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Economic development alive and well in Deer Park

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Posted: Monday, February 15, 2010 12:00 am | Updated: 5:24 pm, Sat Nov 20, 2010.

By [RICHARD TEW](#) | [0 comments](#)

Geographically, Deer Park occupies a relatively small footprint. However, its spirit and its drive to constantly improve is something that transcends any perceived boundaries.

Debbie Westfeld, who was recently hired as the economic development administrator for the city of Deer Park, is tasked with bringing in new business along with helping existing business succeed within the city.

As someone who has seen roles leading roles in economic development with the city of Houston, along with the city of La Porte, Westfeld is no stranger to the business of encouraging business.

Having only been in her new position a few months, Westfeld stays busy making important contacts with local land owners, business owners and those looking to possibly locate their place of business in Deer Park.

The idea of hiring an economic development administrator was something that has been discussed at the city for some time.

"The economic development committee made a recommendation that the community needed an economic development coordinator," said Gary Jackson, assistant city manager. "We are proactively encouraging both expansions of existing business, as well as creating opportunities of new businesses in town."

Westfeld said the north part of the city is the most active for development at present.

"The Deerwood Glen business park is just booming; then there's the Deer Park distribution center, which is doing well too," said Westfeld.

Concerning retail, "You hear there's no movement in retail, although I'm seeing different in Deer Park," she said.

Westfeld also said she hears from residents that they want sit-down restaurants, so there is a push to encourage those businesses to locate in the area. The new Bullritos and Buffalo Wild Wings eateries attest to the push to bring more dining options to the city.

Both the chemical and petroleum industry drives the port region. The Economic Alliance Houston-Port Region is the economic development corporation for the Houston Ship Channel.

The Economic Alliance's President Chad Burke explains the goals and ambitions of the alliance, "What we do is try to grow and to market this economy and this region. We do everything we can to improve the business and the economic environment for all of our companies and at the same time, trying to improve the quality of life for the people that live here and that work out in the plants, that work with the service companies or work on the ship channel."

The Economic Alliance fights for business not only at the local level, but also at the state and federal level through their "Public Policy Task Force."

The Economic Alliance contains membership not only from local business, but from cities such as Deer Park and municipalities including Harris County who belong to the Economic Alliance which gives a powerful and unified voice to the causes of the Economic Alliance champions in the political arena.

Among the current projects the Economic Alliance is currently involved in are both the "Project Stars" and the

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"Gateway project." Cities like Deer Park that lie along the Houston Ship Channel are eligible for grant monies, which help offset costs associated with constructing monuments and historic murals that are erected at entry points and major corridors leading into the city.

The structures can be used to not just beautify, but tap into the historical significance of the area.

Through matching grants from the Port of Houston and the Houston-Galveston Council, cities interested in these projects can qualify for up to \$98,000 that can be used to offset grants.

"We're trying to improve our image so that people can be proud to live on this side of town," said Burke.

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