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Fort Worth Avenue Development Group

2024

Annual Report

Discover The Worth: Fort Worth Avenue



Mission

The group seeks to honor the corridor's history, to support its existing businesses and to propel its growth by encouraging well-designed development, creating a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, enhancing public spaces with art and beauty, and generally fostering a sense of community among the corridor's businesses and residents.

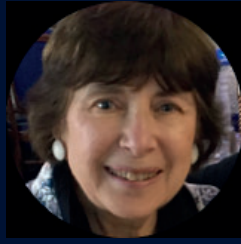
Vision

The purpose of the FWADG is to improve the West Commerce/Fort Worth Avenue corridor and maintain a high quality of life for the area's residential neighbors, property owners and businesses.

Board of Directors



Ron Veech
President



Katherine Homan
President Emerita



Trudy Newton
Vice President



Alex Qi
Treasurer



Randy Osteen
Secretary



Kyle Ward
Director



Linda Ward
Director



Laurie Hawkins
Director



Kathi Chandler
Director



Thomas Kryzer
Director

A Message from our President

These past few years have witnessed continued evolution of the Fort Worth Avenue/Commerce Street Corridor, due in no small part to the exceptional leadership of the Fort Worth Avenue Development Group President Emerita, Katherine Homan, and the hard work of members of our Board of Directors and volunteers. I'm grateful to this group as well as to our donors and sponsors who have given generously to advance the growth and development of the Corridor.

FWADG remains a strong and vital organization, ready to tackle zoning, beautification, and other issues that the corridor is experiencing. Each board member brings a unique skill set to our organization. It's important to note that all of our board members live in the surrounding Oak Cliff and West Dallas neighborhoods, and so we know firsthand what the community's needs are, and we hear from our friends and neighbors on a daily basis.

Our challenges remain consistent. Industrial businesses, auto shops, and used car lots don't attract visitors or bring local consumers to the area. In combating this, I believe education is key. We can help by spreading the word about PD 714, informing potential companies as to the benefits of building a pedestrian- and bike-friendly environment, and the advantages to establishing new business along the Corridor between N. Beckley and Westmoreland Avenues. In addition, we must remain vigilant in keeping the city informed of code violations in order to maintain a healthy, prosperous and inviting place to attract new business to the Corridor. We must keep an eye on new use permits and work with developers on the few remaining parcels of land along the Corridor to ensure the growth of the types of business that will meet the needs of the surrounding communities and attract visitors from outside our area.

We have several upcoming opportunities; our partnership with the Trinity Conservancy regarding the new Harold Simmons Park is key. We all want to see a beautiful park at the Eastern gateway to our corridor from I-35 and the downtown area. With that park will come additional development opportunities, attracting new businesses and bringing visitors from other parts of the city and state. We also have opportunities to meet with existing business owners and neighbors along the 3.5 mile stretch of Ft. Worth Avenue and Commerce Street to understand their needs and inform them of PD 714 and the benefit it continues to bring to the Corridor.

The City of Dallas is an important ally in ensuring continued growth in the area. We must continue to keep our community leaders informed and aware of the issues we face along the Corridor in order to manage the historically negative perceptions associated with homeless encampments, graffiti, trash, and poorly constructed or decaying buildings. We also have a responsibility to communicate with local neighborhoods and businesses to ensure they understand both the opportu-

nities and the threats to continued development along the Corridor, and make them aware of ways that we can work together toward a better environment.

To that end, we must strengthen partnerships with other organizations that have a vested interest in our common goals, including surrounding neighborhood organizations, the Trinity Park Conservancy, Dallas Housing Authority, Western Heights Cemetery, Heritage Oak Cliff, and the West Dallas Chamber among others. Together we are stronger and can achieve more.

It's important that our board members, volunteers and neighbors spend time visiting businesses along the corridor. There are many places to shop, eat, work out, and have fun, and the number is growing. We have an opportunity to invest in relationships with local business owners and engage them in building a stronger community. And of the members of our community what, I would ask is this: Join us during our fundraisers throughout the year. Volunteer to help during our clean-up projects. And most importantly, if you have an idea, share it!

I see in the future an even more vibrant community along the Fort Worth Avenue/Commerce Street Corridor with increased pedestrian and safe bicycle traffic, more trees lining our streets and beautification projects to enhance the local aesthetic, and more businesses to attract visitors, shoppers, diners, and sightseers to our area. I invite you to Discover the Worth in Fort Worth Avenue!

Ron Veech

President, FWADG



“...our partnership with the Trinity Conservancy regarding the new Harold Simmons Park is key. We all want to see a beautiful park at the Eastern gateway to our corridor...attracting new businesses and bringing visitors from other parts of the city and state”

Ron Veech

From Our President Emerita

It has been an honor to serve as President for Fort Worth Avenue Development Group, and we can be proud of the accomplishments that have been made over the last few years in turning the Fort Worth Avenue/Commerce Street Corridor into a livable, walkable environment for residents and visitors. I became FWADG president during the COVID pandemic, when the organization was relatively inactive with regard to fundraising and public events. Our primary focus and effort was reviewing submissions for new construction projects by developers and advising them and the City of better ways that they could adhere to PD714. Much of what is newly built today - or is not! - originated from that time. I'm proud to say that the Corridor has totally transformed from a primarily gritty auto body shop and industrial locale to one that is tree-lined with wide sidewalks flanked by buildings for offices, restaurants and residential housing.

Since 2010 when I started on the FWADG Board as community liaison for the East Kessler Park Neighborhood Association, my priorities and activities have remained the same; seeking person-to-person relationships in the interest of forging seamless connections with City and community leadership, identifying and addressing FWADG Board and FWA corridor strengths and weaknesses, and stemming the tide of urban decay and disorder inside and around our neighborhoods.

In this time, we have made monumental gains in delivering new housing and mixed use developments to the area. We have been successful in honoring the history of the Corridor with the dedication of the Gateway Pecan Tree and the restoration of Western Heights Cemetery. We are partnering with the Trinity Park Conservancy to help deliver a first-rate Harold Simmons Park at the eastern end of the corridor, which will serve to attract more business development and visitors to the area. We were successful in negotiating a Sprouts Grocery development plan that includes the City's first entirely eco-friendly "green" parking lot. And we continue to work to secure Landmark status for the Belmont Hotel, protecting the historical legacy of this Charles Stevens Dilbeck-designed centerpiece for the community.

Our growth has not been without its challenges. As with most non-profit community-based organizations, keeping an all-volunteer Board and community members engaged and educated toward fulfilling our mission and vision is imperative. We must continually secure sufficient services from Dallas Code Compliance for the Corridor, including our newly installed I-30 Underpass beautification project. And we must build and maintain a positive rapport with the community after our struggle in securing a Good Neighbor Agreement and a 5-year Special Use Permit renewal for the Miramar Hotel's conversion into a Permanent Supportive Housing facility.

Katherine Homan

President Emerita, FWADG



Treasurer's Report

Starting Balance	\$1,685.35	
Total Deposits		\$34,108.17
Expenses		
Administrative	\$ (1,345.93)	
Cemetery	\$ (6,108.13)	
Fundraising Events	\$ (3,450.38)	
Information Technology	\$ (4,223.33)	
Total Expenses		\$ (15,199.77)
Ending Balance	\$20,593.75	

“I have been amazed by the growth in the area with condos, fitness centers – it’s a great fit. There are a lot of young professionals who eat out and use third-party services often.”

- Michael Greco, Franchise Owner, Jersey Mike's

2024 Highlights

Events

Earth Day

On April 21, Fort Worth Avenue Development Group once again hosted a booth at the 2024 Oak Cliff Earth Day at Lake Cliff Park. This was a great opportunity to connect with our communities and provide information about the FWADG mission and accomplishments, and increase awareness of PD714 and its impact on the corridor. In addition, Western Heights Cemetery hosted a booth right next door, where plant sales resulted in over \$1500 funding for the Cemetery.



Cemetery Fundraiser and Silent Auction

The annual Dias de las Muertos fundraiser was held on November 4 at White Rhino Coffee, followed by a dedication of the Brick Plaza at Western Heights Cemetery. The event was attended by neighbors from surrounding communities, cemetery volunteers and sponsoring organizations including Constellation of Living Memorials and Trinity Conservancy. Combined proceeds of over \$6400 were raised through the Buy-A-Brick campaign and Silent Auction toward creation of the Brick Plaza near the cemetery entrance, and continued restoration and maintenance of the cemetery.



Courtesy of 2nd2Nunn Photography



Courtesy of 2nd2Nunn Photography



Courtesy of 2nd2Nunn Photography

Business Growth

Fort Worth Avenue Development Group works to encourage business growth along the Fort Worth Avenue/Commerce Street Corridor by maintaining the appearance and improvements in the area, encouraging artistic expression and increasing the visibility and image across the Dallas community.

We're encouraged by continuing business growth along the Corridor. As new businesses move into the area, in addition to new construction, buildings that were previously falling into dilapidation are being restored and given new life, paying homage to the history of the corridor while adding goods, services, and dining options to our communities and visitors.

The Corridor also continues to experience growth in multi-family housing construction, with the most recent additions being the innovative 8.5 acre Kessler Bluffs, a community of 146 luxury townhome residences, and Mariposa Apartment Homes at Western Heights, an apartment community for active 55+ adults.

White Rhino Coffee

White Rhino Coffee is a rare breed of coffee shop that delivers exceptional coffee and food, and supports direct trade and sustainability. Founded in 2007, it has 15 shops across North Texas and a roastery on Fort Worth Avenue. The company recently opened a new café at the Fort Worth Avenue location. This latest café, situated within the roastery, offers customers traditional café offerings, experimental menu items for guests to sample, and views of the inner workings of the roasting facility.



1607 Fort Worth Avenue

Jersey Mike's

Jersey Mike's Subs officially opened a new location on Fort Worth Avenue on August 29, 2024. Residents had been anticipating the amazing authentic subway sandwiches and other treats, as a sign had been up for several months prior to the grand opening. Franchise owner Michael Greco told What Now Dallas, "The area is going through some major changes. I have been amazed by the growth in the area with condos, fitness centers – it's a great fit. There are a lot of young professionals who eat out and use third-party services often. There are a lot of good restaurants in the area but not a lot of just quick, casual options where people can grab lunch."



2150 Fort Worth Avenue



Dallas Art Supply

Dallas Art Supply opened in 2024 at 623 Fort Worth Avenue, and serves up professional art supplies and live plants. It is the only independent, women-owned art supply store in Dallas. The store is owned and operated by Shannon Driscoll and Kayli House, founders of Oil and Cotton Art Classes and Supplies located on Beatrice Street. The owners see great potential for community engagement as the Corridor continues to become more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.



623 Fort Worth Avenue



Sprouts Market

After decades without a name-brand organic grocery store, Fort Worth Avenue became the site for a Sprouts Farmers Market. The company's development plan, however, was not compliant with PD 714. By working with the developer to overcome many site plan issues, hosting community meetings and circulating a community survey, the FWADG was able to secure an acceptable plan and get the project underway, incorporating many elements of FWADG's mission of being bike- and pedestrian-friendly and augmenting the site with green infrastructure. Construction started in 2024 and is well underway, with an anticipated opening in 2025.



1350 N Hampton Road



Another Round

Another Round offers a sprawling 930 square meters of indoor entertainment space, featuring unlimited mini golf, table games, and a variety of delicious drinks from their full bar. The venue is designed to cater to groups of all sizes, making it an ideal spot for team-building activities, corporate events, or casual gatherings with friends and family. The indoor area provides an environment where guests can enjoy a mix of fun activities in a comfortable and lively setting.



660 Fort Worth Ave



Western Heights Cemetery

Adopted by FWADG in 2009, Western Heights Cemetery is now a participant of the non-profit organization, Constellation of Living Memorials (CLM). With a team of dedicated volunteers, in the 15 months since joining CLM we have accomplished the following:

Cemetery Research

A significant effort to conduct burial research and database reconciliation/merge by research volunteers, and an extensive database is now established for reference and future research. All known headstones have been mapped within a database and GPS locations by Texas Cemetery Restorations. A topographic survey of the cemetery grounds has been completed, and all trees within the Cemetery have been mapped.

Community Events

Many descendants of people interred in the cemetery have been contacted and are involved in ongoing activities. Several events took place over the course of 2024, including Descendants Day homecoming event with attendees coming from as far away as Houston, a cemetery-wide Veterans Day observance, Memorial Day observance, and numerous free one hour tours have been provided and are very well received by visitors. Living Biographies were performed during cemetery events, during which volunteers enacted roles of people interred at the cemetery. A Memorial Plaza, consisting of bricks purchased by cemetery patrons, was built and dedicated.

Communication/Awareness

Five Facebook accounts have been created for the cemetery, including History, Nature, Arts, Volunteers, Visitor Information. In addition, one Facebook account was created for the surrounding neighborhood. Western Heights Cemetery has been featured in a number of print and television stories, increasing awareness across the community of this valuable historic resource.



The Buy-A-Brick campaign has been successful in creating a new plaza at Western Heights Cemetery, as well as generating additional funding for continued restoration and maintenance of this vital part of West Dallas history.

Restoration/Maintenance

Physical conditions of all stones have been logged to support planning for restoration, and a project has begun to repair all stones. All headstones have been professionally cleaned. We have created an extensive walking trail system over the two acres, purchased and installed benches for visitors, particularly those with disabilities, and multiple birdhouses & birdfeeders have been added to attract birds to the area. In addition, we have engaged three local residents part-time to assist with landscape maintenance and to increase community involvement. Landmark status filing preparation is in process to protect the cemetery from commercial development and ensure preservation as a Texas historic site.



Congratulations to Steve and Patti Erickson, the first annual WHC Volunteer of the Year Award recipients!

Goals for 2025

Reimagining Fort Worth Avenue for 2025 and beyond means embracing sustainability, inclusivity, and collaboration. By focusing on four pillars, Communications and Marketing, Beautification and Transformation, Events, and Historical Preservation, the Fort Worth Avenue Development Group can ensure meaningful progress. Despite the Belmont Hotel's current state of inactivity, leveraging its potential alongside key projects such as Harold Simmons Park and the Constellation of Living Memorials program demonstrates a commitment to honoring the past while shaping a vibrant future. Together, these initiatives will foster pride, inclusivity, and resilience,

Communications and Marketing

Goal: We will increase FWADG's visibility and image through a variety of marketing channels and tactics.

Develop a 30-60 second "elevator pitch" for FWADG members to use to create awareness and a common message in support of ongoing marketing efforts. Also develop a one-page flyer or pamphlet to support our marketing messages.

Establishing a separate Instagram account for FWADG will help expand our message to broader audiences. Explore Instagram best practices including formatting and posting frequency. Also, consider creating 30-second video clips for the account, and work with our web design service to enhance design and content of the FWADG website consistent with social media posts.

Doing business with FWA merchants, including monthly board meetings at various locations, will increase visibility and provide avenues for understanding the needs of our stakeholders. Highlight a FWA business every quarter and offer a coupon or discount via the website, Instagram and Constant Contact.

Create a "Did You Know" Campaign:

Share intriguing facts about the corridor, such as the Historic Gateway Pecan, its industrial heritage, the historical significance of Western Heights Cemetery, the ongoing rewilding project "Constellation of Living Memorials," and the anticipated impact of Harold Simmons Park.

Develop a "Business Spotlight" series to feature local enterprises like Sprouts Farmers Market, White Rhino Coffee, and Sylvan Thirty. Include interviews with owners, highlight sustainability practices, and emphasize their contributions to the community.

Secure a variety of opportunities for media coverage, i.e. Good Morning Texas, Channel 5 News, Dallas Business Journal, Advocate, Observer, Candy's Dirt and The Voice.

Beautification, Art and Transformation

Goal: We will enhance the corridor's aesthetic appeal, create welcoming public spaces, and promote community pride while being code compliant.

We will develop a code compliance playbook, and use the playbook to inform key businesses and monitor/submit code violations as needed. We will also attend monthly meetings with the City of Dallas to discuss events and areas of concern within and surrounding the corridor.

We will implement specific programs to include:

- **Adopt-a-Spot Programs:** Formalize Adopt-a-Spot initiatives, inviting businesses, schools, and community groups to maintain designated areas. Provide recognition through signage, community events, and an annual awards program.
- **Sidewalk and Infrastructure:** Conduct a comprehensive survey of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure to identify areas requiring repairs and upgrades, including streetlamp beautification. Engage residents and businesses in prioritizing these projects.
- **Public Art:** While existing murals and art installations celebrate Oak Cliff's culture, there is room for additional projects. Collaborate with schools and local artists to ensure ongoing community engagement and create new art installations. Focus on clean-up of Sylvan/I30 mural and graffiti removal.
- **Belmont Hotel:** Participate in meetings regarding the landmark status for the Belmont Hotel and, to the extent possible, influence restoration and improvement of the property.

Events

Goal: We will raise FWADG's community engagement through key events.

We will participate in the Oak Cliff April 2025 Earth Day: create a booth that will host interactive activities to attract more booth traffic. Include educational activities for families and children.

Participate in an eco-focused vendor fair, i.e. Sprouts.

Develop a unique fundraising event such as a "Green Gala" to include a silent auction featuring local art. Determine distribution of proceeds.

Partner with Trinity Conservancy for an open house at their facility. Consider inviting the public.

Plan and conduct year-end holiday event.



Historical Preservation

Goal: Preserve and honor the history of the Fort Worth Avenue/Commerce Street Corridor.

Constellation of Living Memorials Program: We will continue collaboration with rewilding experts to enhance the cemetery's ecological value, transforming it into a peaceful green space that also serves as a habitat for native plants and wildlife. This project aligns with sustainability goals and community rewilding initiatives.

Western Heights Cemetery Events: We will participate in annual events at the Cemetery to honor veterans and historical figures interred at the cemetery. Implement a cemetery calendar to include historical tours, storytelling sessions, and flag placements.

We will continue to pursue funding to support Western Heights Cemetery including brick purchases and other donation opportunities.

We will continue to restore cemetery artifacts and enhance the natural beauty of the environment, including continued installation of butterfly gardens, seeding of native wildflowers, and planting of flowering understory trees. In addition, we will complete removal of dead and unsafe trees and undergrowth. Installation of additional water barrels and a water meter with multiple faucets will enable our volunteers to more effectively nourish and maintain new plantings. Installing a bike rack will encourage local visitors and volunteers to come to the cemetery while reducing vehicular traffic. Public art, such as a mural for the retaining wall along Fort Worth Avenue, will further enhance the appearance of the cemetery and attract visitors.

Community Engagement: We will continue identifying descendants and gathering of their oral histories via StoryCorps and other methods. We plan to conduct additional history storytelling performances, as well as acoustic choral music performances, poetry walks, theatre, and adding Spanish language tours and American Sign Language tours for the deaf. and tours for the vision impaired.

We will complete the process to create a separate 501(C)(3) organization for WHC, providing focus and direction consistent with the history of the cemetery and needs of the community. To our knowledge, this will be the first time in its 177 year history that Western Heights Cemetery has had a dedicated, independent organization whose only focus is preservation and management of the cemetery.

Donors & Business Sponsors

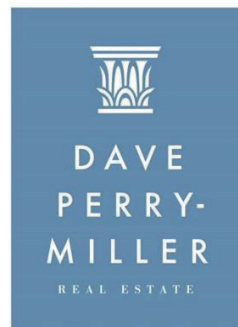
We greatly appreciate the generous donations and Buy-A-Brick purchases made by members of our communities and local businesses in support of making the Fort Worth Avenue/Commerce Corridor a great place for residents and visitors alike.

Adriana Escontrias	Jackie Keish	Marla E Custard
Alex Qi	James Jack	Michael Riney
Alice Zaccarello	James W Schutze	Mike Rowlands
Angela Stoenescu	Jennifer Lavender	Monte Anderson
Anonymous	Jennifer Stock	Pam Smith
Art Garcia	John Arrington	Patricia Erickson
Bertha Ramirez	John Cramer	Paul Hermann
Brent Willmott	John Stolly	Peter Kavanagh
Carla Wood	Jordan Ford	Randy Osteen
Carolene English	JP Kelleher	Rebecca Connatser
Catalina Garcia	Judy Pollock	Renata Wells
Chad West	Julia Ousley	Robert Kucharski
Charlie Perdue	Julie Maxwell	Robert Meckfessel
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Danielle Taylor	Kathy Hewitt	Sheena de la O
David Droese	Katrina Whatley	Sheila Newton
David Preziosi	Kim Dunbar	Steve Roe
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Dottie Dunnam	Kristen Pierik	Timothy Herfel
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Francis James	Linda Carolene English	Tracey Fox
Gage Johnston	Lucea Kedron	Van Johnson
Gary Tinsley	Lynn Merlino	William Norcross
Greg & Karen Dobbs	Maddie Sanders	

The Fort Worth Avenue Development Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax deductible. Our Tax ID Number is 75-3012354.



**BELMONT
HOTEL**



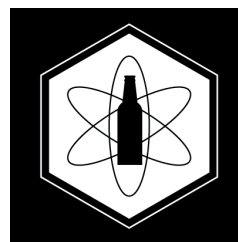
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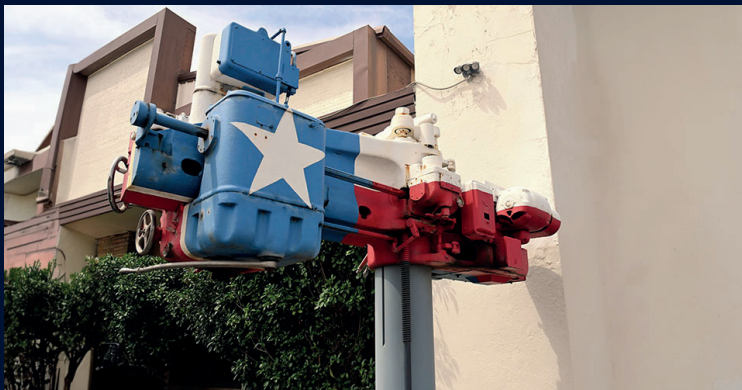


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