

NORTHEAST TARRANT

After 43 years in city government, Westlake's unsung hero calls it a career

BY NICHOLAS SAKELARIS SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM



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NICHOLAS SAKELARIS SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

WESTLAKE — Nearly 11 years ago, Tom Brymer decided to come back to Texas to manage a tiny enclave in Northeast Tarrant County known for its millionaire athletes and celebrities.

He already had three decades of city administration under his belt in 2008 — including city manager of College Station — but Westlake and its 700 residents presented a new, dynamic challenge.

At the junction of Texas 114 and Texas 170, Westlake had only begun to tap its economic development potential. The town's permanent population doubled over the ensuing decade while the daytime population soared to 14,000 and will only go up as Charles Schwab opens its campus.

"I believe we have done this work staying true to the council's vision, values and mission for the town; not always an easy thing to do in the fast pace, high-growth area that Westlake is located within," Brymer said.

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And the town-owned charter school, Westlake Academy, had plenty of room to add programs and grow the enrollment.

"I was interested in the fact that the town owned the school with an award-winning baccalaureate program," Brymer said.

Now, at 66 years old, Brymer said he plans to retire as town manager and Westlake Academy superintendent on March 31, ending a nearly 43-year career in public government.

He's signed the diploma of every Westlake Academy graduate in the school's history.

"It was time for a new person to assume the helm and bring new ideas and new approaches, it was time for me to step aside," Brymer said. "My time with the town of Westlake has been both the most challenging and the most satisfying. Every day has been a new adventure, making coming to work every day fun and exciting."

A succession plan is in place where 17-year Westlake veteran Amanda DeGan will take over as town manager and superintendent on Feb. 1 and Brymer will transition to a consultant role until his time with the town ends March 31.

She was the second full-time employee hired by the town of Westlake in 2001 and has been the assistant town manager for seven years.

"We still have great things to come that will change our corporate dynamics," DeGan said, referring to the Charles Schwab and Entrada project. "We're looking at managing that growth in concert with the residents' expectations."

Charles Schwab will bring 2,600 employees to Westlake in phase 1 in 2019 and could have up to 7,000 workers at full build-out.

If Brymer had one regret it's that he won't get to see the Catalonia, Spain-inspired Entrada project through to fruition at Farm to Markets 1938 and Texas 114. The mixed-use project has been planned for years but is just now starting to gain momentum with new restaurants, townhomes, retail, homes, condominiums and a hotel starting construction.

Brymer has been involved in the discussions since the developer acquired the land in 2012.

"While it's been very slow, our faithfulness to that vision and the standard that will maintain it ... will bear huge fruit for the town of Westlake," Brymer said. "It will be a very unique development in the Metroplex and will add to Westlake's reputation of having high standards and will keep Westlake on the map."

Mayor Laura Wheat said Brymer has had the biggest impact in shaping Westlake and is the town's unsung hero.

"From the moment he arrived in Westlake, he began encouraging the Town Council, the town staff and the Westlake Academy administration to dream big," Wheat said.

Watching the recent memorial coverage of former President George H.W. Bush, Brymer said he was reminded of the drive to serve others that he's had since he got his first internship with the city of Richardson in 1975.

Though Bush served on a national and international stage, Brymer can relate to the desire to make the world a better place.

Local government has the biggest impact on people's lives. He spoke recently to students at Westlake Academy, reminding them that local government provides the water, sewer, the roads and police and fire that make everyday life possible.

"It's what attracts any of us who go into public administration," he said. "Local government touches everybody's lives on a daily basis in multiple ways."

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