

FM Economic Director: incentives useful, needed

By Stephen Webster

Melissa Glasgow has the extraordinary ability to recall copious facts and numbers at a moment's notice; a talent that certainly plays to the advantage of a woman holding the position of Economic Development Director of Flower Mound.

During a lengthy interview at the offices of The News Connection on Tuesday, March 27, Glasgow delivered an update on the town's bustling economic development activity. The picture she paints is rosy, to say the least.

But what does an Economic Development Director do? Mrs. Glasgow provided a concise job description.

"We create marketing materials featuring our assets and opportunities and promote that through proactive contact with brokers, developers, and targeted industry reps," said Glasgow. "Some of our materials include site sheets, demographics, brochures, maps, etc., which we distribute through mailings, visits, and the website.

"We are an information facilitator and resource provider and are very customer service-oriented providing timely response to ED-related questions. We conduct site tours of the community and promote awareness of the positive business success stories to encourage more commercial development interest. We attend trade shows, conferences and other marketing activities to promote Flower Mound to potential interested parties."

A day in the life of an Economic Development Director might include...

Media Relations

Developer/staff relations on existing projects in the development process. Developer relations on press releases for new tenant announcements. Discussion on potential advertising for the Shop flower Mound program. Preparation work on a presentation to the ED Advisory Committee on the proposed updates to the ED Incentive Policy. Broker relations on identifying commercial site owners for projects working utilizing mapping software, Internet and the appraisal district. Follow-up response on a existing industrial tract. Prep for a site visit consultants. Provide ED activity information to the Chamber of Commerce for incorporation into member communications.

According to Mrs. Glasgow, Flower Mound is at 45 percent build-out. With a remaining 55 percent of the town awaiting development or other designation, there are many options available within the town for interested builders. But the trick is the negotiation.

That's where the ever controversial "Economic Incentive Packages" come in. One such development that acquired an incentive – in this case a tax abatement – is the Lakeside hotel project.

The hotel received seven years of tax abatement from the town, applicable to the \$27 million structure. One-hundred percent of the taxes on the structure will go uncollected for the agreed period of time.

"But we will still gain 100 percent of tax collection on the revenue generated from the condos," said Glasgow, noting that the total value of the condos is expected to add \$18 million to the tax rolls. "Also, business personal property will add \$6 million to the tax base. Additionally, the hotel is expected to collect \$80,000 per year in sales tax generation and that amount will be fully collected by the town."

Any and all sales – primarily food and beverages – will also be taxed to the fullest extent.

"I believe, with this being the first hotel in Flower Mound, and a four-star property, it would be difficult to attract a property like that without some level of incentive," she said. "Even though it is and will be portrayed as receiving 100 percent incentive, there will be other revenues collected by the town. It's not a net 100 percent."