

Room to grow:

Mansfield offers development opportunities in south Metroplex



BY BRANDI SMITH

Momentum: it's something you observe as easily in sports (ahem, Super Bowl LI) as you can in the real estate industry. Right now, it's building in Mansfield, a booming city in the southern part of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

In a region recognized nationally for its growth, Mansfield stands out as the fourth fastest-growing city in North Texas. In 2000, the city boasted a population of 28,417, according to the United States Census Bureau. That number today is creeping closer to 70,000 as a number of large, high-profile companies and their employees make the city home.

"While the whole country experienced a recession, we never stopped growing. We're currently building about 500 single-family residences a year and we have a number of high-quality multi-family projects underway, including a large project in our historic area downtown," said Scott Welmaker, the City of Mansfield's Director of Economic Development. "We have about 5,000 planned and platted single-family residential lots right now. There's a tremendous opportunity in the next five to ten years to get in and get started on some retail development to serve those new households."

One catalyst for that residential growth is commercial success. Companies such as Klein Tools, Texas Refinery Corp. and AMC Warehouse are bringing hundreds of jobs to Mansfield.

"This city has a long history of having good management that has maintained growth and a city council that has been pro-business and pro-growth for many, many years," Welmaker said. "The school district certainly can't be overlooked, because it's one of the primary reasons families move here."

Mansfield also offers many different housing opportunities, catering to the needs of employees.

"Whether an industrial prospect looking to relocate and expand or a retailer opening a new site in Mansfield, they will have access to a wide range of employee options," explains Welmaker. "We have executive housing and worker housing with quick access and short commute times."

Those short commute times are courtesy of Mansfield's location in the southern part of the Metroplex.

"The majority of growth has been around the airport and to the north, but my feeling is that a lot of that growth reached its limit. People are starting to see that you can be in the south part of the Metroplex and be much closer to central Dallas and Fort Worth," Welmaker said.

For example, he said, DFW Airport, AT&T Stadium, Globe Life Park, downtown Dallas and downtown Fort Worth are all just 20 to 30 minutes from Mansfield, something that can't be said of suburbs in northern Collin and Denton counties.



Growth in the southern sector has led to development competition between Mansfield and its neighbors, Burleson and Cedar Hill, as well as some of the larger communities within the region.

Mansfield stands out to developers, however, because unlike its neighbors, it has considerable room to grow.

"Because we're adjacent to Grand Prairie and Arlington, they are competition for primarily industrial projects," said Welmaker. "Retail projects tend to migrate to Mansfield because of our high household income. As of last year, our average household income is about \$111,000, which is very attractive to retailers."

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"We have available land in the south part of the city. The city is only about 65 percent built out and we have 12 square miles in our extraterritorial jurisdiction or ETJ. We can annex in the future to continue growing the city and that can't be said of a lot of the other communities in the Metroplex," Welmaker said. "Their fate is sealed on where they're going to grow, so I think there's a lot of opportunities in Mansfield for available land and future growth."

The city also goes above and beyond when working with developers to ensure they get the help and incentives they need to complete a project, including Type A sales tax for industrial development, assistance with infrastructure costs, tax abatement, tax increment financing (TIF) and triple Freeport tax exemption.

"We have a strong industrial sector we are marketing. We're working to bring more product to the market because our occupancy in our industrial is pretty high," said Welmaker. "We have a couple of buildings on the market that are more than 80,000 square feet. There are a few smaller buildings available that are between 20,000 and 30,000 square feet, but they tend to get snapped up pretty quickly."



Lofts on Main Street

But, he added, there are opportunities for developers to bring even more industrial product to the market, including projects up to 120,000 square feet.

"Mansfield is a growing city, so your real estate investments here are going to be secure, probably increase in value, which makes investment a better prospect," Welmaker boasted.

The city isn't just focused on industrial, though; it just broke ground on a large shopping center development near the intersection of Broad St. and U.S. 287. One anchor is already open: the city-owned, but privately managed Fieldhouse USA, a tournament and league facility hosting events for "basketball, soccer, volleyball, flag football and futsal," according to its website.

"We're also starting construction on a new Dallas Stars hockey center," said Welmaker.

The 80,000-square-foot, \$15.1 million Mansfield StarCenter ice arena is scheduled to open in September 2017.

"Those two will be significant anchors in this shopping center, along with three major anchors

and then a lot of shop space, restaurants and pad sites," Welmaker explained.

Just as the city works to bring in more development, it's also focused on making Mansfield even more of a housing destination, a place where employees want to live.

"We're investing a lot of time, money and effort to make Mansfield an exciting, 24-hour, live-work-play community and part of that is in Historic Mansfield," said Welmaker. "We have restaurants under construction, new restaurants that have already come in and existing restaurants that have completely remodeled and upgraded. We're building hike-and-bike paths, connecting to our greenbelt and linear trail system that runs through the city. There's just a whole lot going on in the historic area to make it a shopping, entertainment and dining destination." ●

To contact Welmaker or learn more about development in Mansfield, visit the Mansfield's Economic Development Corporation's website at www.Mansfield-Texas.com.



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