

Business

Southwest, Delta trial pushed back

Southwest Airlines will have to wait until at least February to meet Delta Air Lines in court in the battle over gates at Dallas Love Field. **4B**

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DEVELOPMENT

Vast expanse of starter and upscale houses planned in Ellis County



Lynda M. Gonzalez/Staff Photographer

Customers congregated for lunch at Javier's Cafe in the historic downtown square of Ferris on Thursday. A 5,200-acre Woodstone residential development is planned along Interstate 45 and could bring thousands of new homes to the area.

Ranch makes way for homes

By **STEVE BROWN**
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A huge residential development in the works just south of Dallas could bring thousands of new homes to the area.

The 5,200-acre Woodstone development is planned on Interstate 45 in the north Ellis County town of Ferris.

Located about 20 miles south of Dallas, Ferris has long been known as the "brick capital of the nation" because the area was once home to a large number of brick plants.

The town of about 3,000 is just south of booming industrial and distribution centers that employ thousands of workers in southern Dallas County.

"It's the same distance to downtown Ferris from downtown Dallas as it is to downtown Plano," said Co-

rey Ford of Tommy Ford Construction, which is working on the big housing development. "If everything goes smoothly, we hope to start construction before the end of the year."

Ford said the first 71-acre portion of the Woodstone community will include building lots for homes and commercial sites on I-45.

"We feel like the timing is good," Ford said. "We have a mayor and City Council that are pro-growth. We are going to have some starter homes but also going to have more upscale housing."

Ford said the developers are already talking to two builders who want to construct homes in the project.

Plano-based Dowdy, Anderson & Associates designed the residential community. Ford said the town of

Woodstone development



Laurie Joseph/Staff Artist

See **RANCH** Page 5B

Ranch owner wanted Ferris to grow

Continued from Page 3B

Ferris has worked out a development agreement for the huge property.

"A year and a half ago we started working on this and have builders interested," Ford said.

The land along the Ellis-Dallas County line was assembled starting in the 1970s by Dallas businessman W. Ray Wallace, who was the CEO of Dallas-based Trinity Industries. Wallace, who died in 2016,

used the property as a cattle ranch and as the site of a large country house.

"He set things up so this property would be annexed into Ferris," Ford said. "He wanted it to be a part of Ferris' growth."

Wallace's wife, Bea, still lives in the ranch home and says her late husband wanted to see the land developed.

"He always thought that it would be a housing development," Wallace said. "It's a prime location, plus it's a beautiful piece of property."

With rolling hills, ponds, creeks and trees, the Woodstone land is one of the largest such development sites south of Dallas.

The developers plan to build a formal entry for the project on the east side of I-45.

"There will be everything from \$250,000 homes to \$1 million-plus," Ford said. "We eventually see a town center development in the middle of the project."

Ford said the project will take more than two decades to build out.

Demand for new homes in Ellis County is growing, said Ted Wilson of Dallas housing analyst Residential Strategies.

"A lot of builders have migrated down there and have found the market has been very responsive," Wilson said. "We've noticed good results in several developments."

"There are an awful lot of people who commute up to Dallas," he said. "It's a lot easier commute than if you are living farther north."

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