

# Putting Mansfield on the retail map

The city south of I-20 is working to lure shops, restaurants and more for its growing population

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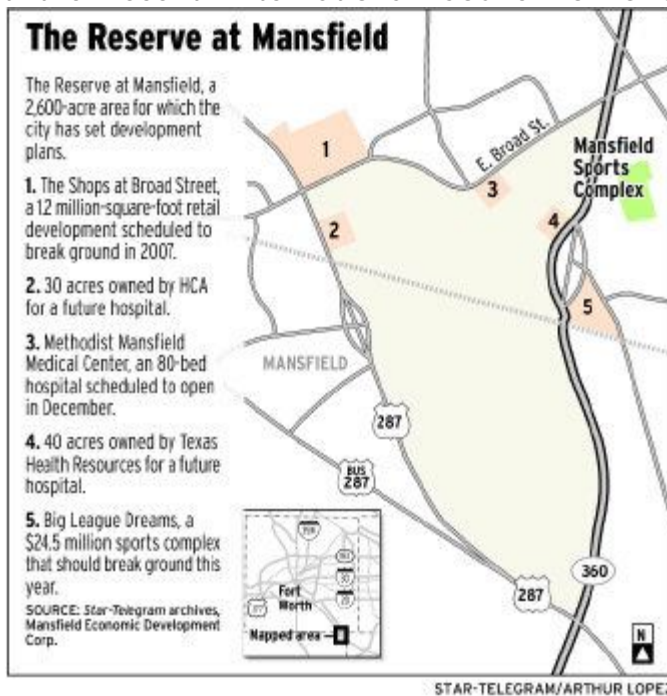
MANSFIELD -- With more than 5,000 people moving to Mansfield each year, the town south of Interstate 20 is attracting the attention of developers and national retail chains eyeing it for potential sites for their next location or shopping center.



"We're very excited with the level of interest from the development community," said Melissa Woodall, director of the Mansfield Economic Development Corp. "And there are still a lot of opportunities out there that we're chasing, too."

Recently, the city of 55,000 residents added a Cinemark movie theater and a Best Buy store. But there are plans for much larger developments, Woodall said, including three proposed hospitals, the Big League Dreams sports complex and the 1.2-million-square-foot The Shops at Broad Street.

At the recent International Council of Shopping Centers convention in Las Vegas, Mansfield officials, along with the developer of The Shops at Broad Street, touted the city's growing population to national retail chains. Planned by Cleveland-based Forest City Enterprises, the large retail center on the northeast corner of U.S. 287 and East Broad Street will include anchor stores, streetscapes and a town center.



Brian Jones, chief executive of Forest City's western region, said his company wants to attract retailers to Mansfield that are "new and fresh" to the market, lured by the growing residential areas south of I-20. He added that the city's long-term development plans -- such as its zoning plans for 2,600 acres of farmland dubbed The Reserve in Mansfield -- are compelling.

"We look at what is the vision of the city, and if their vision doesn't coincide to what we want to do, we probably won't go and build it," Jones said. "The story has to be growth and good incomes, and Mansfield has both of those."

Mansfield property values increased by 11.5 percent this year, and the average annual family income is estimated to be \$91,878, according to the economic development corporation.

The city is considering creating a tax-increment financing district for The Shops at Broad Street, which sits on the original 88-acre site of the proposed Big League Dreams sports complex, which now will be at Texas 360 and Miller Road. In a TIF district, property values are frozen, and any tax revenue generated by higher property values from new development is used to finance public improvements within the district.

Jones said he expects that The Shops at Broad Street will be similar to Forest City's award-winning Victoria Gardens development in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., which counts Macy's, AMC Theaters, Ann Taylor Loft and The Apple Store among its tenants. Although Forest City does not expect to break ground on the Mansfield development until late next year, company representatives met with several unnamed retailers interested in The Shops at Broad Street during the convention in Las Vegas.

The national convention has become an important part of Mansfield's economic-development strategy. The city started sending local officials to the show seven years ago.

"We were literally begging people to meet with us, and we had two appointments over the three-day show," Woodall said. "Now, we take four people, and we have bookings solid for the entire show."

Retail consulting expert Rich Hollander said Mansfield's popularity with retailers is not necessarily because of the growth within the city limits but because of all of the new housing developments in Kennedale, south Arlington and Grand Prairie that are within the Mansfield school district.



"Developers have to be ahead of the game or they can't afford to buy the property later," said Hollander, president of Fort Worth-based The Buxton Co.'s CustomerID division.

Woodall said she believes that retailers are already seeing the benefits of having additional store locations within Mansfield. And city leaders plan to show about 125 local developers and business leaders the area's development plans at its 15th Mansfield Allies Day on Monday.

"It has taken a couple of success stories, like Target and Chili's," Woodall said. "But we are learning that Mansfield's target market is everything south of I-20. There is a significant psychological difference in driving 10 miles and visiting the same store in your own back yard."