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AUGUST 23, 2011
Rockwall Economic Development Corporation
Leslyn Blake 972.772.0025

Rockwall #1 for Job Creation in the United States!

ROCKWALL, Texas – August 23, 2011 - Rockwall County has recently been recognized as the #1 county in the country for job creation by *CNNMoney* magazine, with 98% job growth from 2000-2010. Two counties in Texas made the list. Williamson County, just north of Austin, came in at number three.

“Rockwall may be the smallest county in Texas, but it’s one of the fastest growing too. The county population is just over 78,000 which is 82% higher than 10 years ago.” said Sheri Franza, President and CEO of the Rockwall Economic Development Corporation.

Businesses are flocking to Rockwall because of the generous incentives and a higher quality of life. The latest development is Harbor Heights, a seven-story 110,000 square foot office tower slated to open next year. Major corporations like L-3 Communications and Pilgrim’s Pride make their home in the Rockwall Technology Park where more companies are expected to join their ranks.



At a time when job creation is the top priority for the President of the United States and the nation in general is suffering through an economic crisis, Rockwall is recognized as the number one county for job creation...an enviable designation to cities and towns struggling to create jobs across the country. “We are very fortunate that people are beginning to realize what we already knew. Rockwall is a very special place to call home not only from the residential perspective but also for your business” said Mayor of the City of Rockwall, David Sweet.

With a 365 acre Technology Park, home to Fortune 500 companies and over 1000 workers, the Rockwall Economic Development Corporation (REDC) has championed the effort to bring big industry to Rockwall and create jobs. The Rockwall Technology Park, located on the east side of Rockwall just off Interstate 30, is home to many businesses and growing. “The Park broke ground in 2000 with 147 acres and has grown to three phases with a total of 365 acres today. REDC is committed to providing the optimum atmosphere for significant growth for our businesses” said Franza.

Rockwall’s newest planned development project is “Harbor Heights”. The first phase of the project will be a seven story Class A corporate office tower. It will provide corporate office space, as well as a bank, a five star roof-top restaurant and other retail opportunities. Construction for the 110,000 square foot landmark tower will begin in 2011 and several pad sites will be developed in conjunction with the corporate office tower. Because of the elevation of Rockwall and being located on Lake Ray Hubbard, the views from the Tower will be amazing. Harbor Heights will help ensure that Rockwall assumes its place as one of the top cities for

business in Texas. “From an economic development standpoint, Harbor Heights gives us the ability to compete with other cities for corporate headquarters relocation and expansion. Lake Ray Hubbard gives us a unique opportunity for Rockwall’s ‘Corporate Coast’. In Rockwall, we feel that we have the best place to live and play. Now we will have the best place to work as well” said Franza.

One of Rockwall’s largest manufacturers, SPR Packaging, recently began a 125,000 square foot expansion to their existing facility. SPR produces high quality packaging solutions out of their initial 57,000 square foot facility. The expansion provides for warehouse expansion and additional capital equipment to grow capacity. “There were three main factors that drove our decision to expand in Rockwall: access to rail, the long-term valuation of real estate, and access to a pool of skilled talent”, notes founder Steven P. Rosenberg. “Rockwall met all of these criteria and has proven to be an excellent choice for our associates, their families, and for our future”.

In 1960, the population of Rockwall County was slightly less than 6,000. Thirty years later in 1990, it was about 26,000. Today, Rockwall’s population is almost 80,000, and is projected to be 250,000 by the year 2030.

On a percentage basis, Rockwall is the fastest growing county in Texas and the third fastest in the U.S. In terms of median income, it’s the fourth wealthiest county in Texas and the 44th wealthiest in the U.S. Rockwall is the smallest county in physical size in Texas with a total area of 144 square miles with the county being 12 miles long and 12 miles wide. Twenty three square miles of the county is filled with Lake Ray Hubbard, a major recreation and economic driver for the area. “It is simply full of reasons why it is so successful as a County” said County Judge of Rockwall Jerry Hogan.

The Rockwall school system is one of the most progressive in the state with continued high rankings in both education quality and abundance of first-class physical facilities. Rockwall ISD students score considerably higher than both the national and state averages on the SAT and ACT college entrance exams. State Accountability ratings show that Rockwall ISD had 19 in the Exemplary range and five in the Recognized range. There are also five strong private schools that offer advanced curriculum and different approaches to education.

“Our main goal is to provide a quality education for our students, but we also realize that a quality education includes far more than just rigorous academic courses,” said RISD Superintendent Jeff Bailey. “We encourage our students to serve our community and we provide avenues for students to participate in community service projects. It is very encouraging to see our students achieve success in so many ways—through academics; through sports, clubs and other activities; and through their service to the Rockwall community—and we believe that focusing on each of these areas will help prepare them for their future.”

The six towns in Rockwall County: Royse City, Fate, Heath, McClendon-Chisholm, Rockwall and part of Rowlett, range in size from 3,000 to 35,000. Fate is the fastest growing town in Texas over the last 10 years as it has gone from a population of 400 to over 6,000.

“Quality of life, the ease of getting back and forth to the major city, the lower taxes, the quality of the school system, the safety and security of our communities, the small town atmosphere, the abundance of recreational activities, and the attitude of our citizens...this is why folks move here to work and live, and this is why they stay” said Hogan.

Two major highways allow access into the county; Interstate 30, a major interstate, and Route 66, a major state highway. Both highways cross Lake Ray Hubbard, and both have new bridges with four to six lanes of traffic. Access to Rockwall from the west will be made even easier at the end of 2011 with the completion of the President George Bush Turnpike Eastern Extension. The Eastern Extension is a 10 mile segment from State Highway 78 in Garland, east to I-30, just before the Lake Ray Hubbard bridge. The new six-lane toll road will pass through Garland, Sachse and Rowlett and connect Rockwall to the greater North Dallas area, Plano and Richardson in minutes.

Lake Ray Hubbard is undeniably the biggest selling point when it comes to buying a home in Rockwall. For many, it is the simple charm of waking up to look out onto a large body of water that makes Rockwall so attractive. Housing is plentiful with homes in all price ranges. Whether it is a starter home at under \$100K or a lakeside mansion for \$5M, selection and availability are abundant.

If there is one development that has put Rockwall on the map throughout the DFW area, it is The Harbor. This unique “castle by the sea” is a joint public and private venture that brings visitors by the thousands. There are more than 20 businesses located in The Harbor which include a popular multi-screen Cinemark complex and the Hilton Bella Harbor Hotel. The entire development has been lauded for its stylish, upscale design that compliments the water’s edge ambiance. The “Concerts by the Lake” series sponsored by the City of Rockwall is held every Thursday evening from mid-May to mid-August. Visitors enjoy the music from their seats on patios, or from a comfortable blanket on the grass.

Major retailers and national brand restaurants are abundant along the Interstate 30 retail corridor in Rockwall. Home to Rockwall Towne Center, Rockwall Crossing and the Plaza at Rockwall, there are nearly three quarters of a million square feet of shopping and other services. There are countless restaurant choices within the corridor ranging from five star steak houses to popular casual restaurant and fast-food chains offering everything from great Tex-Mex, burgers, seafood, Italian, Asian and good ol’ down-home Southern. “Rockwall Plaza Phase II is currently under construction. Costco opened in ‘09 and In-N-Out Burger is scheduled to open later this year. Freebirds World Burrito opened in Phase II in July with lines out the door on their grand opening day. Mi Cocina also opened earlier this year” said Franza.

Rockwall County is an area that is chock full of entrepreneurs. From retail shop owners to industrial innovators to technology geeks, they can all be found in Rockwall County. With this kind of opportunity and talent base, Rockwall expects to be #1 in job creation for years to come.

“In July 2009, *Family Circle* magazine named Rockwall number one on their ‘10 Best Towns for Families’ list. They cited good neighbors, A+ public school systems, affordable housing and green spaces, financial stability, low crime rates and access to health care as the main reasons we were at the top of the list,” said Franza. “Now with the designation as the number one

county for jobs, the nation is learning what the citizens of Rockwall have known, and enjoyed, for years.”

The Rockwall Economic Development Corporation actively recruits corporate headquarters by offering assistance and incentives to companies looking to expand or relocate their businesses to one of the largest markets in the United States – the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Rockwall offers training opportunities through five nearby university systems and highly skilled workers as well, with 74 percent of Rockwall’s population having a college education. With existing facilities, a strategic location, and a healthy infrastructure, Rockwall is a profitable decision for business growth and development.

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