

Keeping up with Collin County: NTX communities experience population explosion, development boom

BY BRANDI SMITH



It's one of those statistics that makes a reader sit up and read it again: between 2010 and 2020, Collin County grew by more than 37 percent, which means a whopping 300,000 more people decided to call the suburban Dallas-area county home.

"People are moving to Collin County from across the region and from across the country," says Joey Grisham, Economic Development Director for the City of Anna.

Anna is one of so many cities helping to fuel that growth. Its population



Dan Bowman



Joey Grisham



Alexis Jackson

doubled in the past decade from 8,200 in 2010 to almost 17,000 in 2020.

"It's all about affordability and quality of life," Grisham says. "We have a great school district. We have excellent access to infrastructure. Plus,

I think people are wanting to move farther out to escape some of the congestion of the city."



Other Collin County communities grew as fast or faster. Celina now boasts a population of nearly 17,000 compared to roughly 6,000 in 2010. In Frisco, which was already one of the county's larger cities, the population nearly doubled from 117,000 in 2010 to 200,000 in 2010. Allen's growth was more contained, but it still added more than 20,000 new residents in the space of ten years.

"As Texas grows, Collin County is really at the epicenter of that growth," says Daniel Bowman, Executive Director and CEO of the Allen Economic Development Corporation.

As the rooftops go up, so too do new commercial real estate projects.

"Our focus is really our 121 Corridor," Bowman says. "We have 550 acres of mixed-use projects that have been zoned by the city council. That's millions of square feet of corporate office surrounded by entertainment districts. It's a live-work-play environment with really compelling retail, restaurants, parks, beer gardens and other areas where people want to gather."

Just this year, The Farm in Allen broke ground on a 135 mixed-use development by JaRyCo. It includes The Hub, an outdoor food hall and entertainment venue that will account for 2.67 acres of The Farm across from West Lake Park. The Katy Trail Ice House also recently announced they would locate a beer garden and smoke house nearby in Allen.

"We are in the business of place-making," says Bowman. "We are creating vibrant entertainment destinations that attract businesses and residents alike."

Companies are also eyeing the region for relocation, lured by the educated and highly skilled workforce residing in Collin County.

"Those people are largely having to commute elsewhere, so bringing the jobs here makes a ton of sense. The name of the game is finding, recruiting and retaining a workforce," Bowman says. "We feel like we have just that fantastic access to human capital here. We also just have a great and well-rounded community."

He adds that, in conversations with those companies, they've told city

leaders they are looking for fantastic live-work-play environments for their employees.

"They want a place where their employees can live, walk to work and grab a beer or bite after work," says Bowman.

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Collin County

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The EDC has taken that information into its discussions with developers, making sure to incorporate density and walkability into new projects, including The Farm and Lucy Billingsley's 238-acre development of the former Howard Hughes Corp. Monarch City site.

"I think, for us, the name of the game is public-private partnerships to create walkable places," Bowman says.

Bowman, who grew up in Allen and has headed up the EDC for the past eight years, stresses that keeping the city's character and hometown pride has been an important part of conversations with developers.

"It's hugely rewarding to be a part of that process," he says.

That's also a priority in Celina.

"We are an innovative, forward-thinking city with a deep commitment to honoring generations upon whose shoulders we stand today," says Alexis Jackson, Executive Director of Economic Development for the city.

She calls the commercial real estate opportunities in Celina endless.

"While our historic downtown area is bustling with business, our massive footprint provides so many locations for business development," Jackson says. "And the EDC is committed to working with businesses who share the passions and heartbeat of our community to assist them getting here and finding the perfect place to flourish and enjoy success."

It's a balancing act, for sure, but Celina EDC works closely with the city to promote wise growth.

"We incentivize businesses that love the culture of this community, share our values, and desire to enhance the quality of life for our residents and those who will be moving here soon," says Jackson. "We feel this is the best place in North Texas to live, work, and raise a family. Our EDC is committed to attracting great businesses that will complement the unique charm of Celina."

Back in Anna, the explosive population growth has, in turn, spurred a big increase in retail and industrial development.

"We are under contract on an industrial park and we're seeing a ton of industrial activity," says Grisham. "It's great for us because it brings primary jobs to Anna so people can work here and not have to commute to another community."

Anna is also seeing an increase in strong mixed-use projects, especially along U.S. 75.

"Those are going to bring a lot of different characteristics to Anna, which will be great for the community to attract different age groups," Grisham says.

He points out that Anna sits on 61 square miles of land, only about 25 percent of which has been developed.

"There's a lot of open land that's available here," says Grisham. "Our city council also has a very pro-growth mindset."

As word of the potential in Anna spread, the phones in the economic development department have been ringing off the hook.

"We're getting so many calls, it's tough to call back in a week," Grisham shares. "There are just so many inquiries because when a developer hears that a community is pro-development, it catches their attention."

It's a great problem to have that Anna, Allen and several other Collin County cities are learning to manage as their incredible population growth results in a development boom.