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Economic development exec touts Arlington's successes

Arlington Report

by [Lance Murray](#)

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Marty Wieder, center, is joined by Mayor Pro Tem Barbara Odom-Wesley and Lyndsay Mitchell, director of strategic initiatives, last year at the General Motors plant's 70th anniversary celebration.

(Courtesy photo | Marty Wieder)

Arlington Economic Development Corp. Executive Director Marty Wieder has a simple philosophy that he explains on his LinkedIn page: "I like to tackle opportunities in unorthodox, and if possible entrepreneurial ways — all the while adhering to what I heard Dr. Kent Gardner say years ago at UT Arlington: 'People support what they help create.'"

Wieder was appointed the organization's executive director in March 2024 and he has led the agency during a time of great success in attracting new businesses and corporate headquarters to the city. Previously, Wieder was director of economic development for the city of Grand Prairie from 2016 to February 2024 and he has a long history in economic development efforts in North Texas. Wieder answered questions recently about his work and the future of the city.

This interview has been edited for grammar and clarity.

Why did you pursue a career in economic development?

It was a timing thing. I was in graduate school at UTA at the time. Back then they had the Institute of Urban Studies, which has kind of been refreshed within the College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs. We had a Master of Arts in urban affairs and I was giving thought to what I was going to do. I was working for Bill Pitstick at the North Central Texas Council of Governments, and Bill really was encouraging me to be a city

manager. I got really interested in economic development, partly through reading Nation's Cities Weekly, the National League of Cities' weekly publication.

At that time, Jack Kemp was the HUD director, and I had seen him make a statement that, from his perspective, the best way to eliminate poverty was through job creation and economic development. And that really rang true with me. I began to look into that a little more deeply, and I saw that it was consistent with what Tom Vandergriff really believed in, and all that he had done for Arlington while I was growing up here, and that I got to be a part of a little bit during his one congressional term. That sounded like something I could really sink my teeth into and get committed to. I'm so glad I made that decision because Tom, years later, served as a mentor for me.

How does the Arlington Economic Development Corp. attract new businesses to Arlington?

We are thrilled to now have a complete staff, a group of all stars, and a number of them are charged with business retention and expansion. In the coming months, we will designate somebody to really be the captain of that task. When people see that we are, as City Manager Trey Yelverton likes to say, a city that understands that we need to move at the speed of business. But also that when you come here, we won't forget about you, will continue to lead interference for you with other city departments — and that it's a place where people want to be.

We are involved in a number of organizations where we're able to share the story of how much Arlington wants to attract corporate headquarters, to attract major manufacturers, bring in the kinds of employers, advanced technology and deep tech that play off of the workforce — strengths that are created when you're the home to a major tier one Carnegie-level, patent-producing university like the University of Texas at Arlington is, as well as having a Tarrant County College campus.

Workforce is one of the most important things people look at for attraction, and we've got that covered in more ways than one. We've hired a couple of people that work directly with the university. Hayden Blackburn, our new director of innovation and entrepreneurship, previously worked with TechFW, and Christie Goodman Duke, who was with the city of Fort Worth's economic development office for about 15 months before we hired her, is our director of targeted attraction and state affairs.

What do you count as the AEDC's biggest victories since you joined the

organization?

By far, I would say getting E-Space to relocate their corporate headquarters here. A little over a year ago that decision came down. They later came in and leased space here in the former Siemens building in the industrial portion that backs up to Copeland Road. I say, too, the Salcomp (Salcomp Manufacturing USA Corp.) retention and expansion — for a company based in Finland to move their North American headquarters here. Both (E-Space and Salcomp) headquarters were previously in Silicon Valley. For us to get traction and lead two Silicon Valley-based companies to pick up and move here, or in Salcomp's case, to expand and to move their corporate headquarters here, were huge.

A couple of these preceded me, but I got to be here when they opened shop and began promoting the Bell Systems Weapons Integration Lab and for them to have the second systems integration lab facility on the municipal airport property. They had the initial one for the V-22, and now — for the (Bell) 280 — was just a continuation.

Lyndsay Mitchell of the Office of Strategic Initiatives, deserves all the credit for bringing in Acciona, a company based in Spain, a multinational conglomerate, to bring their facilities services division to Arlington. Sportec Solutions, a German-based sports technology company, moved its U.S. headquarters to Arlington. The city was able to step in and help make it happen for Great American Media, or GAC, which has Great American Family, Great American Faith and Family. For GAC media to relocate their corporate headquarters here made great, great sense. We just talked about that at our first development network meeting with Kinley Construction. They have been based in Arlington for a long time. They're expanding to Centerpoint and going to lease 23,000 square feet for their headquarters.

What do you see as the economic development future for the city of Arlington?

I was asked to be a part of the Greater Fort Worth Real Estate Council's annual forecast. They asked all of us to provide some takeaways for the next three to five years. For us, number one is that Arlington entered the low Earth orbit space race in partnering with satellite manufacturer E-Space in 2024.

We're going to be very busy this summer taking things to our board and to our council to prepare for their next step when we start constructing (E-Space) facilities at the Arlington Municipal Airport. Deep tech became somewhat of a reality with autonomous vehicle manufacturer and software company Mozee. They've occupied their space, and

are starting to finish it out. They signed the lease. This is a trend we want to see, very good, deep tech manufacturing, cutting-edge technology, not dissimilar from Ikon Technologies, which is already here and which we worked with on an agreement.

It's consistent with UTA for us to, over the next one to three years, put in smaller office employers. Headquarters will continue to absorb into vacant Class A space along Lamar Boulevard, north of I-30, as well as in downtown Arlington. Because we're just minutes away from DFW International (Airport), I think in the next one to three years, we'll see them attract another major headquarters, or headquarters consolidation, and follow the lead of (Arlington accounting firm) Sutton Frost Cary, which opened up this year.

I felt like the grand opening of the National Medal of Honor Museum will attract some major visitors in the coming years. Couple that with the three-day Grand Prix of Arlington, which will be next March. And maybe within the next three to five years, we'll see electric vehicles take off and land from the Arlington airport.

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