

# DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL

## NORTH TEXAS GOES NORTH

Dallas-Fort Worth's growth is pushing north,  
ratcheting up expansion for the area's smaller cities.

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JAKE DEAN | DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Jason Brown discusses what projects  
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# RISE OF THE EXURBS

Inside the development strategy of one of  
North Texas' fastest-growing cities

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STORY BY BILL HETHCOCK  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAKE DEAN





new City Hall and fire station are under construction in Anna, a city of about 20,000 residents 42 miles north of Dallas along U.S. Highway 75.

A new 85-acre, rail-served business park with infrastructure is available for the next wave of growth.

The massive Mantua development straddling Anna and Van Alstyne is expected to have more than 6,000 homes and over 600 acres of commercial, office and mixed-use space.

The way Mayor Nate Pike sees it, Anna is a still-small but fast-growing city with big plans.

"In 2017, we really started changing the overall culture of the city," Pike said on a recent exclusive tour of the city with the Dallas Business Journal.

"We were a place that was real quiet. No one heard a lot out of Anna. But I, along with the City Council at the time, had big visions for what could be accomplished in Anna."

As people, homes and businesses push northward from Dallas-Fort Worth through Frisco and McKinney, the area next in line is Anna.

Pike, who was elected mayor in November 2017, has overseen a nearly total makeover of the city staff.

Anna is one of the five fastest-growing cities in North Texas, U.S. Census Bureau estimates show. The city limit sign from 2010 says the population is 8,249 but Pike puts the number of residents closer to 20,000 today. By 2050, the city will have a population of more than 100,000 if the current pace of growth continues, he said.

Anna has issued more than 2,500 single-family building permits since 2018. To put that in perspective, the city issued about 2,300 building permits between 2010 and 2018.

"We're getting people moving in from all over the country right now," Pike said. "We've got people from California moving in. It's interesting to watch. As we see new people coming into town, they're from all over the place. Different cultures. Different backgrounds."

## BURBS BOOMED, BUT EXURBS EXPLODED

The further north you drive along Dallas North Tollway and U.S. 75, the higher the population growth. A handful of exurbs' populations crossed the 10,000 resident mark last year, and these cities are growing at a faster rate than Frisco and McKinney, more established suburbs nearby. Below shows population growth during the 2010s for several cities in the northern part of Dallas-Fort Worth.

SOURCE: U.S. Census

Celina, **170%**

Melissa, **158%**

Prosper, **161%**

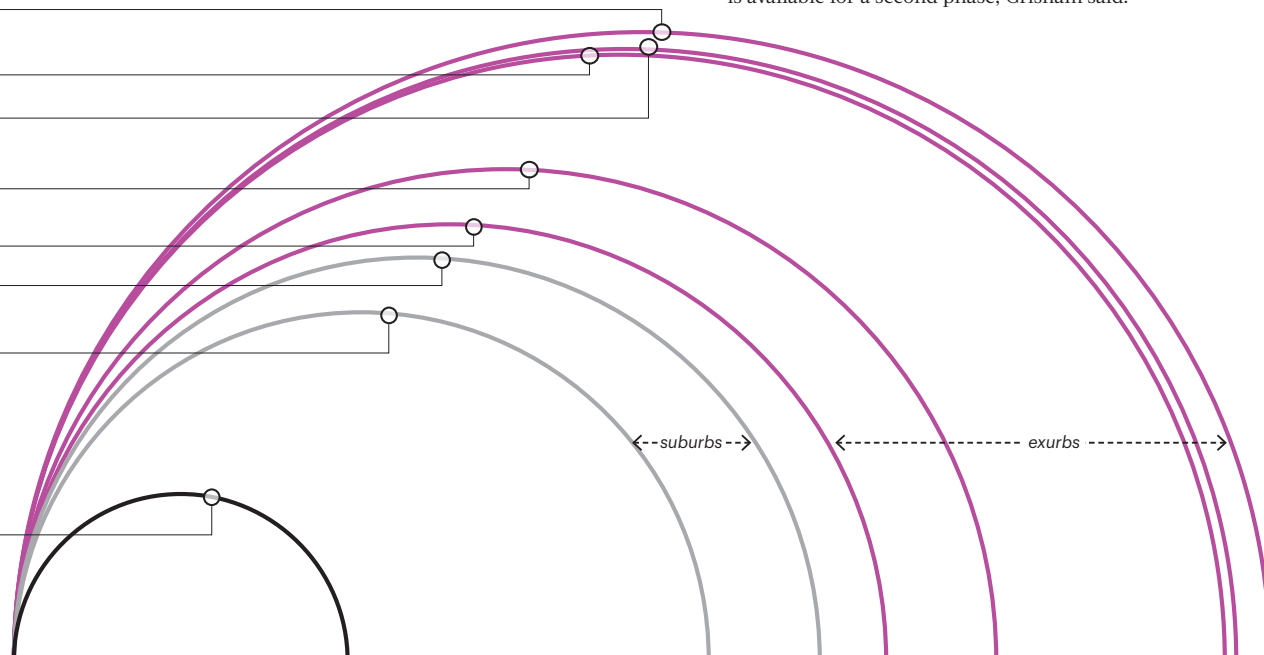
Princeton, **104%**

Anna, **82%**

Frisco, **70%**

McKinney, **52%**

Dallas, **12%**



## BUSINESS PARKS



**ANNA'S CITY COUNCIL** in 2019 adopted an updated Strategic Plan that identified economic development as a top priority, Anna Economic Development Corp. Director Joey Grisham said. A Comprehensive Plan update that also includes a Downtown Master Plan and Parks & Trails Master Plan is underway, he said.

The city has several prospects for the business park, the largest of which would bring in about 250 jobs, Grisham said. In terms of space, the prospects range from 25,000 square foot users up to 400,000 square feet, he said.

"The activity has been really brisk (at the business park)," Grisham said. "We're really close on some deals."

Industrial land in Anna is much more affordable than in the more populous cities of Frisco and McKinney nearby, Grisham said. The business park is primed for manufacturing or logistics companies, he said.

"You have lots of smaller companies from California looking for a footprint," he said. "They want to have enough land and enough space that they can expand. I would say about half of our prospects are California companies just looking to get out, and also it's the Central time zone so they're looking to expand into the fastest-growing market in the country (Dallas-Fort Worth)."

Pike said he hopes to fill up the business park in the next couple of years, as well as developing Anna's downtown and creating 1,000 jobs citywide.

When the business park fills up, an adjoining 85 acres is available for a second phase, Grisham said.



## RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS



**HOME CONSTRUCTION** has begun on the first of a planned 6,000 houses in Mantua, a 3,000-acre master-planned community with five miles of frontage on Highway 75.

The first phase of construction in this Risland Development community will have 223 single-family homes on varying lot sizes, according to Michael Hanschen, vice president of Development at Plano-based Risland.

"It's very exciting to see the first phase of Mantua coming to life," Hanschen said. "Our goal from the start has been to provide our residents with unequalled amenities, high-quality builders and a highly ranked school zone."

When the project is completed, Mantua residents will have access to a total of 25 miles of nature trails and 275 acres of parks, creeks, community gardens, dog parks and green-spaces. The Mantua development will have several million square feet of office space, retail and mixed-use facilities, which will all be connected by more than 15 miles of roads.

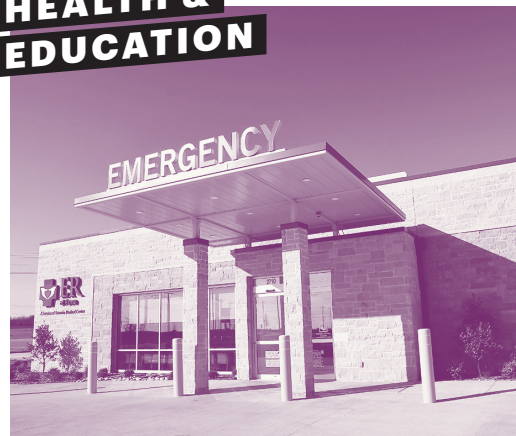
Meanwhile, the 695-acre Villages of Hurricane Creek mixed-use project under development by Centurion American in Anna just west of 75 ultimately will include more than 1,800 homes, 400 multifamily units, 50,000 square feet of retail, a hotel, restaurant and entertainment space, plus a community and botanical garden, hiking trails and an amenity center for residents.

Groundwork for the development's first phase, called Hurricane Creek North, is underway.

One reason for much of the development success Anna is experiencing has been because the city has streamlined the building permit processes, Pike said.

"We want to be the fastest in North Texas to issue permits for those types of developments," he said. "We have completely revamped that."

## HEALTH & EDUCATION



**ON THE EDUCATION FRONT**, Anna is working with Collin College to bring a core curriculum college to the city in the next three to five years, the mayor said.

The city is also becoming a "medical hub," Pike said, with a freestanding emergency room through Texoma Medical Center that opened last summer and a new physician-owned Surgery Center of North Texas.

The medical facilities and other growth helped the city's sales tax collections to rise about 50 percent last year despite the pandemic, Pike said. Sales taxes have more than doubled since 2016, he said.

"Our timing was good on welcoming some new businesses," Pike said. "Texoma Medical Center, the Surgery Center of North Texas, Neighborhood Credit Union, and also a lot of restaurants – Chick-fil-A, JuBa Pizza Bar, Salsa Tex-Mex, Starbucks are some examples – all are examples of sales-tax producing businesses that opened during the pandemic."

Anna's accessibility, housing affordability and housing variety are keys to its growth, Pike said.

"A lot of that is branding who we are and letting people know that Anna is open for business," Pike said. "If you want a successful project to take place in Anna, we're going to sit down with you and find a way to say yes."

Pike expects the pace of growth in the retail and entertainment realms to escalate as the population growth continues.

"They say, 'You're just under 20,000 (residents). You need to be more like 25,000 to fill that out,'" Pike said. "There's arguments that our daytime traffic is not heavy enough to demand that retail yet."

**Nate Pike** is the mayor of Anna.



## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Anna has a 61 square mile planning area, counting its extraterritorial jurisdiction, Grisham said. That's just four square miles less than the roughly 65 square mile planning area in Frisco, he said.

When Pike moved to Anna in 2012, there wasn't much more to the city than a Sonic, a Chicken Express, a Quick Lube, a bank and a grocery store, he said.

"Knowing that all of North Texas is growing rapidly, we are going to grow, so we might as well embrace it and do a lot of planned, managed growth," Pike said. "We're one of the final blank canvases left in Collin County where you can really create something special here. Anna has got a tremendous amount of momentum now in the development community. We're being talked about."