



**CITY OF
LA PORTE,
TEXAS**



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LA PORTE,
TEXAS



On the shores of Galveston Bay near Houston, Texas the City of La Porte, Texas has a lot to offer its residents, including a vibrant petrochemical industry, award-winning schools, and a business-friendly climate. This city of 35,000 people is known for its quality of life and innovative business development.

The Heart of the Petrochemical Industry... and more

Written by Leon Bracey

Scott D. Livingston, Economic Development Coordinator for the City of La Porte, spoke with *Business in Focus* about the city and why it is not only a great place to work, but also a great place to live.

"La Porte offers warm hospitality and small-town charm with a pro-business attitude," Livingston says. "Its friendly citizens, cool summer breezes, and proximity to the natural beauty of Galveston Bay make La Porte a superb choice for businesses that are considering a new location or expansion in the Greater Houston Area."

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The Petrochemical Industry has had a longtime presence in La Porte. Petroleum, petrochemical, and specialty chemical companies from all over the world maintain business operations in the city. In fact, the key combination of resources that exist in the area have made it an integral part of the second

largest petrochemical cluster in the world. Companies in the area are known for transforming natural resources such as oil and natural gas into the materials needed to make essential consumer products such as cosmetics, gasoline, jet fuel, lubricants, pharmaceuticals, electronics, building supplies, household goods, clothes, plastics, automobile parts and thousands of other everyday household items.

The city is also adjacent to the Port of Houston, which is the busiest port in the United States in foreign tonnage and the second-busiest in the United States in terms of overall tonnage.

Two industrial districts lie within the City of La Porte's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) – the Bayport Industrial District and the Battleground Industrial District. Within these districts, the City has established incentives to encourage economic growth, retention, and expansion. La Porte also offers incentives for new and/or expanding manufacturing facilities, regional distribution centers, offices, restaurants, retail, and family-oriented entertainment.

The City of La Porte is also active in the Texas Enterprise Zone Program, which allows local communities to partner with the State of Texas to promote job creation and capital investment ►

▶ in economically distressed areas. With this program, companies may qualify for refunds of state sales tax paid on eligible items used at the business site. The total amount of any refund is predicated on the investment amount and number of jobs created and retained at the qualified business site. In order to qualify, companies must commit that at least 25 percent of their new employees will meet economically disadvantaged or enterprise zone residence requirements.

“The Texas Enterprise Zone Program allows local communities to partner with the State of Texas to promote job creation and capital investment in economically distressed areas.”

To encourage qualified research, businesses in Texas may qualify for either an exemption in state sales and use tax for the purchase, lease, rental, storage or use of depreciable tangible personal property directly used in qualified research, or a franchise tax credit based on qualified research. Also, Texas businesses are exempt from paying state sales and use tax on the purchase of machinery exclusively used in processing, packing,

or marketing agricultural products by the original producer at a location operated by the original producer. This incentive is also applicable for natural gas and electricity consumed by companies that use more than 50 percent of their utilities for the manufacture, processing or fabrication of tangible personal property.

The City of La Porte has a large number of petrochemical companies within and near the city, many of which have had a longtime presence in the area.

Dow Chemical has had substantial operations in La Porte since first purchasing the facility in 1985. Dow’s facility covers 139 acres and is located near the Houston Ship Channel. Initially constructed to produce isocyanates, Dow’s operations in La Porte have expanded and the facility has become a leader in polyurethane production.

Occidental Chemical Corporation also has extensive facilities in La Porte. Occidental is a leading North American manufacturer of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) resins, chlorine, and caustic soda, which are key ingredients in a variety of products such as plastics, pharmaceuticals and water treatment chemicals. Other Occidental Chemical products include caustic potash,

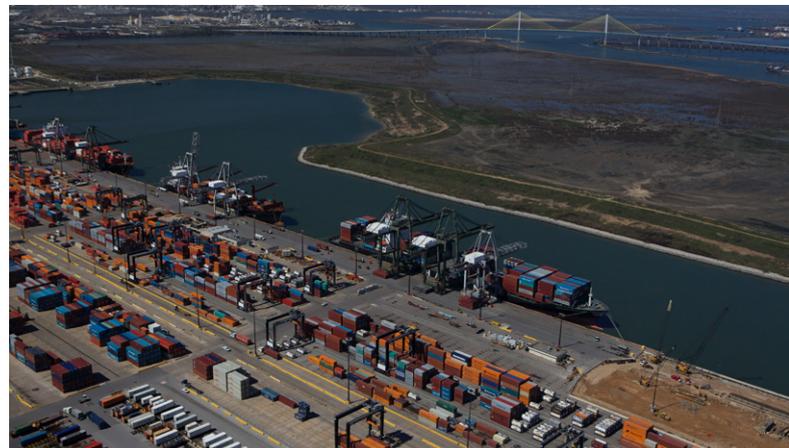


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chlorinated organics, sodium silicates, chlorinated isocyanurates and calcium chloride.

Belgian chemical company Solvay also boasts extensive operations in La Porte. With one of the largest portfolios of chemical products aimed at critical applications such as pollution control, water treatment, pharmaceutical and consumer packaging, Solvay's La Porte plant is the world's leading producer of hydrogen peroxide and its derivatives.

Despite the petrochemical industry's strong presence, La Porte is better known for numerous historical and recreational attractions. Several of the more well-known attractions in La Porte include the San Jacinto Monument, San Jacinto Museum of History, and San Jacinto Battleground, where Texas fought and won the battle for Texas' Independence from Mexico in 1836. The city is also the final resting place of the Battleship Texas, which is the last remaining "dreadnought" (big-gun) battleship. Commissioned on March 12, 1914, the Battleship Texas served in both World Wars and was the first U.S. battleship to launch an airplane and to house anti-aircraft guns. La Porte is also home to Sylvan Beach, which is the only public beach in Harris County, the Houston Yacht Club, which was organized in 1897 and is the oldest yacht club in Texas, and the Bay Forest ▶



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► Golf Course, which is a highly-rated, municipally-owned course.

Notably, the La Porte Independent School District is highly rated and recently passed a \$260 million bond referendum to build new schools and update the facilities at older campuses that will improve the quality of education for the children in the school district.

Livingston says that the city is making more of an effort to raise the profile of these attractions and amenities and attract more upscale commercial development to the city. "We actively attract new investment to spur new development and redevelopment throughout the city," he shares. "We particularly wish to attract more full service hotels and resorts, restaurants, retail, family-oriented entertainment, and unique business establishments on Main Street."

"We actively attract new investment to spur new development and redevelopment throughout the city."

La Porte's Main Street district has re-emerged as a thriving downtown community over the past few years. As an important element of La Porte's history, Main Street offers a hometown atmosphere in a unique setting along Galveston Bay. Main Street is also home to several events such as Art Walk on Main, Sunset Sip & Stroll Farmers' Market, Mardi Gras in February of each year, and Christmas on Main.

"La Porte's Main Street offers a hometown atmosphere in a unique setting along Galveston Bay."

In response to requests for a meeting and gathering place, Five Points Plaza was completed in March 2010 and features a fountain, free wifi, benches, and a performance pavilion. The economic development corporation also purchased property and land abutting the plaza so the property may be developed into space that will further revitalize the downtown area in the future.

Additionally, 7.5 acres on the waterfront are owned by the city and available for commercial development – this acreage is adjacent to a 35 acre public park called Sylvan Beach Park. Sylvan Beach underwent a re-nourishment project in 2010 and today gives residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy 2,000 linear feet of sandy beaches. In addition to new sand, the



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project also included the creation of walkways and benches along the beach for people to enjoy.

95 acres of land are also available between the Houston Grand Parkway and the Bay Forest Golf Course for a full service hotel / resort, restaurants, retail, family-oriented entertainment, offices, and residential development; and, along Galveston Bay and Little Cedar Bayou, 45 acres are available for a full service hotel resort and complementary development complex.

"La Porte is the figurative 'hole in the retail-commercial donut.' Retail exists all around us in Deer Park, Pasadena, Baytown, Clear Lake, and Webster, but the citizens of La Porte have been overlooked and under-served in almost every category of retail. Over 380,000 people with a household average of \$72,000 reside in our primary trade area. Our own citizens make an average income of \$75,000 per year, and they want more places and options to spend their money in their own community." While surrounding cities have an abundance of retail, La Porte has historically lagged in bringing retail to the city. Livingston hopes to change that and feels that the available land and incentives will encourage new, desired business development. La Porte offers Texas-sized opportunities to visionary entrepreneurs and investors who see the need for new retail,

restaurants, and family-oriented entertainment development in La Porte.

"Texas-sized opportunities are plentiful in La Porte for eager retailers, restaurants, and developers."

Already one of the most well-known petrochemical processing areas in the world, the City of La Porte today is showing that it is a well-rounded place with a lot to offer to both residents and visitors alike. As the city works to attract more desired businesses, Mr. Livingston sums up what makes La Porte a great place for businesses and people alike to invest.

"La Porte's citizens and the employees in our industries are hard-working Americans, who are essential to the United States' economic recovery and shift toward independence from foreign oil," he says. "The City of La Porte actively supports its existing businesses, and the City encourages its existing businesses to expand their facilities in La Porte and attract their customers to open new facilities in La Porte." ■

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