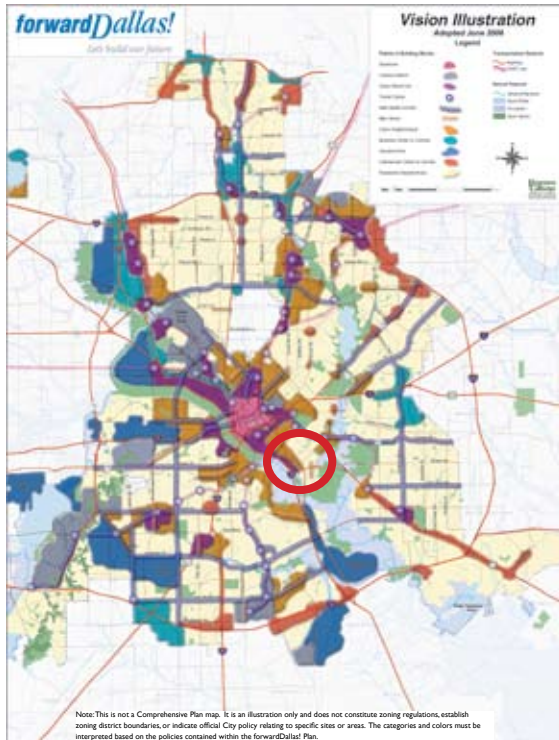
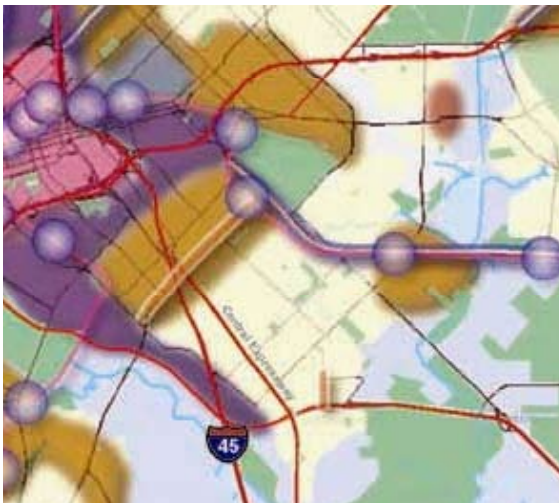


SOUTH DALLAS/FAIR PARK NEIGHBORHOOD



South Dallas/Fair Park is circled above on the forwardDallas! Vision map.



Inset view of the forwardDallas! Vision for South Dallas/Fair Park.

History

An example of an area that has experienced a number of successful neighborhood planning efforts is the South Dallas/Fair Park neighborhood. This neighborhood, located adjacent to Fair Park, has a rich history of proactive involvement in planning for its future. From developing the South Dallas/Fair Park Neighborhood Preservation and Economic Development Plan in 1987 to adoption of the South Dallas/Fair Park Planned Development District in 2001, this neighborhood has been forthright with articulating its desires.

Planning and Investment

There are a number of public investments that are anticipated in the South Dallas/Fair Park neighborhood. DART plans to build the Southeast Corridor light rail line with three stations in the neighborhood. Dallas Housing Authority is redeveloping two housing projects and planning for improvements in the surrounding areas. The Trinity Parkway is proposed to connect with C.F. Hawn Freeway and provide improved access to the neighborhood. The City of Dallas' Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) is focused on improving streetscape and development along Bexar Street. A number of other neighborhood roadways and parks are also slated for improvements. Despite this array of public investments and neighborhood initiatives, the South Dallas/Fair Park neighborhood continues to face challenges and has not seen as much redevelopment and revitalization as could be expected given the public investments and neighborhood initiatives in the area.

Other Activity

The area has many active neighborhood-based organizations and has seen numerous neighborhood initiatives led by organizations like Clean South Dallas and the Connectional Alliance. South Dallas also has a number of community development corporations (CDC) including South Fair, Inner City Development Corporation, Operation Relief Center, Saint Philip's and T.R. Hoover, among others, that have successfully completed single-family and multifamily residential developments that have helped bring stability to some of the most blighted parts of the neighborhood.



The Fair Park Comprehensive Plan is one of many plans that have been developed for the South Dallas area.

In addition to the major investments planned, there are three major planning initiatives in the area that will affect the neighborhood dramatically.

In October of 2003, the Fair Park Development Plan was adopted for the 277-acre Fair Park National Historic Landmark. The focus of this plan is to make Fair Park a year-round destination for tourists and Dallas residents. While it focuses on the Fair Park grounds, implementation of the Plan will positively affect the surrounding areas by providing an anchor for residential and retail stabilization and growth. Plans for gateway and other improvements will enhance the entire South Dallas/Fair Park Area.

The Trinity River Corridor Plan was adopted in 2004 and is currently under implementation. There are several small Area Plans that affect this area, namely urban design plans for South Lamar, Rochester Park and the Ideal Neighborhood area. The implementation of these should coordinate public investment and stimulate the development and upgrading of these areas.

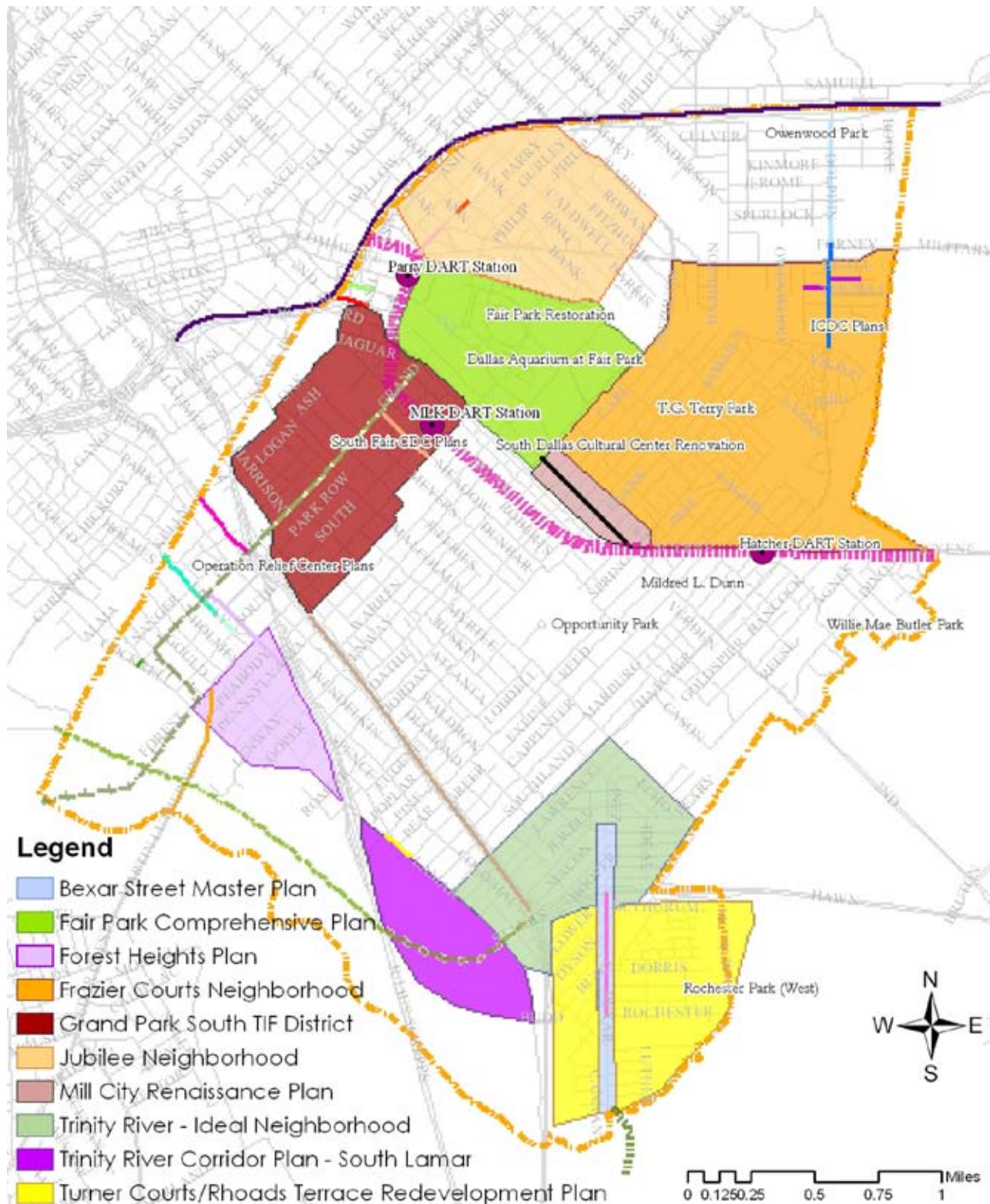
The DART Southeast Corridor extension will include three new stations in the South Dallas neighborhood. DART is initiating station Area Planning on this corridor and the intention is to identify and maximize redevelopment opportunities around the station areas, wherever compatible with City plans and neighborhood desires.

The Challenge

Clearly this area is one of the most active in terms of local initiatives and capital expenditures. In reviewing the amount of activity, it is clear that there is a great deal of planning and investment under way in South Dallas/Fair Park. Yet there is still a concern expressed by the local neighborhood groups about the overall direction of the area. The activities are not guided by a neighborhood vision or plan, and while the activity is welcome, some feel that the various projects lack a sense of coordination. Much of the concern of the neighborhood is for smaller, shorter term projects—redevelopment of local eyesores, attracting additional retail (such as a grocery store), and preservation of the neighborhood's identity in the face of the coming changes.



Map 2c.1 Summary of initiatives and plans in the South Dallas/Fair Park area



DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC VISION



More than 60 South Dallas residents participated in a workshop that helped form forwardDallas!. Such a strong turnout illustrates the commitment of area residents to the development of their community.

Workshop Process

As part of the development of forwardDallas! plan a workshop was held in the South Dallas/Fair Park neighborhood that was attended by more than 60 participants. At this workshop, stakeholders reported on the many public and private initiatives occurring in the neighborhood. Workshop participants also worked interactively in groups with maps showing existing conditions in the neighborhood and with game pieces depicting a variety of future development options. Using these tools participants were able to see the interrelationships between the various community initiatives and planned public investments and develop their vision for the future of the neighborhood. The results of the workshop are captured in maps and show the composite vision of the neighborhood based on the maps developed by each of the groups that participated in the workshop.

Workshop Findings

The workshop process and subsequent meetings with the neighborhood revealed that concerns revolved around several major areas:

- 1) There was a desire to better integrate the major ongoing planning activities so that neighborhood leaders and residents can monitor and influence the outcome. While the activity is appreciated, it also causes concern about changing the fundamental character of the area.
- 2) There was a desire for various small scale civic improvements—wider sidewalks, street lighting and park improvements were common themes in most workshop maps.
- 3) Major streets, notably Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Boulevard., Hatcher Street and Lamar Street are all identified as needing corridor improvements. In addition, the Malcolm X Boulevard. connection to Deep Ellum is in very poor condition and has been identified as an improvement that would assist in connecting South Dallas/Fair Park to Downtown.
- 4) Improvements to two key commercial nodes were seen as a potential improvement to retail and other services in the area and the beginning of “locally grown” stores and offices—specifically focusing on stimulating commercial development at the intersections of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, and Hatcher and Malcolm X. The addition of a retail anchor such as a grocery store was seen as crucial to attract other smaller retailers to the area and to allow local entrepreneurs to thrive.

- 5) Continued rehabilitation of the existing housing stock was important, including programs that assist local area renters to purchase their first homes.

The South Dallas/Fair Park area probably does not need another planning initiative, so this action plan does not recommend the development of a typical Area Plan. Given that the implementation of the Trinity River Corridor Plan and the DART station Area Plans are imminent, the beginning of another planning process would be ill advised.

However, there is a need for a strategic process to organize the neighborhood's many advocates and provide an opportunity for coordinated action by a coalition of groups. The City of Dallas can facilitate the ongoing development of this area and the implementation of forwardDallas! by assisting in this process. The following were some the major concepts that were developed during the course of this study:

Organization

1. Develop a process of regular meetings of the many interest groups and neighborhood activists to keep abreast of the ongoing activities, to identify common short-term objectives, to facilitate communication and coordination among the parties and to provide a forum for the neighborhood and those who care about it to impact City decisions. In addition to the participation of the City of Dallas, the involvement of the Black Chamber of Commerce was mentioned as helping organize such a meeting. The meeting would be at least annually, and more often during periods of great activity.
2. Develop an annual neighborhood action plan and a realistic set of annual objectives. This adds the voice of a coalition to an achievable set of goals. A group of people working for a common goal can achieve more than the uncoordinated activities of many.



Workshop participants indicated a desire for additional civic improvements including wider sidewalks, better lighting, and new parks.



Improving linkages between South Dallas and Downtown will help facilitate more interaction between South Dallas and the rest of the city.

Connectivity and Transportation

1. The Trinity River Corridor Plan has identified a major project that will affect the neighborhood. The goal of the neighborhood was the efficient movement of regional traffic through the Trinity Parkway link without cutting the neighborhood in half. This development should involve the neighborhood thoroughly and use forwardDallas! Context Sensitive Design policies.
2. Another major Trinity River Corridor Plan project is the improvement of Lamar. The implementation of this plan should be a high priority for the City and should fully integrate key forwardDallas! concepts such as the small Area Planning process, the forwardDallas! Building Blocks and Context Sensitive Design.
3. Develop better linkages to Downtown through the DART light rail system, and identify transitoriented development opportunities. The South Dallas/Fair Park area is now somewhat isolated from the Downtown, but the DART Southeast Corridor will make Downtown a few minutes away. This can be used to benefit the neighborhood by attracting new investment around the DART stations.
4. Malcolm X Boulevard is one of the major connections with Downtown and Deep Ellum. It is in poor condition. In order to enhance the viability of Malcolm X as a neighborhood commercial corridor, it should get improved paving and street lighting. In addition, developing a gateway at the intersection of Martin Luther King Boulevard. would announce arrival in the neighborhood. These needs should be included in the City's capital improvements budgeting.

Accessibility to Parks

1. The development of the Trinity River Corridor will diversify recreational options for residents. The planning of these improvements should include connections to neighborhood parks and playgrounds with safe routes that have protection from traffic but also good visibility in the neighborhood.
2. The neighborhood is fully developed, and it is inadvisable to create off-street paths and trails. However, the upcoming plans for the area should create linkages with pedestrian-scaled streetscapes. Therefore key routes to neighborhood destinations should be identified and receive priority for pedestrian-friendly improvements.
3. While South Dallas has some small parks, many residents expressed a desire to see parks expanded and improved. Some parks have a chronic problem with homeless people and loitering that intimidates some residents and keeps them from using the parks. These issues should be addressed and improvements made that will attract local residents and discourage undesirable uses.
4. The neighborhood should work with the Park and Recreation Departments to identify improvements to local parks (such as recreational fountains) that will attract residents and local children in a safe outdoor environment.

Land Development

1. One of the often repeated desires of the neighborhood was to attract a retail anchor to the area. Many feel that if it locates in an existing commercial area and is integrated into the street, it would assist in developing the remainder of the area and provide an opportunity for local entrepreneurs to thrive. A good local example is the stimulating effect that the recent Fiesta Grocery store has had on the Jefferson Boulevard area. Local and City efforts should continue with an eye toward using the new location as an anchor to new neighborhood investment from large and small storeowners.
2. Two intersections that show a great deal of promise as neighborhood retail centers are the intersections of Malcolm X Blvd. and Martin Luther King Boulevard and Hatcher Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. These already have some retail and service activity, but both would benefit from small scale investments in sidewalks, lighting and tree planting in addition to developing a program for storefront improvement grants or loans.



Safe and active parks, easily accessible by area residents, will help create a more vibrant and active community.



South Dallas' Black Forest Theater hosts some of the biggest names in music.

Cultural Identity

A key concern of residents was that the expected revitalization of the area would not result in widespread gentrification and displacement of existing residents. An often cited example was the development of State Thomas, which once was a primarily African-American community and now has few minority residents. Therefore, a strong program to preserve the diverse nature of this area should be initiated. As the City begins the development code amendments to implement forwardDallas!, this neighborhood should be actively involved, noting that some of the urban design, zoning and parking changes could be implemented to help retain the area's identity. Some of the concepts are:

1. Develop and encourage a distinctive building style and decoration. The building style used should not be an imitation of Uptown, but one unique to South Dallas/Fair Park that has roots in the existing neighborhood. Some neighborhoods similar to South Dallas/Fair Park have developed a distinctive style of development. For example, neighborhoods in other areas that have a large number of industrial buildings have developed new mixed-use building that use industrial building materials like corrugated metal in creative ways with surprisingly attractive results.
2. Enable locally determined street use policies. Dallas has many restrictions on using the public right-of-way for commercial purposes. However, successful neighborhood retail areas often have a blurred line when it comes to public and private property. Commercial and neighborhood activity often spills out into the sidewalk and street, and in many cultures this is a celebrated part of neighborhood life. While outright street vending is not seen as desirable, many other activities may be acceptable and discussions with the neighborhood should be conducted for a pilot program of relaxed street use policies in South Dallas/Fair Park, as well as other neighborhoods. The following ideas should be explored:
 - a. Awnings: Currently awnings are highly restricted and the City charges a high fee if they extend over the public right-of-way. Policies should be changed in South Dallas/Fair Park to encourage sidewalk shading by awnings, making them subject to a use agreement.
 - b. Retailing on the sidewalks: Extending retailing activity onto adjacent sidewalks is part of many neighborhoods. This includes small A-frame signs, some display of merchandise, and sidewalk seating for restaurants. This

should be permitted if it is adjacent to the business, the displays are limited so as not to obstruct the sidewalk, and an agreement is made for maintenance.

c. Festivals: South Dallas/Fair Park has a tremendous amount of unappreciated musical and artistic talent, as well as local craftsmen and excellent chefs. One way of improving the neighborhood's image is to sponsor festivals and street fairs that invite all of Dallas to spend a day or two enjoying the unique talents of this area.

d. Storefront improvement assistance: Storefront improvement grants can assist small businesses to make improvements to the exterior of buildings and properties in order to make these existing businesses compatible with the vision for the area. Painting, historic restorations, awnings and landscaping are typical improvements that can be supported particularly along important corridors such as Martin Luther King Boulevard, Second Avenue and Hatcher Street. A well-managed program can provide grants or revolving loans, and require at least 50 percent match from applicants.



South Dallas/Fair Park has a tremendous amount of unappreciated musical and artistic talent.