

STAFF REPORT

Case Number: 16-ZA-10
Request: Adoption of East Side Plan
Address: East Side
Petitioner: City of Farmers Branch

Summary:

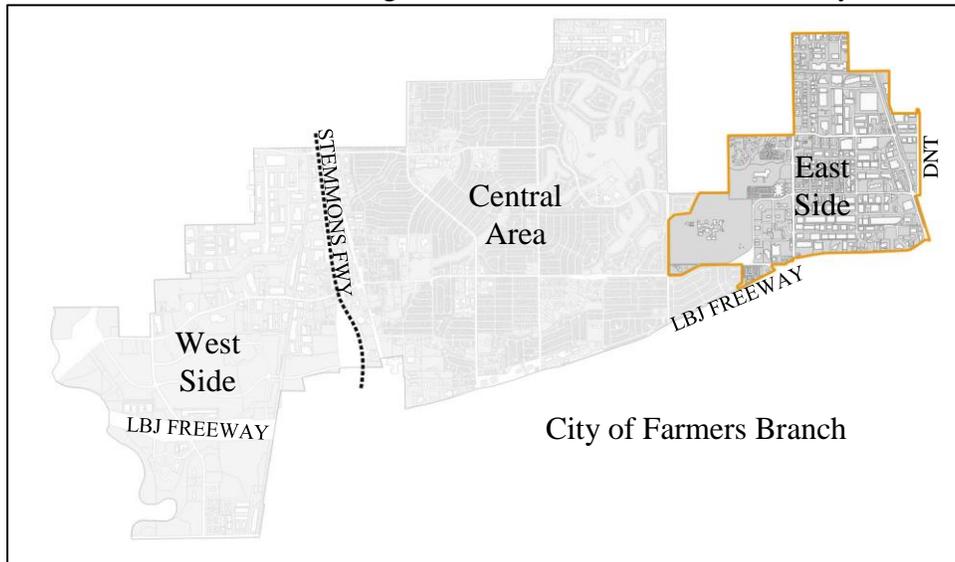
The Comprehensive Plan for the City was originally adopted in 1989. Updates were conducted in 2003 for the West Side and in 2012 for the Central Area. The proposed Plan for the East Side will update and supersede the 1989 Comprehensive Plan. The Plan sets forth a Vision for the anticipated form and function of the future East Side and provides implementation strategies to be utilized to achieve that Vision. Included in the Plan are a thorough review of the existing conditions and an assessment of the character, identity, and economic vitality of the area, as well as a snapshot of the current land uses and potential shared spaces. Consideration was given to the transportation network and its utility for not only vehicular use in the area, but also for pedestrian and bicycle usage.

Proposed Plan:

The overall goal of the proposed East Side Plan is to utilize the existing assets to create a recognizable District which will encourage more interaction between businesses and residents of the District, enable visitors to navigate within the District, and facilitate the brand identity of the District as a positive contributor to the City as a whole. The stated Vision of the Plan is that the “East Side will be a District with a unique identity, based on a diverse mixture of uses that creates opportunities to live, work, do business, and participate in leisure activities for people already connected to the District and those who have yet to discover it.”

Location

The East Side District is roughly bounded by the Dallas North Tollway on the east, the Town of Addison on the north, Brookhaven College on the west, and the LBJ Freeway on the south.



Public Input

The first public meeting for consideration of an East Side Plan was conducted in November 2015. The consultant team and City staff presented ideas to stakeholders (those who live or work within the District and other interested citizens). The following month, the advisory committee members toured several similar settings to observe the physical conditions that contributed to the success of these areas. Stakeholder interviews were conducted which produced a wealth of knowledge and opinions regarding the area. The feedback from the stakeholders was essential in forming the Vision for the area and garnering support for the eventual Plan document.

Plan Framework

The proposed Plan merges the current assets of the East Side with the community's hopes for the future of the District. Achieving the Vision will be a collaboration of the City and the stakeholders. The Plan is divided into five chapters which cover the following topics:

1. Character and Identity,
2. Economic Vitality,
3. Form and Land Use,
4. Shared Spaces & Aesthetics, and
5. Mobility and Connectivity.

Each of these chapters has a stated goal, along with policies and actions to achieve that goal. Also included are benchmarks which will be a measure of the success of the Plan in enacting the policies and performing the actions necessary to the fulfillment of the goal.

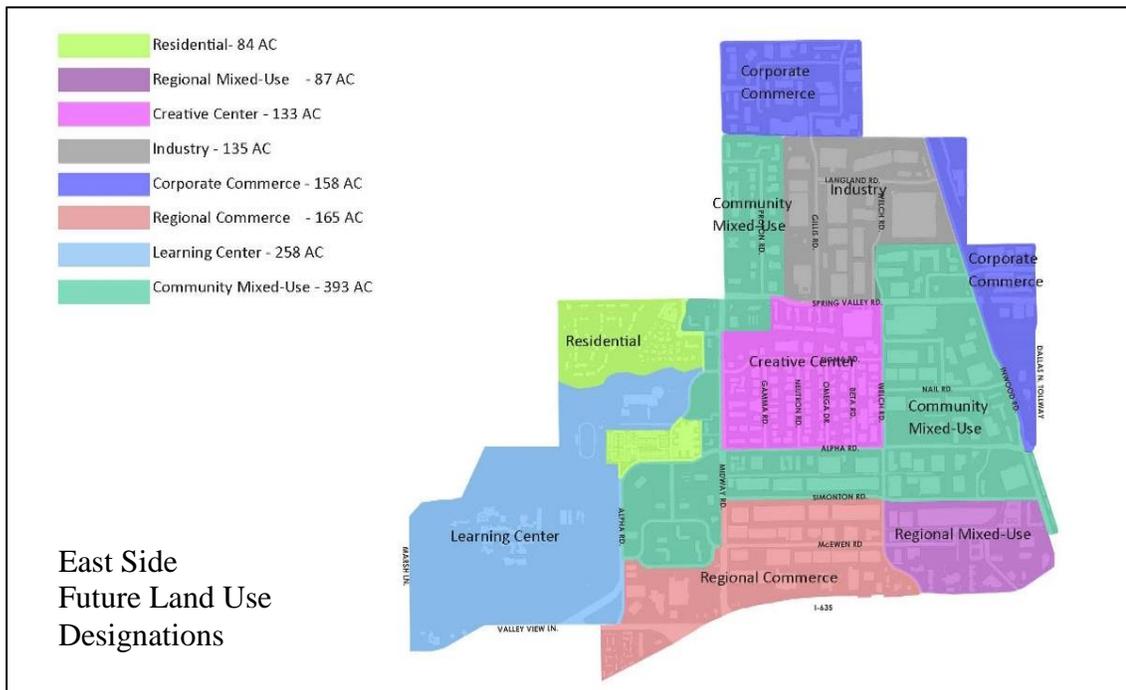
East Side Character and Identity – The East Side has many assets consisting of vibrant small businesses located within a tight street grid coupled with larger industrial/ warehouse spaces, high-rise office towers and expansive educational campuses, along with residential and retail locations. The Plan emphasizes the catalyst effect of the “maker” concept – those businesses that strive for craft and technology integration and innovation. What is lacking in East Side is a clear identity for the area. Many people see this area as part of the City of Dallas and not part of Farmers Branch. Its proximity with the Galleria and its adjacency to the Dallas North Tollway influence this misperception. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is “to be a vibrant destination with a unique character and identity.” This will be achieved through a strong branding effort and the use of entry features to delineate the boundaries of East Side to residents and visitors alike.

East Side Economic Vitality – For any Plan to be effective, it must be based in market reality. This chapter describes the business climate in which Farmers Branch as a whole and East Side in particular exist. Data related to market share, employment, population growth, property value and ownership, and land use capacity are described. The goal of this chapter is “to enhance and sustain a supportive business environment with four focuses: retail, recruit, redevelop, and incentivize.” Policies and actions to be adopted by the City are proposed.

Form and Land Use – An integral task of the East Side Plan was to inventory the land uses throughout the area and consider creating smaller subareas that display certain characteristics

in common. East Side was therefore subdivided into eight future land use designations – these are more broadly described than zoning districts, but support certain land uses and forms that are spelled out below within the brief descriptions of each land use designation.

1. Residential - predominately residential uses with neighborhood-scaled commercial uses
2. Regional Mixed-Use - multi-story mixed-use, anchoring the main Gateways and emphasizing entertainment and modified lifestyle center development
3. Creative Center - the “core” of East Side, a showcase of “makers” and “innovators” with low-intensity commercial uses, mixed residential uses and complementary dining/service/entertainment uses
4. Industry - suitable for industrial, warehouse, flex-space and commercial uses, this industrial core provides valuable employment, services, goods, and entertainment uses
5. Corporate Commerce - campus-type commercial developments
6. Regional Commerce - regional-scaled commercial uses
7. Learning Center - uses associated with and complementary to education/college functions
8. Community Mixed-Use - transition of high-rise mixed-use to less intense forms and uses toward the interior of East Side



The goal for this chapter is “to establish a visually appealing, functional, and compatible District for people-oriented spaces and synergistic development.” This goal addresses the visual appeal of the District in terms of compatible uses while allowing the flexibility to combine various land uses within a subarea provided their scale is similar. The policies and actions in this chapter encourage and support development and redevelopment consistent with the Plan.

East Side Shared Spaces and Aesthetics – In order for the District to be perceived as a destination or a place to gather, it is imperative that the shared spaces (whether they be parks, open spaces,

trails, or other locations) be welcoming and safe for those using them. This chapter's goal is "to create a system of shared spaces which positively contribute to the aesthetics, livability, vitality, and functionality of the District." There are only four City parks within East Side and the Plan calls for more green spaces, landscaping and other aesthetic improvements to enhance the built infrastructure. The Plan suggests that other small areas can be incorporated into pocket parks and that existing open space be programmed for activities that attract attendance. Specific recommendations regarding the beautification of roadways, enhanced and safer crosswalks, and revised zoning regulations are all designed to create a sense of place that is attractive to business owners, shoppers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

East Side Connectivity and Mobility – Within the East Side, the transportation network is fully developed. In some cases, existing streets are recommended for "road diets" in which vehicular travel lanes are reduced in width or even eliminated while providing additional opportunities for bike lanes and wider pedestrian paths. This chapter focused on balancing roadway functionality with the context of the adjacent businesses. The Plan calls for "links" to be efficient means of traveling from one place to another, while "places" are designed for spending time, gathering, and relaxing, with traffic movement a secondary consideration. This chapter examines the existing roadway conditions on the major roads in East Side and proposes modifications in some cases. The stated goal is "to become a cohesive destination of connected neighborhoods and shared spaces where traveling via multiple modes is effective and pleasant." Another key component to the Connectivity and Mobility chapter is the development and enhancement of existing and future trails into an interconnected system for cyclists and pedestrians. Included in this proposal is the re-naturalization of a channelized creek and the utilization of unused rail lines for new trails to connect the District.

Implementation

Once the East Side Plan is adopted, implementation may begin. The Plan includes a detailed chapter with three suggested catalyst opportunity scenarios. These include future development at the Midway Gateway, located at the northeast corner of LBJ Freeway and Midway Road, the extension and enhancement of Galleria Drive, west of the Dallas North Tollway, and Winn Park improvements. In addition, the Plan recommends that a zoning overlay zone be applied to East Side to aid in the future rezoning of properties to fit the Vision. The implementation strategy is divided into three Tiers – short term, medium term, and long term, each with proposed projects.

Appendix

The Appendix includes the raw data gathered at the public meetings. It also includes the description of the East Side Plan's "character zones." These are generally divided by major highways and include consistent types and patterns of development within each of the zones. These are:

1. Core – tight grid street system, low-rise commercial, mature trees (Greek lettered streets)
2. Warehouse – single story, large-scale structures, surface parking
3. LBJ Frontage – low rise, big-box retail, auto-related commercial
4. Tollway Frontage – high-rise offices, structured parking, high-rise multi-family
5. Business Park – mid-rise offices and residential, Blue Lake amenity
6. Flex – older stock of low-rise flex buildings, office, distribution activities
7. Corner – high-rise office and hotel, related commercial
8. Residential – includes several housing types such as multi-family, town homes, apartments
9. Institutional – generally consisting of Parish Episcopal School and Brookhaven College

Public Notification and Response:

A public notice was published in the Dallas Morning News on December 22, 2016 regarding the proposed East Side Plan. In addition, City Staff provided notices of the Plan on the City website. As of the printing of this packet, no letters of opposition have been received by the City for the proposed East Side Plan.