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# FAIR PARK

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A PARK FOR ALL PEOPLE

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Report of the Mayor's Fair Park Task Force

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Draft No. 8 | 20 August 2014

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# OVERVIEW

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## Key Points

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### 1 How was this report developed?

- The Task Force held 22 two-hour meetings through nine months and met with more than 20 people and groups in their intensive evaluation of Fair Park, its best uses and the most promising path forward.

### 2 How are people currently experiencing Fair Park?

- Many Dallas residents have misconceptions around the park's safety and its actual proximity to downtown, while those who do visit often have difficulty navigating the surrounding roads and poorly organized parking areas.
- Private and public organizations interested in hosting events at Fair Park are discouraged by a confusing, cumbersome process that lacks a key authoritative body.
- Without adequate public funding to maintain buildings within Fair Park, organizations are housed in facilities in great need of maintenance and repair. This causes them to operate below their full potential or relocate to other parts of the city.
- Local families and neighbors don't often think of Fair Park as a friendly, community park because of the lack of green space, traditional recreation features and perceived connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood.

### 3 What conclusions did the Task Force reach?

- The 2003 Comprehensive Development Plan had many great ideas that should be implemented.

- For big changes to happen at Fair Park, several strategic foundational actions must take place, which must be the primary job of the new governance board described in this report.
- The best uses of historic buildings will emerge when essential foundational action is taken.
- We must put the park back into Fair Park. Priority should be on preserving and enhancing the park to stimulate private development in the area, as opposed to privatizing the park.
- The State Fair of Texas must be part of any long-term plan for Fair Park.

### 4 What insights from the 2003 report still hold true today?

The Task Force finds great value in many of the recommendations outlined in the 2003 CDP, in particular:

- Better signage – Better signage is needed throughout the park to point visitors to the Santa Fe Trail and the Fair Park DART Station, improve way-finding and ease entry and exit.
- Green space – The absence of green space is incongruous with the park's central identity as the city's largest public park. Parking lots should be consolidated and those areas remodeled to be expansive lawns.
- Year-round destination – Fair Park should be a premier urban park that offers year-round activities, attractions and recreation for locals and tourists.
- Streamline governance: Establish a single authoritative body that can organize the financial and political support needed to implement recommendations and encourage synergy among all stakeholders.

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## Key Recommendations

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### 1 Enhance access, connectivity with community, city

- Continue establishing Exposition Avenue/Parry Avenue entrance as the front door of Fair Park
- Ensure the design of traffic – enhanced signage, all entry points and surrounding roads – emphasizes Fair Park DART Station as park's front door
- Improve Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, along with all entry points and surrounding roads, to enhance access to Fair Park
- Extend Santa Fe Trail directly to Fair Park
- Encourage the lowering of I-30 from Exhibition Boulevard to Grand Avenue and support construction of deck parks that connect Fair Park to Deep Ellum, Baylor Medical campus and the string of parks north along Grand Avenue

### 2 Establish a community park on south side of Fair Park

- Turn parking lots between Music Hall and the African American Museum and former Perot Museum and former Science Place into green areas and develop them into an open, year-round community park
- Build structured parking garages to north and west sides of park to reallocate parking space

- Relocate the stretch of fence that runs along Robert B. Cullum Boulevard in between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Avenue so that it sits on the north side of Leonhardt Lagoon (see map), making the southern area of Fair Park accessible and connective to the surrounding community

### 3 Empower new organization as operational and marketing authority for Fair Park

- Governing body should have full authority over park's operations, marketing
- Park and Recreation Board should contract with private organization
- State Fair and all other organizations housed at or using Fair Park should fall under new body's authority
- 501(c) entity should feature a diverse fundraising board and staff
- City should sufficiently fund the park's operations, which the Task Force has estimated to be at least \$15 million annually, and finance much-needed capital improvements to the park, estimated at around \$478 million

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## Key Actions Required

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- 1** Improve and beautify all Fair Park entrance points, parking structures, surrounding roads (Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, Robert B. Cullum Boulevard, Grand Avenue and the new Fair Park Boulevard)
- 2** Design traffic flow, entrance to solidify park's "front door" as Exposition Avenue/Parry Avenue entrance and DART Station
- 3** Implement strong boundary preventing expansion into private residential area east of Fitzhugh for structures not currently owned or leased by the city or State Fair of Texas
- 4** Work with residents to conscientiously improve area, neighborhood surrounding park
- 5** Maintain the current South Dallas/Fair Park trust fund and its structure
- 6** Extend Santa Fe Trail directly to Fair Park and relocate anything obscuring path throughout park
- 7** Promote Santa Fe Trail and trio of parks connected by it – White Rock Lake, Tenison/Samuell Grand Park and Fair Park – with marketing, improved signage
- 8** Install better signage and way-finding around and throughout the park
- 9** Lower I-30
- 10** Build deck parks to connect Fair Park to Deep Ellum, Baylor Medical Campus and the parks along Grand Avenue
- 11** Relocate stretch of fence that runs along Robert B. Cullum Boulevard in between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Avenue so that it sits on the north side of Leonhardt Lagoon (see map)
- 12** Introduce programming concept – divide park into historic, cultural and children's areas with a music green, festival lawn, etc.
- 13** Build multi-level parking garages to the north and west sides of park
- 14** Create green space, lawns on areas previously used for parking (area between Music Hall and African American Museum, area between former Perot Museum and former Science Place building, etc.)
- 15** Establish new independent 501(c)3 with diverse board and full authority over all Fair Park operations and marketing. It will:
  - Report to Park & Recreation Board
  - Manage all existing and future leases and contracts, including State Fair of Texas
  - Streamline event planning, management process
  - Fundraise from public, private sector
- 16** Provide at least \$15 million annually to new governing body for Fair Park's operating budget
- 17** Fund estimated \$478 million to fully repair and revitalize park
- 18** Invest approximately \$46.5 million in fixing surrounding roads