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Developers call Franklin restructuring a step in right direction

Nashville Business Journal - by [Janel Watson Lacy](#) Nashville Business Journal

The city of Franklin beefed up its administrative staff to better tackle the demands of explosive growth and the development it's triggering.

The city added three assistant administrators, according to Administrator Jay Johnson. Johnson says the change was necessary to best manage the city's 600-plus employees. That number has doubled in the past 15 years, along with the city's population.

Instead of adding another layer of bureaucracy to an already-complex organizational structure, Johnson says the opposite should occur. He says the city will be easier for businesses and developers to maneuver because they'll have more accessible points of contact.

Jim Cheney, a spokesman for Southern Land Co., which is behind such large residential developments as Westhaven, says he can't see how the new positions will be anything but beneficial.

"Anything they can do structurally to streamline that process will only help the development community," he says. "It sounds similar to the way we operate as an organization."

Phil Fawcett, executive manager for **Boyle Investment Co.**, which has done several office buildings in Cool Springs and is currently trying to get Berry Farms - a large mixed-use project on Peytonsville Road - off the ground, agrees.

"We would like to see the city process work a little bit more efficiently, work with us a little better to streamline the approval process." Fawcett says. "So, I think this is a step in the right direction."

Johnson says the restructuring was born out of concern the load was too much to handle for one official.

"Before all departments reported directly to the city administrator," he says.

Franklin's population in 1990 was 20,098, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures, and was estimated at 53,311 in 2005. During that span, 25 to 30 new positions have been added to the city's



Todd Stringer, Nashville Business Journal

Jay Johnson

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staff each year and Johnson says that trend is expected to continue as long as Franklin continues to grow.

The restructuring was approved in July 2006 of last year and passed through the city's mayor and board of alderman with little adieu from the public or the media, Johnson says. The final assistant administrator opening wasn't filled until the middle of last month.

As part of the change, Randy Wetmore, who was previously Franklin's only assistant city administrator, was re-assigned to deputy administrator. In that role he oversees the police, fire and parks departments. Johnson says Wetmore is now the city's No. 2 guy, operating directly under him.

The three new assistants handle other various city departments. Russ Truell, previously Franklin's finance director, was named assistant administrator of finance. He oversees information technology and purchasing functions.

David Park, formerly Franklin's city engineer, is now assistant administrator over public works and utilities. He handles city service and infrastructure issues including streets, drainage, solid waste and engineering efforts.

Last to come on board was Vernon Gerth, who takes on a similar role to the one he handled in Vernon Hills, Ill. As assistant administrator over community development he will coordinate the work of the planning and zoning departments and handle transit services.

That leaves Johnson to look after the city's human resources director and attorney - a much lighter load than he had before. He says the restructuring should free him up to work on better coordination of the functions that flow between the departments.

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