

Background, Vision Plan, & Program and the Community Workshop

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A. Background, Vision Plan, Program and the Community Workshop

1. Background

The Evans & Rosedale Design Team was commissioned to begin work on the Master Plan for the Urban Village, and the design of the new Shamblee Public Library, renewed Tommy Tucker Building and Public Health Center, in June 2004.

Beginning with the Juneteenth Celebration, which was held in 2004 on Evans Avenue for the first time since the new Plaza and streetscape were inaugurated, the Design Team has held a series of formal and informal meetings with City of Fort Worth staff, Library and Public Health staff, the Evans & Rosedale Advisory Committee, the Near Southeast Community Development Corporation, Southeast Fort Worth, Inc., and other community organizations and individuals, to understand the specific requirements of the Library and Public Health Center, and the needs, desires and aspirations of the community for the revitalization of the Urban Village.

Key to the identification of these issues was the Community Workshop held on August 21, 2004 at the Southside Community Center. In a remarkable show of community strength, curiosity, creativity and commitment, close to 70 members of the community spent the entire day with the Design Team, City of Fort Worth South, and a group of artists commissioned by the Arts Council of Fort Worth and Tarrant County, to explore potential ideas for the program and the Master Plan. The summaries of these sessions are included as an appendix to this Report. Their content is embodied in the proposals documented here for the Master Plan.

This report documents the work on the Master Plan for the Evans & Rosedale Urban Village, and related work on the Master Plan for an extended area of the neighborhood. Our work seeks to support as well as to draw on the principles which have been established by the City of Fort Worth for its Urban Villages Development Program, as vibrant, dense, mixed-use urban centers which are the focus of commercial and cultural activity in their greater neighborhoods.

This Master Plan report should be read in conjunction with the Evans & Rosedale Market Study prepared by ConsultEcon, Inc., the economics and market specialist member of the Evans & Rosedale Design Team (Final Draft September 2004).

The Master Plan concepts and guidelines form a blueprint for the future of the neighborhood, which will guide development for a successful revitalization of the Urban Village and its surrounding fabric. The Master Plan is intended as a document to be adopted by the City of Fort Worth, and to be used on a daily basis, as public and private decisions are made concerning development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives and other matters affecting the Evans & Rosedale Business and Cultural District.

2. Vision Plan of 2000

The Master Plan documented in these pages draws on the valuable and substantial Vision Plan of October 2000, which was based on the workshop held in July 2000. This Master Plan report should be read in conjunction with the Vision report. Following are some of the highlights of that report:

- Vision Plan Workshop held July 2000
- Vision calls for Evans & Rosedale to serve as a “gateway” linking the Medical District, Downtown and historic neighborhoods to the east
- Called for “marketplace” of small businesses, restaurants, cultural and educational centers, and jazz and blues music venues which celebrate the rich African-American heritage of Fort Worth
- Called for preservation of key historic structures, and uses which will complement and support entertainment and heritage tourism
- Called for mixed-use buildings with residential units above retail or office space at the street level
- Proposed new National Register Historic District for larger neighborhood including historic houses along Terrell
- Called for new plaza and streetscape on Evans Avenue, generous sidewalks, new signage
- Recommended public-private partnerships to bring the vision to fruition

3. Program and the Community Workshop

A program of uses has been developed for the Urban Village based upon our extensive consultation with the client and community, particularly the Community Workshop on August 21, 2004, our research of relevant precedents, the draft Market Report prepared by ConsultEcon, and our professional experience. The Vision Plan of 2000 also identified many community needs which shaped this program. The program is summarized below.

Although this section identifies program elements separately, it is important that the new cultural and commercial activities, housing and open space are combined with each other in the Urban Village. In line with forward-looking urban design practice, mixed-use buildings should be planned to encourage the cross-fertilization of markets: residents, tourists, the work force, shoppers, purveyors, and customers of restaurants and entertainment venues, should all form a vibrant patchwork quilt of community and activity on the streets of the Urban Village. In this way the cultural and economic energy which is being invested in the Urban Village will generate a sustainable level of activity which will maintain itself over time, and attract more cultural and economic capital over the years.

It is also important that uses be combined to encourage “walkability”, the easy pedestrian enjoyment of spaces and access to buildings, for a healthy environment. Minimizing the need for automobile traffic within the Urban Village and encouraging people to walk will not only promote personal health and clean air, but will also allow the Urban Village to be developed attractively, recalling America’s successful main streets, rather than strip development and suburban sprawl. Appropriate density, enhanced public transportation, compact and well-placed parking areas, and the location of shops near residents and residents near shops, will make walkability a natural characteristic of the Urban Village.

a. Library, Tommy Tucker Building and Public Health Center

These facilities are the first to be assured of construction, since they have been funded by the City of Fort Worth.

1. Library

The program for the new branch of the Shamblee Public Library has been developed in a series of programming meetings and in the Community Workshop. The total required building area is approximately 10,000 square feet exclusive of the Tommy Tucker Building.



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



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The Library has a requirement for 8 secure parking spaces, a bike rack and a loading space, all to be located immediately adjacent to the building. Twenty-five to thirty parking spaces are required for visitors and staff, to be located within walking distance of the building.

The Library's programs will involve a broad participation in the life of the community, particularly for children. Many ideas for library activities were generated during the Community Workshop (see summary in appendix).

2. Tommy Tucker Building

This building was originally a schoolhouse, Our Mother of Mercy, attended by many of the area's most renowned residents, and it holds a special place in the hearts of many in the community. Now roofless and in need of extensive repair, the Tommy Tucker building is slated to be incorporated into the Library facilities to provide a place for community meetings and events. Its area is 4,800 gross square feet.

3. Public Health Center

The program for the new Public Health Center for the City of Fort Worth has been developed in a series of programming meetings and in the Community Workshop. The total required building area is approximately 30,000 square feet.

The Public Health Department has a requirement for 20 staff parking spaces, 30 secure City vehicle spaces, and a vehicle inspection area, to be located immediately adjacent to the building. Eighty to one hundred staff parking spaces and 120 visitor spaces should be located within walking distance of the building.

Although the Public Health Center will serve the entire City of Fort Worth, there are plans for the Center to play a particular role in the Evans & Rosedale community. Please see the appendix for Community Workshop comments on these facilities.

b. Commercial, Retail and Community Services

With virtually the entire network of shops and services having left the area with the demise of most buildings on Evans Avenue, the community is dramatically underserved in the realm of the most basic of convenience shopping and services. Retail activities are essential to fulfill the community's current needs, to develop markets for the future, and to provide the vitality and street-level activity of the Urban Village.

ConsultEcon's Market Report identifies a requirement for approximately 60,000 gross square feet of retail and approximately 20,000 gross square feet of office space, based on current need, independent of any additional demand likely due to an increased number of residents and/or heritage tourism. This includes 5 food and beverage units, 2 anchor stores, 10 specialty shops such as specialty food, clothing stores, etc, 1 bank, 5 small service shops, and a day-care center.

The 2000 Vision Plan set out the desire to create additional retail of a more unique variety, patronized by the new residents and heritage tourists. It calls for a "marketplace" of small businesses, restaurants, cultural and educational centers, and jazz and blues music venues which celebrate the rich African-American heritage of Fort Worth. In discussions, ConsultEcon has confirmed that following the initial establishment of the approximately 80,000 gross square feet of commercial space, additional space can be supported.

In developing the program for commercial activities for the Urban Village, we have therefore created a program for a First Phase and a Future Phase. The First Phase includes the 60,000 square feet of retail space, and 20,000 square feet of office space, for which ConsultEcon has verified an immediate need. The Future Phase includes additional space, measured by what is reasonably available in good locations at street level within the Urban Village, where additional retail spaces can be accommodated. Future Phase mixed-use buildings with office space above retail are expected to provide additional office space.

With respect to entertainment uses, ConsultEcon's report calls for the reuse of the existing theater building commonly known as Pinkston's, two destination restaurants, each at approximately 4,800 square feet, and a nightclub at approximately 3,600 square feet. This has also formed the program for the First Phase, with additional related space planned in connection with the proposed Lucille Smith Cooking School.

Community services such as Police and Fire Stations are of great importance to the community. The Master Plan proposes to relocate the Fire Station currently on Evans Avenue near the Plaza to a location which has better access to arterial roadways and where its vehicular scale is a better fit. A key comment in the Community Workshop called for a Police Station within the community, leading to a proposal in this Master Plan for a combination Fire Station and Police Station facility near the Urban Village.

Discussion in the Community Workshop focused on the need to stimulate business opportunities within the community, recycling the economic investment made through development by establishing locally owned and operated businesses in the Urban Village. For this reason, among others, chain stores and fast-food franchises are not recommended. The Master Plan recommendation, and the community consensus, is that authentic, locally run businesses will better serve the neighborhood, and will also attract heritage tourism with a set of goods and services which are drawn from the unique life and history of the community. Please see the appendix for a variety of commercial and entertainment uses mentioned in the Community Workshop.

c. Housing

New housing to attract residents to the Urban Village is another critical ingredient. One of the major goals of the revitalization of the Urban Village is to encourage an intensity of personal interaction in the Urban Village. New residents increase the sense of activity, the "buzz" of the neighborhood. They also provide an immediate, close-in market for new commercial activities, especially helpful in early phases of development.

ConsultEcon's report calls for a range of 94 to 121 housing units, with an average annual demand of 19 to 24 for the first five years. As with the commercial demand, a First Phase program has therefore been developed at 120 units, with additional units (approximately 180) to be built in future phases, based on the land available for mixed-use buildings of suitable scale (3-5 stories) within the Urban Village.

In both First and Future Phases, a variety of housing choices is desirable, including townhouses at street level, townhouses above retail space, walkup apartments, elevator apartments, and live/work lofts. The focus is on providing housing types which will appeal to new markets, particularly young people, singles, and empty-nesters, and to provide more housing choices than have been available previously in the neighborhood. In future phases particularly, housing for seniors may be another key market area. Due to the large number of detached single-family homes available in the neighborhood, as well as appropriate space and density configurations for the value of the land, no detached single family homes are included in the program for the Urban Village.

It will be important that new housing units fit the economic scale of the community. Units should be developed at modest prices so they will not have to rely on subsidies to

be affordable, and will not unbalance the established market in the neighborhood (subsidies may nevertheless be sought as incentives for development and to make appropriate amenities affordable). The surrounding neighborhood has many examples of Arts and Crafts style houses with generous ceiling heights and well sized rooms. With careful attention to architectural and budget detail, it should be possible to create new housing which shares some of these characteristics, but which benefit from the economies of multistory construction.

Increased housing density in future phases, as soon as the market will bear, is desirable for several reasons:

- HUD, in such programs as Hope VI, set 300 units as a minimum for successfully "turning around" a neighborhood, a critical mass to achieve social change. This is based on considerable experience, and Hope VI projects at 300+ units have been highly successful in urban environments.
- Among the precedents cited in ConsultEcon's Market Study, Kansas City's 18th & Vine Historic District is building 256 new housing units; Houston 5th Ward is building 336; Deep Ellum in Dallas includes over 700 housing units; and Roxbury in Boston is building 7,726 new units. This critical mass of new housing units appears to be associated with successful urban revitalization in African-American neighborhoods.
- "Eyes on the street" are one of the best deterrents to crime. The neighborhood is recovering from decades of past crime and, more recently, an undeserved reputation for crime. Having more residents looking out on the streets as well as walking around will help deter illegal activity.

Please see the appendix for Community Workshop comments on housing.

d. Cultural Heritage and Tourism

The Vision Plan of 2000 identified heritage tourism as a major focus for the future of the Evans & Rosedale neighborhood. In the Community Workshop, community residents overwhelmingly endorsed cultural activities and heritage tourism as desirable activities for the community. Locally, this concept for revitalization has proved remarkably successful for Fort Worth's Sundance Square and also for the Stockyards.



ConsultEcon's Market Report notes that of the African-American neighborhoods which have succeeded in revitalization, all have had a major attraction such as a museum.

The Master Plan proposes a new museum, or "Cultural Headquarters", as part of the Urban Village, with 20,000 square feet of exhibit and cultural space, and 15,000 square feet of support retail, containing a café/restaurant, and shops for artists and craftspeople to sell their creative work. The Museum is proposed to give a focus for the activities of community culture and heritage tourism in the neighborhood. Its role is both as a place to visit and as a headquarters for all the many cultural activities that now exist in the community, and those which are desired for the future. As the first visible building at the I-35/Rosedale gateway, the Museum will herald the neighborhood's future as a cultural center.

- The Museum will provide an Orientation Center which greets visitors to the area, informs them about the history, current activities and future aspirations of the neighborhood, and provides information for neighborhood tours including information for accessing "street museum" activities throughout the neighborhood.
- The Museum will provide space for traveling exhibitions such as those from the African-American Museum in Dallas and other museums across the nation.
- The Museum will provide space for a permanent exhibit of photographs and other memorabilia which celebrate the history of the neighborhood, such as the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Collection, videos, interviews with community elders, information about local Black cowboys and Black Indians, quilts and quilt-making, local artists, and the relationship with Fort Worth's sister city in Swaziland.
- The Museum will provided information about other activities in the neighborhood such as drama, cinema, dance, poetry readings and other performances at the Theater, events in the Plaza such as Juneteenth, activities of clubs such as the Federated Women's Clubs, musical events at nightclubs, destination restaurants along Evans Avenue, etc.

- The Museum will be a place for children of the neighborhood, and children visiting from other neighborhoods, to learn about the history of the community and African-American culture, as well as to provide educational activities and workshops for local talent, allowing children to make art and culture an important part of their lives.
- The Museum can be part of a national network of African-American museums and cultural organizations, and can provide links via computers and other technology to other Museums across the country, as well as global networks with particular focus on Africa.
- The Museum will be Fort Worth's African-American member of the associations of Fine Arts Museums in the City, including the Arts Council of Fort Worth and Tarrant County, and can become a major Fort Worth attraction in a city which prides itself on its museums.
- The Museum will provide retail activities at street level for museum-related crafts and places for local artists to sell their work, as well as a stylish Museum café, stimulating pedestrian activity on Missouri Street.

In addition to the Museum building itself, cultural activities are planned throughout the neighborhood (Please see Evans & Rosedale and the Power of Place section of this report, and the Appendix for Community Workshop discussion of cultural activities and heritage tourism.).

e. Open Space

Open space is a critically important part of any community. Since so few buildings remain in the area designated for the Urban Village, it may be difficult to envisage the need for open space at the current time. However, with the intensity of development needed for a successful revitalization, open spaces will be an essential element which will provide gathering places, real amenities, breathing spaces, and green trees and other planting. In addition to the Evans Avenue Plaza, to be enhanced and integrated into the new development, a variety of small neighborhood parks, squares, and pedestrian ways are planned for the Urban Village and can be seen on the following pages.

Planting, particularly trees, can play a major role in the ecosystem of the community, providing shade and improving air quality as well as enhancing visual enjoyment of the

environment. Trees which shade buildings in summertime provide natural cooling, and can reduce the need for mechanical cooling systems. Mature trees also help to tell the history of a neighborhood, and provide variations in form and scale which complement buildings for a more harmonious urban composition. Accordingly, the retention of existing trees has been a priority in the location of new buildings within the Urban Village, and new street trees are planned for most streets.

Notes on Density

The height of buildings proposed in the Urban Village varies from one to five stories, based on the Mixed-Use zoning, MU-1, which is current in the neighborhood. In the first phase, existing one-story to three-story height buildings are combined with new one, two and three story buildings, for a variety which is typical of the traditional American Main Street. In the future phase, mixed-use buildings up to five stories are proposed on the northernmost blocks, closer to the downtown and similar in scale to new development taking place close to downtown.

It is important, if successful revitalization is to occur, that the density of the Urban Village is not artificially constrained to a height less than that allowed by the mixed-use zoning. The Urban Village is intended to be the highest density in this area, to have the greatest land value. This is a one-time opportunity for the community to take advantage of city-owned land to build. Failing to take advantage of this with density appropriate to the Urban Village would result in development which undervalues the land.

Building density in the Urban Village helps reinforce the walkability of the neighborhood, which is a strong goal of the community and the design team. If housing density is spread out over the whole neighborhood, more residents will live too far away to walk to the Urban Village and will use cars, thereby increasing traffic, parking, etc.

