Appendix
A. Bibliography


Executive Summary Chapter - Image Carillon Village, JACOBS 2009.
B. Case Studies of North Texas TIF Districts and Transit-Oriented Development

Case Study: Downtown Plano Transit Village; Plano, TX

Plano, Texas is a large suburban city located north of Dallas. Its growth over the last 50 years has been dramatic. In 1960, Plano was a town of only 3,600 people. Today its population is estimated at over 230,000 and it is a major suburban employment center with over 100,000 jobs. The traditional downtown area, however, was largely left out of this growth. This area is home to the city’s municipal offices and is its traditional core; however, up until recently, there had been little new office, retail, or residential development that was similar to what was being built in other nearby areas.

In 1983, Plano was one of 14 cities in the Metroplex region that voted to create the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) agency. The original date for the arrival of planned light rail service to Plano was 2010, however, in the late 1990s it became apparent that the schedule for the delivery of this service would be accelerated significantly to 2002. This led the city to focus on taking advantage of transit as a way to spur economic development in the downtown area.

Prior to the arrival of DART, the largest investments in downtown involved a series of expansions of the city government offices. The city also purchased a largely abandoned strip shopping center to address the parking needs of its downtown employees. In 1984, voters approved bonds for streetscape improvements and the creation and expansion of downtown parks. These beautification efforts downtown did little to spur new private sector economic development. In 1991, the Plano planning and zoning commission development a downtown plan with the hope of enticing new investment to the area. The plan recommended preservation of the modest scale and historic character of downtown and promoted new infill development and redevelopment in areas adjacent to the traditional downtown. The desired result was to create a compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented design for the downtown area. A new zoning overlay district was created for the 80-acre downtown core area. This required that all new buildings address the street and it limited building height to four stories. It also went as far as to restrict surface parking and place an altogether ban on “heavy” commercial uses.
Issues Affecting Downtown Plano which Led to Renewed Planning Effort:

- Eroding economic position
- Physical decline and blight
- Absentee and fragmented ownership
- Limited hours of operation
-Disconnected from surrounding neighborhoods

In 1997, Plano’s city planners began to work with DART staff to determine the exact location of the planned downtown Plano station. They also analyzed how development around this station could potentially support, and benefit from, proximity to this station. The DART system formally began service in areas closer to Dallas in 1996. The experience of these stations showed the potential for stations to be catalysts for new development and reinvestment. The City of Plano understood this potential and believed that access to light rail could particularly have a positive impact on the development potential of the city-owned former shopping center next to the rail line. This site represented a 3.6 acre redevelopment opportunity. DART gave final approval to the downtown Plano station in 1998 and the city council approved the redevelopment plan a month later. After a long negotiation period, the city and DART approved a joint agreement calling for the transit agency to purchase the station property and transfer ownership of surplus land around the station to the city. Plano would then pay for the reconstruction and reconfiguration of streets, drainage, and the utilities needed to serve the station. The cost would be credited against the value of the property transferred to the city. Any shortfall would be reimbursed by DART.

The next step in the development process led the city to issue an RFP (request for proposal) to find a developer for the shopping center site adjacent to the planned station. In 1999, the city selected Amicus Partners to develop Eastside Village I, which included 234 dwelling units and 15,000 square feet of nonresidential space including two restaurants (on property leased by the City). The project offers a variety of floor plans including efficiencies, lofts, live/work spaces, and one- and two-bedroom apartment homes. A five level parking garage is surrounded by the buildings in the interior of the property, providing resident parking as well as public parking on the first level during business hours.

The project took advantage of allowances for increased
density enacted through the previous planning effort. Three and four-story buildings were built on the edge of the sidewalks and exteriors are brick with design features that recall architecture of the late 19th century. These were design elements specifically enacted as part of the downtown development plan. The eastern half of the site also contains a four-story building wrapped around three sides of a five-level parking garage. This project added nearly 500 new residents to the area adjacent to the train station and also helps to provide a physical and psychological linkage between that station and the main shopping street in downtown. The developer also stated that proximity to a transit station benefitted the overall financial potential of the project. This proximity made it easier to attract capital and also led to a faster lease-up rate.

Eastside Village I was clearly seen as a success from the perspective of the city, DART, and Amicus. However, at this time the city began rethinking how the new development would fit into an overall downtown plan. In fall of 2009, it was decided that an even larger vision for downtown redevelopment was needed. At this time, assistant city manager Frank Turner presented a report titled “A Vision and Strategy for Creating a Transit Village.” This was subsequently approved by the city council. This strategy used the 1991 plan as a foundation but placed a greater emphasis on the relationship of downtown to the DART station and transit operations. Specifically, this effort set a goal of increasing residential development by 1,000 units and building 50,000 square feet of retail space within a quarter mile of the DART station itself. This study went as far as to identify potential redevelopment sites and several incentives for implementation, including public financial assistance and reduced parking requirements.

Transit Village Strategy:
- Locate/design light rail platform to maximize benefits.
- Develop transportation linkages and parking programs.
- Redevelop key sites adding 1,000 dwelling units and 50,000 square feet retail use.
- Reinforce downtown as an arts district.
- Expand park and streetscape improvements.
- Preserve historic buildings.
- Provide incentives for reinvestment.
This study was the impetus for the establishment of a tax increment financing (TIF) district to encourage economic reinvestment in the study area. The formation of this district required cooperation and coordination between the school district, the county, and the community college. TIF funds come from increased property tax revenues from new development. These funds can be used for infrastructure, public facilities, and land within the district. Under Texas state law, municipalities also obtain broader redevelopment powers within a TIF district. TIF is commonly used by the development and banking community to bridge financing gaps, especially in areas where the cost of upgrading the infrastructure are very high.

The total appraised value of property within this TIF district increased from $307 million in 1999 to an estimated $424 million in 2002. This generated more than $1.5 million in annual revenues. Over the 15 year term of the TIF district, revenues are projected to exceed $15 million. This district is expansive and extends to all three of Plano’s DART station. However, the downtown redevelopment area has been given initial priority for the use of these funds since redevelopment in this area is seen as being more critical than in the more highly development areas around the north and south Plano stations.

It is widely believed by the City that the TIF district has been instrumental in helping to achieve their vision of increased downtown housing, retail uses, as well as the city’s design goals for the downtown area. One of the latest projects to be constructed close to DART in the TIF district is 15th Street Village. This includes 34 for-sale townhomes and 90 condominium units. This was the first substantial new for-sale housing construction in the downtown area since DART arrived. Currently, there is a second phase for the 15th Street Village project that is in the planning stages. Other new development includes Eastside Village II which was finished in 2002 and features 225 rental apartments and 25,000 square feet of retail. This property has achieved very high rates of occupancy. Currently, there are plans for another new townhome development, Lexington Park at Rice Field, which will include 14 new luxury eco-friendly units. This community was designed within the parameters of the transit village overy. They are branded as “new urban” townhomes since they address the streetfront, have alley-loaded parking, and are pedestrian-oriented. This project is located two blocks from the DART station.
Overall, the development spurred within the TIF district has brought the city close to reaching the long-term goal of 1,000 new housing units and 50,000 square feet of new commercial development (as set forth in the Transit Village Strategy). The incremental funds derived from the TIF have also allowed the city to invest over $2 million in streetscape and surface transportation improvements which have made the area more attractive to private investment.

Key Lessons Learned:

- DART station alone was not the only harbinger of new development.
  - Public investment (funded through TIF) and public-private partnerships seen as key.
  - Ridership projections have been surpassed without the provision of city-owned parking for transit users.
  - In beginning phases, users have been able to utilize privately-owned parking facilities within close proximity to the station.
  - Having a planning framework that promotes walkable transit-oriented development prior to the arrival of the actual light rail system was seen as very important in the creation of a “transit village”.

- Developers benefitted from transit proximity in terms of ability to attract capital to project, lease/sales period, and potentially have even achieved some price premium.
  - All these factors work to increase the financial viability of private development projects.
  - Public-private partnership can be key to creating the first truly “catalytic” project that ignites additional investment.
  - In the case of Plano, this took the form of the city offering an attractive land lease to a private developer.
Case Study – Transit-Oriented Development
TIF; Dallas, TX

Mockingbird Station is the city of Dallas’s most successful example of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). In 2008, the Dallas City Council approved a TOD TIF district that encompasses the area around Mockingbird Station as well as station areas south of downtown including one TIF encompassing the area around the Cedars West and Eight-and-Corinth stations and a third TIF district called the Lancaster corridor sub-district. This includes areas around the Illinois, Kiest, and VA Medical Center stations. The strategic significance of this type of “extended” TIF is the ability to link successes in the development around Mockingbird Station to that of the city’s southern sector in the Lancaster Corridor, which has been much slower to develop. The Mockingbird area is further expected to grow as a result of its location close to the planned George W. Bush Presidential Library. This unique arrangement is a result of a 2007 amendment to Chapter 311 of the tax code. This allowed the creation of a reinvestment zone for poverties that have some

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>CALENDAR YEAR</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>UNITS/SF</th>
<th>APPROX. OR ESTIMATED VALUE</th>
<th>TIF INVESTMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Shelby</td>
<td>5609 SMU Blvd.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
<td>55 units; 3,720 sf retail</td>
<td>$14,000,000</td>
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<td>Shamburger Development</td>
<td>SW corner SMU Blvd. &amp; Greenville Ave.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>412 units; 9,100 sf retail</td>
<td>$37,420,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sphinx Development Corp. - Fiji/ Compton Phase I &amp; II</td>
<td>1515 Compton Street</td>
<td>2011-13</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>130 senior hsg units; 50 townhomes; 18,000 sf office</td>
<td>$12,337,500</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crest Plaza Shopping Ctr. remodel</td>
<td>2935 S. Lancaster Rd.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Under construction</td>
<td>112,000 sf retail</td>
<td>$1,000,000 added value</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster Urban Village - Urban League expansion &amp; Ph I mixed use</td>
<td>SW corner Ann Arbor Ave. &amp; Lancaster Rd.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>46,568 sf office; 185 units; 9,285 sf retail</td>
<td>$30,529,392</td>
<td>pending</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>832 res units; 134,105 sf retail; 64,568 sf office</td>
<td>$95,286,892</td>
<td>$0</td>
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1All information updated as of September 30, 2009.
2Based upon either the TIF application or required minimum stated in the development agreement. May be updated for completed projects based on actual unit mix and square footage.
3Based upon 1) market value of comparable projects for anticipated projects, 2) private investment stated in the development agreement for projects that are approved or under construction, or 3) DCAD market value for completed projects (unless project has not yet been assessed). Values may not be fully captured by the TIF District for redevelopment projects once pre-existing value and/or the demolition of structures is netted out.
4Principal amount not to be exceeded per the development agreement. TBD indicates that development agreement has not yet been adopted. Asterisk indicated investment also includes interest not shown.
5Selected significant projects included.
6Tax-exempt property. Amount shown is approximate investment in improvements.
7Includes other incentives not shown. Contact City of Dallas Office of Economic Development for more information.
connection to and will benefit a mass transit rail system.

**TOD TIF Redevelopment Issues:**
- Need for urban scale/TOD zoning
- Infrastructure upgrades
- Flexible incentives to encourage density that is transit and pedestrian friendly

TIF funding as well as a $1.6 million grant from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has enticed Prescott Realty Group, to move forward with the development of the “University Crossing” project. This is part of Southern Methodist University’s master plan to expand its campus eastward past North Central expressway into the Mockingbird TIF area. University Crossing is planned as a mixed-use environment that will feature academic uses as well as private sector housing, retail, and office space. Prescott is also planning another large-scale development within the TIF boundaries that will include apartments and retail. This will be located southwest of SMU Blvd. (formerly Yale Blvd.). TIF funding is seen by Prescott as a key element that impacts the overall financial feasibility of these projects. Specifically, TIF funding will be made available to reimburse the developer for infrastructure work, streetscaping, and lighting in public areas (among other potential uses).

While the TOD TIF district is relatively new, there are already many successes that can be pointed to, particularly in areas of South Dallas where, unlike Mockingbird, new development has been severely lacking around DART stations. This is a testament to the TIF district, the NCTCOG grants, and the activist role taken by the city to promote development in these locations. It should also be noted that this $95 million of investment going into planned and under construction projects has all been announced during the recent economic recession.

**Key Lessons Learned:**
- TIF combined with NCTCOG SD grants has been a proven boost to financial viability of development projects, particularly in areas where new development around rail stations has not been prevalent.
- University (SMU) played a role in driving private sector development within the Mockingbird TIF sub-district. Public-private partnership that includes uses that will add revenue to TIF.
C. Stakeholder Survey

Downtown Implementation Plan
City of Denton, Texas
October 2009

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interview of: ____________________________  Card: (Tape/ list contact information)
Interviewed by: _________________________  Date & Time: _________________________

I. Individual Introductions
II. Project Overview (1 minute)
III. Any Questions Before Beginning?
IV. Interview

Answer all the following questions from your personal perspective.

1. What is your interest in Downtown Denton?
   Property Owner____  Business Owner____
   Organization Representative (which one) ______________________
   City Official____
   Other____________________
   and for how long? _______ years.

2. In your opinion, Is Downtown Denton a pleasing and interesting place for bringing visitors?
   _____ Agree ___ Somewhat agree _____ Somewhat disagree ____ Disagree ____ Not sure
   If you agree, where are the best places to bring Downtown visitors?
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

3. When you think of Downtown Denton, what is the first mental image you have of downtown
   (check the most appropriate one for you)?
   _____ Courthouse
   _____ City Hall
   _____ Shops around the square
   _____ Quakertown Park
   _____ Other __________________________________________________________
4. In your opinion, Downtown Denton is an economically attractive environment for starting or locating a business.
   ____ Agree ___ Somewhat agree ____ Somewhat disagree ____ Disagree ____ Not sure

   Why?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. What are the greatest resources of Downtown Denton for strengthening economic development and creating new economic development opportunities? (limit to three)
   1. ________________________________________________________
   2. ________________________________________________________
   3. ________________________________________________________

6. What do you feel are the major issues facing Downtown?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

7. What is the most important factor or condition that will ACCELERATE economic development in Downtown Denton in the coming five-to-ten years?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

8. Regarding economic development what type of development do you feel the downtown needs additional numbers of to reach its potential future?
   _____ Residential - rental
   _____ Residential - townhouse
   _____ Office
   _____ Shopping & Retail
   _____ Mixed – Use (residential over retail)
   _____ Entertainment facilities
9. Name three assets that separate Downtown Denton from other North Texas downtowns?

1.  
2.  
3.  

10. On a scale of 1 to 5; with 1 being ‘very important’ and 5 being ‘not at all important,’ how important are each of the following factors to the quality of life in Downtown Denton?

____ Variety of housing options
____ Quality of public institutions (city hall, libraries, parks, etc.)
____ Variety of employment opportunities
____ Vibrant and attractive downtown area
____ Well designed streets for autos, pedestrians and bicycles
____ Variety of retail establishments & entertainment options

11. In your opinion, is traffic congestion a problem in Downtown Denton?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Not sure

If yes, name three areas (intersections or corridors) in Downtown Denton where traffic congestion is a real problem.

1.  
2.  
3.  

12. In your opinion, the current streetscape environment in Downtown is pleasant and of a high-quality for increasing economic development and growing a residential population?

_____ Agree ____ Somewhat agree _____ Somewhat disagree ____ Disagree ____ Not sure

13. In your opinion, does the Downtown area have a parking issue? _______yes ______ no

If yes, are their specific zones of Downtown that has the greatest concern?

___________________ West of Courthouse
___________________ East of Courthouse
___________________ North of Courthouse
___________________ South of Courthouse

14. In your opinion, is the solid-waste pick-up from the current dumpsters in Downtown picked up at a good interval?

_________ Yes working well

_________ No needs greater pick-up (twice a day)

_________ No needs greater pick-up (every day)

Other comments:

_________ Not like current dumpsters

_________ Dumpsters need to be screened for view

_________ Need more trash capacity

2009 – Stakeholder Interview
15. Regarding solid waste, what is the walking distance you prefer to carry trash for removal?

- 100 feet max
- 200 feet max
- Within your block

16. Yes or No --- Do you think the following issues would greatly improve the quality of life in Downtown Denton?

- Additional street trees in downtown: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Greater landscape requirements for new development: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Further development of the downtown area: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Additional hike and bike trails/lanes: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Greater variety of cultural facilities / entertainment: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Additional housing in downtown: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Increasing pedestrian amenities: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Providing additional parking in downtown: Yes _ No _ Not sure _
- Increasing parks in downtown: Yes _ No _ Not sure _

17. What downtowns with a similar scale to Denton that you have visited and admired - and what about these downtowns that we could learn from?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

18. In your opinion, do you think we should limit architecture styles, building materials, colors available for outdoor walls, etc. in Downtown.

- Yes _
- No (just minor controls) _

19. Twenty years (20) from now, what kind of downtown do you envision (want) Downtown Denton to be? (list three words or phrases that define the future)

1. _______________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________________
20. What do you feel are the major impediments to reaching this vision?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
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21. Is there anything else we should be aware of as we work on the plan for Downtown Denton?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

That concludes our stakeholder questions.

*Thank You!*
APPENDIX

D. Denton Downtown Implementation Plan - Website

Downtown Implementation Plan (DTIP)

The City of Denton is in the process of developing a Downtown Implementation Plan (DTIP) that will work as a catalyst to achieve the goals defined for downtown Denton, as adopted in the Denton Downtown Master Plan. A few of the goals noted include: Downtown should be a place to live, work and play. Downtown should contain a variety of things to do. Downtown should be attractive and well designed. Downtown should have linked parks and open spaces.

The DTIP will consist of the following elements: parking, architectural design, open space and linkages, and land use analysis. The Denton Downtown Master Plan, the Denton Plan, and the Denton Development Code will all be used during the process for developing the DTIP. The Planning and Development Department has contracted with Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. to assist the city with the development of the DTIP.

It has long been recognized that downtown is the heart of the City and a focal point of commerce and entertainment. In 2002, the City Council adopted the Denton Downtown Master Plan whose primary focus is to encourage development and expansion of ownership opportunities with private investors, while ensuring that proper design practices are employed.

The DTIP will build on this previous work and create a plan to accomplish the goals of the Denton Downtown Master Plan.

In order to ensure that the DTIP is successful, the City is asking for your assistance by providing feedback, attending meetings, and informing other residents about this important endeavor. In the first phase of the process the City will conduct a stakeholder interview, and a survey will be posted on this page soon to solicit your input on various downtown issues. A Steering Committee of stakeholders will be convened to assist the City with developing the DTIP. You will find notices, meetings notices, and minutes for this committee on this web page. The City will also provide several venues for the public to receive and provide information on this topic, including this web page.

Stakeholder Interview results click here

On December 14, 2009 the City of Denton hosted the first Public Meeting for the Downtown Implementation Plan at the Central Fire Station. During the meeting, those in attendance provided input on the Draft Project Goals & Objectives currently defined for the project. This input came from a written scoring of the eight (8) goal statements and their supporting statements. The results of this community input are noted on the following pages.

It is important to understand when reviewing these percentages, which correspond to individual responses, that this public input event is but a part of a multi-month long process. This process – first solicits input that is general in nature and gets considerably more detailed as the project gets further along. We are just getting out of the general area of the study.

This said, one should review these responses as an early set of inputs from a general set of questions (project goals). Our next Public Meeting will seek input regarding detailed choices. All of this input is valuable – and well evaluated with a full set of general and specific inputs from the community. Click here to view the results from the input given at the meeting.

If you wish to view the most current Downtown Implementation Plan presentation click here.

If you have any questions please contact Rick Lasner, Project Manager for the consultant team at 214.424.0549 working with the City on this downtown implementation project.

If you would like to provide information or have questions, please click here to send an e-mail to staff. Thank you for your participation.

Next Meeting:

Downtown Task Force Meeting

Where: City Hall Work Session Room, 215 E. McKinney Street

When: Thursday, July 9, 2010, 8:20 a.m. – Meeting Agenda Title.

For more information, call Ron Menghini at (940) 449-3282 or click here.
Denton public transportation hits record high

BY DREW GAINES
Contributing Writer

The Denton County Transportation Authority saw record ridership in March, and more riders are expected to board the public buses in the months and years to come.

"Since the two years I have been driving with DCTA, I can see nothing but growth," bus driver Danny Brinkley said.

Brinkley and his fellow drivers are transporting more students and commuters than ever before.

Last month, Denton Connect provided 29,289 passenger trips, enough to break the previous record set in September 2009 by 346 trips.

"Basically the cost of parking, the cost of fuel, it’s just getting to be more economical, especially during the tough economic times right now," Brinkley said.

Boris Pakchik, senior planner for DCTA, attributes the growth to improved services. The transit service has added more bus stops, routes, shelters, signage and improved schedules that make the service more consistent and accessible, he said.

Most of the improvements have been in Lewisville, where the DCTA reported a 48 percent increase in ridership in March, compared to the same month last year. However, similar improvements are starting to take root in Denton.

"We routed more service through the campus areas at both [Iwu and UNT]," Pakchik said. "There are more frequent service, decreased wait time and more buses to more destinations."

Downtown Dallas has become a popular destination for commuters as well, with the DCTA extending trips to the city’s West End via the Commuter Express line.

Brinkley’s 40-mile trips to and from the Dallas hub have been packed.

"The majority of them are residents or business people that live in Denton or Lewisville and work in downtown Dallas. Then there are UNT students who catch a bus in downtown Dallas and come up here," Brinkley said.

Those passengers that hitch a ride in Dallas to get to Denton are what Pakchik is calling "reverse commuters."

Rather than heading into the city for work or school, those commuters are leaving Dallas for Lewisville, Carrollton or Denton.

A good proportion of them are students, says Pakchik, though all demographics have been increasing.

Shannon Robinson, a social work senior, has used the DCTA Connect Line for two years. She boards the Colorado Express route every Tuesday and Thursday to go between school and her home near the Golden Triangle Mall.

"I love it. It saves me gas, and I don’t have to pay for parking," she said.

With the arrival of the A-train to Denton in summer 2013, the DCTA is bracing for more riders and destinations. The rail service will connect commuters to Carrollton, Lewisville and later to downtown Dallas.

"We do expect more growth," Pakchik said.
The TOD trend
Transit-oriented developments spring up near DART stops

By STEVE BROWN
Real Estate Editor
stevebrown@dallasnews.com

Off Walnut Hill Lane in northeast Dallas, demolition crews are making quick work of a sprawling neighborhood of crummy apartments.

In place of the crime-ridden units, developers will soon put up an urban village centered around a new commuter rail station.

In years past, that Lake Highlands property might have wound up being used for just more apartments or a strip shopping center or even single-family homes.

But that was before developers caught on to the benefits of mass transit.

“One of the most important aspects of our overall project is having the ability to have mass transit in the development,” said Vance Detwiler, managing director of Prescott Realty Group, which is building the new Lake Highlands Town Center. “In theory, you can build your projects more dense and have a little less parking.”

In just over a decade since the commuter rail system opened in Dallas, real estate projects that have sprung up around some of the stations have gotten bigger and more complicated.

They are called transit-oriented developments, or TODs. And these projects are the real estate development’s version of the iPod.

They are the hot gadget that’s remaking the business of building retail, residential and commercial space.

Early TODs like Mockingbird Station and even West Village in Uptown showed developers that these complexes resonated

See DEVELOPERS Page 8D

Old apartment complexes (below) are being razed to make way for Lake Highlands Town Center (in rendering at left), a mixed-use development that will be close to a new DART station.

Lake Highlands Town Center

- $400 million transit-oriented, mixed-use development
- Adjacent to new Lake Highlands light-rail station
- Walnut Hill Lane and Skillman Street
- 70 acres
- 300,000 square feet of retail
- 100,000 square feet of office
- 1,600 residential units
- 20 acres of park and public space
- Developer: Prescott Realty Group

Photo by STEVE BROWN/Staff, Rendering from Prescott Realty
Developers hop aboard trend of projects near mass transit

Continued from Page 1D

with consumers.

The two newest such developments take the idea to the infinite degree.

The 33-acre Park Lane complex under construction adjacent to DART's Park Lane rail station will cost three-quarters of a billion dollars to complete.

The first phase of the mammoth mixed-use development will open later this year.

“Our grand opening will be in February of next year,” said Ted Ruble, a co-founder of project developer Harvest Partners. “We will have the first tenants in the apartment towers by May of this year.”

The high-rise complex going up across North Central Expressway from NorthPark Center shopping mall is one of the largest such developments in the country.

And Mr. Ruble said the project wouldn’t be happening the way it is without the adjoining rail station.

“It’s already come up several times in discussions with tenants about how attractive it will be to access the project through DART,” he said. “As Dallas becomes more urban and people move back into the city, more of them are willing to ride the transit.”

Park Lane will be a city in itself with more than 600 residential units — mostly in high-rise buildings — and 700,000 square feet of retail space and 816,000 square feet of office space. The Valencia Hotel, which is just getting under way, has been increased to 250 rooms.

And Harvest Partners is seeking tenants for a new office tower.

“We are working on plans for a 400,000-square-foot building right on the corner of Park and North Central,” Mr. Ruble said.

DART’s director of economic development and planning, Jack Wierzynski, said he isn’t surprised to see that local TODs are getting bigger.

“It’s just the maturity and the reality of the market,” Mr. Wierzynski said. “The early ones were more of a let’s-see-if-this-works.”

And the impact of these projects is likely to spread beyond their boundaries.

“There is a ripple effect,” Mr. Wierzynski said. “Mockingbird Station was seen as a success but now look at what’s — even more — going on around it.”

Lake Highlands homeowners who lobbied for Prescott Realty Group’s project on Skillman Street also expect it to be a positive influence on the neighborhood.

The 70-acre development is expected to cost as much as $400 million and will include about 1,600 residences, 300,000 square feet of retail and about 100,000 square feet of office space. Almost 20 acres is being set aside for park and public space.

Crews are busy demolishing the old apartments to make way for the urban village.

“About 50 percent of the site is cleared,” said Prescott Realty’s Mr. Detwiler. “We have knocked down over 40 buildings.

“We will start moving dirt and putting in the streets and other infrastructure by May.”

The first phase of Lake Highlands Town Center is to open late next year, he said.

“We are hopeful that the new DART station will be ready by late 2010 or early 2011,” Mr. Detwiler said.

The addition of the transit stop to DART’s existing Garland Line enabled the developers to seek zoning changes for more buildings for their project.

“In order to make redevelopment work in an urban area, you have to have additional density because of the costs,” Mr. Detwiler said.
Trash bins in way of Future Study: Downtown has development potential, but obstacles remain

12:00 AM CST on Tuesday, February 2, 2010
By Lowell Brown / Staff Writer
Denton Record-Chronicle

Downtown Denton has vast potential for development in coming years, but the city will have to overcome obstacles that include unsightly trash bins and a lack of public parking, a city consultant said Monday. City leaders are looking at those issues and more as they mount a final push to implement a 2002 downtown master plan. City staff members are working with a consultant, Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., to finish the study and draft the related codes ahead of an expected council vote in mid-April.

The study is focusing on a broad range of topics affecting a roughly 160-acre area bordered by Carroll Boulevard to the west, Parkway and McKinney streets to the north, Bell Avenue to the east and Sycamore Street to the south. Some of the same codes would also apply farther east to Exposition Street, where city leaders hope that a planned downtown bus and rail center at 604 E. Hickory St. will spur transit-oriented development.

Rick Leisner, an urban planner with Jacobs in Dallas, briefed Denton City Council members on the effort during a lunchtime meeting Monday. The discussion centered on Jacobs’ work since last fall to study the downtown area and recommend new standards for land use, architectural design, bicycle and pedestrian mobility, parking, trash bins, parks and open space, and related issues.

Leisner said the downtown area has great potential for development, particularly multistory buildings with a mix of street-level retail shops and housing above them. The current density of the study area is more like what is typically seen in suburbs, rather than a downtown core, he said.

“From an economic development standpoint, we have significant opportunity there” with vertical building, Leisner said.

The engineering firm is developing design guidelines that factor in the eclectic nature of downtown architecture while focusing on quality, Leisner said.
The guidelines would apply to new construction and “significant” exterior remodeling of existing buildings, he said.

Downtown shoppers and business owners have long complained of a lack of parking. While the Jacobs study showed more than 4,300 parking spaces in the study area, only about 280 were in public lots. Another 780 public parking spaces were counted along roadways. Officials with the city and Wells Fargo shelved plans for a residential-retail parking garage project in late 2008, saying the economy wouldn’t support it. Leisner suggested a “shared parking concept” where existing parking lots would accommodate public and private uses.

Council members informally agreed Monday to strike an existing city code provision that allows developers to build in the central business district without adding new parking spaces. The move still needs formal approval from the council and Planning and Zoning Commission, a process expected to take several weeks.

Officials described the move as a stopgap measure to ensure that developers don’t rush to file applications for projects that would conflict with the proposed new parking codes. In the meantime, developers would have to meet the city’s general parking standards or secure a variance.

Council members also discussed ways to reduce the number of visible Dumpsters downtown. Options include screening the nearly 90 trash bins or creating more-centralized collection areas.

Council member Joe Mulroy criticized the city’s makeover of Cedar Street, just west of the Square, for allowing roadside Dumpsters to remain unscreened. The $1.7 million project, finished in 2008 and partly funded by a federal grant, replaced underground utility lines and added wider sidewalks, lantern-style streetlights and bike racks along the street.

“Our first step was a misstep,” Mulroy said. “We spent a large amount of money redoing that [street] trying to take our baby steps for the downtown plan and we did not address the Dumpsters per the downtown master plan.”

Denton parks official Bob Tickner, who managed the Cedar Street project for the city, said in an interview
that officials discussed several options for screening or centralizing Dumpsters during the makeover. They ultimately dropped the issue over concerns the screens would be too expensive and take away parking spaces, he said. Merchants also couldn’t agree on how to combine the trash bins, he said.

“It’s more than just a Cedar Street problem,” Tickner said. “It involves all the streets, all the Dumpsters downtown.”

The council approved a $224,995 contract with Jacobs in September to perform the study, formally known as a downtown implementation plan.

The study included interviews with about 90 downtown property and business owners, city officials and interest-group representatives; a Web-based public opinion survey; and a public meeting Dec. 14 at Central Fire Station. A second public meeting is planned for late this month or early March, Leisner said.

In the one-on-one interviews, stakeholders identified parking, infrastructure and outdated building codes as the major issues facing downtown. They also wanted more shopping, entertainment and housing options, and screens for roadside Dumpsters.

Results from the online survey were expected in January, but Leisner said Monday they were still being tallied.

Council member Charlye Heggins questioned whether the city and consultant had done enough to publicize the December meeting, saying photos of the event showed few minorities participating.

“It was not filtered through the community, period,” she said.

Brian Lockley, an official with the Denton planning department, said the city advertised the event multiple ways, including through local chambers of commerce and neighborhood groups.

More information on the downtown plans is available at the city’s Web site at www.cityofdenton.com/dtip.

LOWELL BROWN can be reached at 940-566-6882. His e-mail address is lmbrown@dentonrc.com.
Consultants for the city spent about two-and-a-half hours presenting draft recommendations for new downtown codes and gathering feedback on the plans at the Denton Civic Center. The meeting was the latest step in the city’s ongoing push to implement a 2002 downtown master plan this year.

The meeting offered another chance for the public to influence the area’s future before consulting firm Jacobs releases its final recommendations in late April or early May.

Any new codes would face public hearings and votes before the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council, and some envisioned improvements such as more trees and wider sidewalks would likely count on public funding sources that haven’t been identified.

Still, downtown is poised to flourish with the completion of the plan and the arrival of a commuter rail station as early as next year, said Rick Leeser, planning director for Jacobs.

“Clearly, downtown Denton’s time is now,” he said.

Jacobs has worked since last fall to study the downtown area and recommend new standards for land use, architectural design, bicycle and pedestrian mobility, parking, trash bins, parks and open space, and related issues.

The study area includes roughly 160 acres bordered by Carroll Boulevard to the west, Parkway and McKinney streets to the north, Bell Avenue to the east and Sycamore Street to the south. Some of the same codes would apply farther east to Exposition Street to include the site of

See DOWNTOWN on 11A

City talks codes, plans

Public meeting latest step in implementing master plan for downtown area

By Lowell Brown
Staff Writer

A vision for a revamped downtown Denton with tree-lined streets, wider sidewalks, bicycle lanes and new retail and housing development was laid out at a public meeting Thursday night.
a planned downtown bus and rail center.

Recommendations floated Thursday include:

- Approving more-flexible development codes
- Adding bicycle lanes on Sycamore Street and shared lanes for cyclists and vehicles on Elm and Locust streets
- Removing many Dumpsters — either by having property owners share them or by offering daily collection of plastic trash bags
- Narrowing streets such as Hickory and Oak, and adding angled or parallel parking spaces to reduce the speed of traffic
- Limiting the requirements for new parking spaces by encouraging the shared use of existing lots

Attendees generally agreed on the broad ideas behind most of the proposals, according to an informal survey taken during the meeting. They offered mixed feedback on other proposals, such as limiting buildings to four stories near the Square and seven stories near the transit center.

Kati Trice, a representative of the Bike Denton group, said she liked some elements of the plan, including a requirement that developments provide some parking spaces for bicycles along with vehicles. But she was disappointed that the major east-west bicycle lanes were proposed for Sycamore Street, rather than Hickory Street. Hickory would be a more direct route between the University of North Texas and the planned downtown transit center east of the Square, she said.

Bud Melton of Bowman-Melton Associates, which is working with Jacobs on the plans, said Sycamore was chosen because it has less vehicle traffic.

Jacqueline Poertsch, who lives downtown, said she liked many of the consultants' ideas. But she's not convinced a downtown renaissance is in store.

"I don't quite understand what has happened at this time that the town is now going to be able to bring businesses downtown, when we've been struggling against the Loop [288] for decades," she said.

Denton banker Marty Rivers, chairman of the Denton Economic Development Partnership Board, said a new downtown development code would be a major step forward.

"One of the biggest problems developers have in trying to either rebuild or build something new downtown is we don't have any codes in place to deal with that," he said. "All the codes are designed for greenfield development, and they don't fit downtown."

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Parking code finds spot on agenda

Council set to vote on change to provision for central business district

By Lowell Brown
Staff Writer

Denton city leaders are considering code changes that would force many developers to start providing parking when they build or redevelop downtown.

The City Council is expected to vote Tuesday on whether to strike an existing code provision that allows developers to build in the central business district without offering new parking spaces.

The provision, meant to spur development, has contributed to a lack of on-street parking in the area, city planners say.

The planners describe the move as a temporary solution to make sure developers don’t rush to file applications for projects before the spring, when the council is expected to consider a widespread review of downtown codes.

Critics — including prominent downtown business owners and developers — say the city is jumping the gun with the new parking requirement and pushing a change that could stifle development.

Those concerns helped lead the city’s Planning and Zoning Commission to recommend denial of the change by a 5-1 vote last week. The change now needs a supermajority, or six votes from the seven-member City Council, to pass.

The activity is part of the city’s drive to put a 2002 downtown master plan into practice. City staff members are working with a consultant, Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., to finish the plan ahead of an expected council vote in April.

The downtown implementation plan

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Parking

is expected to include recommendations for parking, architectural design, land use, bicycle lanes, parks and open space, among other things.

In the meantime, city planners want to take away the exemption that gives downtown developers a pass on parking requirements. If the change is approved, new construction and some redevelopment projects in the area would have to meet the city’s general parking standards or secure a variance.

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Electronic version of Downtown Implementation Plan report provided on CD.