



# The Dallas-Fort Worth Region

## The Region

The Dallas-Forth Worth metropolitan area is among the fastest growing metropolitan regions in the United States. Between 1990 and 2000, the population grew by 34%, increasing the region's total population to over 5.2 million people. The Dallas-Fort Worth region is also becoming more diverse with 15% of its population being foreign-born compared with the U.S. metropolitan average of 13%.

The Dallas-Fort Worth region has made strides in developing a knowledge-based economy. The region derives major employment from high-tech companies such as Texas Instruments and Electronic Data Systems. Moreover, the telecommunications infrastructure in the area is strong as evidenced by its #6 ranking in online population, 12th in broadband telecommunications capacity, and 5th in Internet backbone. In addition to the region's high-tech industry, other leading industries are wholesale trade, real estate, professional, scientific and technical services, and finance and insurance.

Despite the presence of major Fortune 500 companies such as Exxon Mobil, J.C. Penny, Southwest Airlines and Radio Shack, the region's annual household median income of \$47,418 is below the U.S. metropolitan area average of \$50,163. The region also had a high unemployment rate of 7.1% in 2002, more than double the unemployment rate in 1998 at 3.2%. Finally, the region's poverty rate in 2000 was nearly 11%, compared with the U.S. metropolitan area average of 9%.

## Business-Led Organizations

The Dallas-Fort Worth area has an abundance of business-led organizations. One of the largest is the North Texas Commission (NTC), a regional nonprofit comprised of roughly 400 businesses, cities, counties, chambers of commerce, economic development entities and higher education institutions. It tries to improve the region's economy, infrastructure and lifestyle by leading and directing regionally cooperative initiatives to accomplish objectives in four primary areas: transportation, aviation, environment and long-range strategies.

The other major business interests in the region are represented by the Greater Dallas Chamber, the Dallas Citizens Council and the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. The Greater Dallas Chamber's mission is to unite and engage the Dallas region's business community and provide dynamic business and civic leadership to develop and sustain a prosperous economy and a vibrant community. The Greater Dallas Chamber's priorities are focused on economic development; international business development; transportation and infrastructure; air quality and environment; work-force preparedness and higher education. The Dallas Citizens Council is a CEO-led

## METRO 8 CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The Metro 8 Chambers of Commerce is a coalition of chambers from Arlington, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio dedicated to improving the quality of life within these metropolitan areas. The Metro 8 Chambers agenda has been focused around numerous public policy and economic development issues, especially air quality and its impact on public health; recruitment of new business; public education; and continued delivery of federal transportation dollars.

The Metro 8 Chambers of Commerce coalition has been successful at gaining full funding for the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, which provides grants and other incentives for improving air quality throughout the state. This is particularly significant because five out of the eight metro cities do not meet federal air quality standards.

business organization that is comprised of prominent business leaders from the Greater Dallas metropolitan area. The goal of the Dallas Citizens Council is to promote a favorable business climate and a good quality of life for all citizens in its constituency. Finally is the Fort Worth Chamber, whose mission is to carry out the interests of its members by assuming a leadership role in ensuring that Fort Worth is an attractive place in which to live, work and do business.

### Regional Business-Civic Landscape

The Dallas-Fort Worth area is a region rich with business-led organizations. Over the years, these organizations have tried to increase the level of cooperation and collaboration among themselves in order to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity of the region. Up until recently, this has been a major challenge for the business community. The idea of partnering and combining resources to address regional challenges was not always at the forefront of business leaders' agendas. However, because the region has struggled to address some serious regional challenges that are too complex for one organization to tackle on its own, the thinking within the business community has changed. As one business leader stated, "There has been recognition that there must be solutions to regional problems — five years ago people were not thinking regionally. Regional thinking wasn't 'cool' but it has caught hold finally and business leaders are getting it." For example, the Dallas Chamber, the Fort Worth Chamber and the North Texas Commission, in conjunction with other organizations, starting working together on solving urban transportation issues by focusing on state-level policies that support improving the transportation infrastructure within urban areas.

In another example, some of the largest business organizations have joined forces to "brand" the Dallas-Fort Worth area as a competitive region to live and conduct business. Moreover, the Dallas and Fort Worth metropolitan areas are increasingly being perceived as one regional economy. As a result, the Greater Dallas and Fort Worth Chambers put together a branding task force to market the region as a whole.

### THE DALLAS-FORT WORTH BIOMETROPLEX ALLIANCE

The goal of the Dallas-Fort Worth Life Sciences Partnership, the BioMetroplex Alliance, is to make the region a more significant player in both the U.S. and international biotechnology and life sciences industries. The coalition will especially focus on medical-related areas such as pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, and medical devices. The Alliance currently has more than 100 biomedical technology companies ranging from pharmaceutical companies to start-up companies and 1,158 medical research, development and testing laboratories.

*For more information, see [www.dfwlifesciences.org](http://www.dfwlifesciences.org)*

Evidence that the business community is beginning to understand that Dallas' and Fort Worth's future competitiveness is tied to one another is the new Dallas-Fort Worth Life Sciences Partnership, the BioMetroplex Alliance. Formed by a coalition of the Greater Dallas Chamber, the Fort Worth Chamber, the North Texas Commission and the Health Industry Council, the BioMetroplex Alliance is committed to increasing and strengthening the growth of the region's life sciences industry. (See box on this page.)

As the Dallas and Fort Worth metropolitan areas continue to be recognized as one shared regional economy, it is likely that the two chambers will also find themselves working more closely together. One business leader said that the two chambers are already "more cooperative on the economic development front. Rarely are Dallas and Fort Worth viewed as separate anymore. CEOs from both cities are on both Boards."

#### **Business Leadership**

In general, business leaders in the Dallas-Fort Worth area have become more involved with regional issues over the last five years. The rise in business leadership is due primarily to the recognition that along with the government and the public sectors, business has a role to play in finding solutions to the region's many problems. However, business leaders — especially CEOs — have less time available to spend on local and regional issues because so much of their responsibility in a global and international economy consists of traveling and marketing their products around the world.