

A Reprint from *Tierra Grande*, the Real Estate Center Journal

The Long View of Longview



By Jennifer S. Cowley

Nineteenth-century railroad surveyors gave the City of Longview its name, noting the impressive distance that could be seen from the area. Situated on I-20 and within the U.S. Highway 80 corridor, this vibrant community was chosen one of "America's 50 Hottest Cities" in the January 2000 issue of *Expansion Management* magazine. Dallas is 125 miles to the west; Shreveport lies 60 miles east.

The Longview-Marshall metropolitan area's population grew 7.7 percent between 1990 and 2000 to reach 208,780. The 2000 Census reports that Longview's population is 73,344, while Marshall is home to 23,935.

Longview is a manufacturing employment hub, with 20 percent of workers (more than 10,000 people) employed in the manufacturing sector. The industrial market is dominated by light manufacturing, with some distribution. The area's major employers include nearly 40 manufacturing companies. The largest, Texas Eastman Company, has 2,770 employees. Others include LeTourneau, Inc., Trinity Industries, Stemco, Lebus Manufacturing, Anvil Products and Dresser Industries.

The Longview area has seen significant job growth in the last year. According to the Longview Economic Development Corporation, about 530 new jobs were added and \$13.5 million in new investment was made in the retail sector between November 1999 and March 2001. AAON, Inc., added 50 jobs in 2001, bringing their employee total to 300. Fleetwood Industries hired 200 people to produce recreational vehicles. Longview Asphalt added 50 new jobs and expanded its facility in 2000.

Dana Corp. plans to build a new automotive component manufacturing plant in the Longview Business Park that will employ 450 when completed. A new Home Depot store, representing a \$5 million investment, will create about 130 jobs. Lone Star Steel is expected to hire an additional 100 employees, bringing its total employees to 1,600.

In Marshall, Black and Decker added 25 new employees and BICC General, a cable company, will add 15. An electricity



WORK IS UNDER WAY on Dana Corp.'s automotive component manufacturing plant (top) in the Longview Business Park. A Neiman Marcus distribution center (above) anchors the park.

generating plant planned for Harrison County will employ 25 to 30.

Employment activity is occurring in other cities in the Longview-Marshall MSA as well. In Kilgore, Orangex-Intercast, an iron casting unit, will employ 43 people. Construction of the Constellation Power Plant in Gilmer will create 350 construction jobs. The plant will have 25 permanent jobs when completed.

Frank Chaney of Coldwell Banker Commercial estimates industrial property rental rates range from \$1.20 to \$3 per

square foot. Warehouse and distribution companies are attracted to the area because of its I-20 location.

The 483-acre Longview Business Park at I-20 and U.S. Highway 259 underwent road and infrastructure improvements

in 1999. The Longview Economic Development Corporation (LEDCO) plans a speculative 100,000-square-foot shell building to encourage companies to relocate to the park, which is anchored by a Neiman Marcus distribution center.

The 512-acre Kilgore Business Park is under construction on FM 349, east of the Texas Highway 31 and U.S. Highway 359 intersection and adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Distribution facilities will be targeted in an effort to diversify the area beyond oil-related industries. The Kilgore Economic Development Corporation sold \$2.9 million in bonds to fund the park's infrastructure and another \$2 million to construct a building shell to encourage development. The infrastructure is completed and construction of the building began in 2001.

Employment growth in the area has fueled new home construction. During 2000, 201 single-family permits were issued in the MSA. Seventy-two new homes were permitted in the first half of 2001.

The average sales price of houses reported sold through the Longview-Marshall MLS continues to increase, as does the number of homes sold. During 2000, 1,622 homes were reported sold, up 2.4 percent from 1,584 in 1999.

The Longview-Marshall MSA is expected to continue to grow with the area's strong manufacturing segment leading the way.

For more information on the Longview-Marshall area, see the 2001 Longview-Marshall Real Estate Market Overview, available on the Real Estate Center website at <http://recenter.tamu.edu>.

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Tierra Grande (ISSN 1070-0234), formerly *Real Estate Center Journal*, is published quarterly by the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-2115. Subscriptions are free to Texas real estate licensees. Other subscribers, \$20 per year.

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