

# The BEST of BOTH WORLDS

Lufkin offers **BIG-CITY** amenities  
in a **SMALL-TOWN** package.

by RON STARNER

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**R**enowned economic development expert Jack Schultz wrote the book, “Boomtown USA: The 7½ Keys to Big Success in Small Towns,” 15 years ago. In it, he profiled some of the more remarkable economic success stories of our time in rural America.

Were he to write that book today, there’s a good chance that Exhibit A would be Lufkin, Texas.

An East Texas community of 36,000 people 90 minutes northeast of Houston, Lufkin

punches well above its weight class in economic development performance. Consider this: most towns its size go an entire year and don’t register even one corporate facility expansion project. In the most recent fiscal year, the community landed eight expansion projects totaling \$178 million in capital investment and 532 new full-time jobs.

To put that into perspective, metro Atlanta would have to generate 88,500 new jobs over 12 months to equal that performance on a per capita basis. In other words, the one-year track record turned in by Lufkin is not only elite; it is game-changing.

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The projects came from companies large and small. Lockheed Martin, a global aerospace and defense conglomerate with \$54 billion in worldwide revenues last year, selected Lufkin for a \$4-million capital investment that creates 125 new full-time jobs. Twin Disc, a Racine, Wisconsin-based manufacturer of power transmission equipment for land and marine-based products, chose Lufkin for a 50-job, \$6.5-million investment that is the firm’s first outside of Wisconsin in the company’s 100-year history.

These two companies were joined in the 2018-2019 investment parade by Angelina Forest Products (\$120 million, 110 jobs); Sterling Lumber (\$30 million, 150 jobs); Overseas Hardwoods (\$3 million, 32 jobs); American eChem (\$8 million, 25 jobs); Angelina Tank (\$1 million, 25 jobs); and Hammer Equipment (\$5 million, 15 jobs).

Workforce, transportation and quality of life lured these investors. Anthony Pittman, site director for the Lockheed Martin plant, says Lufkin was chosen for the 30,000-sq.-ft. expansion due to a strong customer base and partnerships in the area. “Our partnership with the Lufkin Economic Development Corp. is strong,” says Pittman. “A qualified workforce was one of the drivers. This will bring additional high-wage jobs with added benefits to the community. We’re looking for a variety of manufacturing, engineering and finance workers. Those critical skills sets are available here in good supply.”

John Batten, CEO of Twin Disc, says his firm chose Lufkin for a new 50,000-sq.-ft. facility on a 20-acre tract because “we needed to find an outlet for production from our facility on Lake Michigan in Racine. Our radius kept getting longer for employees. We were bursting at the seams. We started looking at areas around Houston, the Gulf Coast, Florida and as far north as Charleston, South Carolina. A friend recommended Lufkin, and we decided to come tour the community and visit potential sites. Far and away, Lufkin rose to No. 1 on our list. The incredible employee base, proximity to Port

of Houston, and the support we received from the community sealed the deal. Everywhere we went, I’ve never seen a community more aligned behind supporting a company project than what I’ve seen in Lufkin.”

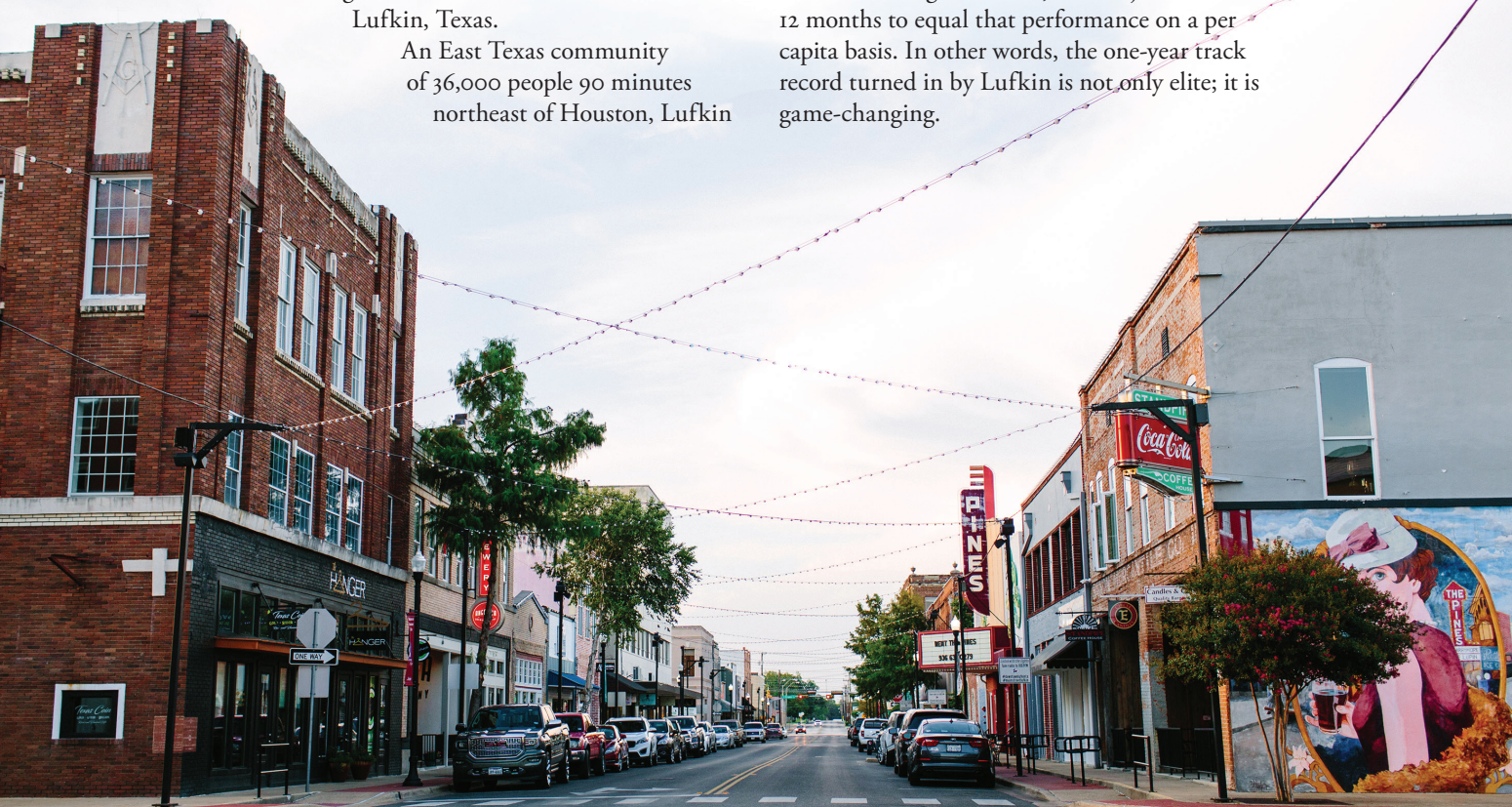
Bob Samford, economic development director for the Lufkin EDC, says Lufkin checks every box for employers, including the one that every community talks about: quality of life. “We have the No. 1 bass fishing lake in the U.S. at the Sam Rayburn Reservoir, one of the top golf courses in Texas, a very nice and historic downtown, a state-of-the-art performing arts center, and Angelina College, known for its ability to tailor vocational trainings to suit the needs of industries moving into the area, especially manufacturing.”

Another plus is that Lufkin will soon be designated the newest Foreign Trade Zone in Texas, one of just 32 in a state of 1,216 cities. “We’re uniquely situated in East Texas near the Gulf Coast,” says Samford. “We’re the regional medical and retail hub for 12 counties, with a 36,000-resident population that swells to over 100,000 daily because of our workforce. We have a very generous incentives plan offered by the city and a tax abatement schedule. The city offers job tax credits and incentive money to help with construction costs. We have multiple 100-acre tracts, all with available sewer and water, either on or near state highways.”

Two railroads serve Lufkin, including class one rail by Union Pacific. Houston’s Bush International Airport is just 90 minutes away, and the community’s average commute time is just 10 minutes. Other benefits include a cost of living that’s 12% below the national average, 65 million gallons per day of excess water supply, and a 12-county labor pool of 145,000.

More importantly, notes Samford, “we want people to know that we are winners. Other companies want to be around positive, leading people in industry. That’s exactly what you’ll find in Lufkin.” ▼

This investment profile was prepared under the auspices of the Lufkin EDC. For more information, go to [www.LufkinEDC.com](http://www.LufkinEDC.com).



Historic downtown Lufkin Photo courtesy of Lufkin EDC