

DAYTON, TEXAS

On the cusp of Houston,  
community poised for  
much growth

# THE FRIENDLY TOWN



## AT A GLANCE

### DAYTON, TEXAS

- WHAT:** The city of Dayton, Texas
- WHERE:** Dayton, Texas
- WEBSITE:** [www.cityofdaytontx.com](http://www.cityofdaytontx.com)

It's a city on the move.

It's Dayton, Texas, and it's the kind of place that will make you want to don a Stetson, some well-worn jeans and snakeskin boots and wave at your neighbor.

We recently spoke with officials from the City of Dayton, including Mayor Caroline Wadzeck (the first woman elected to the city's mayoral position, according to The Houston Chronicle), city manager Kimberly Judge and city secretary Jennifer Billings, and they told us what they love about Dayton.

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### DAYTON, TEXAS

Located in the southeast corner of the LoneStar State, Dayton is a city of right at 10,000 residents, as Wadzeck revealed.

"Well, we still consider ourselves a small town," she said. "We've traditionally been a farming town, particularly rice-farming. As of the early 2000's, we may have about three rice farmers left here. But at one time, it was full of rice farmers. And we have a lot of longtime,

**Houston is growing our way very quickly," Wadzeck observed, adding that construction on a new major highway is now ongoing; a large loop around Houston. "It's the catalyst for a lot of growth that's occurring now, and there's a lot more to come."**

multigenerational families that live here and have lived here since the 1800's. A lot of people know each other. A lot of people here are related. This is the kind of town where you can't talk bad about anybody, because chances are, they're related to somebody else that you're talking about! It's just a very wonderful, friendly town, full of friendly, friendly people. That's why I chose to stay here."

She came to Dayton as a first-year schoolteacher, back in 1971.

"I planned to be gone in two or three years," Wadzeck recalled. "But I've lived here now for 52 years, so that tells you something about the people."

Besides farming, she continued, Dayton's

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history also includes the lumber industry. She cited a former lumber mill that was once a major part of the city's economic tapestry. Plus, it's long been known as a major railway hub.

And Wadzeck credited Ross Sterling (1875-1949) with having a major impact upon Dayton and the state of Texas. Sterling served two years as governor during the worst depths of the Great Depression, nine decades ago, and he later went on to be among the men who founded the Exxon-Mobil oil company, the largest direct descendant of John Rockefeller's Standard Oil, according to the Texas State Historical Association.

With a population greater than 2.3 million, Houston is the largest city in Texas. If it is the sun, possessed of much heat and a mighty gravitational force, Dayton is the moon. And located just more than half an hour away, the former is being pulled into a tighter orbit with the latter.

"Houston is growing our way very quickly," Wadzeck



Caroline Wadzeck



Jennifer Billings



Kimberly Judge

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observed, adding that construction on a new major highway is now ongoing; a large loop around Houston. "It's the catalyst for a lot of growth that's occurring now, and there's a lot more to come."

### **Economic nuts and bolts**

Judge noted the close connection between rail-based transportation and the seaports along the Texas Gulf Coast. Situated not far from Trinity Bay and Galveston, Dayton is almost right-bang on the coast.

"We have a very good working relationship with them," Judge said of the railroad companies. "They're very open-minded to decisions that we have made. We collaborate very well together in making sure that our community is served."

Talking of collaboration, Billings emphasized that the City of Dayton is very big on close co-operation with its residents and maintaining an open dialogue.



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"Absolutely!" she enthused, adding of the local townsfolk, "They can call. A lot of them will stop by (the city hall, located at 117 Cook St. in downtown Dayton). A lot of them will e-mail us. Both Kimberly and the Mayor will avail themselves of talking to the public. It doesn't matter who you are. You don't have to be well known in the community. If folks come in with questions, we either help them ourselves or direct them where they need to go."

Wadzeck spoke of Dayton's mercantile district.

"We have a very small, traditional downtown area," she said. "It was developed at the turn of the 20th century. We've been able to keep a few of our (historic) buildings, but of course many others have been demolished and replaced. But we still have that little core downtown area, where we have events."



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One, a festival known as "Olde Tyme Days," was a very well-attended success, as Wadzeck pointed out. Vintage automobiles, vendor booths, cooking demonstrations and more typified this fun event, as she informed.

And the south side of town boasts a newish community center. This is likewise the home of many events, as the mayor revealed. This center and the downtown hub are the traditional places where Daytonians meet each other to have fun, to shop, to do business and more.

"We want to keep this downtown," said Wadzeck, citing the City's downtown master plan. "We know that growth is going to be occurring to our west.

"We have a lot of needs, as all cities do," she continued, "and we're going to be able to take care of those needs a whole lot better and more quickly if we've got industry coming to town. And we are on the cusp of that."

More industries will in turn mean

economic boons elsewhere, including with Dayton's parks and especially with infrastructure, as Wadzeck emphasized.

Judge stressed the need to ensure the city's utilities can handle this growth. New subdivisions are projected to come in the next three to five years. And with them, of course, come infrastructure, retail, restaurant and coffeehouse establishments (Starbucks, Popeye's, Smoothie King and more), most of them along the major highway corridors.

Judge also cited the economic impact of the nearby Gulf Inland Logistics Park. It's located just half an hour from downtown Houston and the port of Houston, and it's just 45 minutes from the Woodlands and Hobby Airport. Gulf Inland boasts an unmatched location and transportation capabilities, providing the logistics solutions that businesses and industries will need today and in the future.

"I will say, as far as retailers, we'd like to

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see more clothiers, home goods and things of that nature as well," said Judge.

As with all such cities, Dayton wants to put its best collective foot forward in order to make itself more attractive to prospective businesses and industries. Newsletters, social media and Websites have their electronic part to play in such efforts, as Billings noted.

"What we're trying to do is just have more things for people to do," she said, "to have more events and more opportunities and get that information out to our citizens and surrounding cities."

She cited the upcoming Fourth of July events, "Food Truck Fridays" downtown and other such happenings as having a fun and beneficial effect upon Daytonians.

Judge shared Billings's assessment.

"We want people to think of Dayton as a great place to live, work and play," she declared.



"That's what we're trying to create here. We're pushing that and advertising that, throughout our community and into the surrounding areas. We want to keep people here in Dayton."

Wadzeck extolled Judge for her perseverance and efforts.

"Kimberly is very dedicated to serving the residents that are here and not just bringing in the new," she remarked. "We want the new. Certainly, we do. But we want to serve our existing community very, very well. We want them to be proud of where they live. That really impresses us about Kimberly, and she does that every day."

And it would appear that Daytonians agree with Wadzeck, Judge and Billings, and they like the direction in which the city is headed. According to [www.niche.com](http://www.niche.com), recent comments from townfolk include:

*"I've lived in Dayton for quite some time, and it has*



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*been a better experience than other places I have lived. The town is very close together as of attraction sights, stores and food options."*

And:

*"I love the hospitality, and they have great schools. The people are OK. It's very diverse here, which is great, because there is something for everyone here."*

As well as:

*"I like that it's a small, little country town. It is cute, with the cute, little sight-seeing attractions."*

Plus:

*"My husband and I have lived here for 11 months. We bought a cute, renovated block-and-beam home. We love our little neighborhood...I have never experienced such kindness and professionalism by so many police officers."*

*"As we have become more involved with our new town, we are finding that for the most part, this small town is kind and very friendly. We are working on making our mark! Lots of new residential and commercial construction to come. Hope this doesn't take away the old charm."*

And:

*"The people are friendly and there is hardly any traffic. Properties are spaced out, so there is privacy."*

And:

*"We love the people, the big open spaces, the food and the hospitality. Dayton is a very lovely city!"*



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