

COVER STORY

# Avocado facility coming to the city as cold storage businesses expand locally

By Jorge A. Vela  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Already known as the No. 1 land port in the country, the Gateway City is also expanding to become a major player in other transportation businesses such as the cold storage industry. A big step in that direction was the announcement of a deal with California-based company West Pak Avocado, Inc. which will invest nearly \$18 million locally.

“West Pak is a top-notch avocado company that will be investing nearly \$18 million in our community and hiring 140 employees with good pay, great benefits and career advancement opportunities, and they have proven to be excellent corporate citizens wherever they operate,” Laredo Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Gene Lindgren said.

Lindgren said West Pak reached out to them looking for somewhere to start a new facility. West Pak was referred to the organization by a member of the Laredo EDC after learning they were considering a major expansion of their operations on the border.

“Our initial conversations were very positive right from the very beginning, and the West Pak team was impressed with our community’s receptiveness, unity, transparency and overall positive business-friendly atmosphere,” Lindgren said.



Courtesy Photo / West Pak Avocado Inc.

The California-based company West Pak Avocado, Inc. will invest nearly \$18 million locally.

Lindgren said another asset they had to bring West Pak to Laredo was being able to get the city on board right away with what the company had to offer.

“One of our strengths in the community is the use of Team Laredo in attracting and landing great companies here,” Lindgren said. “It many times starts with the Laredo EDC where we utilize the relationships we

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Laredo Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Gene Lindgren

have maintained over decades with developers, banks and commercial property managers. Then we combine efforts with the City of Laredo’s Economic Development Director Teclo Garcia, Laredo City Manager Robert Eads and Laredo College Economic Director Michael Gonzalez.”

Garcia expressed his support and was thrilled about having the client come to the area.

“West Pak is a dream client to work with,” Garcia said. “From the CEO to the operations VP and other personnel, they are completely transparent, willing to work with the City of Laredo, exceed our expectations and genuinely are interested in investing and working with Laredo as they locate a major facility here. West Pak applied for a grant, or property tax rebate, under the Texas Chapter 380 economic incentives program.”

Garcia is excited the facility will bring a lot of permanent jobs to the area.

“West Pak’s facility will create at least 140

and Michoacan, Mexico along with Chile, Columbia and Peru.

Lindgren said bringing large corporations such as West Pak to the area is a growing trend as the city continues to show its economic vitality.

“I believe our Team Laredo approach continues to be a strong advantage along with the City of Laredo sealing the deal with their incentive package that was devel-

oped and approved by our great city council and mayor,” Lindgren said.

According to Lindgren, the community has developed a strong momentum of late in cold storage, especially in perishables, and he said the city plans to continue to leverage the trend.

“We have landed significant investments, well over \$100 million over the last couple years, with companies like Sunset Produce, Nature Fresh Farms, U.S. Cold Storage, Librado Pina, Inc., Mission Produce and now West Pak Avocado,” Lindgren said. “We have a lot to offer these kinds of companies with our location, available talented workforce, innovative educational institutions and great properties coming on line this year.”

According to Garcia, produce logistics, although still a small part of Port Laredo’s more than \$200 billion in annual trade, is a fast-growing sector.

“Half a dozen cold storage and produce facilities have opened or been announced to open soon in Laredo in the last 18 months including West Pak, Mission Produce, Mastronardi, Nature Fresh Farms, Empacadora GAB and more,” Garcia said. “And, most of these are large facilities of 100,000 square feet or more. Consumer demand, changing diets, product price point, sourcing and other factors are driving this new growth.”

jorge.vela@lmtonline.com



Gene Lindgren, Laredo Economic Development Corporation President and CEO.



Courtesy Photo

Teclo J. Garcia, City of Laredo’s Economic Development Director

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### Publisher

Bill Green

### General Manager

Adriana Devally

### Editor

Malena Charur

### Writer

Jorge A. Vela

### Photography

Danny Zaragoza

### Creative Design

Ashley Salas  
Louis San Miguel  
Joseph Veloz  
Rosie Camacho

### Advertising

728-2515  
rcamacho@lmtonline.com  
Araceli Guerra  
728-2513  
araceli@lmtonline.com  
Kazandra Gonzalez

728-2508  
kgonzalez@lmtonline.com  
Amy Gonzalez  
728-2520  
algonzalez@lmtonline.com