

FRIIdays

FERGUSON ROAD INITIATIVE
SERVING FAR EAST DALLAS

Spring 2021



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City and County Leadership Work

A Panel Discussion



Robert Brown, Moderator

The city of Dallas will soon become a more walkable city with the addition of CreekSide, a 4.49-acre urban reserve in Far East Dallas, that will connect to the city's network of over 160 miles of hike and bike trails.

This stretch of natural Blackland Prairie will put more than 35,000 residents, in 17 neighborhoods, 15 multifamily communities and 4 schools within a 10-minute walk of nature at CreekSide Urban Reserve. The project will be located west of Ferguson Road between Samuell Boulevard and Lakeland Drive.

City and County representatives collaborated closely in 2020 to turn this vision into a reality. FRIdays recently met with these leaders to discuss the expected community impact of CreekSide.

The following are excerpts of that conversation. Find an edited transcript of the full conversation at: www.fergusonroad.org/creekside.

FRIdays: How will CreekSide benefit Far East Dallas residents?

District 9 Dallas Councilmember Paula Blackmon (Blackmon): Working together will impact the community far more than imagined. By not saying this pot of money is only for this district, and that pot of money is only for that district, the three of us, working together, have an opportunity to give the residents the recreational opportunities they deserve; ones that connect to schools, parks and downtown Dallas.

We need all departments working together to solve complex problems. People don't care how we get there, they just want a solution.

Politics doesn't need to get in the way. This is an opportunity to transform a community.

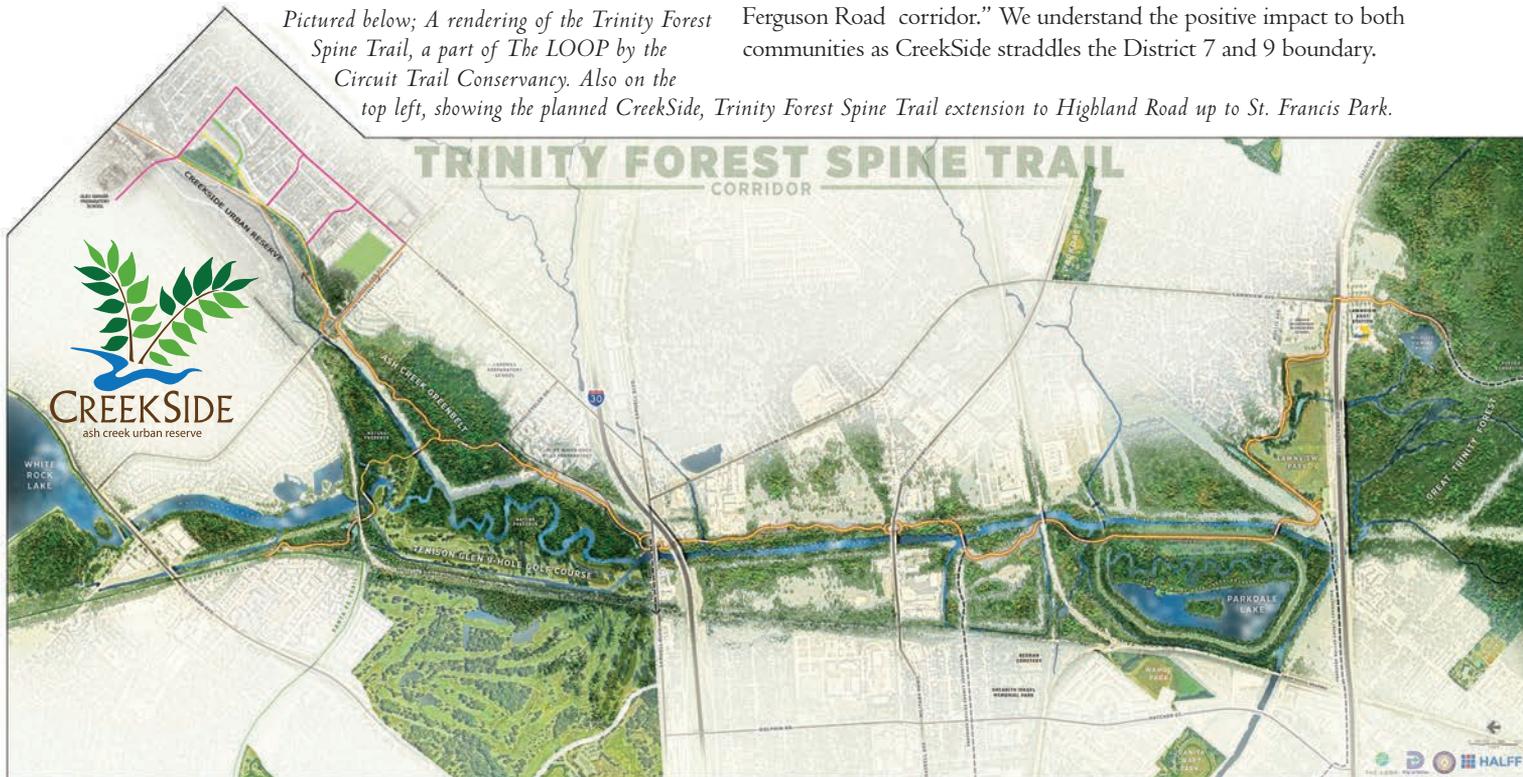
District 1 Dallas County Commissioner Dr. Theresa Daniel (Daniel): Let me expand on that. The beauty of county government is it crosses jurisdictions. Where a plan crosses different city council districts, we are able to bring people together. I am particularly excited about the Trinity Forest Spine Trail which is part The LOOP, because it goes from the Trinity Audubon Center up to the Dallas Arboretum. It will be the entry way to all kinds of development in this fairly neglected part of Dallas County.

That's why I'm so excited by the vision of these two Councilmembers to bring something like CreekSide to this part of the County. It will augment the work that Ferguson Road Initiative, (FRI) has been committed to for more than 20 years.

FRIdays: Councilmember Bazaldua, you've been focused on the redevelopment of the shopping center at Ferguson and Highland Roads. How does that effort fit into the CreekSide plan?

District 7 Dallas Councilmember Adam Bazaldua (Bazaldua): Revitalization and redevelopment of the shopping center speaks to what we were just talking about regarding blurring district lines. When we eliminated that barrier as we envisioned CreekSide, it opened up a blank canvas. We could see how we could maximize this asset for both of our districts. I am fortunate to work with a Council colleague like Paula, who when shown this project said, "this could be a great development project to change this entire corner, and be the catalyst for developing the entire Ferguson Road corridor." We understand the positive impact to both communities as CreekSide straddles the District 7 and 9 boundary.

Pictured below; A rendering of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail, a part of The LOOP by the Circuit Trail Conservancy. Also on the top left, showing the planned CreekSide, Trinity Forest Spine Trail extension to Highland Road up to St. Francis Park.



Together to Achieve CreekSide

I think our County partners are making sure that we have trails also connecting to mass transit. This is a big part of CreekSide. Surely there are a lot of people who would frequent White Rock Lake if they were able to access a trail safely. These amenities increase the potential of developing a multi-modal, multi-income community with an overall better quality of life for everybody.

FRIdays: You’ve described a new level of cooperation. What has changed and how can you three more holistically work together?

Commissioner Daniel: The residents have elected people who have a mindset towards the greater community. It’s not only us in this room, but also State Representatives and Senators as well. It’s amazing what happens when like-minded people are willing to work together.

Councilmember Blackmon: People don’t want squabbles between elected officials. At the end of the day, they want things fixed. It is up to us to find ways to work together. The goal is communities that are connected and feel they’re part of a greater good, a greater whole of the city and county.

FRIdays: How is FRI different from other neighborhood advocacy groups that you’ve worked with in the past?

Councilmember Bazaldua: I always say that FRI is the poster child of a grassroots organization because you’re extremely organized. You expect a level of accountability that keeps me on my toes and I appreciate this very much. Anytime FRI has approached my office, it is always about the work that FRI is already doing, and how my office can help. I believe my job is to help the community leaders already doing the work.

Councilmember Blackmon: A partnership like this makes our job easier because you’ve already vetted a project before you bring it up for consideration. Our job is to block and tackle; to open the lane so it gets done

faster. FRI is instrumental in the whole revitalization of this area.

Commissioner Daniel: FRI’s experience shows. The number of people dedicated to the vision of what the community can be is extraordinary. You know what you’re getting into when you go to meetings with FRI, because it has been hashed out, they have looked at all the options. The community involvement is always there.

FRIdays: Dr. Daniel, can you tell us about your commitment to getting the Ash Creek Trail funded?

Commissioner Daniel: I and the two council members here know what it takes to get something through budget. You have to figure out what is going to make this project selected over another project. By being very committed and providing the information and documentation needed to support projects like the Ash Creek Trail, that’s what gets it approved over other projects.

Councilmember Blackmon: In Far East Dallas, we don’t have bike lanes and trails. The Ash Creek Trail is a first step to changing that. We are going to start looking at our bike plan too, because the whole objective is to connect our communities.

FRIdays: Do you have any closing ideas or something you want to say that we haven’t already talked about?

Commissioner Daniel: Far East Dallas is a gem with access to White Rock Lake and the new Trinity Forest Spine Trail. We’re working together to transform Ferguson Road into a transportation corridor that connects rather than separates. FRI has been part of that discussion all along.

Councilmember Bazaldua: I just want to say that I’m proud of the work that we, including FRI, have accomplished together. In the short time that I’ve been in office and with the amount of things that we have working, I’m excited to see what we’ll accomplish in the future.

Operation Beautification Litter Cleanup



by Vikki J. Martin, Executive Director,

Gaston Middle School students were just one of many civic, school, church, neighborhood, and service organizations to participate in this year’s annual Operation Beautification on March 6, 2021. This clean up event garnered more than 375 volunteers and was underwritten by our friends at City Credit Union, Frost Bank,

and Young Chevrolet. Partners included Bethel Baptist Church at White Rock, City of Dallas, McDonald’s, Ferguson Donut, J Dog Junk Removal, The Mission Continues, Travis Manion Foundation, and Signage Systems.

The concurrent food drive raised more than 100 lbs of food in support of White Rock Center of Hope. A fun time was had by all.



Pictured above; Gaston Middle School students and School Sponsor Steven Santoyo cleaning the playground at Keist Elementary School.



Your Vote Is Your Voice



The Ferguson Road Initiative encourages all residents to exercise their right to vote. As a charitable nonprofit, FRI does not make political endorsements.

Early Voting is April 19-27
Saturday May 1 General Election

Candidates Running for Dallas City Council Districts 7 and 9 *(listed alphabetically)*

District 7

- Adam Bazaldua, www.bazaldua4dallas.com
- Tramonica Brown, www.facebook.com/TramonicaSimplyBeautifulBrown
- Kevin Felder, www.kevinfelderforcouncil.com
- Walter “Changa” Higgins, www.facebook.com/changafordallas
- Calvin Johnson, www.facebook.com/attorneycalvindjohnson
- Donald Parish Jr., www.facebook.com/donald.parish
- James “JT” Turknett, www.facebook.com/James-Turknett
- Israel Varela, israelvarelafordallas.com/who-is-israel

District 9

- Paula Blackmon, www.paulabforcouncil.com
- John Botefuhr, johnbotefuhrcampaign.com
- Judy Kumar, www.judyfordistrict9.com

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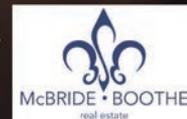
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Blood Drive Save the Date

Ferguson Road Initiative and Carter BloodCare will host a Blood Drive on Saturday, July 24, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at White Rock Church of Christ, 9220 Ferguson Road. Contact Andrea for more information at: andregaray@fergusonroad.org



Pictured above is; Elise Phillips with Karina Salamanca Castaneda at a recent FRI sponsored Blood Drive.

White Rock Hills Park Grand Opening

by *Dan Ortman, President
Ferguson Road Initiative*



White Rock Hills Park at 2229 Highland Road officially opened for business in March. Making up one of the CreekSide district amenities, the park represents a real victory for our community. Neighborhood advocacy in the 1990's forced the city to demolish an abandoned and burned apartment building previously on

the site. Seemingly overnight, the vacant lot transitioned to an illegal dumpsite. Around 2006, as a result of FRI urging, the Dallas Park and Recreation Department purchased the property for the future White Rock Hills Recreation Center.

The first of three adjoining land parcels has now been transformed into a lovely park that will be enhanced by the planned developments around CreekSide-Ash Creek Urban Reserve and serves as Phase I of the Recreation Center. The new park includes two age-appropriate playgrounds, a quarter-mile loop walking trail and a beautiful pavilion. The two parcels of vacant land to the west are also owned by the City of Dallas and are earmarked for future expansion. The park, along with the trails coming online, will begin to address the current recreation desert and lack of connectivity for those living along the lower Ferguson Road corridor.

Bayles Elementary School parent Heather Kellebrew commented, "My children and I are super excited about the new park. It's convenient, within walking distance, and that's important to us. By it being convenient, it will help us get the extra exercise we need and for us to stay healthy and have fun doing it!"

Plans for a Grand Opening were postponed due to Covid-19. A delayed celebration, a parade is now rescheduled for Saturday, November 6, a ceremonial tree planting and family friendly activities are also planned.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Andrea Garay at andregaray@fergusonroad.org. If your business would like to help underwrite this landmark event, contact Vikki Martin at vikki@fergusonroad.org.



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FRI thanks Carrie Mae Weems for permission to use the poster image above.



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Connecting Far East Dallas to the Whole Community



by Paul E. Maynard

The Trinity Forest Spine Trail project is an important component of linking Far East Dallas to the rest of Dallas. A key element of the project is White Rock Lake, making Far East Dallas even more critical in community inclusion. The 9-mile “Spine Trail” is key in connecting, not only these trails but the community and its residents – especially the Far East Dallas neighborhoods and schools along the Ferguson Road corridor.

Dallas’ parks and trails are a big part of the lifestyle that many Dallasites expect, especially those in Far East Dallas. Dallas is a cycling, running and walking community, with many active organized groups that run, walk or ride on a regular basis as a way of being included. These groups socialize together around their activity of choice and form lasting supported friendships. A big element in being included in anything is the connection to the whole of that thing. In Dallas, one of the simplest ways to be included as a part of the whole city (and region) is to connect with the parks and the trail community.

“We’re really delivering the city’s newest green belt,” Philip Hiatt Haigh, Executive Director of the Circuit Trail Conservancy (CTC) said. “The Spine Trail, through its linking of parks and trails and conversion of open space, will provide community connectivity.” said. Mr. Hiatt Haigh. The CTCircuit Trail Conservancy is a non-profit entity formed to realize Dallas’ vision for a connected trail system and is responsible for coordinating funding and project management of the four new trails to complete The LOOP. Raise funds to supplement those provided by public entities for the creation of the Spine Trail.

Part of that greenbelt and the part of the trail most impacting Far East Dallas, is the conversion of Tenisonnyson Glen Golf Course from an 18-hole course to a 9-hole layout. This conversion allows it to be a greenbelt from the Trinity Forest Spine Trail to St. Francis Park.revision, and its role in the overall Spine Trail project, helped make the Ash Creek Trail connection to St. Francis Park possible.

“The Trinity Spine Trail is the first dedicated, safe way to give the community ready access to the overall trail system,” Mr. Hiatt Haigh said. “It provides safe, dedicated pedestrian access to the trail system.” The Ash Creek and Trinity Forest Spine Trails, in particular, provides, for the first time, easy and safe walking access to green spaces for residents and students



Pictured above; a view looking north on the existing Trinity Spine Trail. This spot is nearest Greenville Avenue just past Royal Lane.

previously detached from this amenity – in particular the students of the nearby White Rock Hills Uplift and Sanger Preparatory schools.

The trail system project is a good example of how governmental agencies (the City of Dallas, Dallas County and TxDOT) can work together with non-profit organizations (Ferguson Road Initiative and CTCThe Circuit Trail Conservancy) to understand and meet the needs of the community and, ultimately, to provide access and opportunity.



Pictured above, Members of Pedals and Pints, a Dallas cycling club, take a break on a recent ride. Included in this photo are Pam Reeder, Kelley Jeffrey, Allan Button, Lis Settle, Andrea George and Margo Brian.

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Aquatic Fun Near Completion



by Mari L. Madison, Editor, FRIdays

Progress can be very slow when working with municipalities. The summer 2018 issue of FRIdays announced that in November of 2017, a successful City of Dallas bond vote had designated the Harry Stone Park Swimming Pool to be upgraded to a Neighborhood Family Aquatic Center (NFAC). Then, in the Spring 2020 issue of FRIdays published an update on the progress of the construction. About the time the 2020 FRIdays Spring issue hit mailboxes, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the world. It is a pleasure to announce that the Harry Stone NFAC project is finally near completion. Like the old tale of the turtle and a hare, slow and steady wins the race.

While the world adapted to the larger crises, the work on the NFAC resumed under the oversight of Dan Jones, project director with Big Sky Construction Co. Inc., Dallas Texas. The neighborhood watched as the walls of the pool house rose and the stained glass matching the rest of Harry Stone Recreation Center was installed. The new structure houses showers, lockers, restrooms and concessions.

The work, mostly hidden by the pool house, continued on the pool area. A shallow children's pool with its own slide is separate from the deeper six-lane lap pool for adults and older children. This pool has a spiraling body slide tower on the northwest corner. There are also tables for families to share snacks from the concessions, and to give watchful parents a place to enjoy their children splash and play in the water. The most recent update came January 5, 2021 when Dallas City Councilperson for District 9, Paula Blackmon, participated in a walk-through of the new Harry Stone NFAC. She posted the following

Pictured below; the Harry Stone Aquatic Center pool house.



Pictured above; the Harry Stone Aquatic Center near completion.

on her Dallas City Council District 9 Facebook page. "Had a great time touring the new and improved Harry Stone Aquatic Center. Can't wait for everyone to be able to enjoy this refreshed space this summer (COVID permitting)" said Paula.

Let this be an encouragement for all the residents of Greater Casa View to get vaccinated for the Covid-19 virus, so the splashing and laughter of summer can return.

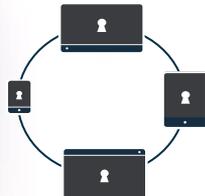


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Turn to These Far East Dallas Nonprofits for Help



by Vikki J. Martin

Did you know there are nonprofit emergency service providers offering health, financial and rental assistance, food distribution, clothing, hygiene products, and free COVID-19 testing and vaccinations right here in Far East Dallas? Please take a moment to review the list of Ferguson Road Initiative partners below. And, if you are able,

please consider supporting their missions through financial contributions, volunteering, donating food, clothing, and/or diapers.



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dentalinfo@missioneastdallas.org



Owenwood Farm & Neighbor Space – (OFNS) is the second campus of White Rock United Methodist Church. They are part of a larger partnership that includes White Rock Community Church (supporting the HIV-AIDS community) and Aspire Literacy Center (offering free GED and ESL classes). Free drive-through diaper and personal hygiene distribution via Diapers Etc occurs on the last Saturday of the month from 9 - 11 a.m.

Location: 1451 John West Road
Call: 469-438-0810
or go to www.owenwood.org

Pictured at right; FRI partnered with their friends at the Wilkinson Center on a food drive last summer



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White Rock Center of Hope

White Rock Center of Hope – (WRCH) ensures access to nutritious food for high-risk and vulnerable families through their food pantry. They offer short-term financial assistance to prevent utility disconnection or homelessness through rental assistance. By appointment only, no walk-ins allowed.

Location: 10021 Garland Road
Call: 214-324-8996
or go to www.whiterockcenterofhope.org



Wilkinson Center – The mission of the Wilkinson Center is to transform the lives of Dallas families by providing pathways to self-sufficiency with dignity and respect. They help families facing critical life challenges including food insecurity, lack of education, unemployment and underemployment. In addition to their food pantry, they provide case management services, adult education classes and other workforce training classes. They also have a social and educational program for seniors. All programs are provided free of charge.

Location: 3402 N. Buckner Blvd., #302
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