This is a time of abundance and blessings for Tarrant County. Jobs are plentiful, schools are good and businesses of all shapes and sizes are doing well.

Tarrant County, like the rest of North Texas, is growing like gangbusters. Two million people now live in the county and there could be well over three million by 2050.

Unemployment was a low 3.6 percent last November. Our economy is strong. American Airlines is building a new headquarters, Lockheed Martin is manufacturing F-35s, Bell Helicopter is developing new helicopters and BNSF Railway is running its trains all across this great nation.

A Time of Abundance

It’s no wonder people are resettling here in droves. They can find good work, comparatively affordable housing and we have a wholesome, generous and supportive community.

There is a lot we have to be thankful for in Tarrant County, but we cannot sit back and rest on our laurels. That would be a disservice to the generations that follow.

We must be able to watch children and grandchildren play soccer or perform at school or visit older family members, without facing Los Angeles-style traffic.

Businesses depend on having a well-educated workforce and being able to quickly move goods and provide services. If they are not able to do that, they will most likely locate elsewhere.

Children need to learn to read well by third grade, so they can read to learn for the rest of their lives. It is critical to support our schools to create that educated workforce.

As for moving people and goods, we have the Chisholm Trail Parkway from Fort Worth to Cleburne, the reworked North Tarrant Express that includes State Highway 183 and Loop 820 and the long overdue makeover of Interstate-35W.

After all, I-35W is the backbone road of North America, traveling from the tip of Texas to Lake Superior in Minnesota – right through the center of Tarrant County. And, the interchange at Interstate 30 and State Highway 360 is being built.

We will need to do more to prepare for the significant population growth between Fort Worth and Weatherford.

The Metroplex grew north to Denton and Collin counties the past 20 years and now it is growing to the west, bigtime, with tens of thousands of homes being planned.

Access to Jobs, the Arts, the Medical District and Schools

There will be tremendous economic development opportunities, new businesses, new jobs and schools, new communities. People living and working out west will want access to the destination areas of a vibrant downtown Fort Worth, West 7th Street, the Arts District and Medical districts or a baseball or football game and other entertainment in Arlington.

TCU and the University of North Texas Health Science Center are opening a new medical school next year, The Texas A&M law school is established in downtown Fort Worth and Tarleton State University is building a campus in southwest Fort Worth.

Tarrant County College continues its great success, Texas Wesleyan is transforming its campus and the University of Texas at Arlington has become a premier research and engineering school.

We will need to pay close attention to the newly convened 85th Texas Legislature.

The Legislature sometimes imposes costly unfunded mandates that can affect the ability of local governments to provide vital services to Texans and to businesses locating or staying in Texas.

A hallmark of our success is the cooperative nature of our cities, school districts and Tarrant County. We leverage everybody’s strengths toward a common goal in order to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

With all of us working together, we can succeed.
Sheriff Bill Waybourn Gets His Star

Say hello to the new sheriff.
Tarrant County Sheriff Bill Waybourn, who took office on New Year’s Day, is a big man with a big job.

“I’ve been looking at the sheriff’s office for 30 years and recognized that it could be more effective,” said Waybourn, the former Dalworthington Gardens police chief who defeated incumbent Sheriff Dee Anderson in the 2016 Republican primary and faced a Libertarian Party candidate in the general election.

Waybourn believes that the previous sheriff’s department isolated itself and was out of touch with the deputies and the communities it serves.

“I hope to improve communication and to create a more service oriented team,” he said.

The department has nearly 1,500 employees and works in cooperation with the county’s 41 cities and many municipal police departments.

“I want to get to know them and I want to let them get to know me,” he said.

Waybourn has small-town roots and 30 years of urban experience running a small police department in the heart of the Metroplex.

He was born in Jal, New Mexico, a small town in the southeast corner of the state near the Texas border. His family relocated to Arlington and he is a graduate of Bowie High School.

He joined the Air Force in the late 1970s, only to be right back in Tarrant County working security at Carswell Air Force base.

Waybourn was a 24-year-old police lieutenant when he was made chief of the Dalworthington Gardens department in 1984. He retired in September of 2015.

He holds a bachelors degree from Dallas Baptist University, a Master’s degree in conflict management from Trinity Seminary and College in Newburgh, Indiana, and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

While chief, Waybourn developed an innovative program to aggressively pursue convictions of drivers pulled over for driving while intoxicated.

He trained his police officers to draw blood on suspected drunk drivers and the conviction rate that had been about 50 percent nearly doubled as a result of the program, he said.

“I think we should draw blood 100 percent of the time,” he said. “I want the truth so that we can appropriately seek justice.”

The no-refusal DWI program earned Waybourn the endorsement of former Texas Governor Rick Perry in his successful Republican primary bid.

He is a lifetime member of the Texas Police Chiefs Association and often visited the State Capitol in support of issues concerning police officers and police departments.

Waybourn was a staunch supporter of the “Chris Kyle Bill,” named for the late Navy SEAL Chris Kyle, whose story was depicted in the film ”American Sniper.”

The bill, passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature, recognizes training of service members and allows them to get credit toward state law enforcement licenses.

“If you developed a skill and used it in the military you should get credit for it to become a police officer,” Waybourn said.

He said he would like to find a way for correctional officers who work in the jail to get the training they need to become police officers, if they want to pursue that as a career.

“The future of the Tarrant County Sheriff’s office is bright with all the great employees we have,” he said.

What Does the Sheriff Do?

The word “sheriff” is a contraction of the term "shire reeve." It’s an old English term that once designated a royal official who was responsible for keeping the peace throughout a shire or county on behalf of the king.

The first sheriffs carried the authority of the king.

Times change. We don’t have a king anymore.

But, we still have a sheriff. It is the oldest law-enforcement position in the United States. The first American sheriff was appointed in 1634 in Virginia.

The Tarrant County Sheriff serves as an elected county official and is a sworn law enforcement officer.

The sheriff’s duties largely include maintaining the county’s several jails that house about 3,300 prisoners, policing unincorporated areas and providing bailiffs for security in the courts.

Sheriff’s deputies also participate in multi-jurisdictional task forces, with police officers and investigators from cities, state and federal agencies, to reduce auto theft and the distribution of narcotics.
Arlington calls itself the American Dream City. These days it’s a place where dreams become reality. Arlington’s schools, businesses and diverse community are shining examples of Metroplex success.

The dream started in 1954 when then Arlington Mayor Tom Vandergriff was behind the wheel and brought the General Motors Truck Assembly plant to the city of 5,000 residents. That was only the beginning.

Six Flags Over Texas and a water park followed.

In 1972, Vandergriff brought the Texas Rangers baseball team to town. Arlington’s entertainment district was firmly established.

This century, the city that grew to nearly 400,000 has a state-of-the-art Dallas Cowboys stadium and a new Texas Rangers retractable-roof ballpark on the way, with the commercial development called Texas Live planned between the sports arenas.

But that’s only a part of the Arlington dream, made possible by the city’s central location, the willingness of community leaders to work together and a “can do” spirit, said Mayor Jeff Williams.

“Arlington’s goals align so well with Fort Worth, other cities and Tarrant County,” he said.

A priority is to get families jobs, which is so important to the vitality of the community, and the city added about 6,000 last year, he said.

The General Motors truck plant is in the first year of a $1.4 billion expansion, a move that could double production, he said.

General Motors Financial opened a $35 million addition to its Arlington Operations Center campus for 1,300 employees. The company’s Texas workforce of about 4,500 has more than 3,000 employees based in the city.

Arlington public schools led by Dr. Marcelo Cavazos are on a roll.

Cavazos, named Texas Superintendent of the Year for 2016, by the Texas Association of School Boards, shepherded a successful school bond election two years ago that added new elementary schools and upgrades to buildings in the district.

Under his leadership, the district has opened two fine arts academies and expanded community-based kindergarten opportunities. He also signed agreements with colleges and universities to give Arlington high school students greater opportunity to get dual-class credit and early college admission options.

The University of Texas at Arlington, under the leadership of the current President Vistasp Karbhari and past president Jim Spaniolo, emerged from the pack of North Texas universities to become a premier research and engineering institution.

Even though Arlington is in the heart of the well-developed Metroplex, the city has found room to grow.

The 2,300-acre Viridian master-planned community in North Arlington, along State Highway 157, is expected to have more than 1,000 condos and townhomes and several thousand houses when it is built out.

Near Viridian is the 1,300-acre River Legacy Parks, the largest urban park in the Metroplex.

Downtown has been rejuvenated with, among other improvements, venues such as the outdoor Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts that hosts free concerts.

This year, the city began building a 21st Century downtown library just north of Arlington City Hall and a new state-of-the-art facility for City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, library programming and other public meetings.

The new George W. Hawkes Central Library, outfitted with the newest technology, is set to open in 2018.

Finally, the ancient interchange at Interstate 30 and State Highway 360, a relic of the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike, is under construction.

“You have to have patience and have a vision,” said Council Member Sheri Capehart, elected 17 years ago and the longest serving member of the Arlington City Council. “You have an idea and you have to figure out how it fits strategic goals.”

Strong community partnerships that are mutually beneficial, like the connection between Arlington and UTA, are very important, she said.

Arlington needs to think ahead to the next great technology opportunity, Capehart said.

“It took a lot of coordinated effort to make the most of the opportunities and we didn’t get sidetracked,” Capehart said. “Here in Arlington, we just get things done.”
NAVAL AIR STATION FORT WORTH JOINT RESERVE BASE

Securing the Future of the Naval Air Station and Economic Development

Tarrant County skies have filled with the sound of freedom made by American military aircraft for 75 years.

What was once Carswell Air Force Base with B-52 bombers rumbling into the wild blue yonder, is now the Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, home to fighter jets, troop transport planes and host to about 40 different military commands and operations.

It almost wasn’t so.

The federal base closure commission closed Carswell in 1993, only to reopen it the following year as the nation’s first joint reserve base.

For the past nine years, the cities and counties surrounding the base, the Navy and the North Central Texas Council of Governments have worked together to protect the base from additional encroachment that could diminish its ability to operate and lead to further attempts to close it, while also protecting economic development in the adjacent communities.

In 2008, all the entities collaborated on a Joint Land Use Study to identify land-use strategies to preserve the air station’s ability to function. A new study is now underway.

Some land uses near a military base can be incompatible with the military mission.

Urban growth, energy development, land uses that restrict air space or pose a security threat, can affect the base’s future.

Giant wind turbines that produce electric power can interfere with radar, affecting military airspace and operations. They are a challenge for several Texas bases, including the Naval Air Station.

The land-use study and resolving development conflicts is a delicate balancing act made easier by the Regional Coordination Committee, made up of the Navy and the community, that supports compatible growth.

These collaborative studies have helped connect the base to the nearby community and businesses and have been mutually beneficial, said Capt. Mike Steffen, base commanding officer.

“As a whole, the installation’s outlook is vibrant, with ongoing investments from the Navy and other service branches into the base's infrastructure,” Steffen said.

Some squadrons on the base have been selected as part of aircraft modernization programs, Steffen said. The Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron has the new KC-130J Super Hercules and the Air Force has decided that the 301st Fighter Wing will be the first Air Force Reserve-led F-35A Lightning II unit.

Units from the Naval Air Station have, over the years, deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations around the world. The base serves as a safe haven for aircraft that need to be evacuated from coastal installations in the southeast and Gulf of Mexico when there is a threat of tropical storms.

There are currently about 2,000 active duty personnel at the Naval Air Station. About 1,900 civilians work there and nearly 6,000 reservists and national guard members use the base. The Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and Texas Air National Guard have units there.

The annual economic contribution of the base is estimated at about $2.3 billion and increases to $6.6 billion, when the co-located Lockheed Martin plant, which shares the runway, is included.

Statewide, the largest 15 military installations contribute $136.4 billion in total output to the Texas economy and $81.3 billion to the gross domestic product, according to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

The Regional Coordination Committee

The Regional Coordination Committee is a voluntary land-use board made up of representatives of local governments and the Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base.

The innovative committee was formed in 2008 to preserve the military mission of the base and economic development in the cities surrounding it.

The committee encourages compatible land-use planning. “We have a development review tool,” said Councilman Joe Ashton, River Oaks mayor pro tem. “It allows for input without any city giving up its right to develop its own land.”

The committee has a development review web tool that helps with the voluntary peer review process and provides a clearinghouse to discuss various project types including parcel-specific zoning changes, height obstructions, site-plan applications and special exceptions.

It also provides a discussion forum on broader long-term projects, such as comprehensive plan updates, zoning ordinance language and capital improvement plans. The system can also accommodate other specialty projects on an as-needed basis such as utility plans, construction permits or subdivision plats.

When the initial study was done in 2008, there was a general feeling that the community outside the base was not well-informed and that the base did not have a mechanism to have an ongoing dialogue with the community, said retired Capt. Paul Paine, a former Naval Air Station commanding officer who in the past, chaired the committee for five years.

“There wasn’t a sharing of information that went both directions,” Paine said. “We have improved.”
The North Central Texas Council of Governments is developing a program to protect the mission capability of North Texas military bases through a series of land-use studies.

Under the Joining Forces program, the Council of Governments is leading a collaborative effort among military installations, local governments, citizens and other stakeholders to study and identify encroachment issues that can impact the current and future military missions of bases and economic development opportunities in the surrounding communities.

The effort is an outgrowth of work begun in 2008 to protect the viability of the Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base in western Tarrant County.

The expected population growth in North Texas, from seven million to 12 million by 2050, may increase development pressure on military installations in the region.

That, say planning and military officials, could lead to land uses that restrict flight paths or range areas, an increase in risk for installations and to nearby residents, limited operation days and noise complaints.

If a base’s mission capability is compromised it can become an easy target for base closure when the federal government seeks to trim military expenses.

The study will identify a number of strategies to continue the “vital economic engine” the bases represent, while ensuring that surrounding communities are able to continue economic development and population growth, said Dan Kessler, the Council of Governments assistant transportation director.

Land-use strategies to promote compatibility will be achieved through education, communication and the local planning process, he said.

The four areas to be studied include:

- The Naval Air Station in Fort Worth and the military operating areas southwest of the base past Brownwood, as well as the Colonel Stone Army Reserve Center.
- The Fort Wolters Training Center near Mineral Wells that dates from 1925. In various incarnations the installation was one of the largest infantry training centers in the country, a camp for German World War II prisoners, a helicopter training facility and a Texas Army National Guard base. The Eagle Mountain National Guard base is also included.
- The Redmond Taylor Army Heliport in Grand Prairie that is also a national guard and reserve base. It was formerly the Naval Air Station Dallas and was used by the Navy and the Air Force during World War II, Korea, the Vietnam era, Desert Storm and Desert Shield. It was first established in 1929 as a U.S. Army Air Corps training field.
- Camp Maxey in Lamar County, just south of the Red River and north of Paris, is also a Texas National Guard training facility for the northeast part of the state. It opened in 1942 and soldiers trained there for the invasion of France. Camp Maxey also held German prisoners during World War II.

The joint land-use studies are funded by the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment.

The results of the studies will include recommended actions for the communities to adopt, including zoning overlays, obstruction ordinances, comprehensive plan language and communication strategies.
Tarrant County Receives a Transparency Star Award

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts has awarded Tarrant County its second Transparency Star for its efforts to provide pertinent financial information to citizens in a format that’s user-friendly.

The Contracts and Procurement Star was awarded to Tarrant County because the following information is listed on the county’s website:

- Spending on procurement and contracting activities expressed as a total and as per capita amounts.
- Total number of publicly posted bidding and contracting opportunities opened (invitation for bids or requests for proposal).
- Total number of closed bids/solicitations or awarded contracts.
- Total dollar amount of bids received from invitations for bids or requests for proposals.
- Total dollar amount awarded from contracts.

The information is placed on the County’s Open Books web page, which provides financial and county business information to the public in less than three clicks from the county’s landing page.

To access the Tarrant County Open Books web page go to
http://access.tarrantcounty.com/en/openbooks

New Transportation Alternatives to Alliance Area and Denton

A new bus route connecting travelers from downtown Fort Worth to the Alliance area and on to the City of Denton may spell relief for road-weary drivers who battle traffic on Interstate-35W.

The North Texas Xpress runs between the Fort Worth Intermodal Transportation Center to the Alliance Opportunity Center and the North Park & Ride, with a final stop by Apogee Stadium at the University of North Texas.

The route also serves Tarrant County College’s Erma C. Johnson Hadley Northwest Center of Excellence for Aviation, Transportation and Logistics at Alliance Airport.

As many as 47,000 people work in the Alliance area. "Employees drive that route every day, but now they have the choice of using that time catching up on email or just relaxing while someone else handles the driving," said Paul Ballard, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority. “Students traveling to UNT or TCC for classes can get in a little extra studying time.”

Some companies, like Amazon, have made arrangements to get workers to their Haslet plant. Catholic Charities of Fort Worth’s transportation services provides a shuttle and Amazon picks up some of the cost, said Amy Willard, Catholic Charities transportation director.

The North Texas Xpress service is a partnership between The T and the Denton County Transportation Authority.

The first bus leaves downtown Fort Worth at about 6:00 a.m. and the service ends at about 9:00 p.m. The buses will leave at 90-minute intervals and operate on weekdays.

The North Texas Xpress is the latest effort by The T to improve service in rapidly growing Tarrant County.
GET VACCINATED: PREVENT FLU AND THE MUMPS

Winter Viruses: Flu and the Mumps This Year

In addition to the usual flu virus, there is a dramatic increase in mumps across the nation this winter and many of the Lone Star State cases are in North Texas.

Cases of the mumps, a highly communicable infectious disease, have hit a 10-year high, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Mumps is on the rise,” said Vinny Taneja, Tarrant County Public Health Department director. “The incidence is higher than what you might expect.”

As of the end of December, there were more than 90 cases in Johnson County and more than a dozen in Tarrant and Dallas counties.

The Johnson County outbreak is the largest in Texas and there does not appear to be a mumps outbreak in the large urban areas of the state other than North Texas, said Chris Van Deusen, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Health Services.

But, the Texas outbreak is nothing like the one in Arkansas, which had about 2,400 cases by year’s end, largely in the northwest part of the state, or the smaller outbreaks in Oklahoma, Iowa or Illinois, which each have had several hundred cases.

At the end of 2016, nationwide there were more than 4,500 mumps cases. In 2006, there were about 6,500.

Health officials believe that the Johnson County cases can be traced to an exposure to the virus in Arkansas.

Another cluster of about a dozen mumps cases are linked to cheerleading camps that occurred in November and early December in Arlington, Dallas and Frisco.

A smaller cluster of about a half-dozen cases is connected to an October party in the Dallas Oak Lawn neighborhood.

Cases have also been reported in Collin and Denton counties.

Major factors that contribute to a mumps outbreak are crowded environments such as school classrooms, playing on a sports team or living in a dormitory. In recent years there have been outbreaks on college campuses and in 2014 there was an unprecedented outbreak in the National Hockey League.

Symptoms that can include fever, headache and the telltale swollen cheeks usually appear within two weeks after exposure to the virus.

In Tarrant County, from 2009 through 2015, there were only 13 cases of mumps, ranging from none in some years to as many as four cases in other years.

But there were 11 cases reported since Thanksgiving, bringing this year’s total to 14 by year’s end. Of the eleven recently reported, five are associated with either the Johnson County outbreak or the cheerleading camps, county health officials said.

The mumps outbreak is a good reminder that mumps and many other diseases can be prevented through vaccinations, Taneja said.

“One shot - measles, mumps and rubella - takes care of three diseases,” he said. “If adults don’t know of their mumps status, they may want to get vaccinated.”

Don’t Forget About the Flu

The winter months are prime flu season.

Protect your family and friends by encouraging everyone to get a flu shot. If you do get sick, take the appropriate medications and try not to spread the highly contagious virus.

“Flu season typically has a couple of peaks, right before Christmas and a second peak in late January or early February,” said Vinny Taneja, Tarrant county Public Health director.

It can be contagious a day before symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick.

Young children and people with weakened immune systems can infect others for an even longer time.

The virus spreads when sick people cough, sneeze or talk and tiny droplets land on people. A person can get flu touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, eyes or nose. The illness can last a week or longer, though severe cases can lead to hospitalization and even death.

Mild or severe, flu symptoms can affect the nose, throat, and lungs and arise quickly. There can be fever, chills, headache, and muscle aches, fatigue, a sore throat and a deep, bronchial cough.

Older adults with chronic health conditions and young children are most at risk for serious complications.
In Tarrant County Members of the Armed Forces Get Served First

American men and women in uniform get the special treatment they deserve in Tarrant County.

When someone wearing a military uniform shows up at a county office to get services, they get to go straight to the front of the line. It is putting “thank you for your service” in action.

The countywide Armed Forces First Initiative was easy to implement, inexpensive and has the support of the community.

“This is just a simple way to honor our nation’s heroes,” said Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley. “They do so much to protect us and to preserve our freedom. It’s the least Tarrant County can do for them.”

The Tarrant County program was selected by the Texas Association of Counties to receive a Best Practices Award this year. The awards recognize innovation, hopefully inspiring other Texas counties to come up with their own initiatives, association officials said.

TARRANT COUNTY CONTACTS

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For additional information, visit: [www.tarrantcounty.com](http://www.tarrantcounty.com)