

December 17, 2019

**MEMO**

**To:** FRI Founder's Circle Supporters

**From:** Vikki J. Martin, Executive Director

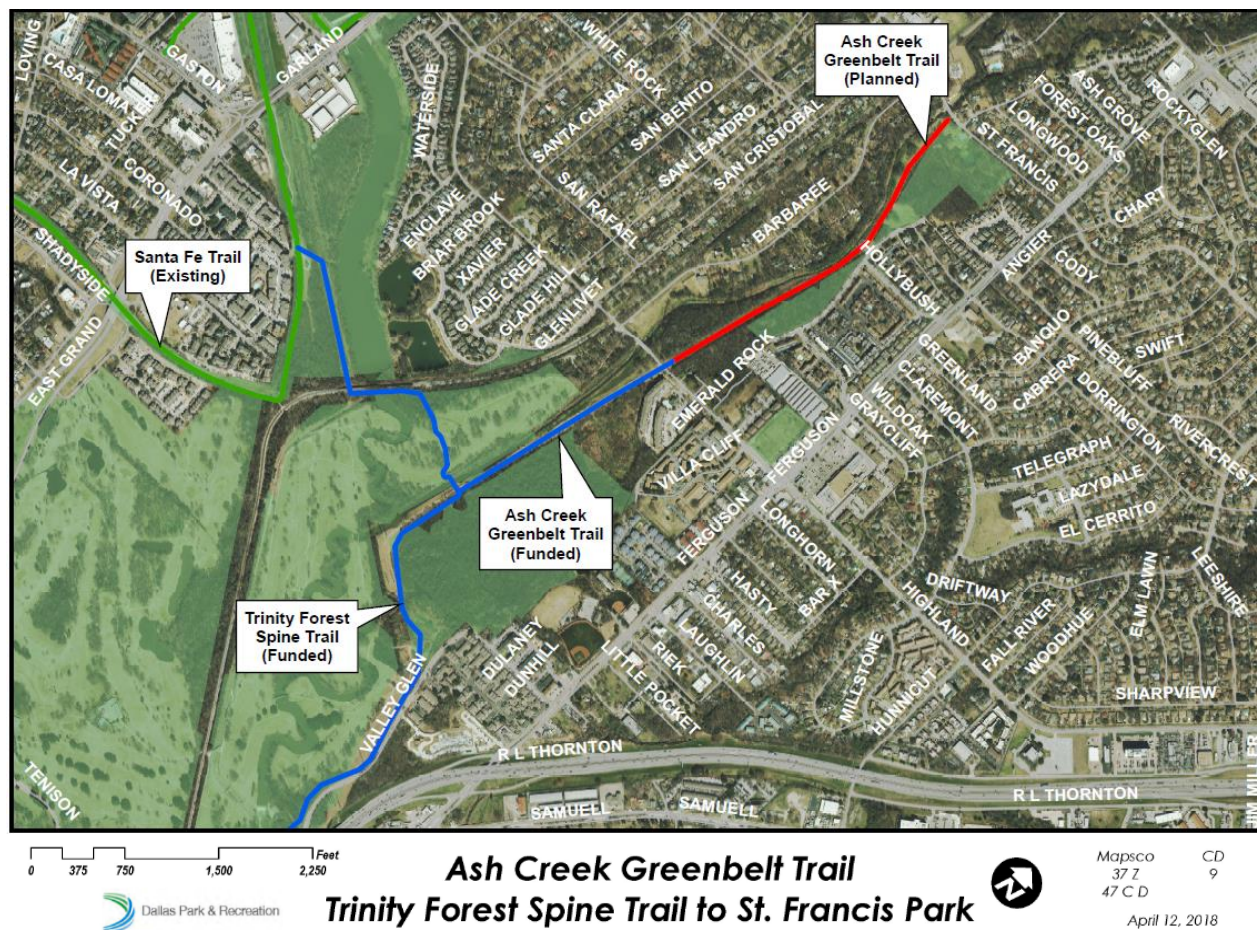
**RE:** [Ferguson Road Initiative Update Briefing, July-December 2019](#)

It is a pleasure to provide this update on the status and progress of the Ferguson Road Initiative.

## Ash Creek Greenbelt Project

Things along the lower Ferguson Road are rapidly progressing and growing. Working with our new City Council leadership, Councilmembers Adam Bazaldua (District 7), Paula Blackmon (District 9) and County Commissioner Dr. Theresa Daniel (District 1) demonstrates how collaboration benefits everyone, and the big winner is the community! We work until we find a “win-win” solution for all.

There are three (3) projects underway and four (4) “on the horizon” within the vicinity of the Ash Creek Greenbelt in the lower Ferguson Road corridor. Through an Urban Land Institute Grant, the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department received technical assistance from a panel of experts in community and economic development. Their goal was to study the Greenbelt and analyze how it can serve as an economic development generator.



### Ash Creek Greenbelt Projects underway are:

1. White Rock Hills Park on Highland Road
2. Highland Road Reconstruction
3. Trinity Forest Spine Trail Construction



## Development Underway

### 1. White Rock Hills Park on Highland Road

Work on the White Rock Hills Park is scheduled for completion in 2020. Building this park will provide two (2) playgrounds, a ¼ mile walking loop, a flexible athletic field and a pavilion. Significantly, the park is Phase I of the future White Rock Hills Community Recreation Center (CENTER) and begins to address the recreation desert that exists in this area.



*White Rock Hills Park Site Plan*

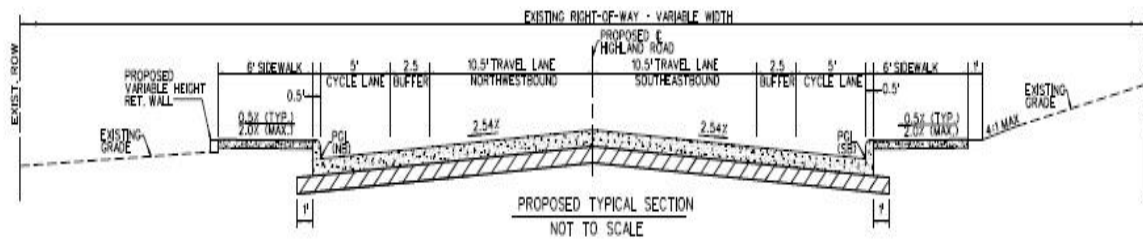
The two (2) parcels of land just NW of the park will be the location of the future CENTER. Currently, the Casa Blanca Apartments are undergoing asbestos abatement and will be demolished, and the land cleared by spring 2020, making way for the future and long-awaited CENTER to be funded in the next bond program.

### 2. Highland Road Reconstruction

FRI is thrilled to report that the rebuilding of Highland Road from Ferguson Road to the Primrose Senior Apartments (2000 Highland Road) is scheduled to begin as soon as the last Lakeland Drive Bridge reconstruction is completed. We anticipate this to begin this summer 2020. The road reconstruction will include:

- 37.0-FT BACK-OF-CURB TO BACK-OF-CURB (TYPICAL)
- 10.5-FT TRAVEL LANE (TYPICAL)
- 2.5-FT BUFFER STRIPING FOR DEDICATED BIKE LANE (TYPICAL)
- 5.0-FT DEDICATED BIKE LANE (TYPICAL)
- 8.0-FT ON-STREET PARALLEL PARKING (WHERE FEASIBLE)
- 6.0-FT CONCRETE SIDEWALK (TYPICAL)

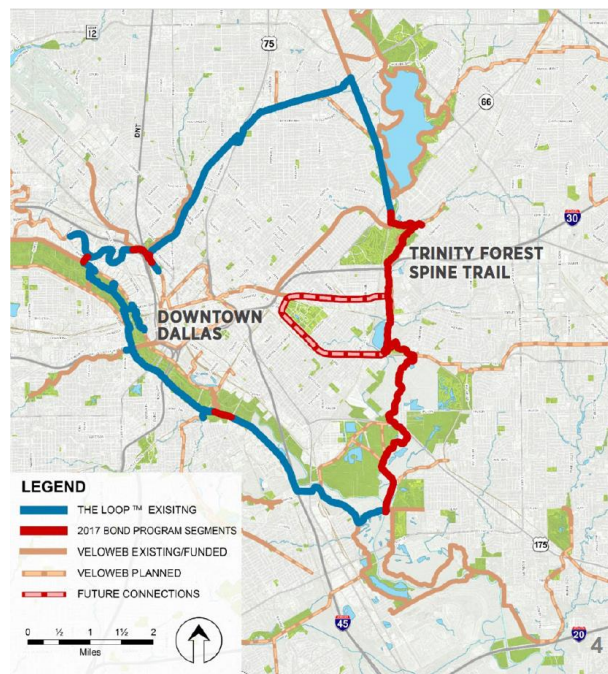
The best news about this construction is that these plans include a dedicated bike path connecting the White Rock Hills Park and future Community Recreation CENTER to the soon-to-be-constructed trail system.



*Highland Road Reconstruction Project (Ferguson Road to Primrose @ Highland Meadows Apts.)*

### 3. Trinity Forest Spine Trail Construction

The Ferguson Road Initiative, working closely in collaboration with the [City of Dallas](#), [Dallas County](#), [Circuit Trail Conservancy](#), and [Half and Associates](#) have ensured that the Trinity Forest Spine Trail (TFST), will connect to Highland Road. This means that the isolated communities SE of the BNSF Railroad tracks will have safe access to the city-wide trail system.



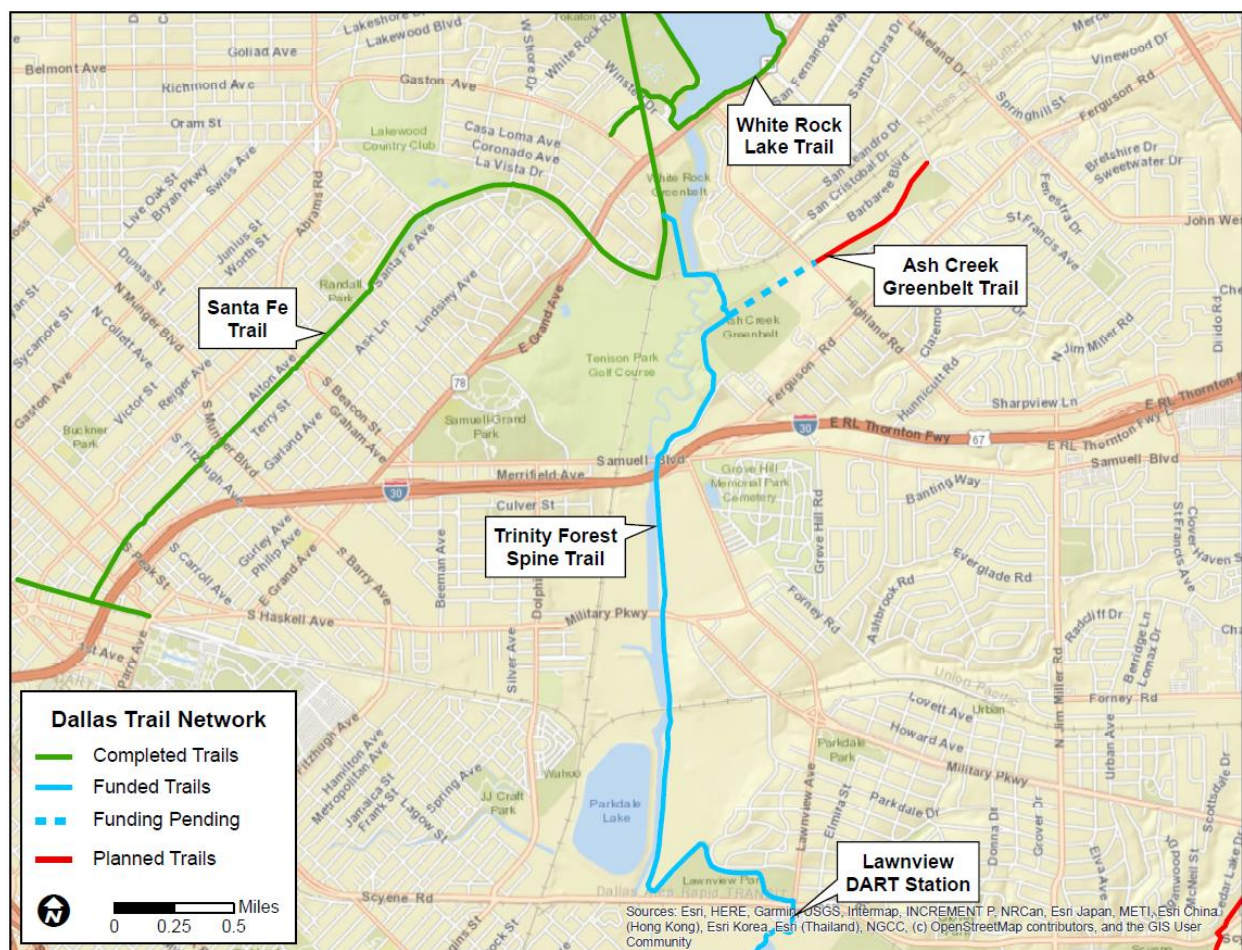
*Circuit Trail Conservancy, "The Loop"*

Construction on the TFST will begin in summer 2020 with completion in 2022. This trail will run from the Lawnview DART Station to Highland Road. At the request of the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department, FRI has written a letter of support for potential grant funding from the Dallas County's Major Capital Improvement Program (MCIP) to build the \$3M portion of the Ash Creek Trail (ACT) that is planned, but currently unfunded. If funded, this means that the TFST will connect to the ACT making the connection all the way up to St. Francis Park.



What does the building of these trails mean to the children and families that live in these Far East Dallas communities? The TFST and ACT will provide:

- Dedicated bike and pedestrian facilities in an area currently lacking in those facilities;
- Connection to White Rock Lake and the Trinity Forest;
- Connection to the city-wide trail system;
- Connection to neighborhoods;
- Safe walking access for children attending Alex Sanger Preparatory and White Rock Hills Uplift Preparatory Schools;
- Access to existing neighborhoods, new housing developments, schools, park, open space, and commercial areas;
- Completion of a section of the North Central Council of Governments Regional Veloweb.



**Ash Creek Greenbelt Projects “on the horizon” are:**

- Diverse Housing Development
- Ferguson Road Intersection Improvements
- White Rock Hills Community Recreation Center “CENTER”
- “10-Minute Walk to a Park” Campaign

## A. Diverse Housing Development”

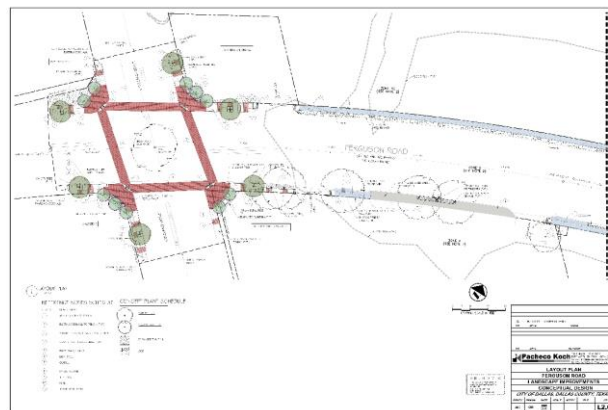
The Ferguson Road Initiative is committed to seeing our community remain strong and vital by working with responsible developers who are interested in improving our community. FRI is proud of the variety of housing stock available for our residents. Currently, David Weekley is building the Grove at White Rock Hills, a 35 single family townhome project that will be next door to the future CENTER (on Highland Road). Homes are estimated to be 1,600 sf at \$400,000, this will be an upscale gated community project located within proximity to an area of mixed income housing.



One block away, located at 7839 Ferguson Road, will be 10 townhomes, marketed to middle income families; educators, fire and police personnel. Homes at the Ferguson Townhome development will also be 1,600 sf and priced at \$250,000.

## B. Ferguson Road Intersection Improvements

Working with both CM Bazaldua and Blackmon, FRI is thrilled to report that plans for the new re-design of the Lakeland/Ferguson intersection have been revised from the original 2005 plan. Scheduled to go out to bid by summer 2020 and construction to begin by late fall, this \$750,000 project has long been on the FRI drawing board. The communities around the Lakeland/Ferguson Road Intersection are excited to see this enhancement move forward and are urging both councilmembers to consider replicating the intersection improvement also at Highland/Ferguson. The Highland/Ferguson Road intersection will be the entry gateway into the Ash Creek Greenbelt area.



*Lakeland/Ferguson Road Intersection Improvement Design*

### C. White Rock Hills Community Recreation CENTER

The Ferguson Road Initiative continues to advocate for the CENTER, a much-needed amenity that will truly address the recreation gap in our neighborhoods. We will advocate for this CENTER in the next bond program. Below is a conceptual design created from the 2014 feasibility study for the CENTER approved by the Park Board in 2015.



*White Rock Hills Community Recreation Center "CENTER"*

### D. Urban Land Institute Grant to Create “10-Minute Walk to a Park” Campaign

In July we reported that the City of Dallas was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the [Urban Land Institute](#) (ULI). In partnership with [Trust for Public Land](#) (TPL) and the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) (NRPA), the goal will be to ensure area residents who reside along the lower Ferguson Road corridor will have access to a high-quality park, trail and green space within a 10-minute walk. The grant’s scope of study includes how the Ash Creek Greenbelt (from Samuell Blvd. to St. Francis Park), the White Rock Hills Park (currently under construction on Highland Road), the Trinity Forest Spine Trail (from Lawnview DART Station connecting to Highland Road bike path, construction scheduled to begin summer 2020), the future Ash Creek Trail (from Highland Road to St. Francis Park), and future White Rock Hills Community Recreation CENTER can serve as a catalyst for quality economic development in the FRI community.

To achieve this goal, a **Technical Assistance Panel** (TAP) of professional experts was assembled in November to study this project. In a two-day intensive workshop, in which ULI members volunteer their time and knowledge to create pragmatic solutions, the FRI Board and constituents of Far East Dallas look forward to learning how these ideas can accelerate and guide local planning, urban design and financing challenges.

Currently, thousands of underserved children, families and seniors do not have access to recreation opportunities in the lower Ferguson Road corridor. FRI partnered with the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department to facilitate stakeholder engagement in the TAP process and to help create a briefing book for the TAP to use as a resource to better understand our community. FRI also identified and connected with various stakeholder groups (both residential and commercial) in the community to solicit ideas, challenges, and concerns as we develop the 10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign in Far East Dallas.

The outcomes of the TAP Workshop will be presented to the Far East Dallas community on February 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at 9220 Ferguson Road. This is FRI’s bi-annual Community Connection Town Hall meeting and annual election of the FRI Board of Directors. It will be FRI’s task to find ways to prioritize and implement the recommendations presented by the TAP panel.





*TAP Volunteers at Work*

## Other Developments

### Owenwood Farm & Neighbor Space Partnership

FRI is not willing to wait until our future CENTER is built to serve our community. We are fortunate to be invited to work closely with our partner, [Owenwood Farm & Neighbor Space](#) (OFNS) a 30,000 sq. ft. facility located on 8 acres of land at 1450 John West Road. The community garden has broken ground and they are harvesting their first winter crop now.

OFNS is a former United Methodist church and the second campus of White Rock United Methodist Church. The building is undergoing renovation to house a variety of community-based nonprofit service providers. Partners include: [Grow North Texas](#), who is creating an urban farm, [The Linden Grove Theatre](#), a children's theater, [Dallas United Crew](#), students rowing boats on White Rock Lake, [White Rock Community Church](#), providing meals for HIV/AIDS folks needing assistance, [Hope Supply Co.](#), meeting the needs of homeless children, [Diapers Etc.](#), a diaper bank for babies, and [Aberg Center for Literacy](#), an educational program building fluency, preparation for high school equivalency in English and Spanish, early childhood education, and family literacy, and [North Texas Food Bank](#), providing fresh produce twice a month.

FRI has helped OFNS identify additional partners to help support their once-a-month diaper distribution through Diapers Etc. We are thrilled to introduce partners like [McDonald's](#), [Lone Star Credit Union](#), [The Episcopal School of Dallas](#), and [Presidium Group](#) this year.





*Volunteers at the OFNS Community Garden*

### Growing Partnerships

**Serving Our Schools:** FRI collaborated this fall with our partners like [Mountain View Church of Christ](#), [Mission East Dallas](#), [Lone Star Credit Union](#), and the [Claremont Addition Neighborhood Association](#) to provide free backpacks, health and financial related information to 324 students and their families who attend Bayles and other area schools.

We also working with [Reading Partners](#), a nonprofit located at [Bayles Elementary School](#) that coordinates volunteers and students in a reading tutorial program that has a documented track record of success in improving reading achievement scores.

**Serving Our Families:** Through grants provided by [Wells Fargo](#) and [Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration](#), we can partner with our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) providers, helping them with volunteer recruitment, communications, and other volunteer support. Last year FRI not only partnered with [Foundation Communities](#) to continue their VITA site at [First Community Church](#) (9120 Ferguson Road) and helped launch a new site at Lochwood Library, but we also worked with [Eastfield College](#)'s TRIO program to provide financial literacy training to area high school students. Last year more than 1,600 families in Far East Dallas received free tax preparation services.

**Serving Our Community:** Through the leadership support of CM Bazaldua and Paula Blackmon, FRI is currently working with the Dallas Police Department to address crime and explore ways we can work with the business, apartment, faith and neighborhood communities to improve the quality of life in Far East Dallas. We also work with the East Dallas Senior Coalition as we seek ways to improve the lives of our senior population living in Districts 7 & 9. Through these partners we have begun to start conversations regarding how to address the community challenge of establishing a grocery store in a USDA designated food desert. Our community is preparing now for our annual Operation Beautification Litter Cleanup Event on March 7. This year we anticipate more than 200+ volunteers from various civic and neighborhood groups to help with this effort. Simultaneously, we will hold a food drive that will benefit the White Rock Center of Hope, a food pantry that serves folks in the 75228 and 75218 zip code areas.



*Volunteers from the 2019 Operation Beautification Event*

### FRI Meets North Texas Giving Day (NTGD) Challenge Grant

FRI is the “backbone” organization in Far East Dallas in many ways. We provide ongoing support by guiding vision and strategy, raising funds, convening meetings, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurements, building public goodwill, communicating opportunities and results to constituents, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources. These services are helping our area nonprofits to accelerate their ability to make a positive “collective impact” in the community. FRI works behind the scenes to ensure our partners are successful in fulfilling their missions. We accomplish all of this with no full-time staff!

This September during North Texas Giving Day we are proud to report that FRI exceeded our goal to raise \$17,000 in a challenge/match grant. Not only did the community match the initial goal but exceeded it by raising over \$27,000 for a grand total of \$44,003! FRI is indebted to a community that recognizes our good work.

FRI demonstrates daily our motto of “working together for the greater good.” We appreciate your continued support and interest, which allows FRI to do what we do best – **provide visionary leadership, facilitate community connection and communication, and advocate for Far East Dallas!**