Hurst-Bellaire Sustainable Redevelopment Plan

Executive Summary

Prepared for

City of Hurst
and
North Central Texas Council of Governments

by

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Hurst-Bellaire Study Area
INTRODUCTION

Plan Purpose
In early 2008, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and the City of Hurst initiated a study process focused on the Bellaire area in the southeast corner of the city. The objective of the study was the creation of a sustainable development plan for the Study Area that would guide Hurst, other agencies, and the private sector in future public policy and investment decisions that reflect NCTCOG’s 10 Principles of Development Excellence and the City’s Transforming Hurst vision.

NCTCOG 10 Principles of Development Excellence

The Center of Development Excellence recommends 10 Principles of Development Excellence as a guide to cities, counties, school districts, other public agencies, and the private sector as they plan and create future development and redevelopment in the region:

Development Options: Provide a variety and balance of development options and land use types in communities throughout the region
Efficient Growth: Foster redevelopment and infill of areas with existing infrastructure and promote the orderly and efficient provision of new infrastructure
Pedestrian Design: Create more neighborhoods with pedestrian-oriented features, streetscapes, and public spaces
Housing Choice: Sustain and facilitate a range of housing opportunities and choices for residents of multiple age groups and economic levels
Activity Centers: Create mixed use and transit-oriented developments that serve as centers of neighborhood and community activity
Environmental Stewardship: Protect sensitive environmental areas, preserve natural stream corridors, and create developments that minimize impact on natural features
Quality Places: Strengthen community identity through use of compatible, quality architectural and landscape designs and preservation of significant historic structures
Transportation Efficiency: Develop land uses, building sites, and transportation infrastructure that enhance the efficient movement of people, goods, and services
Resource Efficiency: Provide functional, adaptable, and sustainable building and site designs that use water, energy, and material resources effectively and efficiently
Implementation: Adopt comprehensive plans and ordinances that support Development Excellence and involve citizens and stakeholders in all aspects of the planning process


Plan Objectives
The City of Hurst, in accordance with its Transforming Hurst initiative, had several key objectives for the plan to achieve:

1. Perform a housing and commercial market analysis and develop economic and land use strategies for re-development of an underutilized strip center and adjacent multi-family complex.
2. Prepare a realistic development plan that will guide short-term and long-term neighborhood-wide improvements in the project area including recommendations to:
a. Improve overall neighborhood character,
b. Increase home-ownership opportunities,
c. Provide desirable market rate housing,
d. Integrate workers and residents in a desirable and vibrant mixed-income neighborhood setting,
e. Improve overall safety, desirability, and attractiveness of the area, and
f. Encourage stakeholder collaboration in on-going redevelopment efforts and community building,

3. Create an example and catalyst for similar redevelopment along the Pipeline Road and Bedford-Euless Road corridors.

**Plan Process**

By the fall of 2008, a consultant team led by the CDS Market Research | Spillette Consulting Alliance began work on the study. The team visited the Study Area and completed a review of existing conditions and previous studies. During the fall the team performed an economic analysis, the results of which were presented at a well attended Stakeholder Meeting in November.

Following the Stakeholder Meeting, the team began the development of concept plan alternatives for the Study Area. By February 2009, the team had fully developed two alternatives. At a Community Meeting on February 4, the team presented the two concepts and received feedback both during and after the meeting. The comments from the Community led to the selection of a preferred alternative and the drafting of the Redevelopment Plan report. The preferred alternative was presented to a joint meeting of the City of Hurst City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Economic Development Advisory Committee on March 30, 2009. The final Redevelopment Plan report was completed during late spring 2009.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

The team kicked off its work in the Study Area by analyzing its existing conditions and reviewing a number of previous planning efforts that covered it.

**Existing Conditions**

Key features of the existing conditions that the team observed include:

- Predominately older single family housing, with small areas of recent infill subdivisions
- Large areas of 1970s-era apartments, some in deteriorated condition
- Aging retail centers, some with a high level of vacancy
- Little vacant land
- Automobile-oriented environment
- Lack of enhancement and coordination in streetscape, particularly along Pipeline Road
- Ethnic diversity, with particularly notable Hispanic presence
- Strongly supported Artisan Center Theater with an inadequate physical facility
- Large park in southern part of Study Area with limited public access due to adjacent private properties
- Lack of connectivity due to deficient street grid and fencing between large properties

**Review of Previous Studies and Plans**

The team reviewed the following studies and plans to better understand where the City and citizens of Hurst wanted to take the community and build upon previously generated ideas:

- Hurst City Council Strategic Plan Vision
- Hurst Mixed-Use Ordinance and Mixed-Use Zoning Overlay
- Pipeline Road Action Plan
- Transforming Hurst initiative
- City of Hurst Parks Master Plan
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- City of Hurst Capital Improvement Plan
- Bellaire Drive reconstruction bond proposal
- Safe Routes to School – Bellaire
- Tarrant County bonds – Pipeline Road
- Market study and appraisal for Trinity Ranch Estates

The plans revealed the community’s increasing emphasis on place making, revitalization, mixed-use, and aesthetic attractiveness.

Economic and Market Analysis

An economic and market analysis, focusing on residential and retail uses, formed the basis of the concept planning for the Study Area. A separate Economic Analysis report was produced. Key findings and recommendations of that report included:

- Economic and physical conditions are currently deterrents to new retail and multifamily development in the Study Area. However, new single family housing is viable if it is moderately priced.
- The deteriorating conditions of the multifamily apartment complexes create an additional hurdle for improvement of other uses.
- Retail uses are oversupplied in the Study Area, particularly in light of nearby competition at newer retail centers. Despite these conditions, some level of neighborhood-serving retail should continue to be viable.
- Large one-owner tracts of aging multifamily and retail properties facilitate redevelopment into single family or other uses.
- The economics of property purchases, infrastructure improvements, and moderate pricing of new homes presents financial challenges to redevelopment for single family uses.
- To further enhance market viability, the concept plan should build upon or create other assets of the Study Area including the Artisan Center Theater, public parks, streetscapes, and a new street grid.

The Economic and Market Analysis was presented to a Study Area Stakeholder group, consisting of property and business owners, on November 20, 2008. The comments received at the meeting confirmed and agreed with the study findings.

Conclusions and Implications for the Concept Plan

Efforts to create sustainable development districts often focus on increasing residential density, adding local commercial activity, and creating new public spaces. However, the findings of the preceding tasks made it clear to the consultant team that an unconventional approach would be necessary. As the project moved into the conceptual planning phase, the team identified key implications for the plan’s framework:

1. Capitalize on the market opportunity for new single family housing.
2. Reduce the quantity of aged retail space.
3. Improve connectivity to the existing parks and the Pipeline Road commercial corridor.
4. Build on the community’s desire to improve Pipeline Road.
5. Incorporate and enhance opportunities for civic and cultural activity such as the Artisan Center Theater.

CONCEPT PLANS

After the conclusion of the Economic and Market Analysis, the team began to formulate a framework that would evolve into two concept plan alternatives.

Tradeoffs and Emphases

To arrive at these alternatives, the team examined a number of areas where tradeoffs or differences in emphasis would need to be made:

Artisan Center Theater – With a new facility needed, should it be a part of the plan, or assume the theater leaves?
Where to locate commercial and civic activity – Keep this activity focused on Pipeline or in places more internal to the Study Area?

**Internal streets** - The team decided that forgoing a new internal street network was NOT an option – enhanced connectivity to support a sustainable plan was a must.

**Retail quantity** – Reduce total retail space only slightly, assuming support from surrounding neighborhoods, or more substantially, with a focus on serving the immediate Study Area?

**Arts district vs. neighborhood** – Recreate a community identity based on arts activity or its residential ambience?

**Role of Pipeline Road** – High-volume, fast-moving conduit from surrounding areas or a more leisurely, intimate “main street” for the Bellaire community?

**Focus of placemaking** – Create the epicenter of placemaking value at the Brown Trail / Pipeline intersection or at the north end of Vivigene Copeland Park?

**Redevelopment Timing / Phasing**

An assessment of individual properties by the team indicated that the major near term candidates for redevelopment are the large multitenant retail centers on Pipeline (Belaire and Village Square) and some of the multifamily properties, such as Wellesley, Whispering Run, and Glen Rose. The vacant parcel on the south side of Pecan, just east of Brown Trail, would also be included in this time frame. Vivagene Copeland Park also presents opportunities for early improvements. In the middle term, Kinney’s Automotive and the Sutton Square Apartments represent significant potential redevelopment sites.

**Two Alternative Concepts**

After these additional analyses, two concept plan alternatives emerged:

* **The Neighborhood**
  
  Designed to be a district centered on its own residents, The Neighborhood featured the following:
  
  • An intimate and neighborhood scale character with a focus and attention to Bellaire Park
  • Small cultural gathering opportunities such as a band stand; the theater company is assumed to leave Bellaire
  • Small neighborhood retail opportunities centered around the Kroger between Pipeline Road and the neighborhood park
  • Pedestrian oriented streetscape and scale along Pipeline Road with on-street parking
  • Create network grid of internal streets and sidewalks for increased pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation

* **The Arts District**
  
  In contrast to The Neighborhood’s self-contained orientation, the Arts District was intended to appeal not only to Bellaire residents but also draw from a wider area due to the greater amount of commercial and civic activities:
  
  • Focus on creating an Art and Entertainment District
  • Redevelop the Artisan Theater
  • Create a community commercial node at the intersection of Pipeline and the re-alignment of Brown Trail
  • Internal focus around a main street plaza and gathering space
  • Re-define Pipeline as a boulevard road supporting vehicular circulation as an east-west thoroughfare
  • Create network grid of internal streets and sidewalks for increased pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation

**Community Meeting**

The City of Hurst organized a meeting at Hurts Christian Church on the evening of February 4, 2009. In addition to the Stakeholder group to whom the team had already presented, the City invited Study Area residents. Approximately 40 attendees heard a presentation by the team describing the two concept plan alternatives. The attendees were asked to ask
questions and make comments verbally, via comment cards, and afterward via email to the City. They were also asked to express their preference for one concept alternative before they left the meeting.

Key sentiments expressed in attendees’ comments and additional feedback included:

- Concern over existing congestion and traffic implications of the concepts
- Concern over rising crime and vandalism and the need for better lighting
- Questioning of where funding will come from for improvements and amenities
- Support for redevelopment of existing apartment properties and mitigation of perceived negative impacts that occur now
- Support for improving green spaces and access to them from surrounding residential areas

Regarding the selection of a preferred alternative, attendees overwhelmingly chose the Arts District concept. The team subsequently presented the Arts District as the concept plan for the Study Area. However, it is possible that future developments could include elements of both concepts.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Critical Success Factors and LEED-ND

The Arts District concept satisfied the critical success factors that had been identified by NCTCOG and the City of Hurst:

- **Physical connections and linkages for vehicular and non-motorized travel** – The lack of an internal street grid forces all traffic onto Pecan, Brown Trail, Pipeline, and Bellaire, and substantially increases distances for pedestrian and bicycle travel. The plan creates new pathways so that non-motorized travel has more practical routes to key destinations and vehicles place fewer burdens on existing thoroughfares and collectors.

- **Re-orientation of the commercial strip center** – In addition to declining economically, the large strip centers along Pipeline present an aesthetically unwelcoming frontage set back behind large areas of paved parking that deter pedestrian access. The plan proposes new configurations of commercial uses that add placemaking value as well as enhance multimodal access.

- **Carve out under-utilized large parking fields for maximized opportunity** – The retail parking areas represent large amounts of underutilized land that increase storm and chemical runoff to downstream ecosystems while generating no revenue for property owners. The plan substantially reduces the area devoted to surface parking resulting in a much more efficient economic and environmental impact while still satisfying parking needs.

- **Create a public plaza or permanent open space for community events representing Hispanic community** – Hardscaped civic space for planned community events targeted to the local Hispanic population (and others) is currently nonexistent in Bellaire. The plan provides multiple venues for such activities, including indoor spaces such as an amphitheater and band shell.

- **Link Vivagene Copeland Park to the surrounding neighborhood** – Vivagene Copeland Park is currently only accessible through its frontage on Pecan Street. The plan creates multiple new pathways that allow residents and visitors improved access to this centerpiece open space.

- **Create an arts / entertainment district** – The Artisan Center Theater lends an element of a regional arts destination today to the area. The plan proposes an improved facility for the Theater and other arts groups, plus it suggests that commercial and residential space be oriented towards arts-related uses. This will serve to draw visitors to Bellaire from other areas and enhance its regional profile as an arts and entertainment destination.

- **Fill-in and connect pedestrian linkages and sidewalks with street grid design** – Sidewalks in Bellaire are today limited, especially because of the lack of an internal street grid. Holes and informal (illegal) pathways through existing fences indicate a strong desire for pedestrian travel in the Study Area that is not accommodated by the public street system. The plan formalizes and legitimizes pedestrian travel by adding sidewalk-lined public streets and pleasant streetscapes.

- **Find home for the police sub-station** – The economic and physical deterioration of existing properties, plus the appearance of graffiti, has created public safety concerns in the community. The City of Hurst is considering a new police substation in the general Bellaire area. The plan accommodates this investment with a site that serves both the police department by providing easy access to Pipeline Road but also increases it visibility within the newly created arts district and is quickly accessible to the residential population.

Team member Design Workshop also performed LEED-ND analysis on the concept plan to test its sustainability according to the draft rating system developed by the United States Green Building Council.

The Arts District Concept Plan is depicted in the map on the following page. Key specific elements of the plan are listed on Page 9, with reference to the items on the plan map.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Plan Elements

List below refers to numbered items on preceding plan map.

Streets and Transportation
1. “Boulevard” treatment for Pipeline Road
2. Realignment of Brown Trail where it crosses Pipeline
3. New internal street grid network
4. New “event” street in key placemaking area near the new theater building
5. On-street parking added to several streets

Civic and Cultural Facilities
6. New Theater / Cultural Arts Center to house Artisan Center Theater, sharing parking with nearby uses
7. Festival space on the new “event” street
8. Small plaza / performance space in Vivagene Copeland Park
9. New police facility near Kroger along Pipeline Road

Open Space / Parks
10. Extension of Vivagene Copeland Park to the north
11. Improved connection to open space adjacent to Arwine Cemetery
12. New small pocket parks

Hypothetical Land Uses
- Single family residential dominant in redeveloped areas – regular, small detached, and townhouse lots
- New multifamily, retail, and vertical mixed-use development near “event” street and north end of park to capitalize on placemaking improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Summary</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifamily residential (1,000 sq.ft. avg., 1.5 pkg. / du)</td>
<td>422,000 sq.ft. (422 units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-use residential (upper floors)</td>
<td>216,000 sq.ft. (216 units)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed-use retail / commercial (bottom floor, 1 pkg. / 300 sq.ft.)</td>
<td>108,000 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail / commercial single use (single story)</td>
<td>18,000 sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phasing Summary
1. **1st Phase** – Focus on public improvements – Brown Trail realignment, Vivagene Copeland Park extension and connecting streets, and new theater / cultural arts center if private sector provides sufficient resources
2. **2nd Phase** – Large-scale redevelopment of apartment complexes into single family and new internal street network, infill redevelopment along Pipeline; portions of Phases 1 and 2 may be combined if a public / private partnership with a developer can be achieved
3. **3rd Phase** – Redevelopment of retail properties into multifamily, mixed-use and commercial, creation of “event” street
STREETSCAPES

Implementing a system of streetscapes along existing and new streets is integral to the concept plan. The street system of Study Area is proposed to create an organized system of transportation, not just for the automobile but for bicycles and pedestrians as well. These streets have been created to offer the best relationship between the adjacent land use and necessary bicycle, pedestrian and automobile circulation. In essence, the width of the right-of-way was determined based on existing standards, anticipated adjacent land use, the need for bicycle and pedestrian space, and parking needs.

A complete streetscape plan, including design cross-sections, is included in the full Redevelopment Plan report.

FINANCING CONSIDERATIONS

Financing Objectives and Issues

Financing Objectives

Because the success of this plan will depend heavily on major new investments by the private sector, the financing approaches employed by the City of Hurst and other public agencies must support some general objectives.

1. Planned investments must be clearly defined and display a certainty of being carried out. The private sector treats uncertainty as a cost; if a private development project depends on a public investment for success, the size and scope of the investment must be known in advance and subject to as few discretionary changes as possible.

2. Investments should be timely and systematic, especially for public/private partnerships. A defined process should be installed for developers to enter into agreements. The public share of investments should be scheduled to not be overly burdensome to the developer (for example, time periods for reimbursements should not be excessive).

3. To avoid displacing investments and other spending from other deserving locations within Hurst, where possible the City should seek to fund Bellaire investments from the additional value created by redevelopment within the district.

4. True success is achieved when the market begins implementing plan objectives on its own, without direct public sector assistance – self-replication.

Important Issues

Implementation of the concept plan will take place in a dynamic environment subject to market forces, most of which are not in the City of Hurst's (or other public agencies') control. However, it is important that the implementing agencies acknowledge important considerations in their financing approaches that will help increase the odds of market success for the desired development types.

1. The Concept Plan implementation depends upon the redevelopment of existing, income-producing properties. Assuming that the City of Hurst does not want to engage in a massive land assembly program for the entire Study Area, achieving this will require existing property owners to sell their property to a private developer or redevelop it themselves. This means they will need a compelling financial reason to do so - either the properties' sale prices or the financial rewards from engaging in their own redevelopment would need to be higher than the present value of their properties’ income stream.

2. Many elements in the Plan represent investments in public or civic facilities and infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, utilities, parks, and in one alternative, a new theater. While providing amenities to the neighborhood and helping to address sustainability, these elements raise the overall cost of Plan implementation. From a private development perspective, the cost of providing these elements may hurt the financial feasibility of the redevelopment. More specifically, the rents or sale prices of the new development that would be needed for satisfactory financial feasibility may not be achievable in the Study Area market, particularly in the near term. Further cost estimation and financial analysis will be necessary to determine the extent of this challenge.

In developing some potential financing approaches for the Plan, it is important to recognize that these two issues are closely related. The lower the cost of infrastructure and amenities, the greater the likelihood of a development’s financial
feasibility while offering product at affordable prices to the market. The developer will be able to offer a higher price to the existing property owners, therefore more likely inducing a sale.

**Financing Approaches**

A more complete discussion of financing alternatives to fund improvements in the Study Area and attract investment in redevelopment is included in the full report. Potential financing options include:

1. **Tax increment financing**
   - Help reimburse developers for public infrastructure and amenities
   - Potential to leverage funds from other jurisdictions and agencies
   - Gives City leverage in upholding sustainable design principles
   - Further financial analysis needed

2. **City of Hurst General and Community Services funds**
   - Especially applicable for park improvements; possible for theater / cultural arts center
   - Opportunities for public / private / nonprofit partnerships

3. **Other incentive programs**
   - Neighborhood Empowerment Zone
   - Chapter 380 agreements

4. **Federal and regional transportation programs**
   - Federal programs – CMAQ, upcoming transportation bill reauthorization
   - NCTCOG Sustainable Development Funding Program

5. **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

6. **Private / nonprofit sector – area foundations, theater supporters**

It should be emphasized that more intensive financial analysis of redevelopment options is needed to truly understand where feasibility gaps exist, how large they are, and what is the most effective means of addressing them.