

FRIdays

FERGUSON ROAD INITIATIVE
SERVING FAR EAST DALLAS

FALL 2023
ISSUE 40

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FRI in Action—Behind the Scenes

By Dan Ortman, President, FRI



Far East Dallas has seen significant new amenities and investment over the past two decades. Often community members see a new park, housing development or improvement and assumed that it “just happened, as if by magic.” As the president of the Ferguson Road Initiative, I can testify first-hand to how difficult these projects can be to realize.

FRI has advocated to ensure large scale amenities be placed on city bond programs, like the \$8.5 MM White Rock Hills Library (2012). Or ensuring our area be connected by the Trinity Forest Spine Trail and the citywide trail system (2023). We also work with developers, so they understand the vision of the community and we find that compromise is necessary to get the best result for our community.

A recent example would be our work with Generation Housing Development (GHD) and their option to purchase a former church property at 9229 Ferguson Road. In initial meetings, plans proposed building a four-story multi-family complex with 200+ units. Our work with GHD helped them understand that a complex of that height would not fit into the character of our neighborhood.

After negotiating with FRI, the developers agreed to reduce the height to three stories as well as the number of units to 164. However, the best outcome is that the property will be affordable senior housing, thus alleviating overcrowding in our public schools. This project is anticipated to go to the Plan Commission and City Council for approval by the end of this year.

Now, we are faced with our biggest challenge yet. And we need your help! Residents living along the upper Ferguson Road corridor have enjoyed the benefits offered by the Harry Stone Recreation Center, built in 1955. Recently remodeled, this center now has a lovely Family Aquatic Center.

However, residents living along the lower Ferguson Road corridor live in a recreation void, as defined by the Park Department. A walk to Harry Stone or Samuel Grand Recreation Centers takes an hour. To travel by bus is anywhere from 20-54 minutes! I'm calling YOU “to action!” We need your help to ensure the long envisioned White Rock Hills Recreation Center (at Highland/Ferguson) is placed on the City of Dallas 2024 Bond Program, as promised by our elected officials. As you read through this edition of FRIdays, you will see the many ways that you can help make our recreation center a reality.



February 2023 Community Connection Townhall meeting celebrated Bill Coleman's service to FRI over the past 25 years.

FRI's Quest for a Recreation Center

1995 – A Recreation Center is identified as a need at a Townhall meeting.

1998 – FRI becomes 501c(3) ordinary citizens begin to work together to identify community needs, advocate for City support, & fight crime.

2002 – FRI forms Bond Committee-identifies projects for 2003 bond program; produces packet for City Council with photos, maps, 700 signatures, letters of support from 25 businesses.

2003 – City CM Chaney, D7 –\$840,000 approved on bond program for land acquisition for the CENTER.

2006 – City CM Chaney, D7, Bond package included \$5M for Design & Construction for CENTER.

2008 – City CM Davis D7 – 2229 Highland Road – property is purchased by Dallas Park and Recreation Department for the CENTER. FRI strategy is that CENTER will become anchor for mixed income housing/retail.

2010 – Redistricting shifts CENTER site from D7 to D9.

2011 – City CM's Davis, D7 & Kadane, D9 – vote to ask City to reallocate \$5MM in bond funds from 2006 bond for CENTER designated for

Proactive Public Support Needed to make the WRH Recreation Center a Reality

by Karl Zavitkovsky

We urgently need your help to make the White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER a reality. Let me tell you why.

For more than 25 years there has been an identified public recreation facilities gap along the lower Ferguson Road corridor. As area residents, you have consistently made construction of the White Rock Hills Park and White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER, as well as trail linkages to other City parks and open spaces, a high priority.

Green spaces and recreation CENTERS function as “social infrastructure.” They bring people together but are also catalysts for propelling a broader agenda of social initiatives and achieving a wide range of community goals. It is well documented that CENTERS have a positive impact on community youth. They provide opportunities for education, promote active and healthy communities, increase property values, and contribute to economic development. CENTERS foster community pride and bring diverse populations together. They provide opportunities for interaction, inclusivity, and community learning.



A rendering of the White Rock Hills Recreation Center by Jacobs Engineering in 2015

The White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER is the culmination and final link of a comprehensive community-driven initiative and will serve as a hub for a range of needed multigenerational activities. FRI has tirelessly advocated for decades for a CENTER. We partner with the City of Dallas and organizations like the Urban Land Institute, the Circuit Trail Conservancy, the Dallas Off Road Bike ...continued

Let your voice be heard! Write your City Councilmembers to express your support for the WRH Recreation Center. Example letters are on the FRI website.

CALL TO

Councilmember	Email	Phone
Adam Bazaldua D7	Adam.Bazaldua@dallas.gov	214.670.4689
Paula Blackmon D9	Paula.Blackmon@dallas.gov	214.671.8916
Jesse Moreno D2	Jesse.Moreno@dallas.gov	214.670.4171

Association (DORBA), and others. We have made meaningful progress. The City of Dallas acquired the land for the CENTER and adjacent park in 2017. The Park Board approved a Feasibility Study/Master Plan in 2015, completed a park on the site in 2021, rebuilt Highland Road to incorporate sidewalks and bike lanes in 2022, and facilitated connection of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail (TFST) to Highland Road in 2023. The city will initiate reconstruction of the Ferguson/ Highland Road intersection in 2023 and build mountain bike trails along the TFST by the end of the year.

The estimated cost to construct the White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER is \$24 MM. The logical funding source for the CENTER is the City of Dallas' 2024 Capital Bond Program. Bonds are voter-approved debt to pay for infrastructure projects over a period of several years. The City dedicates a portion of its property tax revenues to repay bond-funded projects. Dallas has 43 Recreation CENTERS, all of which were constructed with city bonds.

The City Manager's recommendation for the 2024 Bond Program is \$1 billion, with \$150 to \$175 million allocated to Parks and Trails (CENTERS fall in this category). The City's Needs Inventory List (NIL) for Parks and Trails is \$700 MM, but the Park Board is only seeking \$350 MM. All other departmental categories besides Parks and Trails are seeking allocations greater than the City Manager's recommendations. Why is the Park Board so reticent to forcefully request the funding it needs to provide the parks, trails, and Recreation Centers that its citizens so desperately need?

Mayor Eric Johnson, who resides less than a mile from the site of the proposed White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER, made "creating the best park system in Texas" a top-three priority in his recent inaugural address.

FRI has initiated conversations with potential partners who can provide services and programming. They are willing to lease space at the CENTER and thus offset operating costs. The CENTER needs to rank at the top of City Council and Park Board priorities so that it can fill a recreation CENTER gap and provide needed services to our diverse community.

We need your help to ensure our proposed White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER is included on the next Bond Program. With your active support, we can make our CENTER a reality. Please visit the FRI website at FergusonRoad.org for more information on how you can help.

Karl Zavitskovsky retired in 2017 after a successful 35 year career in global and domestic commercial real estate finance. The last 12 years of his career as Director of the City of Dallas' Office of Economic Development. He now engages with a variety of nonprofits and serves on the FRI Board of Directors.

continued from p. 3
design & construction to instead purchase (2) adjacent apartment sites to provide land for an enhanced CENTER. (2131 Highland Road—demolished, 2016 & 2165 Highland Road—demolished, 2017).

2012 – City CM Davis, D7 & Kadane, D9 – FRI requested \$840,000 for land acquisition for additional land, tenant relocation, etc., to complete the land acquisition phase for the CENTER

2014 – City CM's Davis, D7 & Kadane, D9 – Dallas Park and Recreation Department approves \$125,000 for feasibility study for the CENTER.

2015 – Park Board Approves CENTER Feasibility Study – FRI provides Park Board with more than 1,000 signatures in support of the CENTER.

2017 – City CM's Young, D7 and Clayton, D9 – Funding to build \$740,000 White Rock Hills Park as Phase I of future CENTER.

2018 – Groundbreaking for White Rock Hills Park.

2021 – City CM's Blackmon, D9 and Bazaldua, D7 – White Rock Hills Park opens, Dallas Park & Recreation Department completes additional CENTER analysis confirming need for CENTER.

2022 – Redistricting shifts CENTER site again from D9 to D2 to CM Moreno. D2, D7, D9 work together to support the CENTER.

2023 It is time to place the \$24 MM CENTER on the 2024 Bond program!

ACTION

Mon. Sept. 18

FRI Community
Connection Townhall
Meeting
Owenwood Farm &
Neighbor Space
6:30 p.m.
1451 John West Road

Thurs. Sept. 21

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\$50,000 Goal

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Advocating for
Recreation Center

Tues. Sept. 26

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website to register.

Ensuring Equitable Green Space

by Vikki Martin



We who support the Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI) believe that parks, trails, green spaces, and recreation centers are for everyone to enjoy. And everyone truly means everyone. Our parks and trails belong to all the citizens of Dallas to enjoy. Our community needs safe and equal

access to public spaces and natural places to inspire those who might not otherwise feel inclined to step outside the boundaries of their home or apartment. We believe that quality parks, green spaces and community recreation centers are fundamental for sustaining an equitable and resilient community. These “amenities” are more than just that—they are a matter of health, equity, and justice.

The provision of parks, trails, green space, and recreation centers along the lower Ferguson Road corridor has been inequitable for decades. With the dedication of the White Rock Hills Park in 2021 and the opening of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail this fall, FRI is moving the needle to closing the park equity gap and

bringing green spaces to everyone. Safe, quality green spaces improve a community’s physical, mental, and environmental health. Providing everyone easy access to nature, the outdoors, and facilities that provide health, wellness, and cultural programming is a powerful public health strategy.

Now is the time to build the White Rock Hills Recreation Center (CENTER). Our city councilmembers have expressed support for placing the design and construction of this CENTER on the 2024 Bond Program.

Our community has patiently waited and worked with the city to complete the land acquisition and park development phases of this initiative and is in the process of connecting significant trail system improvements. Completion of the CENTER represents the logical culmination of these efforts and addresses a well-documented recreation gap in our community. Furthermore, it has overwhelming public support and will serve thousands of families and children living in the Ferguson Road Corridor.

It is time for this city to fulfill its promise to our community and place the White Rock Hills Recreation CENTER on the 2024 Bond Program.



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DALLAS

The first new project needed to complete **The Loop Dallas** 50-mile citywide trail network is complete!

We invite you to celebrate with the community and experience the new trail and park on Saturday, October 21st, from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.



Follow The Loop Dallas on Instagram for details on the event and other trail happenings!

The new Creekside Park along the first phase of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail

Join the Festivities Trinity Forest Spine Trail Community Celebration Saturday, October 21, 2023 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



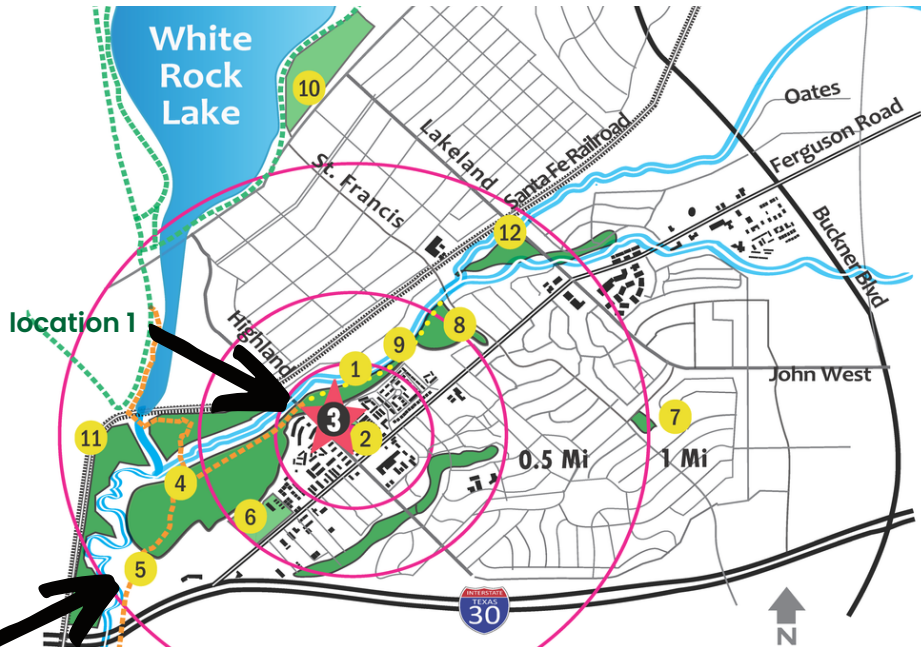
THE LOOP DALLAS



Dallas Park & Recreation

Trinity Forest
Spine Trail
Community
Celebration
location 1 at
Highland Road
east of the
railroad tracks

Trinity Forest
Spine Trail
Community
Celebration
location 2 at
Valley Glen Drive
near Uplift White
Rock Hills Prep.



FRI CONNECTIVITY Natural Amenities

- HIKE AND BIKE TRAILS
- LAKES AND CREEKS
- GREEN BELTS/PARKS
- OUTDOOR RECREATION

NOTES BY SYMBOL

1. Ash Creek
2. White Rock Hills Park
3. White Rock Hills Recreation Center
4. CreekSide Park (DORBA Trails)
5. Trinity Forest Spine Trail
6. Lakehill Athletic Complex
7. Lakeland Hills Skate Park
8. St. Francis Park
9. Ash Creek Trail Extension (Funded)
10. Dallas Arboretum
11. Tenison Golf Course
12. Fraternal Order of Eagles



Scan QR code to view FRI
Neighborhood Map

FRI Connectivity Map of the natural amenities along the lower Ferguson Road corridor
Map provided by Farrell Architects

Thank you to FRI's 2023 Trinity Forest Spine Trail Sponsors



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Far East Dallas Great Neighborhoods to Live and Love

by Gary Garcia

I have lived in this community since 1997 and have been a member of FRI for as long as I can remember. When I first came here, the neighborhood had been in decline and had just received funding a few years prior from the Department of Justice Weed and Seed program to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in targeted high-crime neighborhoods. This was exciting to me because the effort to improve the neighborhood was a total grassroots neighbor-driven initiative.

Fast forward to today. Crime has declined, and the neighborhoods are laser-focused on improving the livability of this area. Although we now have some attractively landscaped streets, connected sidewalks, multi-purpose trails and designated bicycle routes, there is still much work to be done. Neighborhoods create the fabric of a city, and we are creating our own pockets of culture, entertainment, and personalities.

Our family has thrived in this community and my kids have attended local schools and gone on to institutions of higher learning such as Rice University and the University of Texas. My wife was inspired by the Creative Arts Center, a neighborhood gem that teaches visual arts classes. She now is a skilled fused glass artist who has shown pieces at the State Fair and in galleries. I have forged so many strong friendships that even a neighborhood walk can turn into a social outing. There is a great sense of



Gary Garcia, newly elected FRI Board member, shares his time, talent, and treasure in Far East Dallas

community in our Far East Dallas neighborhoods.

I work at the Dallas Foundation. Some of our most important goals center around neighborhood revitalization and making Dallas a fair and equitable place for all its citizens. This is the work that is being done by FRI and I am glad to participate. I want to be a part of the effort to enhance our community, so I knew I needed to serve on the FRI board. As a nonprofit executive, I know that positive change only occurs when you give your time, talent, and treasure to the cause. This is why I am excited to advocate for the long anticipated White Rock Hills Recreation Center and other improvements to enhance our neighborhoods. Although still partly aspirational, I want our area to take its place when there is a roll call of great neighborhoods to live and love in Dallas.

Why support FRI on North Texas Giving Day?

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Happy Birthday

FRI **turns 25 years old** this year and has been revitalizing the community since 1998



Leads

FRI serves as the **"community watchdog"** and vets projects with community feedback



Advocates

FRI has facilitated over **\$300M** in economic development since 1998



Connects

FRI partners with DPD. **Crime has reduced 30%** in FRI area from Feb. 2022 to 2023



Communicates

FRI **communicates** through social media (FB and IG), Resource Directory, FRIdays, NewsFlash, and website



Donate!

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If You Build It, They Will Listen

by Paul Maynard



It started on a whim, really. An off-hand conversation between friends on their way to a concert.

"We had been talking about all of the things going on in our East Dallas neighborhoods," Camille Liebbe said. "That followed with 'I wonder who owns the domain name?'"

That was the beginning of the Visit East Dallas website and podcast.

"We wanted to create a resource that was all in one place, for residents to discover the community that is East Dallas," Rich Harmer added. Rich is Camille's long-time friend and podcast co-host. He was part of that initial conversation on the way to the concert.

Their mission is to create a realm of information that people can tap into to learn about what comprises East Dallas. Not just businesses, but community-focused organizations and stories about the people who live east of White Rock Lake.

That conversation between Camille and Rich late in the summer of 2022 has resulted in not only a website, but a much-listened-to podcast, "What In East Dallas is Going On?" Their podcast is found on their website, VisitEastDallas.com, and is also available from many podcast apps such as Audacy, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify, the 35 or so episodes run between 20 and 60 minutes. Covering everything from history, to events, to specific businesses, the podcast draws back the curtains on East Dallas' community, people, and culture.

"This is our way of sharing where we live with the rest of the world," Rich said. Rich is a veteran podcaster, having produced and voiced the "Rock and Rich" podcast. He's also a media professional and consultant, based (where else?) in East Dallas. Camille is also a media professional, having written and published the Lakewood Life Magazine for N2 Publishing. It was while she was in that role that she met and interviewed Rich for a story.

"This effort is very much collaborative between us and our guests," Camille said. "Our goal is to grow this enterprise organically and have it be self-supporting."

In the spirit of community involvement, the podcast is shared with the East Dallas Chamber's "Chamber Chicks," Megan Dennen and Rheanna Avila to allow the Chamber to spotlight their members and initiatives.

For more information, check out VisitEastDallas.com.



Camille & Rich keep listeners informed on "What in East Dallas is going on?" through their podcasts.

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