes Ranch (SLR) announced in March 2025, that T1 Energy was going to be the first tenant at the new Advanced Manufacturing and Logistix Campus on the old ALCOA site. The T1 project looks to create up to 1,800 new manufacturing jobs at full build-out. T1 announced their facility groundbreaking in December 2025 with a projected opening and start of production at then end of 2026.

Accomplishments

Industrial Product

Purchased 100-acre tract for new industrial park; completed required site documentation; selected development firm for master developer agreement.

Marketing

MDD joined Team Texas as a bronze sponsor for business recruitment. Participated in the following marketing activities:

- Small town road show - Los Angeles, CA (Nov. 2024) and New York City (Nov. 2025)
- Select USA - May 2025, Washington DC
- Consultant Forum - Waco, Texas, August 2025
- Chicago road show - August 2025
- SemiCon West trade show - Phoenix, AZ, October 2025

Increased LinkedIn presence to 2,728 followers (+159 from 2024).

Joined the KoreaTexas Forum and Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce for networking and lead generation.

Project Pipeline

Prospect Lead Responses	51
Prospect Site Visits	(5) Big Chill, Green Potion, Orange Venus, Ignition Point, Jackrabbit
Active Projects:	(3) Project Ewers, Ignition Point, and Jackrabbit

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Goal Statement

Rockdale will partner with key stakeholders to take steps to invest in human capital so that new industry locating to the area can rely on a documented talent pipeline.

Objectives

1. Partner with Rockdale ISD and Temple College to facilitate the new college satellite campus in Rockdale
2. Identify local workforce skills needs and work to fill those gaps
3. Engage in workforce/industry outreach activities

Accomplishments

Training Facilities

Assisted Rockdale ISD secure \$5.3 million in Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant funding for the new College and Career Center.

The projected opening for the College and Career Academy is Spring 2026.



2024 Community Business Survey Results

71% of survey respondents indicated that recruiting or retaining employees is very to somewhat challenging.

45% said it is very to somewhat challenging to find unskilled labor; however, 40% said it's not a problem.

67% responded that it is very to somewhat challenging to find skilled workers.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Goal Statement

Building upon improvements in Rockdale's quality of place, Rockdale will be able to deliver quality housing for all price points.

Objectives

1. Position Rockdale as a community of choice in the Central Texas region by leveraging recent quality of place investments for those working in Rockdale or in a commutable distance – help induce demand.
2. Create a pipeline of housing development projects into the Rockdale market – help create supply.

Accomplishments

Increasing Housing Supply

New home construction in Cornerstone started in February 2024.



Had visits with multiple potential developers and homebuilders to increase awareness of the Rockdale market.

Assisted developer with the new Rockdale Ridge subdivision, a 400 +/- residential development on the west side of the city.

New home construction permits issued: 34

	Planned Lots	Homes Built	Percent Build Out	Homes Purchased	Absorption Rate
Cornerstone	672	78		61	78%
Republic Ridge	234	0			
Total	906	78	8.6%		

RETAIL EXPANSION

Goal Statement

Rockdale will grow into a retail and commercial hub for the Greater Milam County area and capture retail leakage, ensuring imported dollars circulate multiple times in the community before flowing out.

Objectives

1. Create retail/commercial development concepts
2. Market these concepts to candidate companies

Accomplishments

Entered into contract agreement with Retail Strategies for retail recruitment efforts.

Attended the 2025 ICSC Red River(January 2025) and Austin Retail Live! (September 2025) trade shows

New Downtown businesses: Rockdale Outfitters and Texas Country Title



Conducted local traffic count study – (October 2024). Highest traffic count location – 22,000 vehicles per dday!

New Auto Zone built and opened in May 2025.



New Dusty Boots Arena opened in Fall 2025.



Façade grants awarded:

The Rockdale MDD completed six facade grant projects in 2025: Texas Medical Distributors - a 'digital facade' for an e-commerce platform; Liberty Family Dental and Di-Hard Fitness - new signage; Integrity Roofing and The Tint Shop - facade improvements.



MDD Sales Tax from Retail and Restaurants

The Rockdale MDD continues to receive additional sales tax revenue from retail and restaurants.

The data also show a pattern of approximately 75% of sales tax revenue coming from consumer activity.

	Retail and Restaurant Total	Percent Growth	% Retail and Restaurants to Total
FY 2021	368,853		82%
FY 2022	410,516	11%	74%
FY 2023	419,248	2%	65%
FY 2024	440,477	5%	76%
FY 2025	447,105	1.5%	72%

MDD Sales Tax from Local Businesses and Retailers

The synthesis of these three data points reflects a stable, consumer-based local economy. Consumer spending patterns reflect additional on-line shopping. These stable numbers when paired with an expanding total allocation reflects that growth is coming from non-local, non-consumer sources. Specifically, sales tax growth has come from one-time payments from non-traditional sources.

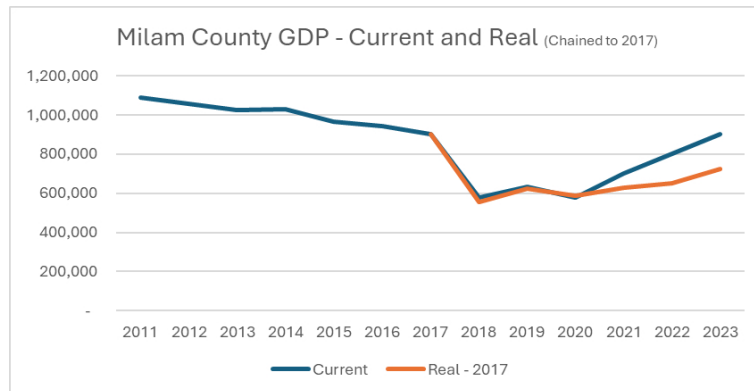
	Total Sales Tax Allocation	Allocation from Local Businesses	Percent Local
FY 2022	556,178	396,387	71%
FY 2023	513,541	394,009	77%
FY 2024	579,464	395,046	68%
FY 2025	622,403	397,614	64%

	Total Retail Allocation	Allocation from Local Retailers	Percent Local
FY 2022	327,923	253,781	77%
FY 2023	338,566	265,557	78%
FY 2024	351,894	265,944	76%
FY 2025	359,605	265,786	74%

COMMUNITY / ECONOMIC METRICS

Milam County Economy and Business

The Milam County gross domestic product (GDP) figures are delayed and will not be released until February 2026.



	Current GDP	Real GDP - 2017
2011	1,091,014	
2012	1,055,451	
2013	1,026,659	
2014	1,030,414	
2015	965,484	
2016	944,564	
2017	900,706	900,706
2018	577,854	556,058
2019	634,209	623,476
2020	577,148	588,790
2021	700,708	630,690
2022	801,674	653,270
2023	904,461	722,426

Labor Market

The labor market picture in Milam County continues to show strength. For FY 2025 (1st & 2nd quarters), there were 149 new private sector (all industries) jobs. However, not all of these jobs are in Rockdale.

	Milam County Jobs	New Jobs
FY 2022	4,221	
FY 2023	4,603	382
FY 2024	4,676	73
FY 2025	4,825	149

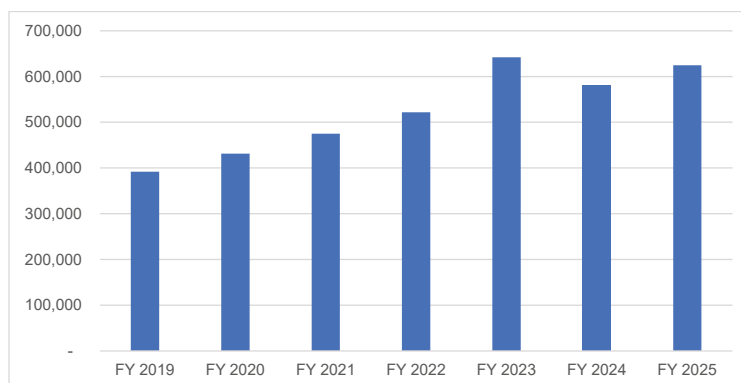
The County labor force is showing strong resilience and a return to levels when ALCOA was operating.

Milam County	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Civilian Labor Force	9,780	9,708	9,873	10,191	10,338	11,026	11,815
Employed	9,280	9,074	9,209	9,731	9,872	10,543	11,297
Unemployment	500	634	664	460	466	483	518
UE Rate	5.10	6.55	6.73	4.52	4.51	4.34	4.39

Fiscal Measures

Sales tax is considered to be a good proxy for a local economy's health.

In FY 2023, the MDD received a large one-time payment, which makes FY 2024 appear to be a very down year. FY 2025 saw a rebound of 7.6%, mostly coming from one-time payments



FY 2020	431,397
FY 2021	475,038
FY 2022	521,573
FY 2023	641,860
FY 2024	580,752
FY 2025	624,621

Financial Performance

The Rockdale MDD outperformed its budget by spending less than it earned, adding another 10% to its unobligated fund balance. The MDD did more marketing and outreach in FY 2025 while completing a record five facade grant projects.

The industrial park land acquisition was booked in FY 2026. The MDD issued a \$1.7 million loan for the land purchase and other property development. This preserves the MDD's liquidity and ability to execute on other opportunities.

		FY 2025 Amended Budget	FY 2025 Actual
REVENUE			
	Sales Tax	617,400	624,621
	Interest	25,000	72,531
	Total	642,400	697,152
EXPENDITURES			
	Personnel	250,000	218,146
	Board of Directors	7,200	1,987
	Economic Development	1,357,800	282,112
	Community Marketing	21,400	34,112
	Professional Development	9,600	1,738
	Contractual Service	73,900	82,983
	Supplies	15,600	12,632
	Maintenance	9,700	11,186
	Total	1,745,200	644,896

Beginning Fund Balance	1,502,88
Change in Fund Balance	52,255
Ending Fund Balance	1,555,144
Project Reserve	1,100,000
Net Fund Balance	455,144
% Net Fund Balance to Revenue	65%