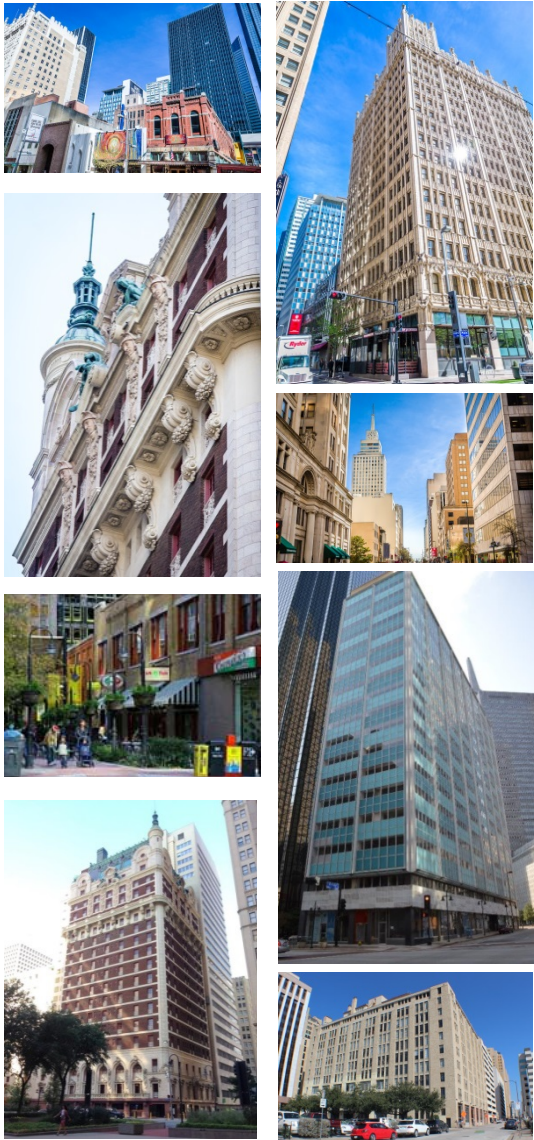


DOWNTOWN DALLAS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE

Executive Summary: Findings and Recommendations

FINAL REPORT April 1, 2015



“Historic Preservation creates profits and economic development for Dallas. It is our competitive advantage. We have a resource, and we’re going to lose it. We don’t want to squander what we already have. It is unique to Downtown.”

– *Downtown Historic Preservation Task Force*

Downtown Dallas’s historic buildings are valuable, limited resources proven to be major catalysts for growth. Dallas has a history of recognizing the importance of its existing buildings to its economic and cultural health. But now, as Downtown re-emerges as a highly desirable place to live, work, and play, we must do more to position our historic resources as assets that should be used to build upon as the backbone of this resurgence.

Dallas’s preservation program was once a model for the nation, fully integrated into the larger planning efforts of the City. Best practices in many comparative metropolitan areas use preservation as a planning tool. In contrast, the Dallas Program has become largely reactive. Instead, the Preservation program must become participatory by including planning as its main activity in coordination with other departments to accomplish the larger goals of the City.

Preservation must shift from a position of reaction to one that influences change.

Recommendations

The Task Force has identified the following phased approach for the Mayor and City Council to consider. It will benefit Downtown stakeholders, overcome existing challenges to the mutual benefits of historic preservation and development, and change the perception of preservation as a hindrance to one of fostering change. Support must come from leadership in the City of Dallas, as well as from the community of stakeholders.

Phase 1: Immediate Solutions (0-12 months)

1. Advocacy: Establish broad-based Preservation Solutions Committee to advocate for historic fabric and be its voice as the City grows and evolves. Its first order of business is to help implement the following recommendations.

2. Simplify Designation: Streamline the landmark designation application and process.

3. Assess Staffing: Broaden staff capabilities to include planning and provide a new focus on public education. Review staff priorities to expedite landmark designations, file certificates of appropriateness, field inquiries, and assist owners with incentives. Fund two additional planners.

4. Demolition Delay: Enhance notification and expand staff review time for proposed demolition of historic buildings in Greater Downtown to foster dialogue and consider alternatives.

Phase 2: Near Term Solutions (1 to 3 years)

5. Education: Educate the public about the goals and accomplishments of preservation.

6. Downtown Survey: Conduct a new, state-of-the-art survey of Greater Downtown as a base-layer for direction, to establish preservation priorities, and to provide a tool for existing and future planning. Explore funding sources such as Community Development Block Grants, Certified Local Government money, and private foundations.

7. Incentives: Identify strategies and incentives that address market conditions and barriers to re-development to re-animate vacant and underutilized buildings, such as: more flexibility in preservation criteria, parking requirements, permitting, and code requirements.

Phase 3: Long Term Solutions (3 to 5 years)

8. Preservation Plan: Prepare and adopt a new Preservation Plan for Dallas to address the programs and policies that impact the City’s historic urban fabric. Explore funding sources such as public/private partnerships, private foundations, and private sector money.

9. Planning: Create a forum for strategic interdepartmental partnerships where a common interest is being pursued such as Capital Improvements, Tax Increment Finance Districts, and Use/Zoning, and certain aspects of Economic Development.