

# Jarrell's hopes for growth rise with 200-foot water tower

*City leaders count on tower to attract growth and lower fire insurance rates.*

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This small town 17 miles north of Georgetown has one fire hydrant, in front of its Volunteer Fire Department. Jarrell's water system doesn't have big enough pipes for more hydrants, said City Council Member Jeff Stockton.

Firefighters have to use water tanks on their trucks to battle fires. And that has always worried Stockton. "You really don't want something bad to happen on your watch," he said.

Now, a new steel water tower paid for by local developer Troy Bradshaw has gone up along Interstate 35 and will hold 300,000 gallons once it is filled in March.

It will provide enough water pressure for fire hydrants for businesses and residents in Bradshaw's development, called the Jarrell Town Center.

The city, already in negotiations to buy its water system from the Jarrell Schwertner Water Supply Corp., will eventually be able to connect to the tower once it can afford new pipes, city leaders said.

They also hope the water tower will usher in an era of growth in Jarrell, which has about 1,700 to 1,900 residents.

The water tower "is the ignition point for growth along Interstate 35," said Mayor Dewey Hulme.

It has also given city leaders another asset to talk to potential businesses about, said City Council Member Larry Bush.

The city recently added a \$10 million wastewater system.

Development in the southern part of Jarrell's extraterritorial jurisdiction along the extension of Ronald Reagan Boulevard will also benefit from the fire protection that the tower offers, said Council Member John Grant.

Many outsiders remember Jarrell only as the place where 26 people died in a tornado in May 1997, Bush said.

"We will not forget that we lost lives in the tornado, but that does not define us," he said.

Rising more than 200 feet into the air, the new tower took about a month to erect, and construction on it will continue for another month, said Casey Sledge, the town center's designer.

"The water tower has moved us years ahead in providing peace of mind to residents," Stockton said.

It's a welcome sight for Greg Danek, who owns a lumber store in downtown Jarrell.

He said he had to rebuild it after a fire in April 2009 destroyed the original 1911 wood-frame building in about 15 minutes.

"The Fire Department did a good job of containing the fire and not letting the rest of downtown burn," he said. "If this building were to catch on fire again, the water tower would help."

Bradshaw paid \$1.8 million for the construction of the water tower and the 340-foot well that serves it, he said.

He plans to develop the 153 acres around the water tower and along Interstate 35 and FM 487.

"I just see the economic growth potential here. ... It will be the next Hutto," Bradshaw said.

Plans for the 46-acre town center include a large convenience store-travel center, a large grocery store, a pharmacy, a few restaurants and fast-food chains, a hotel or motel, professional offices and some retail stores, said Charles Ashby, who is marketing the center.

It will also have green space and a pavilion for gatherings and pedestrians.

The 107-acre subdivision will have about 10 to 13 acres of commercial property on FM 487 and more than 300 single-family homes, Ashby said.

City leaders hope the resulting development will boost sales tax revenue, pay for the city's wastewater system and attract businesses that the town lacks, such as a pharmacy or a large grocery store, said Bruce Barton, vice president of the Jarrell Economic Development Corp.

He said that fire insurance could drop by as much as 50 percent for local businesses because of the water tower.

Jarrell, which incorporated in 2001, is trying to highlight qualities it hopes will attract residents, Barton said.

"We've got a low crime rate, an outstanding school district, and you can build a home here for about 20 percent less than Georgetown," Barton said.

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