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Masonry Planning Case Study / Frisco, Texas



Focus on Sustainability Leads to Masonry Planning

Located in western Collin County about 35 minutes north of downtown Dallas, Frisco, Texas has, in the span of about 20 years, grown from a quiet small town of less than 6,200 people to a lively and attractive city of 109,000 in 2010. In 1997, Frisco had five schools. Thirteen years later, it has 53. The city master plan projects a population of 280,000 in an area of 70 square miles. It is the fastest growing city in the nation.

Frisco passed its masonry ordinance in April 1997 as one element in its long-term plan for sustainability. The ordinance, an amendment to the city's comprehensive zoning ordinance, specifies minimum percentages of masonry that are required for the exterior facades of new residential and commercial buildings. Now, more than 10 years later, the city continues to grow and stands out as one of the most desirable communities in North Central Texas.

City Snapshot:

- City: Frisco, Texas
- Population: 109,000 (2010)
- Government: Council-Manager
- Founded: 1902, first settled in the early 1800s
- Maher Maso, Mayor; George Purefoy, City Manager
- Web site: <http://www.friscotexas.gov>

"We've looked at other cities and how they have aged, and we've adopted policies aimed at avoiding the problems older cities have experienced,"

– Maher Maso, Mayor Frisco, TX

Masonry Requirements

Residential Zoning Districts

- Minimum of 75 to 100 percent masonry (facades) on the first floor. Cementitious fiber board may constitute up to 50 percent on the second floor. Brick is required on the second floor if part of the wall from the ground floor to the roofline is continuous.
- In Old Town area, all facades must be clay-fired brick or stone; cementitious siding is permitted in the Original Old Town Residential zoning district to reflect the primary building material (i.e. wood) used at the turn of the century.

For more information on how your community can increase its tax base, increase fire and wind safety, and attract quality commercial and residential development, call 800-733-1813 or visit www.MasonryOrdinance.com



Frisco Mayor Maher Maso, an information technology entrepreneur, says Frisco always has excelled at long-term planning and policies that support sustainability. That mindset led officials to consider and ultimately adopt masonry planning.

In focusing on sustainability, Frisco officials saw it as a proverbial three-legged stool with legs of safety, durability, and aesthetics. The Frisco Fire Department, which is ISO 1 certified, emphasized the safety benefits of masonry construction. Officials also were swayed by the durability, low-maintenance, and aesthetic characteristics of masonry.

Frisco planners and elected officials recognized that many new buildings look good for a while, but the real test is how they will look in 10, 20, or 30 years. “As neighborhoods age,” Mayor Maso said, “what’s the best material to withstand the test of time? What requires the least maintenance? All the signs pointed to masonry... Just about everything we’ve built has had sustainability in mind.” Maso added, “We want to be on the leading edge.”

In addition to the city government center, major projects have included a professional soccer stadium, a conference center and hotel combination, a regional shopping mall, a hospital and professional building, and Class A office buildings, just to name a few examples.

The impact on the city tax base also loomed large in the discussions of a masonry ordinance, Maso noted. “The more you do to keep the city sustainable, keep a lid on maintenance costs, and enhance the general appearance of all areas of the city, the better it is for the tax base,” Maso said. “It’s a chain reaction that keeps the city in good shape.”

It all comes back to Maso’s favorite word, “sustainability.” “Sustainability comes from the policies that will ensure that the city is a healthy, well-balanced community that withstands the test of time,” he said. “The masonry ordinance is part of the equation, just like public safety, tourism, sports and entertainment.”

Brick Protects from Fire

On January 17, 2006 a 40-acre grass fire threatened homes in Joshua, Texas. Even though the yards were charred and storage sheds and fences burned to the ground, the all-brick homes were spared. Brick does not burn. It’s that simple.

Masonry ordinances that require masonry materials can help raise a community’s fire rating and lower insurance rates for the city and its residents.



Brick Protects in High Winds

Hurricanes and tornadoes have city officials scrambling to make their communities more safe.

Texas Tech University conducted test to determine the safety of cladding materials when subjected to flying debris in high winds. A 7.5 ft. 2x4 penetrated both vinyl and fiber cement siding at wind speeds of 34 MPH or less. Brick veneer provided protection in winds up to 80+ MPH.

