

City of Newcastle sees slight dip in new homes, but much progress with parks and business

By Jayson Knight

COVID-19 hit, and economies around the world, country, state, counties, and municipalities have been in flux since March 2020. While many communities are suffering greatly, Newcastle has actually handled the pandemic quite well, according to Jeannette Lore, with the City of Newcastle.

"Actually, overall, 2020 was great for Newcastle," said Lore. "We did 308 single family homes in 2020; and in 2019, we did 315, so we were coming off a very much record-breaking year for 2019.

We feel some of that wasn't necessarily because of what was happening in 2020 with COVID, but with COVID, materials became harder to come by, and so that's, I think, how it slowed down a little bit."

Despite the slight drop off, Lore said 2020 was still a successful year, all things considered.

"Three-hundred-eight single-family homes is a tremendous amount of single family homes. And that doesn't include all the duplexes and fourplexes that we did, and it does not include any of the commercial properties that were built either. That's just single-family homes for new capital. So, that's great for us."

As far as sales tax, Newcastle budgeted conservatively this year and Lore said, "Our revenue was well beyond what we budgeted. We did not see any issues there as far as not getting the sales tax dollars we were expecting. We were still going up. Our market's very strong. Even our existing homes are selling, just listed for prices that we've never seen here before. The values of the properties just keep going up. We've had several new businesses, including the Domino gas station and things like that.



The splash pad at Veterans Park in Newcastle has benefited greatly from the grant work put in by the City of Newcastle in 2019, and the construction work put in during 2020. This is the largest park in Newcastle, encompassing over 90 acres near the Newcastle Elementary School and Newcastle Public Library and Multi-Purpose Center. This park is equipped with picnic tables, restrooms, pavilion, soccer fields, baseball fields, volleyball courts and a basketball court, and a splashpad.

"Thru Tubing, their corporate office was able to get open this year here in Newcastle, and then we even saw some smaller businesses come in and open, and we also saw some of our smaller businesses expand. One of our appliance and furniture stores, they're moving locations to expand their business, because it did so well during this time. And then now, we're seeing a lot of the real estate starting to move again with a few open spaces where we did have a partial development. Those are being leased now and we're getting a lot of calls for realtors and site selectors looking for places to put their businesses.

"Of course, dealing with Covid, it creates issues with your personnel,

the state and almost everything, but overall, for our economy, it did not affect us the way we thought it was going to."

And that's a good thing. The city was even allowed to get a few grant applications approved last year, which allowed the city to get to work on some improvements.

"We spoke last year about some of the grants that we had been awarded," Lore said. "We used time in 2020 to work on those projects and our splash pad is complete. And so the rest of that splash pad grant project, we're working on that and we should be finished with that grant sometime here this spring. We were able to do our phase one walking trail, so we have just about

two miles of pedestrian trails. Now, we're painting them and doing all the back dressing and we've got the park benches and tables that have been delivered, and we'll have to install those, but we were able to do those projects during this time as well. So we've made some amazing park improvements. We worked on a new master park plan during this time for Veterans Park and it was actually adopted at our January council meeting. So now, we have this amazing master park plan for our biggest park. There have just been a lot of exciting things, actually, here for the last year."

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