Deer Park Community Advisory Council

May 18, 2026

Economic Development in Deer Park & Transportation/ Infrastructure Improvements

Debbie Westfield, Economic Development Administrator for the City of Deer Park, provided an overview of several recent and upcoming city projects aimed at improving quality of life and attracting visitors and economic activity to the area. She briefly discussed Deer Park's history and noted its designation as the "Birthplace of Texas."

Debbie highlighted the new 56,000-square-foot Jimmy Burke Activity Center, which replaced the original aging facility and now serves as a modern convention and event center capable of hosting both small gatherings and large events of up to 1,500 people. She also discussed the adjacent Ella and Friends Dog Park, a two-acre sports-themed park featuring splash areas and play features that is free and open to the public.

Additional projects included the new Municipal Courts Building, expected to open in October, and the recently completed pickleball courts at San Jacinto Park, which are already attracting visitors and leagues. Westbeld also described the Dow Active Complex (DAC), a 66,000-square-foot recreation facility featuring fitness areas, indoor courts, aquatics, exercise classes, and childcare services.

She concluded by discussing the construction of two new fire stations to replace outdated facilities that could no longer accommodate modern equipment. Westbeld encouraged attendees to follow the City of Deer Park Economic Development Facebook page and subscribe to the city's monthly newsletter for updates on projects, businesses, and community events.

Chad Burke with the Economic Alliance provided an overview of the organization's ongoing infrastructure, transportation, workforce development, and public policy efforts throughout the region. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a business-friendly environment in Texas to support industrial growth, employment opportunities, and future development. Burke discussed how tariffs on imported materials recently impacted a local company's planned $20 million expansion, noting that the Economic Alliance worked with officials in Washington, D.C. and Austin to help secure tariff exemptions. He explained that the organization's primary priorities include freight mobility, transportation infrastructure, workforce development, and coastal surge protection.

Burke highlighted the significant growth the region has experienced since the shale revolution and explained that the area has spent more than a decade working to improve transportation infrastructure to support increasing industrial activity and freight movement. He discussed a recent meeting with the Speaker of the

Texas House and regional leaders focused on the need for additional infrastructure funding, noting that infrastructure is expected to be a major focus during the next legislative session.

Several major transportation projects were discussed, including the Highway 225 expansion through La Porte, and the Beltway 8 and Highway 225 direct connectors. Burke explained that the direct connector project required coordination between TxDOT and Harris County after funding challenges delayed the flyover ramps. Construction is currently underway on the first four connectors, with the remaining connectors expected to follow shortly thereafter. He also discussed ongoing resurfacing work on Highway 225 and long-term plans to redevelop the corridor with additional capacity, including the possibility of adding a second deck to portions of the highway.

Burke also addressed future infrastructure needs, including eventual replacement of the Sidney Sherman Bridge due to its age and heavy industrial traffic demands. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of workforce development to support the region's manufacturing and logistics industries. He highlighted partnerships with San Jacinto College and noted that workforce development representatives speak with thousands of students each year about local career opportunities, including high-paying technical careers available through two-year degree programs.

Mike Rowe with Infrastructure Consulting and Engineering provided an update on the ongoing State Highway 225 planning and development effort being conducted for TxDOT. He explained that the current project builds upon the previously completed Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study conducted approximately five years ago. The current phase of work extends from Preston Road to Barbours Cut and focuses on advancing the project into the schematic environmental and preliminary design stages. Rudd stated that the team will complete environmental documentation and approximately 30% design work, which will allow future designers to advance the project into final design and eventual construction.

Rudd explained that the project team is reviewing recommendations from the original PEL study, including potential elevated roadway concepts with dedicated lanes for trucks, passenger vehicles, or HOV traffic. However, updated traffic studies have shown that many trucks exit Highway 225 before reaching Beltway 8 to access warehouses and industrial facilities, making some previously proposed elevated concepts more difficult to justify operationally. As a result, the team is conducting additional traffic and origin-destination studies to better understand freight movement patterns and determine the most effective improvements. He noted that potential improvements could include widening existing lanes, improving frontage roads, and refining concepts proposed during the earlier study.

He also noted that TxDOT's current resurfacing work along Highway 225 will improve ride quality and roadway conditions but will not address the long-term traffic capacity issues facing the corridor. Rudd stated that the overall goal of the project is to improve mobility and accommodate future traffic growth throughout the corridor.

Rudd concluded by explaining that stakeholder workshops are anticipated later this year, likely in October or November, to gather input from agencies, stakeholders, and the public regarding desired improvements and project priorities. Feedback from those meetings will be incorporated into updated schematics before future public meetings are held as the project advances.

Read about DPCAC meetings and see summaries of our most recent presentations at www.deerparkcac.org.

DPCAC's August 24th meeting will feature *Texas Molecular Deer Park's New Mercury Disposal Technology.*

Visitors are welcome! For an invitation, contact annelgowan@gmail.com.