

April 2018 Column

Growth... Oh yeah, it's coming. As a matter of fact, it's already here. Over 3,000 new homes ("rooftops") will be built in the City of Seguin within the next 5 years, with more coming after that.

If you know me, and if you have followed the news, you know that I am very much a pro-growth person. In the late 20th century, for reasons too many to discuss in this one column, our community was just treading water economically. We learned plenty from the mistakes we made, but I don't want to visit ghosts of the past right now. And I don't want to place all the blame on our past actions. A great deal of what we are experiencing now is due to the booming state and national economies. We sit at the edge of the fastest growing region of the country - the Austin /San Antonio Corridor. We are definitely riding a very positive economic wave, and it is up to us to make the best of it.

Back in the last century, our personal wealth declined relative to our neighboring communities. Oddly enough, some people even regarded growth as a threat to their business. However, we were not making enough goods and providing enough services here that other people wanted to buy...and we were spending much of our personal income outside Seguin, because there was very little here we wanted to buy from ourselves!

It's an oversimplification, but it is the bare truth. Yes, there are all kinds of socio-economic and political reasons that can be thrown into the mix, but it still boils down to the fact that we were in the economic doldrums.

That economic malaise led to the inferiority complex that was so prevalent here for so long. This led to criticisms of our schools and law enforcement, which led to lower property values, which led to lower tax revenues, which led to deteriorating infrastructure, which led to a perceived bad reputation in the region...and on, and on...

So, how did we stop the downward spiral?

We started to grow.

We made it economically advantageous for new companies to locate here, and for our existing companies to stay here. We began making our town a more attractive place where companies will want to bring their people to live. This led to improved perceptions and community pride, leading to higher property values, leading to more home construction, leading to more tax revenue, leading to better schools and law enforcement, and improved infrastructure... and on, and on...

We are now in the process of bringing enough people here to create that "critical mass" to support the businesses, restaurants and entertainment venues that we all crave. That is the reason all those new "rooftops" are so important.

Now comes my dilemma. I love this town for what we have here now. I love it because it is small. I love it because it has traditional neighborhoods, a beautiful downtown, and a rich history. I live in a house built in 1927, and my private office is a cottage built in 1895. I drive a large truck all month on 1 tank of gas. Heavy traffic is defined as having to endure a full light cycle at Court & Austin.

So, is there a solution to the dilemma? Yes, but only to a point. We will have more traffic, we will have more of our open areas converted to industrial and retail use, more housing developments will pop up on the outskirts, and more franchise restaurants will compete with locally owned operations.

But... We are fortunate to already have our identity intact, while keeping our distance from I-10. We will keep our traditional neighborhoods and downtown and our history alive. Downtown Seguin is awakening, and it will return to its former glory - don't doubt me. Our small-town pride is shining bright.

Yes, there will be much happening along I-10, but most of the things that we all love about small town living will remain in our beloved Seguin.

Gosh, I love this town!