



Hibbs Brief *Special Edition*

Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research

A Model of a Veteran-Friendly Community

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I am pleased to announce Tyler MSA (Smith County) received the Veteran-Friendly Community (VFC) designation (urban) from the East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG). The unanimous vote showed that Tyler MSA historically has gone above and beyond to honor and support our veterans. Thanks to the Veterans Committee, Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce, for initiating the process. Here are some of the highlights of my research from the application.

Veteran/Military Distinctions

- **Tyler MSA: Texas-Veteran Friendly Community** by East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG), (2025)
- **Purple Heart City** (2014)
- **Military Friendly Schools®**
The University of Texas at Tyler (Silver)
Tyler Junior College (Gold)
- **Sea of Goodwill Award** by Homeward Deployed for supporting transition in education, healthcare and employment (2012).
- **Certificate of Appreciation to East Texas Veterans' Community Council (ETVCC)** by the Department of VA for leadership, collaboration and collective impact on the community (2004).



Why is This Designation Important?

This designation will invite veterans to invest in the community as they may retire, work, continue their education and more. More importantly, this distinction sets a high standard for all our veteran initiatives, ensuring that the quality of service should continue. The Veteran-Friendly Community Designation also serves as a badge of honor, signaling that the community has a strong commitment to provide the necessary resources, services, and opportunities to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families.

A Model of a Veteran-Friendly Community and Quick Facts

Strong Economic Environment: Please see the Hibbs Brief entitled Tyler MSA: A Texas Veteran Friendly Community for specific economic data.

Quality Healthcare: Our new Tyler Centennial VA Clinic is a state-of-the-art facility. The medical community is one of the fastest-growing and most significant industries in Tyler MSA. With four hospitals and a large number of support practices and specialty clinics, Tyler provides world-class healthcare to all of East Texas.

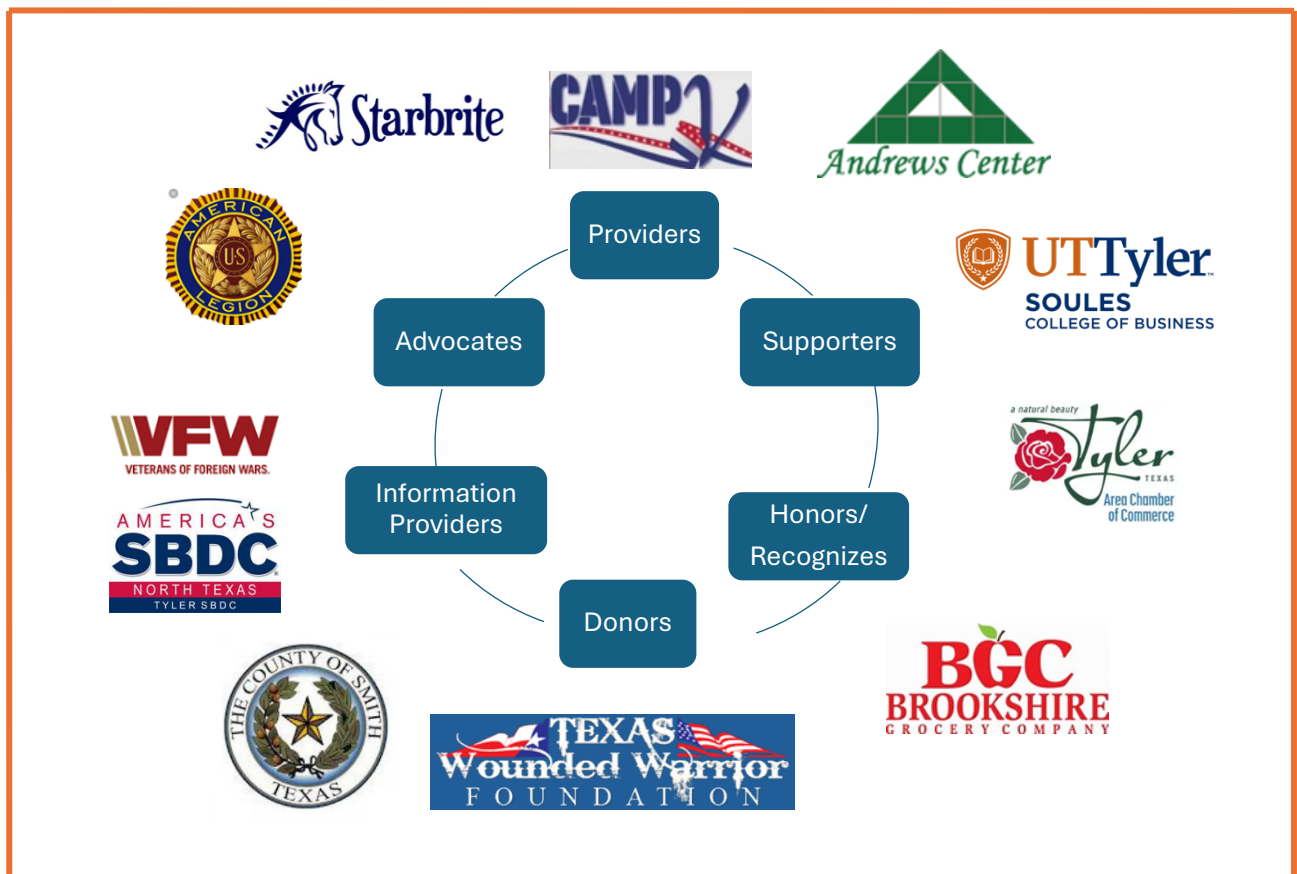
Employment & Career Opportunities: Tyler MSA is an excellent area with several large employers that provide excellent opportunities for veterans. Recent estimates predicted the area’s employment is expected to increase by 2% through 2027.

Educational Opportunities: Many educational, training and career development opportunities are available for the military. Our three colleges and universities have military success centers.

Quality of Life: Tyler has been designated as a great place to work, visit, retire, and raise a family and is ranked No. 8 for best cities for veterans.

Community Support: Our community designation also includes Arp, Bullard, Lindale, Troup, Winona, Whitehouse and other areas. The model below shows excellent examples of providers and organizations that support veterans. I discovered nearly 100 organizations and community initiatives supporting veterans. I would like to recognize the organizations, their volunteers, and their employees who provide services that honor and recognize veterans. The people within these organizations are vital in achieving and sustaining this designation. The model below shows just a few of the excellent examples of types of organizations that support veterans.

Figure 1. A Model of Organizational Support for Military and Veterans



The Future

As we honor our veterans, I offer these important goals to sustain a veteran-friendly community:

- Increase awareness of services.
- Provide current and accurate information and assistance.
- Continue to improve the processes and services of providers.
- Coordinate and partner with other organizations.
- Assess the need for new initiatives.

Message from Krist Swimberghe, Dean of the Soules College of Business

“We at UT Tyler and the Soules College of Business support this veteran-friendly initiative. I am proud to be part of a community and a university that recognizes that the opportunities that are provided to all of us are because of the sacrifices made by veterans of the past, present and future. Therefore, we owe it to veterans and their families that they can live the best quality of life.”

Read the full report — [Tyler MSA: A Model of a Veteran-Friendly Community](#)

Hibbs Institute References on Veteran-Friendly Community

Young, M.(2024) [Tyler Metropolitan Statistical Area \(MSA\): A Texas Veteran Friendly Community.](#)

Young, M. (2022) [Tyler, Texas: Becoming More Military & Veteran Friendly.](#)

Young, M. (2020) [Veterans as Emerging Entrepreneurs.](#)

Hibbs Institute References in the Application

Reyes, M. (2023). “[The Hibbs Institute Health Index: Examining Health Conditions in Tyler and Other Cities in the Region.](#)” Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research, Soules College of Business, The University of Texas at Tyler.

Reyes, M. & Cuellar, C. (2023). “[Spreading Kindness and Generosity: Nonprofits, Fundraising and Volunteering in East Texas.](#)” Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research, Soules College of Business, The University of Texas at Texas at Tyler.

Reyes, M. (2020) “[The Number of Restaurants is Growing in the Tyler MSA.](#)” Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research, Soules College of Business, The University of Texas at Tyler

Reyes, M. & Mabry, R. (2018), “[Importance of Religious Organizations in Tyler \(MSA\).](#)” Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research, Soules College of Business, The University of Texas at Tyler.

The Hibbs Institute has created a [LinkedIn](#) page that frequently releases business and economic information. Follow our page for future brief updates, announcements and links to our periodic publications.