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GOING GREAT GUNS

BY MONICA ISSITT

FROM FRISCO'S
FARMS TO
ITS FUTURE



New meets old
photo by Chris Fritchie



Rendering of Newman Village
rendering provided by Newman Development

GROWING UP in Plano in the '80s and '90s, suburban legends about falling off the earth at Parker Road were as numerous as privacy fences and tree-lined streets lacking their namesakes. Farmland was all around and Willow Bend Country Club was still a country club. And, if Plano was still shouldering growing pains, then Frisco was nothing but a dot on the map, the place to take a drive, the place with the funny water tower. Now that little town with a raccoon for a mascot is the seventh fastest growing city in the nation and on its way to an estimated population of 250,000 in just a few short years. The analogy to Plano of the '80s and '90s works, as Plano's population went from 72,000 in 1980 to 128,713 by 1990, and hit 222,030 by 2000.

Texas is big land, big sky and just... big. It's proud of being big – even proud of being too big for its britches. Texas is known for big growth, for turning vast open space into some of the most economically viable housing in the country and for trading blackland prairie for retail as far as the eye can see.

According to Forbes.com's writer, Matt Woolsey, "Growth in Texas is almost completely unregulated" and, as

a study by Demographia, an independent company that studies and compiles demographics and growth statistics, shows the twenty fastest growing suburbs in the country are all in Texas, with twelve of them in the DFW area.

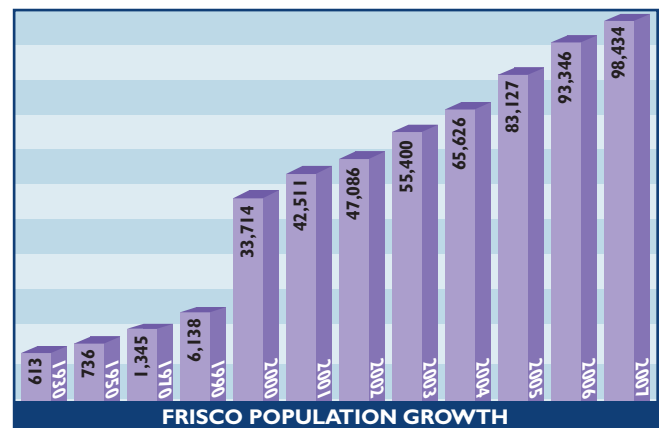
All of this developer-friendly growth does come with a price tag that you can't read in dollar signs. Every minute throughout the 1990s, the U.S. saw two acres of agricultural land lost in the name of development. Frisco was Boomtown, USA in the 90s, growing over 400 percent between 1990 and 2000, its miles of cotton and corn being cleared for concrete and cars at an alarming rate.

"REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE" MAY BE JUST THE BEGINNING

Like Texas, our world is not actually getting any bigger and there are some subtle shifts back to local economies and tight communities.

There are even theories which suggest that within two decades a lack of oil and even water will prevent suburbia as we know it from supporting itself. Our school systems, transportation options and housing would all be affected. We might have to learn to live differently.

We would be hard pressed to imagine modern life as we know it without suburbs, as they have taken on mythic status as a place where everyone has a chance to live out their version of the all-illusive American Dream. But researchers of "relocalization" believe that working in a large city and then suffering through



Sources: Frisco Economic Development Corp. 2004 & City of Frisco Planning & Development Services

a commute to the hinterlands, or just living in a city like Frisco (or Plano, or Little Elm, or McKinney) that is so spread out, could become a thing of the past, as this upwardly mobile life we have come to take for granted is not very sustainable. Whether this theory holds water or not is yet to be determined, but it may be worth our while for us to think about where our “community” is. That is, where do we live? Eat? Work? Play? Buy food? Worship? Could we shrink this stretched out community back to a human scale? Our suburban attitude may need some tweaking.

MIXED-USE IS GOOD NEWS

We are fortunate to have developers like Jim Newman who have the history of place as well as the ingenuity to create communities that represent a shift to something more balanced. Mr. Newman is proud of the fact that his family has given their land, the last family farm in Frisco; back to Frisco in the form of something the city can be proud of. It couldn't be put any better than when he says, “I came from the dirt. I played in the dirt. I farmed the dirt. I sold the dirt. I developed the dirt. Someday I will return to the dirt. I guess what I know is dirt.”

Mr. Newman's desire is to give the people of Frisco the chance to see what “mixed-use” really means by building a place where one can live, work and play. That term, “mixed-use,” gets tossed around a lot these days as something more sustainable gets diluted down to a strip mall next to some apartments. A place that encourages walking, has beautiful parks and one that gives families living in larger homes and multi-family units alike easy access to



retail, dining and entertainment – that is what Newman Village will be about. It will truly be something Frisco has never seen.

“It was the first and only time I've ever seen a planning and zoning committee give a builder a standing ovation, actually thanking him for what he is doing for the city,” Mr. Newman says describing

Homes will have an important part in this as the main builder of custom homes for Newman Village.

Bill Darling goes back and forth between schoolboy excitement in showing off the beautiful plan drawings and delayed gratification, wanting to save the surprise for Frisco to see with its own eyes. “This is so unique that I want to tease them a bit; if we talk it up too much we'll be like everyone else,” he explains.

Knowing the rabid curiosity about new things happening in their community, there are some details that can help satiate the folks of Frisco until June, when they can drive by the intersection of Legacy Drive and Eldorado Parkway to have a look-see for themselves.

Newman Village, with its 900 high-end single family homes in its gated community, 270 town homes, and 900 multi-family units, will truly be a mixed-use development (a term which both the Newmans and the Darlings want to clearly differentiate from “subdivision”) with retail and office space also being included in the project. A crucial piece



NewmanVillage

the scene when Bill Darling, of Darling Homes, unveiled the renderings and began to explain what exactly Frisco can expect in Newman Village.

Mr. Newman goes on to say, “Newman Village has been our family's dream for several years. We quickly realized we could have had the land zoned any way we wanted. When we had it zoned residential we still had a choice; we could have packed in four stick-and-brick homes per acre or we could have done something better than that.” Darling



to the “mixed” in mixed-use are the owner-occupied units which could house family-run businesses, like law offices, candy shops and art galleries.

This walk-able community has taken some serious planning, something lacking in developments that go up in a speedier manner when the “hurry up and make money” philosophy outweighs the desire to focus on quality. There is no rushing drawn into the plans, evident in Mr. Newman’s pledge on behalf of five generations of his family, “I may not be around when this community is completely finished. Maybe my kids will finish it, but it will be done right.” All of this planning allows for places of destination, places to linger and gather, both in the residential and retail areas. Water features, sports fields, pocket parks and long expanses of landscaping abound.

A plaza with an amphitheatre and community house will be sunken below traffic level forming a serene niche in which to enjoy a concert, play or art show. This public art space is important to both the Darlings and the Newmans, who believe that Frisco’s dedication to the arts will continue to distinguish it from other nearby cities in the future and who are, through Newman Village, benefactors of Frisco Association for the Arts. An amenity center and space in the plans for an elementary school and a church help

to create a real community, one in which just about every aspect of life is accounted for, each connected by walking trails and tree-lined boulevards.

The commercial portion of Newman Village will continue the theme of a pedestrian-friendly small town with the streets narrower, the sidewalks wider and the parking lots off to the side. These seemingly simple decisions actually take a lot of forethought and make for a cozy spot with an active nightlife and European feel.

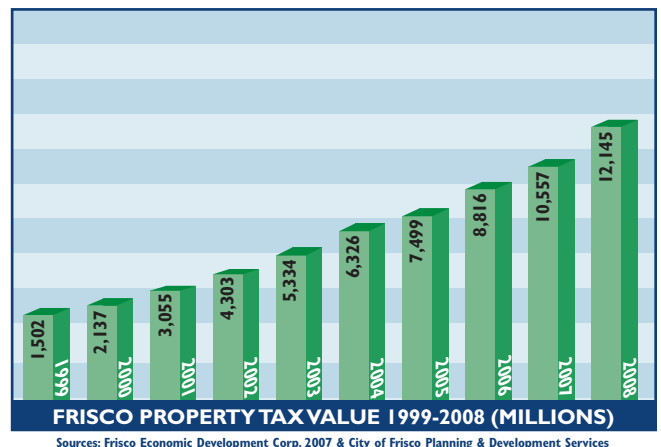
A HISTORY LESSON

Newman Village is the brainchild of Jim Newman whose great, great grandfather, John Lennox Newman, was a pioneer in Frisco (then called Emerson) arriving in 1841 with, as Jim

Newman explains, “a covered wagon and a bag of gold.”

This was more than sixty years before the town’s name changed to Frisco and when “Texas” still had a “Republic of” in front of it. Over the years there were other families, hard-working farming families, like the Cobbs, the Wades and the Haggards, who reaped and sowed on the “flatlands of west side,” the name some gave to the area where Frisco and Plano met hinting at the fact that the towns’ boundaries didn’t stick as good as family fence lines.

Passing Super Target and IKEA it is hard to imagine that when Frisco was being settled Andrew Jackson was the president and the price of a dozen eggs





On Deck Circle at Bacchus Park

photo by Chris Fritchie

was a penny. In those days water and transportation were two immediate problems that needed solving. The Shawnee Trail later became the north-south wagon route, now Preston Road, and rail followed later connecting Frisco to the outside world. But this solution made one more problem. There was plenty of water up until the train came, then a lake was dug to provide enough water for watering holes every twenty-five miles, not for people, but for the steam engines. Water and transportation were, and still are, two must-haves for growth in Frisco.

RAILAND RESOURCES

Just like the first pioneers in Frisco, those looking out for its future cannot ignore water and transportation issues. Current Frisco residents have more to be proud of than beautiful neighborhoods and serious shopping, like some of the best city officials and planners around. People like

Gary Hartwell, director of Public Works, who through cooperation, foresight and respect for the citizens of Frisco helped lead the city in saving 3.1 billion gallons of water during the drought of 2006-07. Planners like Mr. Hartwell, together with the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) set up the strategies and logistics of water conservation in Frisco. Some of these plans include allocating water from the East Fork Wetlands Supply and the Upper Sabine River Supply and transferring it into Lake Lavon providing our area with water into 2050. This plan, expected to be a reality this summer, cannot cover a multitude of sins, however, and Mr. Hartwell is clear and serious in stating that our water philosophy around here must change. He tells us, "There is plenty of water if we will only stop wasting it. It is time to stop overwatering our lawns." Sage advice to folks who like seeing street upon street of lush, green, golf course-like yards.

The leaders of Frisco know they can't stop development, but they can help make Frisco a quality place to live...

Growth in Frisco does not create drought, scorching temperatures and evaporation from lakes do. Remember your 5th grade science teacher and the diagram of the water cycle? But just like other resources, we cannot abuse it and then expect to always have enough for everyone who needs it. The NTMWD and its member cities' leaders burn the midnight oil figuring population and growth projections to use to determine

our water needs 5, 10 and 50 years down the line.

John Classe, a current Frisco Parks and Recreation board member, father of two little girls and proud resident of Frisco, respects the work that Mr. Hartwell has done. "The leaders of Frisco know they can't stop development, but they can help make Frisco a quality place to live and Gary Hartwell and others are on top of that. They're playing the cards they're dealt as best they can."

Mr. Classe goes on to mention home energy efficiency as another bonus of Frisco saying, "We now own our second home in Frisco. The first one we bought before the new energy standards were set. We're constantly amazed at how much lower our energy bills are now."

These energy conservation measures are no small thing and Frisco is attracting

more and more people because of them. Cities that do things right also attract builders and developers to continue that good work. For instance, the Newman Village project, even if not proclaimed to be "green," could be well on its way to qualifying for status with LEED N-D, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development. A joint effort between the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Congress for New Urbanism, it allows neighborhoods to earn points for strides like building parks and open spaces, water conservation, varied housing options, mixed-use facilities, walking trails and of course, energy efficiency. Other, more intense bullets are building

with low-toxicity and recycled-content materials, restoring already developed land and protecting ecosystems. This list gives us a hint of what to expect from our communities in the future and Newman Village is definitely taking Frisco

a giant step in the right direction.

John Lettellier, the city's Director of Planning, is another leader like Gary

Hartwell looking out for the future of Frisco. Working on public transit studies and DART Mobility Plans into 2030, Mr. Lettellier and others are saving a place for mass transit on Frisco's horizon. The Burlington Northern Railroad is the main thoroughfare on which these plans are based with three stops (at S.H. 121,

THE SHOPS AT



Starwood



*Kirk Hermansen (left) photo by Chris Fritchie
Rendering of Frisco Market Center rendering provided by Kirk Hermansen*



Main Street and Virginia Parkway) being discussed.

Some folks who've been around the DFW area for awhile have some pretty strong feelings about the lack of workable mass transit here and the subsequent lack of community-based, efficient planning that goes with it. In many ways it has seemed like too little, too late. Whether in an inner-city area or a young suburb, mass transit spurs economic growth. But, and this is the crux for Frisco, a city still in its adolescence may do better by putting monies toward economic and community development, which is the road, so to speak, that Frisco has taken.

Frisco voters elected to create the Frisco Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) that is supported by a one percent sales tax. This money is used to further growth and development in Frisco. Frisco is one city in a 13-city council that came together with three transit authorities (DART, the T and Denton County Transit Authority) to



City of Frisco Awards Received in 2007

OVERALL AWARDS

- Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition: Travel Demand Management Award
- Dallas Child Magazine: Best Family-Friendly Town
- Gadberry Group: 7 From 2007 – Most notable high-growth areas in the nation

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Finance Division

Government Finance Officers Association: Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting – Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

Purchasing Division

National Purchasing Institute's 12th Annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award

Communications & Media Relations

- Telly Award for "Frisco Today"
- 3CMA Award of Excellence: TV & Videos – Promotional, Frisco Fire Safety Town
- 3CMA Award of Excellence: Special Events – Recurring Event: Frisco Freedom Fest
- Texas Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors (TATOA): 2nd place – Promotion/Public Service Announcement "Chunk Your Junk"

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (EDC)

Dallas Business Journal Best Real Estate Deals:

1st Place Best Office Deal – Amerisource

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION – PUBLIC WORKS

- Recycling Alliance of Texas: Recycling Leadership Award
- Keep Texas Beautiful: 1st Place – Sadie Bay Graff Education Award



Main Street after dark (above)

photo by Chris Fritchie

sign a Tri-Party Agreement that leaves Frisco as a non-transit city for the time being. Being a non-transit jurisdiction has allowed Frisco to skip funding public transportation and put money towards the FEDC. The state legislature has agreed to hold local elections to add an additional ½ percent sales tax in order to possibly fund both economic growth and mass transit in Frisco, but the issue is tabled until 2009.

Whether or not Frisco will have mass transit may still be an "if" and not yet a "when." John Lettellier says, "Frisco is still scattered about. It would be premature to have a rail line at this time." And just so we don't point the finger in the wrong direction and at a notorious local scapegoat, Mr. Lettellier goes on to say, "Frisco's mass transit system may or may not come from DART. There are other transit authorities we could work with to provide Frisco with public transportation when the time is right."

APPLAUSE, PLEASE.

There doesn't seem to be anything Frisco doesn't have going for it and if Frisco were an award recipient, it would have to stand on the stage for a very, very long time.

Back in 2000, the City of Frisco was

given the Comprehensive Plan of the Year Award that points to excellence in city planning. Our fair city has also been among Money Magazine's 'Best Places to Live' two years running (2006 and 2007) and CNN Money.com's 'Best Places to Retire' in 2005. One of Frisco's most recent awards is from The Gadberry Group who listed Frisco among its most notable high growth areas in the U.S. Add to this list low crime, a median income 148 percent of the national average and more companies jockeying for a spot to set up shop and you have the recipe for a very pleasant life for the citizens of Frisco. Hold that thought and Frisco, keep standing.

In 2001, the city set a precedent by being the first one in the U.S. to put into place minimum residential energy efficiency standards that met or exceeded Energy Star ratings. Frisco is known for its great schools, miles and miles of hike and bike trails and significantly lower taxes that allow the owner of a \$250,000 home to save about \$1,750 annually. Oh, and there's shopping. The square footage set aside for retail in Frisco is staggering, and there is more, much more, on its way.

Jim Newman isn't the only developer doing some nice work in Frisco. Kirk Hermansen is developer of The Shops



*Aerial shot of Frisco Central Fire Station
photo by Chris Frichie*

at Starwood, some of which continually snatch D Magazine's 'Best Cool Spots in the Burbs' awards, helping to frame Frisco as quite the hip place to be. It was Mr. Hermansen's vision that helped get the ball rolling in the hip direction.

The pedestrian-focus, beautiful architectural details and top-notch merchants help to create a luxurious experience for shoppers and business people alike. A pleasant surprise for those who think they have to travel to University Park for high-end retail and chic dining.

If The Shops at Starwood are any indication of what to expect, we can get very excited about Frisco Market Center, Mr. Hermansen's new baby which is already crowning at the northwest corner of Main Street and the Dallas North Tollway (DNT). This development is reported to bring condos, hotels, entertainment and dining to the area. Frisco Market Center will have nine points of direct access from three major thoroughfares, a convenient place for residents and visitors to stop and play. Smack in the middle of four sports venues it will surely provide access to the kind of entertainment that attract the millions of tourists who visit every year.

Fashioned after 19th century Boston's

Printer's Row; the area will be 88 acres of charming brick buildings, parks and pedestrian trails that connect to Frisco's larger trail system. There is a noticeable theme of foot traffic in the developments mentioned here and Frisco Market Center will play on this theme, not only with the trails, but also with the 700 upscale, mid-rise residences, which will create a lively feel to both days and nights in the development.

Everywhere you look there are new building projects and some of the largest projects of 2007 belong to the city itself. The city of Frisco was the single largest developer in 2007 with taxpayers seeing their bond money being put to good use as five major municipal sources of pride were erected last year. They include the 43,000 square foot Central Fire Station with a cost of \$8.6 million, two acre Frisco Fire Safety Town, \$400,000 excluding private donations and business contributions, City Hall Plaza, \$2.5 million, 100,000 square foot Frisco Athletic Center, \$26.5 million and 79 acre Bacchus Park at \$7.5 million.

'X' MARKS THE SPOT

Lest we get carried away with how much Frisco has grown up we would do well to hold our proverbial horses, because we ain't, as they say, seen nothin' yet.

City of Frisco Awards (continued)

FRISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT
Fire Chief Magazine/National
Station Style Award Winners:
Bronze Award - Frisco Central Fire
Station & Safety Town

FRISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT
Outstanding Participation in
National Night Out

IT DEPARTMENT
Ektron All Star Award: Best
Government Site – www.friscotexas.gov

PARKS & RECREATION

- Texas Recreation and Parks Society (TRAPS): Gold Medal Award
- National Arbor Day Foundation: Tree City USA award

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Texas Chapter of the American
Planning Association: Planning
Excellence Award



*Construction continues...
photo by Chris Fritchie*

Roads are being lengthened and widened opening the arteries for more circulation and property is getting snatched up faster than you can say “Highway 380.”

Growth in Frisco is big business and there are no signs of this growth slowing down anytime soon.

Builders like Forest City Enterprises and General Growth Properties, both non-local companies, as well as Jerry Jones’ Blue Star Investments, are just a few of the folks helping to fuel Frisco’s massive expansion. Now that the DNT, named “The Road to Riches” in an NBC 5 broadcast, has met S.H. 380, scores of big red X’s could be drawn up and down the highway, as every intersection on the map is set up for the movement of dirt in the very near future. More than 10 million square feet of retail and office space are being planned and the planners have certainly done their homework, zeroing in on a section of the highway that already watches more than 50,000 cars go by everyday.

IN GOOD HANDS

Growth in Frisco is big business and there are no signs of this growth slowing down anytime soon. This excitement invites more and more business to Frisco continually improving its chances of remaining a place people want to be.

Builders, developers and planners have done well in shouldering some huge responsibilities in money management, stewardship and overall integrity. We are in good hands if folks like Jim Newman are participating in some of the decisions and take heed to his comment, “We don’t have exclusive rights to this land, in fact, we are only here on earth for a short time.” It speaks volumes about the legacy he, and others, would like to leave Frisco.

Monica Issitt is a freelance writer living in McKinney.