

New director will aid city growth

By Robert Cadwallader
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MANSFIELD - It doesn't show up on her resume, but Melissa Woodall's experience for her new job as city economic development director started at age 11.

"I grew up the daughter of a downtown retailer in a small community," said Woodall, whose mother owned and operated a store in Greenville for 30 years. "I saw firsthand the challenges that small business owners face."

In her new job, Woodall, 41, will help Mansfield companies meet similar challenges -- including the need for expansion or reinvention -- and help them entice out-of-town industries to make Mansfield their home.

She works closely with the Mansfield Economic Development Corp., run by a city-appointed board that uses revenue from a half-cent sales tax for such business projects.

Since 2001, nearly \$370 million worth of industrial and commercial projects have benefited from MEDC-funded infrastructure such as utility lines and roads.

"The board and the City Council believe those are investments that the community will realize returns on for many years," said Woodall, who joined the city staff in 2000. "A company may be gone at some point in time, but that road will be there for a long time."

Woodall held positions in marketing and business retention before being named assistant director last year.

City Manager Clayton Chandler said he promoted her to director in August after considering several candidates from across Texas. Chandler said he realized Woodall would "end up training" anyone he hired.

Woodall works in marketing and business retention roles in the economic development office, and is well-known among business leaders. She also puts "a good face on Mansfield" for prospective industries, said Tom Ritter, a commercial real estate broker.

"To me, in economic development, that first impression means a lot," he said. "And she makes a good first impression."

Woodall graduated from Austin College in Sherman with bachelor's degrees in economics and political science and took her first economic development job in Post in 1987. She later had positions at Mineral Wells, Denison, Longview and Fairfield, where she was executive director of the Fairfield Industrial Development Corp.

But she gained her interest in community service from her parents, both Greenville natives who were active on city boards and projects.

"I've always been fascinated with the process communities go through to reinvent themselves and revitalize," she said. "It's a process that's constantly changing."

Melissa Woodall

Age: 41

Occupation: Director of economic development for Mansfield.

Experience: Mansfield city staff member, 2000-05; 12 years in economic development with five other cities.

Education: Bachelor's degree in economics and political science, Austin College.

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Melissa Woodall, the new city economic development director for Mansfield, says she has always been fascinated with the process communities go through to reinvent themselves.

