

HOMECENTER Neighborhood Profiles

Allen's growth puts it on the map

Collin County town has grown to 77,000 — from 19,000 in '90

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MARY A. JACOBS/Special Contributor

The first time Theresa Brandt heard about Allen, she said, "Where?" And even after she and her husband bought a house there 10 years ago, friends and acquaintances had the same response: "Where's Allen?"

That's changed. Allen had about 19,000 residents in 1990, but city estimates now put the Collin County city's population at more than 77,000. Allen is 23 miles north of Dallas.

Young families are hearing about Allen and moving there.

Ms. Brandt says the friendly feel that first attracted her family remains. "I love being able to run into my grocery store and see people I know," she said. "And even the people I don't know are friendly."

The Brandts have three children, ages 11, 9 and 3, and like many Allen residents, the family moved there for the schools.

"I was considering home-schooling," Ms. Brandt said. "But the schools were so good we decided to give them a shot, and they've been great."

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DARNELL RENEE/Special Contributor

Theresa Brandt came to Allen for the schools for her children, Colson, 9, Kendal, 11, and Kate, 3. Before moving there, she was considering home-schooling.

Enrollment at Allen ISD has more than doubled since 1989, to almost 16,000 in kindergarten through 12th grade, and is projected to increase at a rate of about 9 percent a year over the next 10 years, according to the district.

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Eight Allen ISD campuses were rated exemplary last year. (Residents are quick to mention the Allen Eagle Escadrille, Allen High School's 600-member marching band, color guard and drill team. The Escadrille represented Texas at the 117th Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., in 2006.)

Residents also praise Allen's more than 1,000 acres of parks, and hiking, biking and nature trails, as well as its extensive kids' sports program.

The city is also witnessing a surge in office and retail construction along U.S. Highway 75. Some \$350 million in new developments — such as the 15-acre, eco-friendly Angel Field Center on Bethany Drive — will add almost 2 million square feet of commercial space. Next to the center, 300 apartments plus retail space are popping up at Watters Creek, a mixed-use development.

Allen ranks among the fastest-growing cities in North Texas, according to the North Central Texas Council of Governments, but all this growth will soon come to an end. City leaders project that Allen will reach its "build-out" by 2012, with a maximum population of about 98,000.

The city is handling growth wisely, says Lynna Smith, a resident and Realtor with Keller Williams. She thinks Allen's limited capacity for growth will maintain property values. And having learned about the city's planning while attending the "Leadership Allen" educational program, she's convinced that city leaders are making solid plans for the future.

The mayor, city planner and City Council are "being careful and thinking things through," she said. "They understand that they have a finite piece of land, and they are working with that."

Rather than staying content as a bedroom community, says Ms. Smith, city leaders are "working hard to create a diverse community that can sustain itself after all our kids are grown up and leaving the house."