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New build-to-rent neighborhood aims to inject housing into fast-growing Leander

'It's almost dumbfounding how expensive homes are to buy and own,' builder says

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A new build-to-rent neighborhood is opening in one of the fastest-growing neighborhoods in Leander.

Tricon Residential Inc., part of Blackstone Real Estate's portfolio, is opening Tricon Bryson – a build-to-rent neighborhood consisting of 155 single-family homes – within Leander's wider Bryson development, according to an announcement. The new neighborhood will add to the region's rental housing supply in Leander, where the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the population has more than tripled since 2010.

"There's a tremendous need for more housing overall, and every day it's harder and harder to get a new neighborhood approved and permitted and ready to go, whether for rent or for sale," said Andy Carmody, senior managing director and chief sustainability officer at Tricon Residential. "We very strongly believe that it's a math problem, a shortage of available homes for rent or for sale. That is the biggest problem we face in housing now, and we're a huge advocate for more home building and home development."

Bryson was developed in partnership with Johnson Development, while HHS Residential, a division of Plano-based Highland Homes, was the homebuilder. Land development work on the project began about two years ago, with home construction beginning about one year ago, Carmody said.

Homes in Bryson come in six floor plans with three- and four-bedroom options. Monthly rental rates range from \$2,169 to \$2,509, according to information on the neighborhood's website as of Sept. 20.

"The price of homes has gone up so much, it's almost dumbfounding how expensive homes are to buy and own," Carmody said. "We found a lot of success in having some of our homes available to



rent, because they're considerably cheaper today than ownership ... the rental rates are 30% to 50% lower than the cost to own the same home in the Bryson neighborhood."

The median sales price of a home in the metro in August was \$439,990, according to the Austin Board of Realtors.

Bryson isn't the only build-to-rent neighborhood that Tricon is opening. It's also opening Tricon Willow Creek in Tomball near Houston, with 148 build-to-rent homes. Tricon is on track to deliver 1,000 new build-to-rent homes in 2024 and 1,000 more in 2025, according to the company.

Tricon Residential pivoted to development of build-to-rent housing around five years ago, Carmody said.

"We think the fundamental problem in housing in America broadly, and especially in a place like Austin or Dallas ... there just aren't enough houses and that big, strong growth of population has, in a short supply of housing, driven up homes prices," he said.

In addition, build-to-rent neighborhoods fill a

need for people who are ready to progress from apartment living but aren't prepared for home ownership yet, said.

"As young adults, a lot of us lived in apartments, and the old American Dream was to then buy a house," Carmody said. "That is further and further out of reach, but it doesn't mean that families aren't growing and don't want to live in a single-family home. We're filling that gap that's in the market today to allow a young family to get into a house in a neighborhood, in a community, and over time graduate their way up to home ownership."

The Bryson neighborhood overall, which includes Tricon Bryson, is one of the fastest-growing in the region, according to Austin Business Journal research. The 530-acre master-planned community is nearly complete, with a final goal of 1,261 homes in total.

But it's not just Bryson that's growing. Leander, located at the northern end of the metro, has been the epicenter of a population explosion, with the suburb growing from 26,521 in 2010 to an estimated 80,067 in July 2023. That's a 202% population increase in 13 years.