

## **Erie Economics**

### **Mayor Moore: 21-year business development plan on track**

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With new businesses springing up, a new elementary school in the works and land waiting to be filled with housing, there is no doubt the Town of Erie is growing, and poised for future growth.

Erie Mayor Andrew Moore envisions a 21-year strategic growth plan that will transition Erie from a small town to a full-service town. In his eyes, the expansion has three distinct phases.

Moore said the town came out of the first phase — during which Erie established the necessary elements residents need, such as infrastructure, trails, water and sewer — about a year ago.

Erie is now going through its second phase, according to Moore, during which small businesses begin to move in — including grocery stores, retail and community services.

“It’s like SimCity, for real,” Moore said, referencing the popular game.

So far, Moore’s gameplan is working the way he had hoped.

“Sales tax is up because we are getting new businesses,” he said.

Erie’s revenue comes from five major categories: 23 percent comes from sales tax, including automobile sales; 25 percent comes from property tax; the town brings in 11 percent of its revenue from recreation fees and youth programs; 19 percent of revenue comes from the landfill, franchises and miscellaneous fees; and, 7 percent of Erie’s income is from use tax and building permits.

Sales tax is currently the town’s second largest revenue generator, but Moore anticipates it will grow to 40-50 percent as businesses open.

For the most part, Erie’s new businesses are thriving.

Dusty Thompson, owner and hair stylist at DeMaj Salon and Spa on Highway 7, said the complex has experienced good traffic flow since it opened last March.

“I would say for our first year-and-a-half, it’s been phenomenal,” she said. “It’s definitely constant and we continuously get new clients.”

Each new business that has opened in town has generated a trickle-down effect for its neighbors. Thompson feels with the recent addition of 7-Eleven and Si Senior, a Mexican restaurant, next door to her salon, business will pick up even more.

Anytime Fitness Manager Scott Johnson said he already noticed an increase in business since the restaurant and convenience store became his neighbors.

“This specific area has grown,” he said. “And (the additions) help with getting some traffic in here.”

Thompson said the complex appealed to the residents of Vista Ridge and Anthem because they don't have far to travel.

"The more support from Erie residents, the better," she said. "It's a win-win."

Because more commercial is coming in with incremental tax revenue, the town isn't "robbing Peter to pay Paul," Moore said.

The mayor anticipates seeing big box stores settle in Erie in about 5-6 years, in what Moore refers to as phase three of his 21-year plan.

Moore stressed that the town needs the primary employers, citing Super Target, Lowe's and Sam's Club as possibilities. He said he expects the large commercial stores will gravitate toward I-25 and border Erie, leaving the town with its quaint, peaceful quality.

With approximately 18,000 residents, Erie is smaller than the nearby cities of Louisville and Lafayette. But while Louisville covers 7.93 square-miles and Lafayette is close behind at 7.82 square-miles, Erie has a planning area of approximately 40 square-miles. Moore said the town has the potential to easily surpass both in population by the time it finishes growing.

"Erie will be twice the population of Lafayette on roughly four times the land," he said.

The mayor also questions whether there is too much commercial area zoned in Erie's comprehensive plan. Moore does not see it as an urgent issue, but he believes it could be a problem once major retailers begin to move in.

He said stakeholders and residents would need to offer feedback on the matter, but some land might need to be zoned as low-density housing.

Moore believes the interstate area will draw primary retailers due to the freeway's access, and he envisions the land will contain high-density residential condominiums and apartments.

"We need the primary employers ... it brings the final element to a fully self-sustained community," Moore said.