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News Release

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City of Melissa sees robust resumption as it closes year

MELISSA (January 4, 2023) Two years removed from the worldwide pandemic that brought a widespread slowdown to cities across the country, the City of Melissa has seen a robust resumption of its progressive focus in 2022 covering all phases of its functions and operations.

Chief among these is a significant rise in its population numbers. In the last five years, the population of Melissa has doubled, closing 2022 at nearly 22,500. While the population numbers have been trending upward on a fairly consistent basis annually since 2018, the rise during 2022 was seen as a small leap up from the previous year.

Housing construction, of course, was one of the key drivers of the increase. Thanks, in part, to a virtually uninterrupted level of production in the local construction industry, the number of single family homes kept a steady pace throughout the year. Closing the 2022 fiscal year with just over 900 residential permits, the year was the second highest on record.

The year also was notable for forcefully moving forward with the conceptualization and primary steps toward fulfilling the promise of a true downtown district, an item that was consistently rated highly by residents in each version of the Comprehensive Plan.

Fueled by increasing interest in the formation and development of a dynamic and vigorous mixture of commercial, residential, and entertainment options, the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council brought their shared vision for downtown closer to reality. The work has been guided by an unwavering commitment to ensuring that the development meets the unmistakable Melissa flavor.

Already announced and anticipating an imminent groundbreaking is the upcoming Gateway Village Downtown Development, the first major commercial project in the City's Downtown Overlay District. The project will showcase the architecture, streetscape, and gathering spot potential inherent in the downtown vision.

Behind the scenes, work was completed in the critical area of right-of-way mapping in the downtown district, ensuring that public infrastructure improvements proceed with the proper amount of respect to existing properties. In those areas of the downtown district where development will progress on its own pace, a planned course of street improvement is now underway.

A growing community needs a well-planned, efficiently connected grid of thoroughfares that allow residents to commute from neighborhoods to retail centers, schools, parks, and other points of interest. During 2022, the City completed East Melissa Road from Hwy 5 to SH 121, a major east-west connector. There was also substantial work on West Melissa Road from US 75 to the Trinity Falls subdivision. That stretch of West Melissa Road is being constructed by the Johnson Development Corporation, developer of Trinity Falls. Completion is estimated for mid-2023, making Melissa Road a true cross-town access road.

In response to the expanding needs of the growing Melissa ISD student body, a network of roads and streets that serve the high school site and surrounding area are nearing completion.

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Commercial activity has also seen a sharp rise in 2022 as more businesses opened their doors during the year than in any previous 12-month period. In addition, ten new free-standing commercial building permits were issued in 2022 as well as 23 commercial tenant finish out permits. Of course, the announcement of Texas grocery giant HEB entering the Melissa market was extremely welcomed.

On the Public Safety side, both the Fire Department and the Police Department continued their quest for excellence by implementing best practices in both professions. The Police Department was recertified for the coveted Recognition designation for third time by the Texas Police Chiefs Association while the Fire Department is also on track for a similar designation from its peers.

The Police Department implemented a NARCAN program that assists officers when dealing with citizens who have overdosed on opioids. Recognizing the value of medical based training for patrol officers, the department has implemented a program for officers wishing to become certified Emergency Medical Technicians. The initial cadre of four officers going through the training will join the one officer who was previously certified, and who has used those skills on patrol in the past.

The Police Department's Criminal Investigation Unit has been increased to two officers. The staffing increase will allow these detectives to concentrate their efforts at solving cases more quickly and with greater success in prosecution.

The Fire Department has undergone the annual Insurance Services Office review of capabilities and readiness and has been successful in maintaining an ISO rating of 2 for City of Melissa residential and office structures. The rating provides favorability in property insurance costs because it indicates that the Fire Department has the skills, manpower, facilities, equipment, training, and water availability to successfully fight fires.

Staffing and training at the Fire Department have been top priorities in 2022, as crews have been working steadily to master the capabilities featured in the department's quint, which includes an expandable ladder and nozzle.

Both the Police Department and the Fire Department were instrumental in assisting architects and designers of the planned Public Safety Building, slated for construction on Hwy 5 just south of Melissa Road. The facility will house both departments, their administrative staffs, and Municipal Court. It is set to open in early 2024.

Municipal Court, in 2022, added an additional court date each month to deal with an increase in cases, driven by the addition of police officers and code enforcement personnel. In an effort to standardize and provide efficiency, several forms were revised and automated. These forms include Request for Deferred Disposition; combined Affidavit and Request for Driver Safety Course; and Deferred Disposition for Driver Safety Course. The revised forms appear on the City of Melissa and TrafficPayment.com websites.

Court staff has worked with third party vendors to pave the way toward a paperless environment, making Municipal Court more accessible to the public without the need for unnecessary face-to-face interaction. This year also marked the seventh year in a row that Municipal Court won the Municipal Traffic Safety Initiative award.

The year was an especially productive one for Parks and Facilities. In addition to replacing one of the rooftop HVAC units at City Hall, the Facilities staff upgraded the control system for future migration to other such units. Other improvements to the City Hall lighting and outdoor surfacing were accomplished.

On the Parks side, emphasis during 2022 was placed on upgrades to the Z-Plex, major enhancements to Country Ridge Park and shepherding the development of the as yet unnamed 90-acre Park as well as to assessing and surveying resident views on future amenities. For example, a comprehensive trail study was completed and a widely distributed survey concentrating on parks and recreation was completed. Currently underway is an update to the Parks Master Plan. A grant was secured to connect trails under SH 121, making a seamless connection to both sides of the busy roadway.

At the Z-Plex, two grass soccer fields were constructed that meet FIFA (the international federation for football association) standards. This means that high-end soccer will likely be played at the Z-Plex in the near future. Also constructed were two all-purpose turf fields for local play. A new playground for youngsters was added to provide a place for children's entertainment.

Among the newer parks in the Melissa system, Country Ridge Park underwent major work as the existing trail and parking lot were topped with a decomposed granite and cement mixture. A new perimeter trail and bisector trails through the park were added as well as a connector trail to Lake Perry Fisher. The park was enhanced with an array of solar lights around Lake Perry Fisher.

While hopes for a grand opening of the 90-acre park went unfulfilled by a combination of lack of rain to fill the lake and delays in the construction of the amenities, work on the park nevertheless moved forward rapidly during the year. The parking area and site lights were completed, as was the restroom building. To ensure against erosion, 26 irrigation zones were installed that will water the landscaping and grass, and a supply well was drilled and a well house was built to maintain the lake's level. Sidewalks on the east side of Liberty Way were completed to provide a safe walkway to the park. An opening celebration will be planned in 2023 when the phase is completed.

This year, the staff at the Public Library completed certification of the Family Place program, following a years-long delay caused by COVID. An inspection of the facility and toys was completed successfully. The Family Place program builds on the knowledge that good health, early learning, parental involvement, and supportive communities play a critical role in a young child's growth and development.

The certification fortifies the library's goal of being family friendly, providing an environment that continues to transform the library into a center for literacy, early childhood development, parent education and engagement, family support and community information.

Confirmation of the transformation's success is borne out by the numbers. In 2022, the library handled 68,436 material circulations, an increase of 23 percent from 2021. Over 22,700 people visited the Library, with many taking advantage of 192 programs, in areas such as baby, toddler, and family storytimes, summer reading, performers, teen hangouts, and adult craft classes.

Melissa's meteoric growth trend also means that the constantly engaged Public Works staff saw its workload increase. Ensuring a reliable water supply, the staff oversaw the completion and utilization of the two million gallon North Elevated Storage Tank. A new VT SCADA monitoring system that allows Public Works personnel to closely monitor and control the systems in the storage facility was acquired.

The staff ensured that all of the City's major collector streets were re-striped and new school zone LED flashing signs were installed. Public Works continued its leak detection and repair program, worked with developers and builders on water and wastewater extensions, and quickly and effectively responded to various urgencies caused by construction accidents.

Meanwhile, each of the Public Works employees who required licensing for their specific positions completed the prescribed water courses and have either obtained their license or are awaiting results of their testing.

On the Administration side, the Finance Department implemented the OpenGov processing software for building the budget and published an online budget book. The staff also implemented a new Request for Qualifications process for new auditors, in line with City Charter guidelines. New and improved payment processes were put in place by increasing ACH auto draft payments with security measures such as Positive Pay for all ACH payments.

The department was recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association with the budget preparation award, a recognition it has won 14 years in a row, as well as the award for the annual financial report, awarded to Melissa for the last dozen years. The annual audit found no discrepancies in the City's finances.

The City Council was able to reduce the City's tax rate by a significant 20 percent while stabilizing water and wastewater rates. Funding for the Road Repair and Replacement program was continued, designed to defray the cost of future street repair and replacement.

On the Human Resources front, the City of Melissa continues its commitment to maintaining a lean organization. Of the 13 area cities and towns used for peer comparison, the City of Melissa workforce represents the lowest in positions per 1,000 population. Melissa's 2.55 positions per 1,000 population compares very favorably to the 6.77 average of the other 13 cities.

Constantly conducted employee satisfaction surveys by a third party, which measured both job satisfaction and organizational engagement, reveal that 89 percent of employees score high on both measurements.

The year also saw residents bid farewell to beloved Mayor Reed Greer, electing Jay Northcut to the post along with two new Council members. A strategic planning retreat was hosted for Council members and the Code of Ethics was reviewed and amended as a new Code of Conduct. A review of the City Charter was begun, and a restatement of the mission, vision, and values is also underway.

The outlook for 2023 and beyond is one of growth and further development, as Melissa burnishes its reputation as an emerging city of the future.

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ABOUT THE CITY OF MELISSA – The City of Melissa is a fast-growing progressive suburb with a small-town feel, located 35 miles north of downtown Dallas in the dynamic growth area of northeast Collin County. Melissa sits on 21 square miles, is home to over 19,000 people, and is easily accessible by way of three intersecting highways. Melissa has ample inventory of the highly-sought-after undeveloped frontage available on US 75 and SH 121, primed to serve the commercial needs of a booming Collin County. Melissa is a home-rule municipality, governed by a council-manager form of government.