

NEWS RELEASE

Waxahachie's Local Economy Showing Positive Signs

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(May 13, 2010) Positive economic signs are beginning to be seen in Waxahachie. According to the April 2010 population estimates released by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), Waxahachie has grown to 31,100 residents. This growth represents an average growth rate of 4.01 percent, which is currently the highest average growth rate in Ellis County.

Residential & Commercial Growth

Evidence of positive economic activity can also be seen through an elevated number of both residential and commercial building permits in the last couple of months. The city of Waxahachie issued 19 new building permits for single family homes in March and 18 permits in April of this year. These numbers signify an increase over 12 months ago, when 14 residential permits were issued in March 2009 and 4 issued in April 2009. Country Lane Seniors, Phase Two, will include a subdivision for senior duplex cottages and additional senior apartments.

A flurry of activity is also being seen in commercial development. Several new projects are currently under construction, including Christian Brothers Automotive, Dairy Queen, Comfort Inn & Suites and Family Video. Petsmart and Popeye's Chicken have both applied for building permits with the city.

City leadership is encouraged by the increase in activity. "We are certainly excited about the recent upswing in local development. While the development is encouraging, we are viewing it with a cautious optimism," said city manager Paul Stevens. "The past two years for Waxahachie have been challenging, but we have fared better than some other cities," said Stevens.

Included in the commercial development is Austin Bridge & Road's Maintenance Facility just off of I-35, which is currently under construction and scheduled to be completed in August 2010. This development will offer

approximately 45 jobs. The facility will add over \$40 million in value to the community, including the building and equipment being stored on-site. The extension of water and sewer to this area also opens up more opportunity for development along the I-35 corridor.

Discovering Downtown

Next month, the new Ellis County offices will be open to the public, a move that will bring over 150 employees to the downtown area. Along with the new county offices, the city has constructed an adjoining parking garage that will provide an additional 317 parking spaces. The garage will be free and open 24 hours a day, with security cameras and emergency telephones.

Downtown Waxahachie has also seen a recent boom in new businesses. The historic Rogers hotel re-opened in late 2009 and is now home to offices, a barber shop, coffee shop, restaurant, comedy theater and extended stay rooms. Other new downtown additions include several restaurants, a bakery, salons, and retail. The new businesses are open in time for the tourist and festival season, beginning May 22 with the annual grand opening of the Downtown Farmer's Market.

Sales Tax

During 2009, the city of Waxahachie, along with many other cities in the area, experienced a dramatic decline in sales tax revenues. While revenues are beginning to look a bit more optimistic, it is still too early to judge if the upswing is permanent. "The city has budgeted conservatively in anticipation of lesser sales tax revenues," said Stevens. "So far, we are right on track for the fiscal year."

The latest sales tax collections, which are representative of March 2010, were about \$754,000, which puts the city at half a percent, or nearly \$20,000 ahead of projected collections for the fiscal year.

"We have tried to be proactive in encouraging our citizens to shop locally, and show them how we all enjoy a better quality of life when our dollars stay here," said community relations manager Amy Hollywood. "It's difficult to quantify our efforts, but educating the public is always good, and our recent sales tax revenues are encouraging," said Hollywood.

For more information about development within the city of Waxahachie, please call 972-937-7330, ext. 284.

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