

Technical Assistance Panel Report

Ash Creek Greenbelt Ferguson Road Corridor

Far East Dallas
Nov. 14-15, 2019

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This report and the recommendations it contains are the product of the ULI Technical Assistance Panel. As the TAP sponsor, the City of Dallas provided background information and logistical assistance, but the recommended actions and alternatives are those of the independent panel.

ULI & THE TAP PROCESS

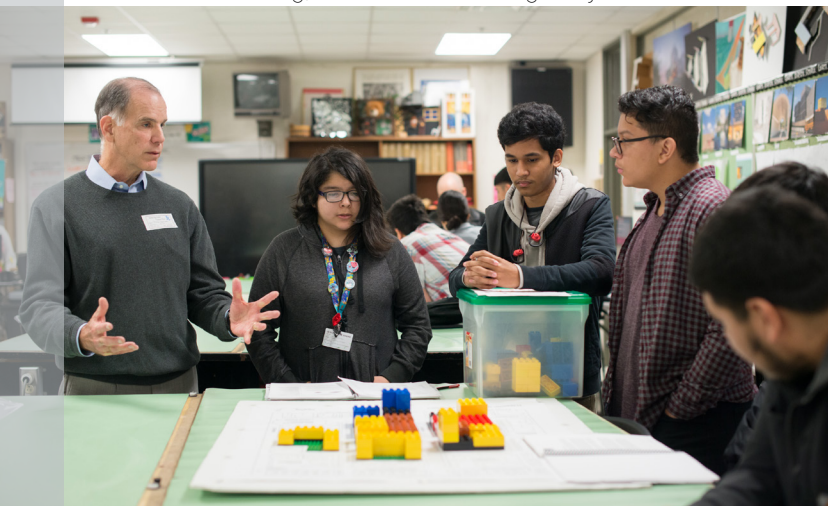
About Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the Institute now has approximately 46,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.



ULI Fall Meeting, Dallas Texas - images by ULI



UrbanPlan at Skyline High School, led by Phillip Bankhead

About ULI Dallas-Fort Worth

ULI Dallas-Fort Worth was founded more than 15 years ago and is one of 53 local chapters, known as District Councils, operating in the U.S. as part of the national Urban Land Institute. Today, ULI Dallas-Fort Worth is an association of more than 1,400 local members representing a broad spectrum of land use and development disciplines including all of the varied professions reflected in the national ULI membership. ULI Dallas-Fort Worth carries forth the ULI mission by serving the greater Dallas/Fort Worth area, in both public and private sectors, with educational programs, impactful volunteer programs and pragmatic land use expertise.



TAPs Panel reviewing St. Francis Park - image by ULI

About the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) are two-day, hands-on workshops focused on a specific land use or development policy challenge. They are organized by local District Councils upon request by a municipality or community non-profit organization. Panelists for these two day work sessions are experts in their fields selected from the local Council's membership to address challenges that require both professional expertise and local knowledge to resolve.

Panelists offer objective, responsible advice to local decision-makers on a variety of land use and real estate issues related to site-specific and public policy questions. The scope of each TAP is defined by the client, which in this case was the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department. All panel members are required to sign an agreement stating they

will not solicit work directly related to the TAP from the client organization for a specified period.

The panel begins with a briefing followed by a two-day intensive working session in the client's community. During the session, ULI's expert panelists tour the study area, interview stakeholders, and address a set of questions posed by the client about a specific development issue or policy barrier.

The typical outcome is a community presentation and final report that presents the panel's responses to the client's questions and offers a diverse set of suggestions and recommendations.

To request a TAP, to serve as a panelist or to learn more, contact Pamela Stein, Executive Director of ULI Dallas-Fort Worth, at Pamela.Stein@uli.org.

OVERVIEW



Ash Creek Area Map Existing Conditions

1. Trailer Park
2. Highland Bridge
3. Sanger Elementary School
4. Fraternal Order of Eagles
5. Recreation Center Site
6. White Rock Hills Park
7. Claremont Village Shopping Center

-Image by A. Stewart

Project background

The City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department acquired the 4.49-acre Ash Creek Greenbelt through a tax foreclosure. This undeveloped greenbelt has beautiful dense stands of hardwood trees and grassy plains.

The Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail, if developed, would provide linkages to the Ash Creek Greenbelt, St. Francis Park and White Rock Hills Park in Far East Dallas. It would also

serve as a trail spur to the Trinity Forest Spine Trail, which will connect to the Santa Fe Trail and link White Rock Lake, Lawnview Park, The Great Trinity Forest, and the Trinity River Audubon Center.

It would benefit the Ash Creek community, which encompasses ZIP codes 75218 and 75228 and about 37 neighborhood groups. This racially/ethnically and economically diverse community is home to more than 86,000 residents.

“There’s a lot going on in the area, but there are gaps. We need an overall vision on how we can best utilize the Ash Creek Greenbelt. How do we tie all these different projects together that don’t sync up just yet?”

- Jared White, City of Dallas Park & Recreation Department

“*The (FRI) board felt like this area is always going to need an advocate and that’s what we’ve done best. We’ve engaged people to advocate for their own needs and solve their own problems.*”

- Vikki Martin, Director, Ferguson Road Initiative

TAP participants gathered, in part, due to the goals and ambitions of three major stakeholders:

1. The City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department (DPRD), which is the TAP grant recipient and ULI’s client for the purposes of this Technical Assistance Panel.
2. The “10-minute Walk,” a partnership of the Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Park Association, and Urban Land Institute to advance a goal that everyone has a quality park within a 10-minute walk of home.
3. Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI), an influential grassroots Far East Dallas nonprofit that has successfully advocated for economic revitalization, crime reduction and improved public schools over the course of more than two decades.

Other stakeholders include Smart Growth for Dallas; the Circuit Trail Conservancy; Blackland Chapter, Native Prairies Association of Texas; White Rock Partners; Tenison Golf Course; and For the Love of the Lake.

Broadly speaking, the Ash Creek Greenbelt has the potential to link into an ambitious 50-mile master hike-and-bike trail system (known as The Loop) that would encircle the City of Dallas. This trail vision, spearheaded by the nonprofit Circuit Trail Conservancy, is designed to link Dallas neighborhoods to major transportation hubs and economic centers. The Loop’s goal is to leverage public and private funds to create this premier urban trail network.



TAP Panelists, Robert Kent and Kevin Wallace interviewing Park Board Member, Maria Hasbany - image by A. Stewart

Philip Hiatt Haigh, executive director at the Circuit Trail Conservancy, notes that funding has been secured for the base level of trail development for the Trinity Forest Spine Trail via funding from the 2017 City of Dallas bond package, Dallas County, the Texas Department of Transportation, and private funding. Construction on the Trinity Spine Trail is tentatively scheduled to begin in the summer of 2020. Unlike the densely urban nature of the existing Katy Trail, the Trinity Forest Spine Trail, a 12-foot wide concrete trail, will offer a rural, environmental experience with trailhead connections at various points.

The Loop also has funding to connect the Katy Trail to the Design District, for a more urban trail experience offering connectivity in the urban core. The City of Dallas will own and maintain the trails.

Like those trails in their respective locations, the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail, if developed, has the potential to serve as a catalyst for recreational experiences and economic development in Far East Dallas neighborhoods that are situated on both sides of Ferguson Road, a major commercial thoroughfare in the studied area.



St. Francis Park - image by ULI

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department reached out to ULI's Dallas-Fort Worth chapter to undertake the Ash Creek Greenbelt TAP to review the facts, interview stakeholders and develop strategies that will allow the City to move forward in manageable phases.

As part of its request, the City believes it is paramount to include community voices because the region's neighborhoods have an essential and vested interest in how the area is developed. As part of its TAP application, the City sought guidance on planning, urban design, and financing.

The City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department sought an ULI TAP to help it:

- See the future possibilities of an underutilized area.
- Maximize trail connections of the Ash Creek Greenbelt to the White Rock Greenbelt and to White Rock Hills Park.
- Find ways to engage the community in the process and build excitement.
- Identify hurdles and provide potential solutions.
- Explore opportunities to reinvigorate the area with park and trail improvements, and other City projects, serving as a catalyst.

“

How can we better engage the community and get them pulled into this process so they can have a stake in what is happening in their neighborhood?

- Jared White, City of Dallas Park & Recreation Department

”

“

I'd like to walk away with a blueprint of what we need to do next, and in the next 10 years. What do we need to be focused on?

- Vikki Martin, Ferguson Road Initiative

”



Stakeholder Interviews - image by A. Stewart

STAKEHOLDER AND TAP INPUT

The TAP panelists were chosen for their respective fields of expertise appropriate for the issues raised in the City's TAP application. Most were not familiar with this specific geographic area, its politics or previous history, which was an advantage to their creative solutions, because they "didn't know what they couldn't do." (Alan Stewart, Ash Creek TAP Chair)

The TAP members took a driving tour of the subject area and then split up to interview community leaders to solicit what these local stakeholders would like to see happen in the area, what they don't want to see, and to learn more about perceived challenges, benefits, and concerns. The community leaders (interviewed in person, by phone, or by written responses) included governmental officials from North Texas Council of Governments, Dallas County, and officials from Dallas City Council districts 7 & 9, as well as representatives from the surrounding neighborhoods, businesses, schools and civic organizations.

Below is a synopsis of their responses:

What would you like to see happen in the area?

- Community and transit connections that overcome existing mobility barriers such as railroad tracks and power lines.
- A greenbelt with a focus on multi-modal options, including sidewalks, streets, trails
- Leveraging of investments to solve multiple problems simultaneously.
- A re-imaging of the planned recreation center, which has taken over 15 years to realize: What is the optimal location and how would it connect to the neighborhoods?
- Addition of access points, safety features and parking to trail development.
- Capped tax rate for homeowners and sensitivity to gentrification displacement concerns
- Transit and trail connections to DART, White Rock Lake and schools
- Promotion of healthy places and recreation; mixed-use attractions; coffee shop; ice house; and dog-friendly pub
- Improve and leverage connection to the Fraternal Order of Eagles (non-profit and charitable organization with popular neighborhood swimming pool)
- Additional grocery store
- Traffic calming along Ferguson Road with safety features for pedestrians and bicyclists.



TAPs Panelists Robert Kent & Frank Bliss reviewing existing conditions - image by A. Stewart



Jogger uses the street adjacent to St. Francis Park for lack of a trail- image by ULI

- Soccer fields for young children at St. Francis Park, along a portion of the floodplain portion of the greenbelt and/ or at a new recreation/community center.
- Playgrounds, splash park; covered pavilion; shade structures; open space for outdoor events

What don't you want to see?

- Dollar stores
- Trash
- Anything that can't be properly maintained
- Barriers of any sort
- Anything that would attract illegal activities to the neighborhood or along the trail

What are the perceived challenges?

- Funding and the cost to obtain rights of way
- Access, safety, maintenance

- Public relations issues with the City of Dallas Police Department
- Vandalism and potential for illegal activities along the trail
- Technical/engineering issues
- Floodplain remediation; storm sewer issues
- Lack of public interest/will to take action
- Perceived separation from White Rock Lake trail system
- Dangerous pedestrian/auto intersections
- Zoning/rezoning

What benefits would a park and trail provide to you, your business, your school, your organization?

- A shared neighborhood amenity to draw the community together
- Improved connection to the existing extensive trail system around White Rock Lake
- Recreational options for children, youth and adults
- A potential driver for additional economic investment into the area



Narrow bridge at St. Francis - image by ULI

TAP RECOMMENDATIONS

Answering the City of Dallas Park Department's TAP Questions

ULI provides a unique advantage by bringing together volunteers who form a panel of real estate professionals with appropriate experience. They are able to quickly focus on existing conditions and envision new opportunities and solutions they have seen succeed in other areas.

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Question #1: How can the ULI effort help us to see the future of this under-utilized area?

Answer: The Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail area and the Ferguson Road corridor provide the City of Dallas with a significant opportunity

to re-imagine an economically struggling, auto-oriented thoroughfare and an unused greenbelt into vibrant amenities that provide walkability, safer streets, economic development and recreational assets.

Current conditions: The specific Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail area is an unused and undeveloped open space surrounded by a variety of largely residential areas. These neighborhoods are located in a number of homeowner associations, which are represented globally by the Ferguson Road Initiative. FRI's organization and political influence is important because this area is on the border of two city council districts, 7 & 9, which in the past has been a disadvantage in plan implementation.

Neighborhoods between Ferguson Road and White Rock Lake are growing in popularity for homeowners who seek neighborhood-oriented living with close access to White Rock Lake, downtown, Uptown, and Deep Ellum.

Nearby traffic moves at excessive speeds along Ferguson Road, especially near the intersection with Highland Road. The corridor has many blighted buildings and vacant/underused sites. What retail exists doesn't meet the needs of local residents and employees.

The Ash Creek Greenbelt study area includes this adjacent commercial corridor. The commercial area is an underdeveloped potential community amenity that could benefit from connectivity to the greenbelt. The vision for this area includes the following:



TAPs Panel Deliberations - image by ULI

COMMERCIAL: FERGUSON ROAD-HIGHLAND ROAD INTERSECTION:

We envision that the plans for the greenbelt, the current White Rock Hills Park (See #4, Figure 1) and the recreation center could together help stimulate a “Main at Main” mixed-use development, which would provide a “green” central gathering point and new commercial heart requested by the neighborhoods. The recommended steps to achieve this vision are as outlined below:

- Redesign Highland Road and Ferguson Road to become a new “complete street” intersection. Reduce Ferguson Road

from six to four lanes with sidewalks and parallel parking to calm and slow traffic and provide vehicular-protected pedestrian and bicycle access. (See #2, Figure 1, and Figure 2)

- This “road diet” is a component of the overall “Safe Route to Schools” system program which offers potential funding to improve safety for children who have to cross travel along Ferguson Road to get to Bayless Elementary or other local schools. This school access safety program could also be used for pedestrian improvements in the vicinity of Alex Sanger Elementary.

Figure 1: Ash Creek Area - Recommended Mixed-Use Development

Figure Key

1. Claremont Shopping Center
2. Ferguson Road
3. Park Extension
4. White Rock Hills Park
5. Current Recreation Center Site
6. New Retail
7. Valley Glen Drive
8. Valley Glen Extension
9. Trail Extension
- R. Street-fronting Retail

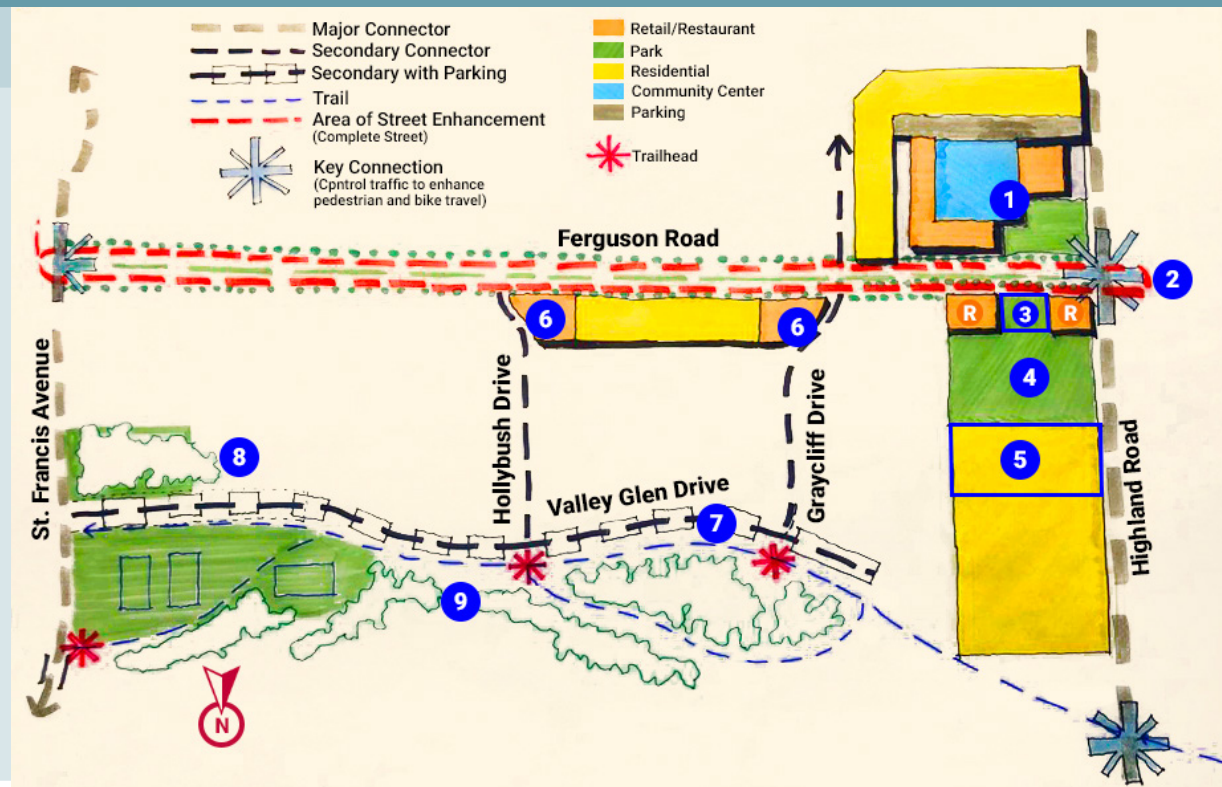


Figure 2: Ferguson Road & Highland Road Complete Street Concept



- City of Dallas should explore partnering with a private developer or developers to renovate the existing Claremont Village Shopping Center on the south side of Ferguson Road into a mixed-use development. This would provide a central gathering point for the neighborhoods with strong visibility. Consider public investment such as public parks, plazas, and improved sidewalks. (See #1, Figure 1)
- Consider moving the proposed recreation center adjacent to the planned White Rock Hills Park (See #5, Figure 1) to the proposed mixed-use development on the Claremont Village Shopping Center site. The current recreation center site could be used for other recreational and civic uses, which could include parking for the trail.
- Development options for the mixed-use site include community-requested, street-level retail/restaurant/grocery, along with the relocated rec center. Multifamily residences could be located above these amenities to take advantage of views from this intersection.
- This corner is a topographical highpoint in the community that could provide scenic views of downtown Dallas if developed as a multi-family structure with rooftop amenities.
- Utilize form-based zoning code to direct development in a manner to support walkability and enhance the public realm by promoting a “street wall” where buildings and activity would be located adjacent to the sidewalk and street frontage, with parking behind the buildings. Include opportunities for pocket parks, restaurants with sidewalk dining and community entrepreneur retail.

- Work with existing property owners or consider acquiring the retail properties located at the northeast corner of Highland and Ferguson to promote additional street-fronting restaurants with outdoor seating options at this location. (See R, Figure 1) Provide a deep sidewalk to allow for patio seating. (25 foot width recommended.)
- Acquire the middle commercial property (See #3, Figure 1) and replace it with a pocket park by extending a small section of the White Rock Hills Park to Ferguson Road. This would enhance what we envision as the heart of the neighborhoods, a community retail and services node with a “green ambiance” at the intersection of at Highland Road and Ferguson.
- These mixed-use development concepts could be the much-needed stimuli to reinvigorate the heart of the neighborhoods, benefiting both City Council Districts 7 and 9 which share Ferguson Road as their boundary line.
- These improvements would work in tandem with the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail effort to further improve connectivity and provide a neighborhood destination.



Claremont Village Shopping Center, corner of Ferguson and Highland Roads - image from Google© Streetview

PARK, TRAIL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

- Work with FRI to implement a community engagement strategy to build interest and receive input from community stakeholders in a real time experience. This could be done by engaging with Better Block Foundation (<https://www.betterblock.org/>) to assist in hosting activities such as a community hike and festival along a portion of the proposed alignment on a semi-permanent or prototype trail alignment created by the community stakeholders. This would allow stakeholders to experience the vision and simulate the anticipated

experience of a trail and park system on the actual land. This event could include food trucks and working with community artists to do a community-based art installation to raise awareness about the proposal. This experience could stimulate additional ideas and community support.

- Contract with a landscape architecture firm to develop a concept/schematic plan for the greenbelt, including a visual package, cost estimate and timetable for construction.

Figure 3: Ash Creek Area Trail Recommendations

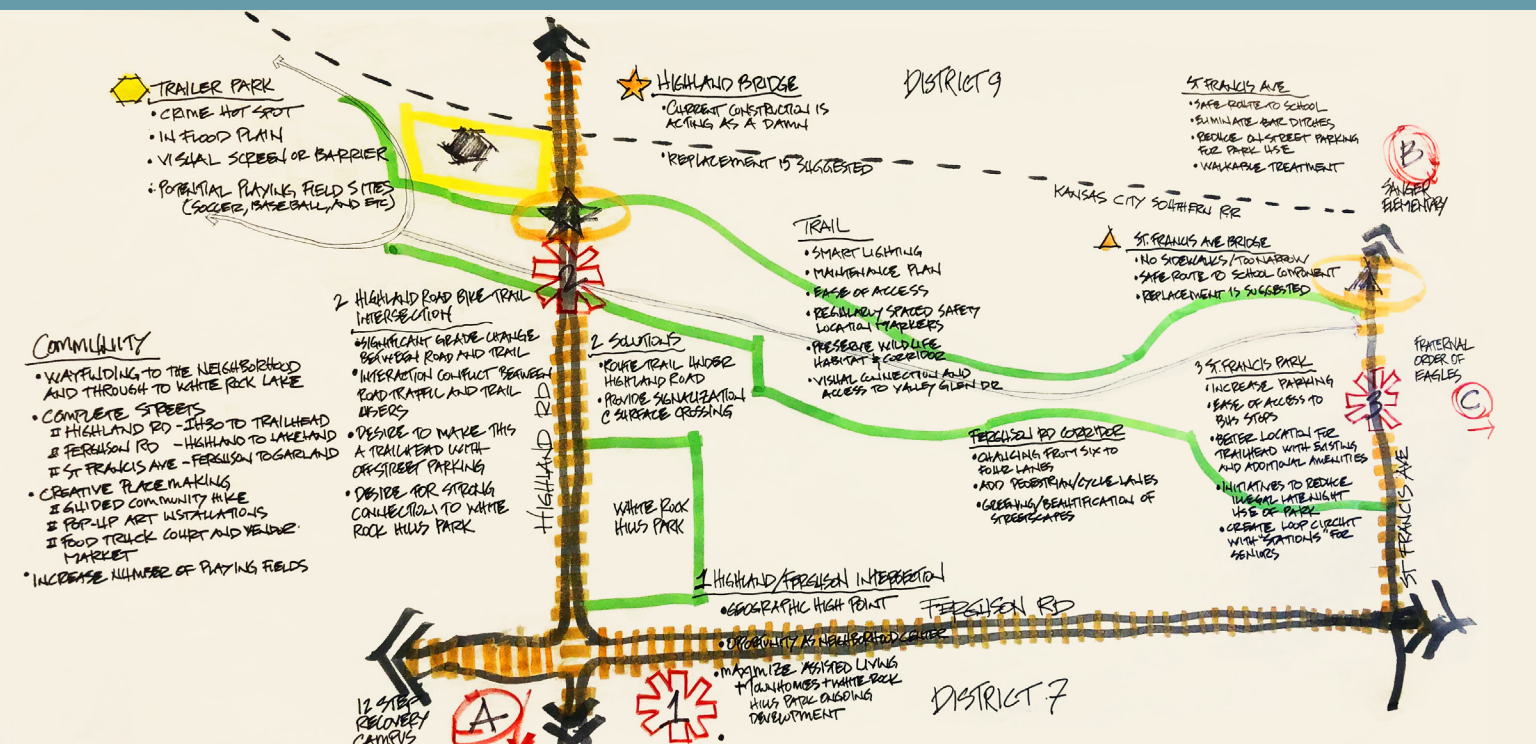


Figure 4: Ash Creek Trail Connection



Question #2: How can we maximize the connection, including the use of trails, of the Ash Creek Greenbelt to the White Rock Greenbelt, and its connectivity to White Rock Hills Park?

Answer:

PARK & TRAIL:

- Consider extending Valley Glen Drive northeast to St. Francis Avenue through St. Francis Park to provide another access point to Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail. This could provide additional parking to activate the area and add police/fire access and improved safety. The extension east would also provide another "Safe Route to Schools" option for children attending neighborhood schools. (See Figures 1 & 3)
- Create a trailhead with trail parking on the portion of Valley Glen Drive that extends west of Graycliff Drive.
- Redevelop Graycliff Drive and Hollybush Drive as complete street connectors to the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail with dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks. These two streets would serve as additional "Safe Routes to School" connectors for children attending neighborhood elementary schools.
- Add soccer fields for children and youth to St. Francis Park, to the former trailer park area and/or to the greenbelt area.
- The parking at White Rock Hills Park (under construction) will benefit the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail users.
- Consider safety features such as 911 markers along the trail.

- Designate St. Francis Park as the main trailhead and main access point to Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail.
- Create some optional loops as part of the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail to give it more of a neighborhood park feel rather than a strictly linear park. One such loop should be in St. Francis Park and one further to the west. These loops can be used for neighborhood walks by older residents and families with young children.

envisioned for the neighborhood school children.

- Provide “wayfinding” signs that direct greenbelt users to park at Sanger Elementary during non-school hours to alleviate parking on neighborhood streets during peak park usage hours. Provide a sidewalk adjoining the bridge for safe passage.
- Rebuild the Highland Road bridge (with safe passage for Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail users underneath the bridge) and from the bridge to Ferguson Road.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

- Make street adjustments to St. Francis Avenue to provide safe passage for bicyclists and pedestrians. This could potentially include a sidewalk on one side, or on both sides, along portions of the Avenue, including where it passes by St. Francis Park and up to Sanger Elementary School. Remove bar ditches on St. Francis, if feasible.
- Pedestrian safety, especially for children is an important issue to the community. The “Safe Routes to School” program is a source of potential funding. The improvements to St. Francis Avenue, the extension of Valley Glen Drive to St. Francis, and redevelopment of Highland Road as a complete street with sidewalks and parallel parking would all be part of the “safe route to school” system



Alex Sanger Elementary School - image from Google© Streetview



St Francis Avenue - image from Google© Streetview

Question #3: What can we (DRPD and the neighborhood associations) do to engage the community, broadly, bring consensus, and build excitement?

Answer: To begin building excitement for the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail, we recommend engaging with FRI and the Better Block Foundation to help the community envision how Ferguson Road between Highland Road and St. Francis Avenue could be redeveloped to be a focal point for the community with robust retail, restaurant, recreation, parks and residential development.

The Better Block Foundation's mission is to educate, equip, and empower communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments. Better Block has a strong success rate, especially in Dallas, and could facilitate community engagement for this event.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- FRI, DPRD and Better Block Foundation could organize a "placemaking" festival with a guided community hike. City Council members, park board members, community groups, homeowner groups and the community at large would be invited to participate in this event. It could include a short hike from a designated point to St. Francis Park where the

City and others would organize a picnic serving free food and refreshments coupled with other fun activities set up at the park, including plenty of information about the future plans for the trail.

- Semi-permanent art installations. This could be a building that is volunteered through a building owner. Creating a mural or sculpture is an opportunity for local artists to present their artwork.
- Food truck festival. Could be held at the Claremont Village Shopping Center, the corner that's been identified at the core of the neighborhood.

Question #4: What are some of the hurdles and how could they be surmounted?

Answer:

COMMERCIAL /FERGUSON ROAD:

- Funding the revitalization of the existing retail was cited by stakeholders as a main hurdle. Utilizing public/private funding is complicated since Ferguson Road is the border of City Council Districts 7 & 9.
- We recommend encouraging both City Council Members to become familiar with recent examples of creative public/private renovation. This includes three recent Dallas shopping center renovations that were given a ULI “Next Big Idea” award in 2019. Former City Council Member Sandy Greyson worked closely with the City, DPRD and private developers on one of these, Hillcrest Village. She is available to discuss the political process used to transform an older center to an open-air, mixed-use development with current Council Members.
- The City of DeSoto provides another example of a public/private partnership in which the City took a dilapidated shopping center and redeveloped it into a rec center/library/ and city hall while using economic development funds to incentivize local businesspeople to come in and start businesses in storefronts around the governmental buildings.
- We recommend that DPRD work in partnership with FRI to solicit additional private funding from an environmental/community group that understands trails, such as the Trust for Public Land, to usher it forward.
- The DPRD FRI collaboration is vital, as this area covers two Council districts. It will be important for FRI and DPRD to keep the Dallas County Commissioner and both Council Members excited, engaged and informed to solicit funding to accomplish the vision.
- The TAP study area is on the border of Forest Hills. This is a neighborhood in which many successful professionals reside. These residents could be approached to provide initial support via philanthropic efforts.
- Collaboration should also extend to working with the district plan commissioners since zoning issues along Ferguson might need to be considered.
- The former trailer park along the northern side of the trail alignment has been identified as a potential safety concern, as well a potential recreational asset. It is worthy of future study by DPRD and FRI for possible acquisition. Currently, the owner has a sales price that likely prevents a purchase although buying

this property could allow it to be developed and improve safety in the area.

- Community buy-in, working with FRI, and other neighborhood groups, and ongoing engagement with neighborhood and political leaders will be essential for success.

PARK AND TRAIL:

- Funding is a potential hurdle. (Review Funding opportunities outlined in detail on P. 20-22).
- Highland Bridge is a challenge for the trail alignment because it acts as a dam and creates flooding problems for the neighborhoods. A significant grade change at the bridge is also a safety concern with as pedestrians approaching “up from the trail” come to an area with limited visibility to unsuspecting drivers on the road. Continue working with the County to build a new bridge to address these concerns with a design to allow the trail to pass underneath it.
- Keep a focus on the approved Ash Creek Trail alignment in any updates of DPRD masterplans, County and North Central Texas Council of Government master plans to maximize all potential sources of funding.
- Add an improved or replaced St. Francis bridge with a “Safe Routes to School”

sidewalk in the DPRD masterplan to enhance grant applications.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

- Some local stakeholders interviewees posed questions like “will the current residents be priced out of their own neighborhood?” Gentrification/displacement is a potential concern when economic development comes to a mixed-income area. There are a variety of tools that could be considered such as tax caps that have been applied in fast-gentrifying communities. The City may have other tools to address this particular issue.
- We recommend that the City’s Housing Policy Taskforce be contacted to explore a neighborhood preservation zone.

FUNDING OPTIONS & STRATEGIES

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“We were very impressed to witness the common drive and excitement led by the very organized and strong Ferguson Road Initiative organization, its neighborhood, businesses, schools and civic organization. We believe this Ash Creek TAP vision is possible with such strong community leadership coupled with the demonstrated cooperation among the two Dallas City Council Districts, Dallas County, North Central Texas Council of Governments, Dallas Park and Recreation Department, Trust for Public Land and Circuit Trail Conservancy.”

– Alan Stewart, Ash Creek TAP Chair

”

Philanthropic Seed Funding:

- Identify and secure philanthropic seed funding to implement TAP recommendations. This funding should cover the costs of FRI and other nonprofits partners as well as any consultants brought on board, if their work is not provided pro-bono. The initial program should include the implementation of a community engagement strategy followed by development of a visual package, cost estimate, and timetable for construction.
- Identify, apply for and secure funding for the capital cost of developing the Ash Creek Greenbelt Trail. Ideally, this will be all public funding, but additional philanthropic resources could be brought to the table to help expedite securing of public funds. Even a match as low as 1:3 or 1:4 private to public funding ratio could make a big difference in

encouraging the public sector to commit funding sooner rather than later.

- Potential philanthropic seed partners: Dallas Foundation, the Better Together Fund with Communities Foundation of Texas, also possibly residents of the Forest Hills neighborhood.

From North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG):

- Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS): NCTCOG periodically funds SRTS infrastructure projects, such as sidewalks and crosswalks, through Transportation Alternatives calls for projects. Please note the specific SRTS recommendations throughout this report.
- 2020 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program: Applications will open in early 2020. Based on the 2019

program, general types of projects eligible under this program include on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure associated with projects that will substantially improve safety. Only a municipality may apply, so any organization must have a municipality submit on their behalf.

- See <https://www.nctcog.org> for more information.

From Dallas County:

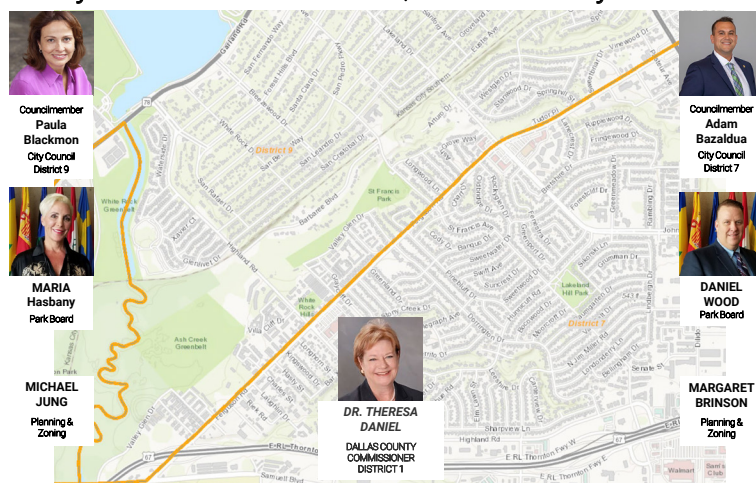
- Major Capital Improvements Program (MCIP) in Public Works: This innovative approach is based on projects typically averaging five years from funding approval to construction completion, and that each year some projects will be authorized for funding while other projects are being completed. Thus, in any given year, there will always be projects in the various phases of implementation (i.e. design, property acquisition, construction.) Dallas County Public Works implements the MCIP, typically every two to three years, through a county-wide call-for-projects that evaluates transportation infrastructure improvement projects which improve capacity and safety on regional roadways and multi-modal pathways within Dallas

County that have been submitted by Dallas County cities. Final MCIP project selections are decided by Dallas County Commissioners.

- Dallas County Road and Bridge District discretionary spending: Each Dallas County Commissioner has a yearly discretionary allocation for infrastructure projects in their district (see Highland Bridge recommendation). There is not a specific application for these funds but they must be championed by a Commissioner.
- Dallas County Trail and Preserve Program: This program has a five-year funding cycle, each year awarding \$3M to trail projects across the County. Projects that connect to other trail and recreation facilities are more desirable. Currently, there is no funding available prior to 2024.

Ash Creek Political Map

City Council Districts 7 & 9, Dallas County District 1



- Map provided by A. Stewart

From City of Dallas:

- **Bond Funds:** The City's Park and Recreation Department does not have a capital projects budget; every major capital project is done in coordination with another funding effort. There is not a strict schedule for bond elections but they happen roughly every five years. City Council members must advocate for a project to be included on a bond election.
- **Re-directed Bond Funds:** After a bond election has passed, it is up to the City Manager and City Council Members to ensure that bond funds are spent. As there are a number of Council Members currently serving on City Council who were elected after the bond passed, the new members may have different priorities than the previous members. By working closely with the City Manager, a Council Member may succeed in redirecting unused bond funds for a different project serving a purpose similar to the original allocation.
- **City of Dallas Transportation Department:** This department directs capital projects for the City. It is the policy implementation and funding department for the Public Works Department.
- **City of Dallas Water Utilities (DWU)**
DWU allocates funding for trails, which it identifies as "Maintenance Access Roads." If DWU maintains the Ash Creek Greenbelt, then DWU may be able to use its access road funds to help with the trail cost.

Dallas Park Land Dedication Fund:

- In 2018, the City of Dallas implemented its first Park Land Dedication Ordinance. This ordinance requires developers to set aside land for parks, or to pay a "fee in lieu" into a fund for park purposes. The fund currently has about \$200,000 in funding. Funds collected must be spent within relative proximity of the project that generated the funds in the first place (called "nexus zones"). In other words, new development near Ash Creek will generate funds that can be spent near Ash Creek. Because trail projects are exempt from these proximity requirements, fees collected from any project within the City can be used on any trail project within the City. The Ash Creek project could be a strong candidate to seek funding from this account.

NEXT STEP STRATEGIES

While this TAP report contains long-term, big-picture visions, it also provides some actions that can be undertaken as the next steps in the process in what will surely be a multiphase and multi-year effort.

1. Seek advice from the Trust for Public Land and Circuit Trail Conservancy to identify and secure philanthropic seed funding.
2. Contract with a landscape architectural firm either through pro-bono efforts or with seed funding to develop a concept/schematic plan for the greenbelt to include a visual package, cost estimate, and timetable.
3. Engage FRI and Better Block foundation to plan and implement a community engagement strategy to build support and to solicit input from neighbors and stakeholders, including a semi-permanent park, a community hike along the proposed alignment and a community-based art installation to raise awareness.
4. Identify and prioritize street, bridge, sidewalk and bike lane improvements for St. Francis Avenue; St. Francis Bridge, Highland Road, Highland Road Bridge, and Ferguson Road.
5. Begin big-picture visioning for the Ferguson Road corridor.
6. Update the 1998 Ferguson Road Land Use and Urban Design Study, using the TAP report as a guide.



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