

# Part I: Study Overview



In February 2000, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Board of Directors approved the Locally Preferred Investment Strategy (LPIS) for the Northwest Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS).

This approval was the culmination of a two-year effort to define future transportation needs within the Northwest quadrant of Dallas County. The primary focus of this effort was to determine possible rail connections between DFW International Airport, the City of Irving, the University of Dallas, Texas Stadium, Dallas Love Field and Downtown Dallas.

The LPIS included the approval of a light rail alignment that served these areas under the following conditions:

A city-sponsored comprehensive land use study must be completed to identify transit oriented development opportunities in the corridor, as well as, determine the most beneficial alignment for rail in a complex, mixed-use development; the participation of the City, developers, and other entities in the funding of the project; and an Interlocal agreement between the City of Irving and DART be signed by December 1, 2000.

In addition, a key consideration was the location of the Las Colinas Urban Center within the study area. The arrival of regional transit to the Urban Center is anticipated to serve as the catalyst for a significant level of growth in the nationally recognized Las Colinas Development. The Northwest Corridor represents the City's single largest opportunity for both qualitative and quantitative development over the next thirty years.

The City of Irving hired RTKL Associates Inc. in March to conduct a comprehensive land use plan. The team was to identify a preferred rail alignment and associated transportation plans, a land use plan based upon this light rail alignment, and economic benefit and feasibility analysis. The challenge was to fully incorporate the light rail alignment through the corridor and direct a truly optimum solution, which maximizes economic development opportunities through infrastructure investment.

The following pages outline a comprehensive effort to re-assess the development dynamics of a prime corridor within the City of Irving as they relate to the implementation of light rail transit from Texas Stadium to the north Urban Center of Las Colinas. The study area has been divided into four Sub-Areas, each with unique opportunities for development.



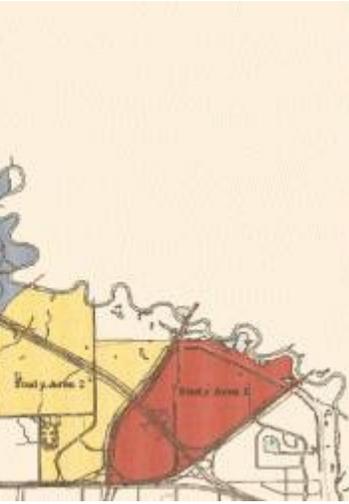
Whereas large areas within the Corridor are well established and feature strong individual identities, a considerable amount of acreage remains undeveloped or is suitable to redevelopment into better uses. The Las Colinas Urban Center, despite its many attractions and worldwide recognition as a development landmark, has not experienced development proportional to the amount of construction elsewhere in the region. Although land parcels adjacent to Texas Stadium and the University of Dallas are either vacant or poorly utilized, they are well served by major highways and abut the unique natural resources of the Trinity River and related Campion Trails improvements.

There are constraints to development in the corridor which include traffic limitations of key streets, administration of the Urban Center's Supplementary Declarations, current zoning and policy restrictions, as well as the marketplace's perception that the development process in the Urban Center is encumbered (DCURD tax rate, deed restrictions, APT requirements, time for development review, etc).

Although this study specifically focuses on the alignment of light rail and station placement through the corridor, our land use and implementation recommendations take these constraints into account and offer suggestions towards their alleviation. Our recommendations are designed to guide the City in the best use of the land that is immediately affected by light rail; but also re-evaluate the potential of the Corridor as a whole, identifying development opportunities that would promote synergies of use and activity.

The construction of light rail in this corridor marks an exciting opportunity for the City of Irving. The recommendations given in this report, including a critical path to implementation, are designed to assist in the guidance of the major changes that will result from the presence of light rail. The Northwest Corridor represents the City's single largest opportunity for both qualitative

and quantitative development over the next thirty years and future, more detailed planning should strive to further the visions outlined in this report in order to benefit the Corridor interests and the community at large.



## Methodology

This Report summarizes a multi-layered study process that involved the City of Irving staff, DART, corridor stakeholders and the general public. The study methodology aimed to coordinate diverse input from all interested parties in order to best achieve a land use plan that combined the expectations of the community with our own transit-related experience towards the preparation of a plan for future development related to the light rail system. Three-dimensional imagery was used in tandem with more technical plan and section graphics when conducting public presentations and group discussions to facilitate a clear vision of proposed alternatives and its spatial characteristics.

This land use study includes four sub-areas, that when combined are referred to as Study Area: Sub-Area 1/Texas Stadium; Sub-Area 2/University of Dallas; Sub-Area 3/South Urban Center to O'Connor Boulevard and Sub-Area 4/North Urban Center.

## Tour of the Washington, DC/Baltimore Area

RTKL conducted a tour of the Washington, DC/Baltimore area early in the process which focused on the successes and failures of transit oriented development (TOD) along the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)'s Rosslyn/Ballston lines and Baltimore Inner Harbor. Diagram 1.2 shows a comparison between the DART Northwest Corridor line and WMATA Rosslyn/Ballston line to give a better understanding of the scale comparison between the two.

Although the Metrorail is a heavy rail type of transit, it is nationally recognized for the many successful developments around its station areas.

## Tour of DART Station Areas

In addition to the Washington, DC/Baltimore area tour, RTKL conducted a tour of the DART light rail station areas around the Dallas Metroplex. Several stations were toured and there was opportunity to evaluate developments around DART stations regarding land uses, density, building types and resulting physical environments. The tour was also important to further understand the light rail system utilized by DART and its general characteristics as light rail trains and tracks, station design and landscaping, accessibility, art and signage elements.

## Planning Toward Transit Oriented Development



The opportunity for transit oriented development around the light rail stations, although more complex than typical non-intensive development occurring outside of the Study Area, creates the potential for the type of exciting urban environments found in cities such as Washington, DC, Boston, San Francisco, etc. As such, land use should be planned so that it supports higher densities that are active during the day and into the evening. Such activity promotes sustainable development in which the potential for sharing of resources such as parking and amenities is maximized.

There are three basic tenets to this type of transit-oriented development that are key to its success. Addressing these tenets will provide the opportunity for light rail to be capitalized upon. Throughout the planning process the RTKL Team looked for ways to incorporate these tenets into the several concept alternatives for the rail alignment and the Corridor's land uses. These basic transit-oriented development tenets are also known as "the 3 Ds":

#### Density

Encourage critical number of workers and residents within reasonable walking distance.

#### Diversity

Promote a viable mixture of land uses, housing types and ways of circulating.

#### Design

Create physical features and site layouts conducive to walking, biking, and transit riding in a memorable environment.

It is important to note that the many benefits of public transit and light rail in particular are "crystallized" around station areas, where stations act as a catalysts for economic and social activities.