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# News Release

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## Year's many uncertainties fail to deter City's progress *Melissa overcomes pandemic residuals and winter storm*

MELISSA (December 28, 2021) Amid the deep uncertainties that seemed to swirl around the dawning of 2021, the City of Melissa continued on a path of undeterred progress, resuming the torrid pace of its anticipated development begun before the pandemic took hold.

In an unmistakable sign of the City's healthy rebound from the previous year's pandemic-induced slowdown, the number of permits for single family structures skyrocketed to a new record. The City ended the 2021 fiscal year with 925 permits issued, the most in recent history and an indication of the continuing strength of Melissa's residential draw.

Commercial activity also gained steam as a number of local and franchised businesses either opened or started construction along SH 121, which has become the City's economic development corridor. Food and retail establishments, businesses offering a variety of home and auto services, private schools, and other business-related construction took a strong hold during 2021.

Among the year's openings were Braum's, Golden Chick, Taco Bell, Wingstop, Jersey Mike's, George's Coffee, and Sunview Café. In addition, Bietsch Orthodontics, Community Med Family Urgent Care, Goldfish Pediatric, and Urgent Care, as well as Melissa United Methodist Church, Caliber Collision, Pinnacle Montessori School, and Eternity Nail Bar all opened their doors during 2021.

Linked to the emerging commercial profile of the SH 121 corridor, the City purchased and cleared the highly-desirable location which was formerly the site of the Kim's Korner convenience store. That specific intersection of SH 121 and Miller Road will undergo widening in the future, and the City's action cleared the way for the road's expansion. The City of Melissa is collaborating with the Melissa Economic Development Corporation for the site's future development.

As the winter of early 2021 eased into its usual February mix of chilly temperatures and the occasional springlike exceptions, the truly unexpected occurred - a winter snowstorm described by state officials as a once-a-century weather event.

A week of heavy snow blanketed the North Texas area, surprising forecasters, overtaxing utility companies, rendering roads and streets impassable, and essentially paralyzing large swaths of the area, including most of Melissa's neighborhoods.

Undaunted by the unprecedented challenge to respond, the City's Public Works, Police, Fire, Parks, Utility Billing, and Administrative Departments worked around the clock to ensure that residents were safe, secure, and able to successfully confront the unusually low temperatures, the heretofore unseen amount of snow, and the dangers of dwindling food supplies.

Melissa water personnel quickly implemented the department's disaster response protocols, which included the use of prepositioned electric generators, ensuring that the system's pump stations remained electrified. This served to

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provide a steady supply of water to customers during the extraordinary winter storm. Staff monitored the water system and all storage tanks along with the backup electric generators at City Hall, the Fire Department, the water pump station, and Stiff Creek Lift Station, continually refilling the gasoline-fueled electric generators. Streets were treated with sand and gravel in anticipation of the storm and crews continued monitoring the roadways during and after the highly-unusual weather event.

Many water customers wisely opened their faucets throughout that week, trickling water through their pipes to prevent the possibility of a freeze and subsequent bursting of pipes. While some customers did experience burst pipes, the vast majority of residents were able to prevent the damage by employing the small-scale water flow in their homes.

Mindful that additional water flowing through individual water meters would be reflected in future water bills, the City Manager and staff proposed that Council issue a one-time credit to residents, providing some monetary relief for the unusual but necessary water use. Council agreed and issued the credit, which was met with resounding approval from residents.

Public Works continued the weekly leak detection and water leak repair program, reducing water loss and upgrading underground piping across the City. In all, crews detected and repaired 31 water service lines throughout the City in 2021.

On the topic of water, Melissa's steadily rapid growth soundly confirmed the wisdom of constructing and utilizing the two-million gallon water tower, known as the NEST or North Elevated Storage Tower, on the north side of town. The tower's full utilization moved closer to fruition throughout 2021 as the completion of its hydrological system entered its final phase.

At the same time, through a fairly complex exchange of land and funding, a new intake point for water from North Texas Municipal Water District transmission lines was established in 2021, with construction of the intake valve pending. The new point's selection process involved several private entities, resulting in a less-expensive and more convenient method of ensuring a reliable and consistent method of water delivery into the Melissa water distribution system. Full implementation of the new intake point will occur in the near future.

Meanwhile, the unrelenting impact of the City's growth was evident in the mobility and transportation areas as well. A new traffic light is scheduled for installation at the intersection of SH 121 and Liberty Way, providing a traffic-activated method of control for that increasingly busy intersection. The traffic signal was approved by the Texas Department of Transportation in mid-2021.

The reconstruction of Melissa Road from SH 5 to SH 121 is nearing completion, soon to fulfill its role as a major east-west crosstown thoroughfare. Once the final lanes are completed, and the traffic control light currently at the intersection of Fannin Road and SH 5 is moved to its new location at Melissa Road and SH 5, the new roadway will be open for traffic. The repositioning of the traffic signal is set to occur during the first quarter of 2022.

To accommodate significant residential construction west of US 75, restoration of Melissa Road in that section of the City was begun. A new bridge spanning the creek bed just west of US 75 along with the widening of the street will ensure that residents from the westside neighborhoods will be able to easily access the City's parks and recreational amenities, schools, shops, restaurants, and other facilities.

North of City Hall, a new northern access from Cardinal Drive, via Highland Street, to SH 5 has been identified and funding secured. Design of the new thoroughfare is underway and, once completed, motorists will have a shorter, more efficient, and safer way to navigate from Pennsylvania Ave. across SH 5 directly to the various Melissa ISD complexes along Cardinal Drive. The traffic light at Pennsylvania Ave. and SH 5 ensures that traffic flows in a safe, orderly manner.

In a similar fashion, easing traffic around the Melissa ISD buildings at the Melissa High School campus, which will eventually include a major sports stadium, several large neighborhoods, and the expanding Z-Plex sports complex, will be facilitated by the construction of an array of connecting streets. Design is currently ongoing and, as with the other street projects, funding has been secured.

Parkland improvements also took root in 2021 with a comprehensive parks program that includes the first phase of construction at the 90-acre park at Throckmorton Road and Liberty Way. To accompany the recently-completed widened hike and bike trail at the park site, heavy equipment has begun excavating the 11-acre fishing lake that will form the centerpiece of the signature park. The lake's banks will be hard-edged, providing safe and pleasant fishing and picnicking opportunities. Other amenities at the 90-acre park include a pavilion, restroom, seating areas, parking, and associated landscaping.

At the Z-Plex, construction of new soccer and practice fields will provide additional practice space for local use and will make the Melissa site eligible for potential high-end amateur, semi-professional and professional soccer play. The improvements, begun in 2021, include enhanced parking facilities.

Country Ridge Park, open to the general public, is also undergoing a major upgrade, renovating trails, and improving the existing natural surfaces. A new trail connection will lead to Lake Perry Fisher, while the lake's perimeter will be illuminated with solar lights. Once complete, the park promises to be among one of the most popular within the City's parks system.

Hike and bike trail construction remains among the most popular preferences for residents, and, in response, the City's trails system is expanding. During 2021, a proposal for a grant that would finance the connection of trails on either side of SH 121 was approved. The trail will allow for walkers, runners, and bikers to safely and securely cross underneath the busy state highway.

The Parks Department has taken over supervisory maintenance of the extensive landscaping and irrigation system along the intersection of US 75 and SH 121, the area that serves as a welcoming garden to Melissa residents and visitors. Unfortunately, the February snowstorm either severely damaged or completely destroyed some of the new vegetation that was beginning to take root. The maturation of this 17-acre area, converted from native grasses to a planned, environmentally-appropriate landscape containing flowering and non-flowering shrubbery and a partial self-watering rain capture feature, will take some time. Nevertheless, City officials are committed to maintaining the unique entryway, giving Melissa a nature-friendly distinctiveness not found elsewhere.

Parks personnel have also overtaken supervision of the maintenance of medians and walkways along the entire stretch of SH 121 within Melissa.

While the downtown area is still in its conceptual phase, members of the City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission are considering the foundational aspects of how the downtown area will progress, with a complementary mix of residential and commercial aspects, working collectively to make downtown Melissa a showcase.

Just south of the downtown area, plans are in place for the construction of a new Public Safety Facility housing the Melissa Police Department Headquarters, Municipal Court, the Central Fire Station, and associated public safety administrative elements. Funding for the facility was secured in 2021 with construction slated for the future.

While public safety continues to dominate the conversation at City Hall, the Fire Department recently took possession of a new ladder truck, giving department personnel the capability of fighting structure fires from tactically-advantageous positions. A new arrangement with AMR, the private ambulance service employed by the City for medical transport services, has resulted in an EMS unit residing fulltime at the current Melissa Fire Station.

This year marked the sixth year in a row that Municipal Court was awarded Traffic Safety Initiative recognition

by the state of Texas. Displays in the lobbies of City Hall and the courtroom that stress the importance of traffic safety and awareness are constantly updated. Responding to the increasing number of citations filed with the court, operational hours were expanded, including an additional court day.

The Melissa Public Library, following guidance from health professionals on the national level, resumed in-person programming, attracting ever higher numbers of participants. Its perennially popular Summer Reading Challenge program successfully stimulated readers at several age levels. A Maker Space within the library was established including a poster printer, vinyl cutting machine, and a vinyl record listening station, among other additions.

In response to patron preference and to increase staff efficiencies, the library separated the previous Young Adult book section into Junior and Young Adult sections, and two grants totaling over \$17,000 were accepted, resulting in the upgrading of the facility's technology.

On the City's financial ledger side, the beneficial combination of increased property and sales taxes and prudent management of expenditures meant a decrease in the annual ad valorem tax rate and an overall lowering of the tiered volumetric water rates.

Enhancements to the City's development dashboard were implemented, making the development tool easier to use and more comprehensive. The economic development dashboard, available on the City's website, allows residents and other interested individuals the ability to track and monitor various residential and commercial projects citywide in near real time.

Two new members of the City Council were elected. The Melissa community welcomed Dana Conklin and Jennifer Clark to the governing body.

Though the uncertainties that marked the beginning of 2021 presented daunting challenges to Melissa staff, volunteers, and Council, the City nevertheless continued to move steadily forward, bolstered by the knowledge that residents continue to be in full support of their efforts.

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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.