

## Flower Mound attracting new businesses

**Michelle Draper**

Published 07/19/2008 - 2:46 p.m. CST

Flower Mound, in conjunction with Denton County, is taking great strides to make sure the needed infrastructure is in place to attract new businesses to the town, according to County Commissioner Andy Eads. Key leaders in local government as well as Chamber of Commerce officials are all on board with welcoming economic growth to the area, and, as they work closely together toward this goal, Eads said the town and the chamber have rekindled their relationship. "We've hung out the Open For Business sign," said Eads, who is also on the Flower Mound Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.



Photo caption: (left to right) Denton County Commissioners, Andy Eads and Bobbie Mitchell, Flower Mound Councilman, Al Filidoro, FM Economic Development Director, Melissa Glasgow and FM Chamber of Commerce President, Katy Taggart met at The News Connection office on Tuesday.

County Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell, who is also on the chamber board, said tax abatements for new businesses coming to Flower Mound is one way they are competing with other cities to get new growth. One project she is excited about is the Hines Lakeside DFW four-star resort hotel and adjacent luxury condominium tower slated to be built on the shore of Grapevine Lake. Mitchell said that will provide a venue for many large events including celebrations large and small. Town Councilmember Al Filidoro agrees. "That's going to be a wonderful thing for the county," he said.

Town officials have also been hard at work on improving the development process for other new business that wants to come to Flower Mound. Town Director of Economic Development Melissa Glasgow said her department did a survey about a year ago that went out to businesses who had come to Flower Mound within the last year, as well as to businesses that chose other homes. "As a result of that survey, the chamber and the town had a joint meeting in October where we hosted about 50 developers," Glasgow said. At that time, the input from developers was taken into consideration, and the process is being fine tuned.

"This is not a PR campaign. It's not lip service," Filidoro stated. "We are aggressively looking at what the issues are and then fixing them."

The numbers tell the story with the Flower Mound Chamber of Commerce. The number of major investors has more than doubled in the last year, according to Chamber President Katy Taggart. In 2007, that number was 29, and this year it is 73. The number of memberships has also seen a significant increase. Taggart said in 2006, chamber memberships stood at 492, and currently there are 777 Flower Mound Chamber of Commerce members. Of course, in any discussion of development, the subject of roads is sure to come up. Mitchell noted that roads spur economic development, adding that many constituents wonder why it takes so long to build a road. "It's a whole process. You can't just say we are going to build a road and then build it," she said. One reason it takes so long is because so many people have to be involved, such as the gas company, the water company, and all those involved in purchasing right of ways. One big upcoming project is the section of 2499 that will go from 407 to Corinth. "It's going to be second to none," Mitchell said. "We have one million dollars for landscaping."

Eads and Mitchell want citizens to know that their county commissioners have a Precinct Task Force meeting every month where the road projects are discussed. Those who attend include concerned citizens, representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation, and others involved in the process. "We try to have all the players in the room and look each other in the eye. It's accountability, so we all know where we stand," Eads said. Mitchell said every week the county buys right of ways for the 1171 expansion project. "We are in a critical mode now. We have to get this road done. We don't have any other choice," said Mitchell. The county commissioner also pointed out that the Farm to Market Roads are state roads, but the projects are expedited by local participation. "We are dealing with TXDOT, and our best strategy is the precinct task force meetings where we hold everybody's feet to the fire. You have to work within the system."

The positive trend will continue, as Taggart said the chamber will host a Spirit of Excellence luncheon in November where major employers in Flower Mound will be recognized. Also, chamber ambassadors have a program where they visit new businesses who have not yet joined the chamber, taking them a welcome gift. The chamber also treats all new businesses to a chamber luncheon. "These programs are to help with business retention in Flower Mound, not just bringing in new businesses, but keeping the ones who are already here," Taggart said.