



April 2, 2015

Spring is definitely here and has brought warmer temperatures and much needed rainfall. Lake Halbert and Navarro Mills Lake are full and the water level at Richland Chambers has risen by another four feet just in the past week alone. Life is good in Corsicana with wintertime passing and the “growing” season approaches.

Speaking of growth, a lot of exciting things are happening in Corsicana, which bodes well for the future. The Downtown Historic District continues its exciting revitalization, spurred by a true public-private partnership that illustrates the strength and vitality of the community. So far this year, the City Council has approved three tax abatement agreements with local entrepreneurs who are putting hard-earned money into projects that, one by one, are bringing many of the historic buildings back to a productive life. These three property tax abatement agreements are in addition to the seven others the Council approved in 2014.

There are a few examples of the many exciting things happening in the City. After sitting idle for a number of years, several of the larger buildings downtown have sold, including the Chase Bank building, the Dyers Department Store building and the former Stroube Oil Museum building. Everyone is eager to see the new owners bring these treasured old buildings back to life and to productive use.

An important indicator of downtown life is the growth in the number of people now living in the downtown area. According to the Landmark Commission, there are about 30 lofts and apartments downtown, with five more currently under construction. The estimate is probably 40-50 people now living downtown and that number will continue to grow as the bustling renovation activity brings more loft apartments into the rental market every year. In addition, to the loft apartments on Beaton, the Old Jail on 5th Avenue has been recently purchased and the new owner intends to renovate that historic old building for a private residence.

Another important indicator is the continued health of retail businesses in the downtown district. Construction on the new Envision Eye Care Center at 5th Avenue and Main Street is nearing completion, taking what for years has been a vacant paved lot and replacing it with a 4,000 square foot building with an exterior façade that the Landmark Commission feels will blend with the rest of the downtown district.

The restaurants downtown are all doing well, a new furniture store (McCain’s Furniture) recently opened on Beaton, and Chickadee’s Embroidery shop is moving to expand the business. A new dress shop (Cotton Kisses) is planning to open soon, the Stroube building is being remodeled into office suites, and the building at the corner of 4th Avenue and Beaton is being converted into office space downstairs with loft apartments upstairs. In addition, there are several more buildings on Beaton that have changed hands in the past six months and the new owners are still firming up plans for future renovation and use.

To make the downtown district more “user-friendly” for visitors, festival-goers and regular shoppers and browsers, the City is adding a new public rest room on the north end of Beaton. The new park will be called the Beaton Street Market. The Council has seen the proposed Wolf Brand Chili Bronze for the corner of 5th Avenue and Beaton Street. The Arts in Public Places group, headed by Joe Brooks, is looking for funding to create the piece. There are several other bronze projects in various stages of work.

Speaking of festivals, Derrick Days is fast approaching. The annual event will be held during April 18th through the 25th. This year promises to be the best year ever. Corsicana’s own Terry Fator will be the master of ceremonies for Derrick Days Parade and will perform on Saturday night, April 25th. Tickets are on sale now! Terry is just another example of Corsicana folks giving back to the community. Terry is not the only big star performing during Derrick Days. The Oil Baron’s Ball, which will be held on April 18th at Lake Halbert, will feature a live performance by the Bellamy Brothers. Tickets are on sale now for this event, too. Contact VOICE at 903-872-0180.

And last, but not least, there is a planned \$130 million mixed-use residential and retail development that will break ground this year on a 282-acre tract in the northwest quadrant of 45th Street and 7th Avenue/Highway 31, across from Walmart. The developer plans to build 250 apartment units, 132 duplex units and nearly 500 single-family homes priced in the \$125,000 to \$225,000 range. In addition, 50-75 acres will be developed for retail and commercial use along Highway 31. According to the developer, Wally Properties, groundbreaking on the apartments will begin in the fall of this year. Construction of the duplexes is expected to begin in the first half of 2016. Construction of the first phase of single-family homes will likely begin sometime in 2017.

Happy Easter,

Chuck McClanahan
Mayor