

BELTON

How can you tell when a city is well-positioned for growth? One measure is the transportation infrastructure it has laid down to attract new business. And in Belton, the rubber indeed meets the road with that metric.

Consider:

- The city has two new interchanges, at 163rd Street and at North Cass Parkway, to access I-49, the former U.S. 71, which has become one of the nation's newest stretches of interstate highway.

- Those connections, in addition to a collaboration with Jackson and Cass counties, Grandview and Kansas

lations exceeding 20,000.

But it's a sign of Belton's commitment to growing right. Mayor Jeff Davis spelled out many of the factors for the city's success, some of which included the leadership shown by City Manager Ron Trivitt, along with the consistency Trivitt has provided by serving in that role for 26 years, a forward-thinking City Council, strong

with nearby Raymore—"competitive but friendly," Davis says. That last item is key, because the population of Cass County is projected to grow by 60 percent over the next quarter-century, and those communities will no longer be isolated from each other.

Belton also has created an Enhanced Enterprise Zone to attract businesses and select industries by offering tax abatements and other competitive incentives. In addition to that framework for growth, the city has restructured its economic development strategy, bringing those tasks in-house Economic Development Department, complete with a new Web site: www.belton.org/ecodevo. That move, officials say, has streamlined the process by creating a single point of contact from initial introduction and consultation, all the way through permitting and construction. The goal: Making Belton the city of choice for new development by marketing itself to the Kansas City metropolitan area and beyond.

As with many suburban communi-

Among the many factors that drive Belton's success, says Mayor Jeff Davis, are the leadership of longtime City Manager Ron Trivitt, a forward-thinking City Council, strong schools, engaged citizens and, more recently, a new spirit of cooperation with nearby Raymore.

City for a replacement of the 155th Street interchange, soon will give Belton four interchanges with the interstate, making most of its run through the city limits prime for development.

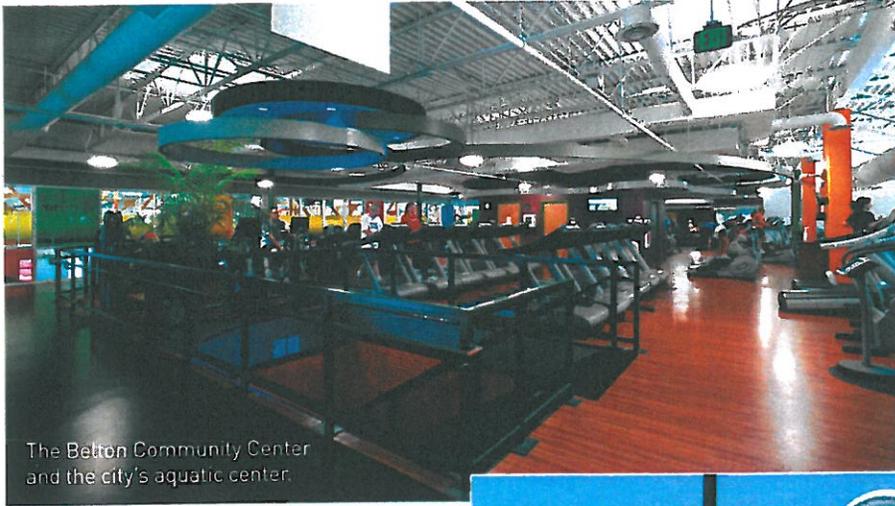
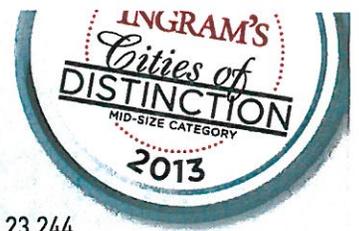
- The city is putting in Markey Parkway, a new four-lane road that will connect 163rd Street to Missouri 58 when work is finished in June 2014, and eventually connecting 163rd Street and North Cass Parkway along I-49. The new road is part of a Transportation Development District flush with commercial space directly adjacent to and readily visible from I-49.

That workload been keeping folks busy at the Public Works Department, one of only 87 organizations accredited by the American Public Works Association, out of more than 2,000 municipalities nationwide with popu-

schools, engaged citizens and more recently, a new spirit of cooperation



A boom in residential construction over the past 20 years has changed the face of Belton.



The Belton Community Center and the city's aquatic center.

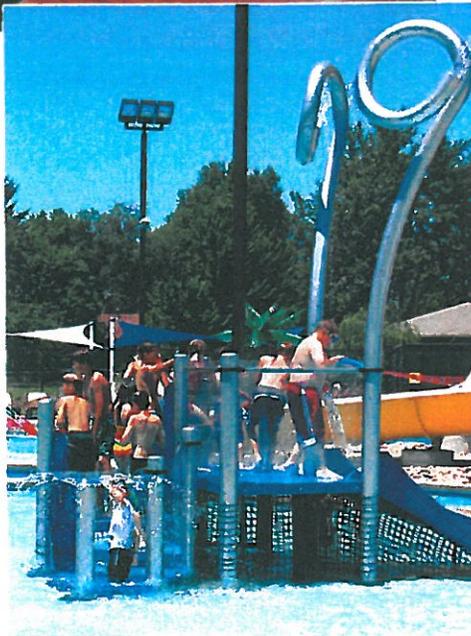
ties, education is a centerpiece, and that shows up in the classroom: Belton High School ranked No. 5 among Missouri public school districts with its average ACT score last year. But the commitment to education doesn't stop with the high school diploma: City leaders have worked with Metropolitan Community College, the school district and Cass County secure college-level instruction at MCC-Cass County, in the Belton High School Freshman Center. Last year, its first, the new site lived up to its post-secondary promise; 38 percent of students there were of non-traditional age.

That educational component is key for community leaders anticipating a 21 percent increase in employment in the 2010-2020 decade.

Among the quality of life factors that define Belton are:

- Seven city parks and a trail system that links neighborhoods.
- A wellness center with more than 11,000 members.
- An outdoor water park.
- The area's first all-inclusive public playground for children of all ages and abilities.
- And this year, the Park Department built a new state of the art events center in Memorial Park, instantly creating a gathering place for the community.

The city is also big enough to support Belton Regional Medical Center, which completed a \$39.2 million dol-



lar renovation and expansion project, complete with a new medical office building, just last year.

Residents enjoy a comparatively modest property tax rate of \$1.90 per \$100 of assessed valuation. By comparison, just across the state line to the west in Johnson County, communities of roughly comparable size levy at rates that would translate to roughly \$2.70 in Belton's terms. And the city's sales tax rate of 2.75 percent, combined with state and county levies, comes to 8.725 percent.

"We have made great strides in the past," Davis said. "We must keep thinking about the future, not only of Belton and Cass County, but how we fit into the Kansas City Metro." ■

Population: 23,244

Median household income: \$50,422

Percent of adult population with college degree: 18.4

Median home price: \$123,300

Key community events:

Belton Heritage BBQ contest (MAY), Belton Community Days (JUNE), Independence Day Celebration (JULY), Fallapalooza (NOVEMBER), Veterans Day Parade (NOVEMBER)

Business development tools:

Enhanced Enterprise Zones, community improvement, TIF & neighborhood improvement districts, transportation development districts, property tax abatements

Leading employers:

Belton school district, Hy-Vee, QuikTrip distribution center, Belton Regional Medical Center

DID YOU KNOW?

■ **Belton was primarily settled** by pioneer families moving in from Kentucky. A native Kentuckian, Manzey Q. Ashbey, bought a track of land from the federal government in July 1869 and sold it to two civil war veterans, who had it platted—and named it after one of the original surveyors, Marcus Belt.

■ **One city, two watersheds:** Belton sits on a ridge in northern Cass County, and its water runoff makes to the Missouri River by two paths: Anything that falls north of Main Street gets there via the Little Blue River, running through east Kansas City; from the south, water flows into the Grand and Osage basins before reaching the Missouri River east of Jefferson City.

■ **The biggest employer** in Belton is the distribution center for QuikTrip's branded sandwiches, dinners and other products. Nearly 1,000 people work at the Quik'n Tasty facility there.