



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.
©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306

Celina Mayor Corbett Howard & Craig James, President of the Celina EDC photos by Chris Johnson



to live in Celina when build-out is complete. That is a long way from the current population of just under 4,000. “Of course it’s a long way to come. We are not going to be a specialty town. It will be a diverse economy. Which means we have to be prepared for office, retail and mixed-use opportunities between Preston Road and the

Tollway,” says James.

The EDC performs as a combination of salespeople and ambassadors for Celina. Their goals include soliciting businesses to occupy retail space and applying their funds to build a solid infrastructure base. James says the EDC’s biggest focus the past two years has been to prepare Celina for opportunities to come. “I was taught many years ago in sports the five Ps -- proper preparation prevents poor performance!” What is true in

“Celina is just 20 miles from downtown Dallas ... in minutes, travelers go from a busy urban setting to a quiet country lifestyle perfect for raising families.”

Preparing for Growth to the North: Celina Expanding Through Diligent Planning

By Regan Stewart

“WE ARE FRISCO 1990,” says Celina Mayor Corbett Howard, as he explains that while the city of Celina is still small, it is anticipating growth and understands what it takes to position itself as the next Frisco.

Celina is just 20 miles from downtown Dallas, but a lot happens in those 20 miles. Within minutes, travelers go from a busy urban setting to a quiet country lifestyle perfect for raising families. Celina is located at the northern boundary of the third fastest growing county in the United States. This charming small town is accessed via Preston Road, (SH 289), just north of Plano and Frisco.

Craig James, president of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), says there is going to be relocation moving north. “It’s a given that people are going to come this direction. That does not mean it is going to happen tonight. It may take several years, but it will occur.” He says once parents move their children to Celina, then the dry cleaners will follow.

Celina EDC is trying to prepare and help grow the tax base. Celina is comprised of 99 square miles in Collin County and a small part of Denton County. In terms of Collin County, Celina is physically larger than Plano, Frisco, and second only to McKinney. More than 300,000 people are expected

sports is true in business. In order to grow or market yourself, there has to be an organized plan in place. The first focus was to attract commercial development.

“Our EDC board went after a grocery store in 2004,” says James. “We were extremely fortunate to get Brookshire’s to buy land on Preston Road for a future store.” In addition, a 100,000-square-foot commercial retail center is also being built. This will serve the increased residential development Celina is experiencing. From there the EDC is developing leads and relationships to attract other light industrial along the commercial rail corridor. Distribution and office development are primary focuses.

The retail center anchored by Brookshire’s, will be built in conjunction with Nancy Underwood of Underwood Financial, Ltd. Underwood and her reputation for building signature properties will be a great “eye-catcher” for those coming up Preston Road.

Next, the board made a recommendation to the city council to become a city offering Freeport exemption. Which means, businesses that ship inventory out of the state of Texas will not have to pay taxes on the inventory that briefly sits in their warehouse. Celina will win by adding new jobs and selling more houses. This decision was easy to make but years down the road would be considerably harder to enact.

“Further foundation building by our board is the strong consideration of hiring a full time economic development director,” says James. “With so much early planning and development taking place in Celina, a director could help significantly in marketing, sales, and strategy in general. The bottom line is that Celina is situated in the middle of the goal posts -- the Dallas North Tollway on the west side and Preston Road on the east. Growth is going to happen, and we’ll be prepared for it.”

“We are so excited about the potential, what we are doing and what we have accomplished as a council,” says Howard, in his third year as mayor. “We have great people serving on the different boards.” Howard and other visionaries enjoy solving problems



“Celina is situated in the middle of the goal posts... the Dallas North Tollway on the west side and Preston Road on the east. Growth is going to happen, and we’ll be prepared for it.”

as they arise. He and a 25-member committee are working on a draft of their Preston Road vision. “It’s important to know what you want so builders can buy into your vision,” says Howard. “With the Tollway coming, we will hit a certain level and then explode.”

New homebuilders, for example, want to know about water security. Currently at 1,560 water meters, Celina has secured surface water and is working meticulously to acquire regional wastewater.

As a general law city, Celina puts governing decisions in the hands of an elected city council. “We have ordinances, but are governed by state statute. Cities with more than 5,000 in population are considered home rule cities. Under this designation, a city can write their own home charter,” says Howard.

Preparing to create that charter will be a major focus for the council as Celina comes closer to reaching 5,000 in population.

The most recent project underway is a \$100,000 grant to the Celina Parks Association to help in the expenses of the development of the 45-acre city park and recreation facility and to be used as matching funds for other grants from the State of Texas. “The city park currently under construction will be magnificent,” says Howard, “as the layout is similar to the Frisco parks since the same people building parks in Frisco are building them for Celina. It will have everything Warren Park has.” The \$5.5 million construction is expected to be complete next March, which will include soccer fields and walking trails. “It’s not only great for the 300 Celina kids currently going to the parks in Frisco and McKinney, but for future generations,” says Howard.

“At the end of the day, all of us want to raise our families in a good city with a small town feel that has access to a business friendly major thoroughfare system,” says James. “Without a culture of family in a city, you are going nowhere.”

Regan Stewart is a freelance writer living in Frisco.