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## **Grassroots Effort Brings Urban Reserve to Far East Dallas**

*Newly named 'CreekSide' offers a gateway to city trails and promise for economic development in the once underserved neighborhood*

**DALLAS, Aug. 20, 2020** — The city of Dallas is stepping up its plan to become a more walkable city with the recent addition of CreekSide, a 4.49-acre urban reserve in Far East Dallas, which will connect to the city's vast network of over 160 miles of hike and bike trails.

This stretch of natural blackland prairie runs parallel to the lower Ferguson Road corridor between Samuell Boulevard and Lakeland Drive. Nearby neighborhoods — an ethnically and economically diverse community of more than 35,000 residents — will be within a 10-minute walk to CreekSide, affording 17 neighborhoods, 15 multifamily communities and four schools easy access to St. Francis Park and White Rock Hills Park. Once the Trinity Forest Spine Trail is completed, CreekSide will connect to it, and this will connect to the Santa Fe Trail and White Rock Lake, Lawnview Park, the Great Trinity Forest and the Trinity River Audubon Center.

"CreekSide is transforming this once recreation desert into a recreation destination," says Vikki Martin, executive director, Ferguson Road Initiative. "This grassroots effort has engaged people to advocate for their own needs and solve their own problems."

The many benefits of neighborhood parks, gardens, urban forests and green spaces — even small ones — are long established. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, they support human health and wellness by providing areas for physical activity to help reduce some chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease and respiratory problems. An article in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* suggests that spending time in nature benefits human health by reducing stress, anxiety and depression, and it shows a positive association with community social relationships.

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The economic advantages are noteworthy as well. Walkable neighborhoods, parks and open spaces generate economic improvements to homeowners, businesses and local governments through higher property values and correspondingly higher tax assessments.

According to the City Parks Alliance, parks attract residents and businesses, encourage private investment, boost city revenue, and increase job opportunities. A 2017 study by the National Recreation and Park Association showed that local park and recreation agencies in the U.S. generated more than \$166 billion in economic activity and supported more than 1.1 million jobs.

The Dallas Park and Recreation's 2016 comprehensive plan reveals that parks provide \$360 million in real estate value each year. Trails produce the highest return on investment, generating over \$50 in development for every \$1 of capital invested. These aesthetic amenities stimulate new development, which increases property values and revenue for the city.

On a neighborhood level, CreekSide is expected to be a catalyst for economic development in a community that has been generally underserved.

"This urban reserve in Far East Dallas will attract quality developments — housing, office, retail, restaurant — places where neighbors can enjoy new community programs and outdoor amenities for exercise, play and wellness," says Alan Stewart, chair, Ash Creek Technical Assistance Panel, Urban Land Institute.

CreekSide is the result of a collaborative effort among many different groups: grassroots organization and planning with Ferguson Road Initiative, the city of Dallas, and Dallas Park and Recreation; facilitation by the Urban Land Institute; and grant funding from the national 10-Minute Walk Campaign.

"CreekSide is an example of what a community can do when they dream big, roll up their sleeves and advocate for a better quality of life," says Willis Winters, retired director, Dallas Park and Recreation. "Together we are creating safe access to quality parks, trails and green spaces — within a 10-minute walk from home."

CreekSide is one of many projects that Ferguson Road Initiative has championed in Far East Dallas. Here is an update on three more of them.

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**White Rock Hills Park.** One of the trailheads for CreekSide will be located near White Rock Hills Park, 2229 Highland Road, near the intersection of Highland and Ferguson roads. Scheduled for completion in November 2020, the park will include two playgrounds, a quarter-mile walking loop, a pavilion for large gatherings, and a flexible athletic field that can be used for multiple sports; a tree planting is scheduled for fall 2021.

**White Rock Hills Community Recreation Center.** The proposed recreation center next to White Rock Hills Park will be included in Dallas' next bond program. With these two amenities, "neighbors are well on their way to realizing our long-term vision of the White Rock Hills Community Recreation Center," says Martin.

**Trinity Forest Spine Trail.** With construction now underway, the first phase of the Trinity Forest Spine Trail will connect the existing Santa Fe Trail to Highland Road and Samuell Boulevard. The trail will be connected to White Rock Hills Park and the recreation center via a new bike path to be included in the scheduled reconstruction of Highland Road in 2022. Additional phases of the trail will traverse from Samuell Boulevard to the Lawnview DART station, then to Pemberton Hill Road near the Trinity River Audubon Center.

For photos and artists' renderings, go to: [www.fergusonroad.org/creekside](http://www.fergusonroad.org/creekside)

### **About the Ferguson Road Initiative**

Established in 1998 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the Ferguson Road Initiative (FRI) is a grassroots community-based organization comprising 30-plus neighborhood associations and crime watch groups, law enforcement, nonprofits, apartments, businesses, faith-based organizations, schools, and other concerned groups and individuals, all working toward accomplishing a shared vision for the complete economic revitalization of Far East Dallas. FRI's mission is to transform Far East Dallas into a safe, beautiful, prosperous and proud community for all of its 83,000 residents. For more information, visit [www.fergusonroad.org](http://www.fergusonroad.org).

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