

Hurst plans a makeover

Westernmost HEB city has a vision for transformation

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Hurst is a triplet.

Along with Euless and Bedford, Hurst is part of the HEB area of northeast Tarrant County.

The cities' schools form the HEB Independent School District, and there aren't three chambers but one — the HEB Chamber of Commerce.

Hurst is the smallest of the trio, both in population and size — but just barely in size. At 9.9 square miles, it's just one-tenth of a square mile smaller than neighboring Bedford.



RICKY MOON/Special Contributor
Alicia and Michael Rowntree renovated a home in northern Hurst.

The farthest west of the three, Hurst is the closest to Fort Worth: about 10 miles from its downtown. All three HEB cities tout proximity to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport as a major draw for residents and businesses.

Hurst, population 38,500, is 96 percent developed. With little land left for growth, the city is turning to redevelopment to maintain its tax base.

Ashleigh Whiteman, who grew up in Hurst, has returned. "There has been a change, where younger residents are moving here," she said. She also said she's excited about the city's forward-thinking development plans.

The graduate of Baylor University was recently hired as communications manager for the city. She plans to get the word out that Hurst is not standing still.

City officials have developed a "Transforming Hurst: A Vision for the Future" plan that targets three areas for makeovers.

One project is an update of Town Center that will include the addition of a 45,000-square-foot convention center. This area houses City Hall, several restaurants and two new hotels. Plans call for a number of new features such as landscaping, lighting and fountains to make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Another project is the creation of the Heritage District on West Pipeline Road. A new fire station and senior citizen center will anchor the mixed-use development.

The third plan involves turning an older retail center into the Bellaire Arts District. The Artisan Center Theater will be the centerpiece, and the development will include shops, municipal buildings and apartments.

These plans appealed to Alicia and Michael Rowntree, who bought a home in northern Hurst two years ago and renovated it.

“It’s a perfect little city for us,” Mrs. Rowntree said. “We wanted a place that was affordable and in a good location, and had lots of trees.”

She’s only a few minutes from a grocery store and 10 minutes from North East Mall, a retail center that underwent an expansion recently and now offers more than 140 stores.

Plus, she’s been impressed with what the city offers, such as its two aquatic centers, a tennis center and 18 parks. “We can join our recreation center for only \$25 a year and have access to so many activities,” Mrs. Rowntree said.

Since the Rowntrees are expecting their first child this summer, education was also a consideration. While mostly in the HEB district, the city also lies in a few neighboring districts, and all have high rankings.

Higher education is available, too, with the northeast campus of Tarrant County College in Hurst and the University of Texas at Arlington nine miles south.

For a small city that’s part of a trio, Hurst holds its own.