

2019 was a year of significant forward progress for east Fort Worth.

Here is a brief recap of some of the positive things that took place:

Important Actions by Local Government (2019)

Fort Worth City Council approved a Public Improvement District (PID) for East Lancaster Avenue from Riverside Drive to Loop 820 in February. This was the result of a successful 2018 petition effort which commits all private property owners in the District to pay a special tax to fund the PID for the next ten years. The tax money will be used to benefit all the businesses in the district. The PID is gearing up to deploy a private security service to aid in safety and security in early 2020.

Fort Worth City Council approved an ordinance in August to make it easier to deal with situations where homeless people are camping on properties and there is difficulty reaching the property owner. This ordinance will keep homeless people from living in unhealthy situations, while at the same time keeping the community safe.

After working closely with neighborhood leadership early in the year, a zoning change

for the 66-unit Sunset at Fash Place affordable housing community (for ages 55 and up) was approved by City Council. Construction plans have been submitted and a building permit will be issued shortly. Groundbreaking could be just days from now at 2504 Oakland Blvd, just north of the Oakland Corners urban village.

Zoning for a new three-story senior living center with townhomes at 1050 Woodhaven Blvd was approved by City Council in October. Plans are in development and construction should start in mid-2020.

Tarrant County Commissioners approved a game room ordinance in November, which will regulate these businesses in a way the city of Fort Worth attempted to do (which did not survive a court challenge). This new 29-page ordinance will (among other things) regulate hours of operation and distance requirements for game rooms with six or more machines. This should lessen or even

eliminate their presence as negative contributors in our neighborhoods. Through an interlocal agreement with the city of Fort Worth, full enforcement begins in April 2020.

Fort Worth City Council approved the downzoning of a large swath of the remaining rural acreage in east Fort Worth in November (generally northeast of I-30 and Loop 820) in order to protect the rural way of life those property owners enjoy. This was a neighborhood-initiated effort, backed by the council member for that area.

Fort Worth City Council approved a zoning ordinance amendment in December restricting new “small box discount stores.” The amendment requires that future dollar stores not locate within two miles of an existing dollar store, and that at least ten percent of the store must include fresh produce, meat, and dairy products.

Physical Enhancements to Our Community (2019)

Texas Wesleyan University opened its new Nick and Lou Martin Student Center in the center of the campus in time for the fall semester. In addition to serving student needs, the facility includes a three hundred-seat conference space for use by the community.

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Nolan Catholic High School launched a \$40 million capital campaign and campus expansion. In addition to improvements to existing facilities to improve functionality, security, and appearance over the next few years, work is underway on their fieldhouse and IDEA (Integrated Design, Engineering, and Art) building. Construction is planned for completion in 2020. See <https://www.nolancatholic.org/expanding-the-experience>.

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Work continued on the Riverwalk Residences, a townhouse community near 4th Street and Sylvania Avenue. To date, two four-story buildings have been constructed and are nearly complete. See <https://www.riverwalkhomes.com/>.

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Nana's Kitchen opened at 7403 John T. White Road very early in the year, and has already built a strong following for those who enjoy comfort food. Plans to expand to Arlington and Mansfield are under consideration.

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Joe Risky's Barbeque opened in February at 1734 El Paso Street in the Near Eastside neighborhood. A relative of the original Risky's Barbeque family, Joe is running an independent business operating in association with Wild Acre Brewery.

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Ben's Triple B (Biscuits, Burgers, and Brews) opened at 3020 East Rosedale Street in late spring and has been a hit with Texas Wesleyan students and eastsiders. It is the second restaurant concept launched by "Chopped" winner Ben Merritt, and has received a lot of favorable local press.

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Black Coffee, a new coffee shop serving the Texas Wesleyan community at 1417 Vaughn, opened in November. Early reviews are very positive.

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Albertson's supermarket at 850 E. Loop 820 completed a major remodeling effort in the fall, rewarding the store's status as the busiest Albertson's in the metroplex. An in-store Starbucks is expected in January.

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Exceptional Emergency Center, east Fort Worth's first standalone emergency room, opened in the spring at Eastchase Parkway and I-30.

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After some preparatory steps in late 2018, reconstruction and widening of East Loop 820 from State Highway 10 south to Randol Mill Rd moved to an active phase. The work includes a full interchange with East Loop 820 and Highway 121, replacing the stop sign that drivers encounter as they leave Highway 121 for southbound Loop 820.

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The Army Corps of Engineers began creating a "valley storage site" in Gateway Park as part of the eventual completion of the Panther Island bypass channel. The removed soil will replace the contaminated soil in the old Riverside sewage treatment plant location in the middle of the park. These efforts are part of delivering a first-class park for Fort Worth and the region.

Neighborhoods (2019)

Fort Worth Magazine listed the Meadowbrook neighborhood in February as one of five “Neighborhoods on the Rise.” See the magazine article here <https://fwtx.com/news/features/five-fort-worth-neighborhoods-rise/>.

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League Real Estate listed Meadowbrook in March as one of “three neighborhoods worth a look.” See the article here <https://leaguere.com/three-affordable-fort-worth-neighborhoods-worth-a-look/>.

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We continue to see new families discovering the charm of our historic neighborhoods. Roll-off dumpsters were a common sight in 2019 as homes are being remodeled and new investment is occurring.

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New homes continue to be built in our far eastern areas, and infill housing construction is taking place in west Meadowbrook, central Meadowbrook, Polytechnic, and other parts of our older communities.

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Eastside Blossoms continued its volunteer project of planting flowering trees along

major thoroughfares in east Fort Worth. With a goal of 2,000 trees, to date over 1,300 trees have been planted, with 325 new trees planted in 2019. These efforts have also given rise to a similar state-wide initiative known as Texas Blossoms. See <https://www.eastsideblossoms.org/>

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The Eastside Blossoms project spawned creation of two murals along Randol Mill Road, the second of which (featuring a butterfly and redbud blossoms) was completed in 2019. Fort Worth ISD students painted the mural, supervised by artist Jimmy Jenkins.

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A significant number of trees were planted along a nearly mile-long stretch of median on John T White Road near Eastchase Parkway at the D R Horton Company’s expense. This was a part of the penalty for destruction of protected trees in their nearby housing development. While they will not replace the lost native trees, the new trees improve the streetscape and are an important part of efforts to eventually have thirty percent of the city under tree canopy.

Neighborhood advocates continue to be vigilant to inappropriate changes in our community:

- A number of unsuitable zoning changes and variances were denied by our city leadership this year, with neighborhood associations leading the charge.
- A number of people who clutter our neighborhoods with bandit signs got fined, due to the perseverance of neighbors. Others saw their signs have minimal effect, often removed about as fast as they were installed.
- Neighborhood leaders worked with city officials by focusing on longstanding property maintenance issues. Often these issues take years to resolve and require a substantial time commitment in an effort to assist our neighborhoods.
- A court injunction was issued under Chapter 125 of Texas Civil Code for the T L Food Store at 3227 East Lancaster in April. The 150-day injunction (now ended) required specific performance by the property owner to resolve chronic issues with crime and property maintenance. Neighborhood leaders are hopeful that this action will compel a lasting positive change for this property and the community at large.

Innovation/Education (2019)

East Fort Worth is at the forefront of the urban garden movement in the city. After supporters spent several months working with city staff on implementing permitting processes for the new urban agriculture ordinance, Ms. Maudia Hamilton's Urban Farm on Willard Road near Lake Arlington became the first to obtain a Land Use Certificate of Occupancy.

Opal's Farm was also established this year on the banks of the Trinity River, and produced 3,500 pounds of food in its first year. For more information, see <https://www.keranews.org/post/opals-farm-launches-bring-produce-fort-worths-food-deserts>.

There are now four urban farms up and running in east and southeast Fort Worth, collectively known as Grow Southeast. For more information, see <https://www.unthsc.edu/school-of-public-health/grow-southeast-fighting-food-insecurity-one-farm-at-a-time/>

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Healthy Tarrant County Collaboration has been testing strategies to increase healthy food accessibility in east and southeast Fort Worth for the last three years, with the intention of replicating success elsewhere in the city. The main focus is finding convenience stores willing to stock an expanded selection of grocery items to better serve our communities with healthy food choices. Ramey Market was the first location to go online in 2016 (serving Stop Six). Three more east Fort Worth locations were added in 2019: Meadowbrook Food Store (serving Ryanwood and Handley), Carniceria La Altena (serving west Meadowbrook), and Shamrock On The Go Food Mart (serving central Meadowbrook).

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For the second year, east Fort Worth participated in Global Entrepreneurship Week activities with *Igniting Urban Cores*, held in the new student center at Texas Wesleyan University in November. Aimed at raising the east Fort Worth's profile in entrepreneurship circles, the

conference was attended by about seventy participants and featured a panel of pioneers in local redevelopment.

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The Fort Worth ISD opened their new Teaching and Learning Center on Bridgewood Drive. The facility houses a portion of their Technology division and the Career and Technical Education department. Other departments are expected to move into this renovated former grocery store in 2020.

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As it has done for many years, the East Fort Worth Business Association (EFWBA) held its annual banquet in November, the centerpiece of which is awarding scholarships to deserving high school seniors. Six scholarships valued at \$500 each were awarded to students from Eastern Hills, Nolan, Dunbar, and Polytechnic High Schools, and Texas Can Academy and Young Men's Leadership Academy.

EFWBA's strong commitment to education also includes money for books for east side school libraries throughout the year.