

Broken Arrow reaches critical mass

By Holly Wall
Tulsa Business Journal
July 19, 2010

Phil Roland attributes Broken Arrow's booming commercial development to the 2005 addition of Bass Pro Shops, just off the Broken Arrow Expressway between Elm Street and Lynn Lane. But the addition of Bass Pro can be attributed, in part, at least, to Roland.

Roland, principal of Roland Homes and Roland Investments, began buying land in the area now known as Stone Wood Hills in 2000. In 2001, he began building the master-planned Stone Wood Hills community, which consists of nearly 500 homes, the average value of which is \$200,000.

Nearby, two multifamily developments, with around 900 units total, will soon add to the already growing population.

"We're starting to see the density out here that is a prerequisite of this (area) being fully urbanized and put to its highest and best use," Roland said.

The city of Broken Arrow estimates the 2008 population within a five-minute drive was 10,453 and, within a 10-minute drive, 118,484. Projections of 2013 put the five-minute population at 11,290 and 10-minute population at 121,804.

Roland, who owns 150 acres in the area, can be partially credited with getting the development rolling.

"Once we saw the Battle Creek expansion on the north side of the expressway and the success they were having, we felt like it was time now to cross over onto the Elm area, between Elm (Street) and Lynn Lane," Roland said. "The jury was still out whether this north side was going to be residential, like Battle Creek, or whether it was going to bring commercial development. So we kind of let the market dictate what it would support."

The area features 430 acres of land, of which 180 have been set aside for residential development and 250 for commercial.

Roland developed a partnership with Mike Parrish of the Parrish Company Realtors, and they welcomed architect Mike Hughes to their team. Hughes, who had worked with Bass Pro Shops in various regions in the past, suggested the group approach the company, owned by John Morris, about locating a new store in their development.

At 110,000 SF, Broken Arrow's Bass Pro is the largest store in Oklahoma and attracts upward of 2 million visitors every year, an estimated 40 percent of which stay overnight in the area, according to the Broken Arrow Economic Development Corp.

In addition, Bass Pro prompted the city to invest in major upgrades to the infrastructure in the area — the extension of Elm Street, extension and widening of Albany Street and addition of street signs and stop lights — that it likely would not have, at least not to such an extent, without Bass Pro, Roland said.

This month, the city will begin construction on Elm Boulevard, extending it to 51st Street.

"Bass Pro was really a large fish to catch," he said. "They're historically needing a lot of access, and that was one of their requirements to locate in Broken Arrow. And the city

fathers saw fit to accommodate them.”

The added infrastructure enabled Roland to develop a 19.5-acre tract of land commercially, constructing the Village at Stone Wood Hills, a 15-tenant shopping center, in 2005.

It also attracted the construction of St. John Broken Arrow, a 150,000-SF joint venture of Broken Arrow Medical Facility LLC and St. John Health System, at Elm and Albany streets. The 68-bed hospital features 22 emergency department rooms, 20 joint and orthopedic patient beds, 48 medical and surgical beds and a 100,000-SF medical office building. The facility, which will employ up to 100 physicians, should be open in the fall.

St. John representatives cited high visibility, convenient highway access and strong residential growth as factors for opening a facility in that area of Broken Arrow.

“(The hospital) was a need Broken Arrow had because the Saint Francis hospital has relocated to Tulsa,” Roland said. “So St. John was an excellent addition to the community, and the infrastructure the city fathers put in pretty well made St. John’s decision pretty easy.”

Roland said doctors and nurses have already begun buying homes in his Stone Wood Crossing subdivision, located behind the hospital.

Also erected in the five years since Bass Pro’s construction are Lone Star Steakhouse & Saloon, Los Cabos Mexican Grill & Cantina, Charleston’s Restaurant, Steak ‘n Shake, AVB Bank, Holiday Inn Express & Suites and Towne Place Suites Marriott.

“I think Bass Pro is definitely a major player because it’s unique and draws from such a large trade area to get here,” said Tammy Fate, vice president of marketing and retail development for the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce. “Development usually follows other development.”

A Runt’s BBQ that had opened is now defunct, and the space it occupied has been again signed into lease. The new tenant will open a restaurant in 60 to 90 days.

One of the few vacant spaces in Roland’s Village at Stone Wood Hills will soon be occupied by Brandy Wofford and Eric Jarvis, who will open Paradox Pub & Grill in August.

Across the street from his Stone Wood Hills neighborhood, at 2700 N. Seventh St., Case & Associates is constructing the first half of its 600-unit luxury apartments, The Park at Mission Hills. Units range from 789 SF to 1,108 SF and will open in the fall.

In addition, another multifamily development, by Lindsey Management Co. out of Fayetteville, Ark., has been approved for the Battle Creek development and will begin construction soon.

While Roland plans to invest in further commercial development in Stone Wood Hills and is actively seeking tenants — he’s also open to proposals from other developers, he said — at the forefront of his mind is a hotel and conference center to be situated in the area.

“We’re in the process of negotiating with private/public project out here with Stoney Creek Hospitality and the city of Broken Arrow, and hopefully we’re getting pretty close to having some serious talks about a conference center,” Roland said. “I’d like to think we could have something to announce there before year-end.”

He envisions a five-story, 200-room hotel with a 30,000- to 40,000-SF conference center that could accommodate 800 to 1,000 at a sit-down event.

"Broken Arrow doesn't have a place to meet in the area," Roland said. "Currently, the chamber and the city, the graduations, so forth, have to go to Tulsa. It would be nice for a community that's the fourth largest community in the state to be able to have an event in their own metropolitan area."

Fate said even the chamber has a hard time finding venues large enough to accommodate its events.

"It's hard to attract outside visitors to the area if we can't even have space for events within the community," she said.

In addition to the rapid growth in Stone Wood Hills, other shopping centers are popping up in the immediate vicinity. The Tuscan Plaza, with 47,409 SF of rentable space; The Shoppes at Lynn Lane, with 24,630 SF of space; and The Shoppes at Stone Ridge, with 50,000 SF of space, are all commercial projects under construction. In 2009, the nearby 400,000-SF Shops at Broken Arrow opened, with stores and restaurants like Target, Marshall's, PetSmart, Olive Garden and Applebee's.

"Bass Pro triggered that," Roland said. "When we put the infrastructure in, it started the ball rolling on this side of the expressway and got tenants like Target to acknowledge, if Bass Pro thought it was good enough, Target ought to think it's good enough."

Fate also attributes the growth to Broken Arrow's growing population, "dynamic" school system — the city feeds into both Broken Arrow Public Schools and Union Public Schools — and affordable housing costs. She cited Broken Arrow's recent placement in Money magazine's "Best Places to Live" this year as evidence the community is attracting and retaining individuals, families and businesses. Broken Arrow ranked 81 on the list of 100.

Fate said additional development is still needed in the city — upscale clothing retailers, office and electronics supply stores and sporting goods stores, for example.

Roland hopes the development will continue, growing Broken Arrow's sales tax income, helping fund future projects and bringing jobs to the area.

"We're looking forward to being a more self-supporting community, as opposed to being a bedroom community that has to commute back and forth to Tulsa, not only to shop, but to work," he said. "We'd like to see some more jobs out here."