

Developments breaking ground in Leander

[Share](#) |

Like

By Jenn Rains Friday, 21 May 2010

LEANDER — Leander’s plan for economic development centers on sustainable prosperity, or creating a place where residents can live, work and play.

How will the Austin Community College Leander campus benefit you?

- I plan to become a full-time student at the campus
- I will take some classes at ACC Leander
- I will attend special programs or events at the campus
- The campus will have no benefit for me

Vote

[View Results](#) [Share This](#)

“We want everyone to work in Leander, regardless of their education level,” said Kirk Clennan, Leander’s economic development director. “To do that we must have a variety of manufacturing, office, service, retail and public employment options available to residents.”

The plan has been years in the making, but businesses are dotting the horizon of Leander. Business complexes opening along Crystal Falls Parkway, the upcoming groundbreaking of Joule Biotechnologies and the popularity of Business Park 2243 are helping to make the plan a reality.

Other projects, such as Bill Hinckley’s Crystal Falls development, the transit-oriented development (TOD) and The Vision of Leander, will continue development trends in the city.

“All of the public and private investment that is taking place in Leander is contributing to sustainable prosperity by diversifying our tax base,” Clennan said. “These are incremental steps in our overall endeavor to increase the employment and service opportunities to the community.”

Implementing the city’s economic plan takes a lot of work and planning. Clennan said several ways Leander is working to achieve its goal is through fostering entrepreneurship, undertaking a significant business retention and expansion program, attracting businesses to relocate to the city and trying to pursue destination tourism.

Despite the economy taking a toll on Central Texas, developments



When Mike Elmore of MPE Realty first bought the former Aquatic Industries campus, the buildings were aluminum warehouses, but Elmore had a vision to reconstruct empty buildings into a small business and warehouse complex.



—residential and commercial—are still taking shape in Leander. Catering to small businesses and warehouses, Business Park 2243 is filling up fast with the potential to be full by October, a year after renovations started.

Hinckley’s Crystal Falls development, which will feature residential and commercial elements when complete, continues to build new homes and attract residents.

New developments are underway in Leander, but there is still more to come in the future. The Vision of Leander and the transit-oriented development are just two big projects that will shape the scenery of the city in future years.

Business Park 2243

The multiple warehouse buildings that were once home to Aquatic Industries is becoming a popular hub for commercial development in Leander.

The campus stood empty after Aquatic Industries relocated in June 2009 until Mike Elmore, owner of the development group MPE Realty and president of Austin Capital Concrete, came up with an idea.

“I saw the business and thought, ‘I wonder if I can take the warehouses and break this thing down into smaller businesses,’” he said.

Elmore started renovating the seven buildings in October 2009 and planned to offer retail space in the front portion and office warehouses in the back part of the 80,000-sq.-ft. development.

Instead, Business Park 2243 is becoming home to a diverse group, as retail, offices, a school and a theater company are committed to locating in the park. A skating rink is also a possibility for the back 10 acres, which is zoned heavy industry.

“This is becoming more than what I had envisioned, and I think it’s coming together great,” Elmore said. “There’s not a lot of office and warehouse space in Leander for smaller businesses and there’s a need for that.”

The overall value of the development is expected to be about \$5 million to \$6 million.

Crystal Falls

The idea for the Crystal Falls development was born 15 years ago when Hinckley, while horseback riding, discovered rolling hills in the middle of nowhere.

“I knew we had to have it,” said Hinckley, president of The Lookout Group Inc. “This 1,500 acres surrounding the Golf Club at Crystal Falls was the start of the complicated assemblage of ranches and



Building One of Business Park 2243, which houses the office of Seth Tanner’s Farmers Insurance Agency and is the future location of Smokey Mo’s Bar-B-Q, shows the stone work, awnings and other details added to the buildings during the renovation of the former Aquatic Industries campus.

[Click for larger image](#)



[Click for larger image](#)

Current developments

Business Park 2243

- 1 Sterling Classical School, opens July 1
- 2 Smokey Mo’s, opens July 1
- 3 Seth Tanner, Farmers Insurance Agency, opened April
- 4 Way Off Broadway Community Players, opens Aug. 1
- 5 Hill Country Bible Church Leander, in negotiations
- 6 Texas Swing Company, opens June 1

- Negotiations are in the works with companies in the industries of catering, dry cleaning, furniture and several dry warehouse users
- 10 acres in the back are zoned heavy industry

Austin Capital Concrete
Location subject to change!

Crystal Falls

- Five subdivisions: Grand Mesa, The Boulders, The Fairways, The Highlands, Caprock
- Total acreage: 5,000 acres
Left to develop: 3,500 acres
- 13,000 total homes from \$200,000 to \$1 million
- Lots range from 60-feet wide to 5 acres
- Neighborhoods will be annexed into City of Leander city limits in the future
- Limestone from local quarry used in amenities of subdivisions

[Click for larger image](#)

small tracts that now comprise the Crystal Falls Master Plan.”

The Crystal Falls development began in 1997 with 1,500 acres and has grown to 5,000 acres spanning from Bagdad Road west to Nameless Road between RM 1431 and FM 2243.

The project is 10–15 percent complete with 1,300 homes built and about 3,500 acres left to develop, Hinckley said. The homes will range from the traditional 60-foot-wide lot to 5 acres—and everything in between.

“We have everything except starter homes below \$200,000,” he said. “Our hope is to have a vertical move-up market within the community, so folks can move up or down within the community as their lives and incomes change.”

The award-winning master planned community boasts five subdivisions, churches, three elementary schools and a Walgreens, but Hinckley’s plan includes more commercial in the future.

“We are holding out for commercial business partners who raise the bar, and we have resisted the temptation to sell to convenience stores and gas stations,” Hinckley said. “We have serious interests from a grocery chain, upscale retailers, restaurants and a host of medical and wellness providers.”

The Vision of Leander

The southeast corner of Crystal Falls Parkway and Toll 183A is just farmland and trees today, but it will soon house The Vision, a commercial mixed-use development.

Rick Castleberry, principal of Paladin Cres Commercial Real Estate, conceived the idea with partners Doug Devine and Tucker Lewis. Castleberry owns 69 acres along the intersection and has another 6 acres under contract with additional acreage in the works.

Depending on market conditions, Castleberry hopes to start building infrastructure by the end of the year for phase one, which will include pad sites for restaurants, banks, drug stores and other retail along Toll 183A and Crystal Falls Parkway.

Phase one is just the beginning of a larger, more diverse project.

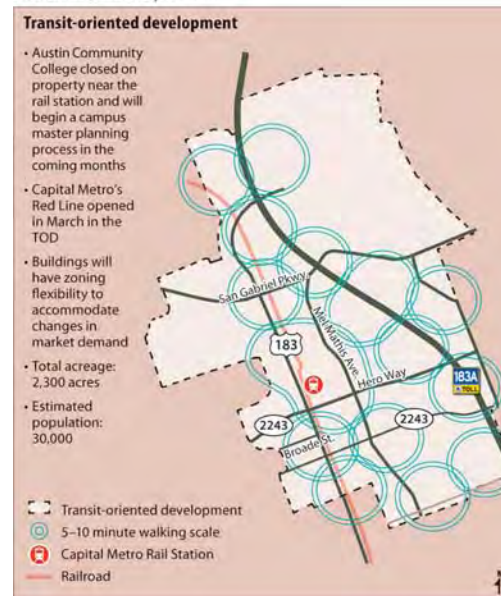
“We’re trying to develop a live, work and play atmosphere with mixed-use commercial, retail, office and with some dense residential community,” Castleberry said. “There is a lot of potential for this corner and with good planning it can be developed well.”

Transit-oriented development

The City of Leander’s plan to have a 2,300-acre transit-oriented development between US 183 and Toll 183A is still in the works, despite tough economic times.

“The economy has really had an impact. Realistically, it will probably be 2012 before we see any vertical build,” said Pix Howell, Leander’s urban design officer. “We’re going to position ourselves for growth and

Future developments



The Vision of Leander



The Vision of Leander will include retail, office, commercial and residential development to create an urban feel at the corner of Crystal Falls Parkway and Toll 183A.

- All businesses will be built with green resources (building materials, cooling systems and materials that capture electricity)
- 75 acres with potential for additional acreage; infrastructure to begin in next few months
- The development will have mixed-use zoning for commercial, office, retail and



[Click for larger image](#)

we're going to be ready for it when the economy turns.”

Some of the transportation aspects of the TOD are falling into place, with Capital Metro's Red Line commuter rail opening in March and the beginning of the Toll 183A expansion in March.

The TOD will have an estimated population of 30,000 at build-out and feature single-family and multifamily residential units, commercial and retail.

“There has to be a mix of those elements in all parts of the plan,” Howell said.

Find more news about [Leander/Cedar ParkNews](#)