

*2022 was another year of significant progress for east Fort Worth.
Here is a brief recap of some of the positive things that took place.*

Education and Libraries

Polytechnic High School completed a \$52M renovation, providing for more career and technical education and a new science wing. Now all three east Fort Worth public high schools have been expanded and renovated for the coming decades.

Design work began on two new FWISD elementary schools which will be built in east Fort Worth, replacing existing 1950s-vintage buildings. Eastern Hills Elementary and Maudrie Walton Elementary will be built with large open community spaces and plenty of natural light (similar to several other recent new schools in the district). Construction is set to start in late 2023. These two new schools will represent nearly \$90M in new construction in our community.

Meadowbrook Elementary School was chosen for a pilot reading program to improve reading skills in third through fifth grade. Instead of children reading a book

chosen by the teacher, the students choose books they are drawn to. This new program was showcased in a local television report: <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/carter-in-the-classroom/fort-worth-isd-to-expand-reading-program-after-pilot-success/2975473/>. The reading program was rolled out in the fall to all elementary schools in the district. In 2022, Meadowbrook Elementary received an A rating from the Texas Education Agency.

Texas Wesleyan University opened The Rosedale, an apartment-style residence hall for 101 non-freshman students and students with spouses or dependent children. This \$10.5M facility anchors a prominent corner just southeast of the campus core, and is a further indication of the growth of this important economic driver and educational institution in east Fort Worth.

Texas Wesleyan University broke ground on a new \$16.6M football stadium as the next

step in reviving their football team. The TWU Rams began playing again in 2012, after a 74-year “break,” prompted by the country’s entry into World War II. The stadium is planned to be built in phases, with the playing field and lighting coming first.

Rocketship Dennis Dunkins Elementary, a 46,000 square foot charter school serving students in the Stop Six neighborhood, opened its doors. The flagship school campus currently serves 350 students in pre-kindergarten to third grade and is on its way to eventually serving students through fifth grade.

The East Regional Library received a new public art installation called Wildflower, dedicated in July. The art is an abstraction of wildflowers as seen along Texas highways. The design features steel vertical elements whose color palette inspiration comes from native species of Texas wildflowers. Selected elements include library-related quotes.

Parks and Community

Woodhaven Park was one of three parks added to the city's park system in 2022, with the acquisition of three acres at 401 Woodhaven Blvd. Though it is still to be developed, Woodhaven will finally have a neighborhood park fifty years after the neighborhood was established.

The first phase of a new Trinity Trails route was completed on the north side of Gateway Park, which filled in trail gaps along East 1st Street eastward to the corner of White Lake Hills at Lake Havasu Trail. The improved connections allow bicyclists and pedestrians to remain out of traffic lanes on a dedicated sidewalk or a segregated section of the roadway. The work also added markings and signs for additional safety. Phase 2 will come in 2023, which will complete an alternate trail loop around Gateway Park.

The North Texas Community Foundation awarded \$150K to complete a trail system at the Broadcast Hill / Tandy Hills / Stratford natural areas, perform large-scale invasive privet removal, and implement a Natural

Resource Management internship program next summer. In 2020, Broadcast Hill was the first open space acquisition by the city of Fort Worth as part of a new initiative to preserve remaining undisturbed areas.

In August, the city of Fort Worth announced a three-year partnership with Main Street America on a revitalization program in Polytechnic. Through Texas Wesleyan University and Southeast Fort Worth, Inc, the program will offer training and funding to hire full-time staff to help Poly achieve its goals of focusing on historic preservation and creating a small business hub to accelerate economic development. Vaughn Boulevard between Texas Wesleyan and the Renaissance Square shopping center will be a special focus. A similar effort was announced for Historic Northside.

A number of significant zoning cases were decided in east Fort Worth, but none more critical to its future than a large warehouse case just outside Gateway Park. Citing the need for a more compatible development,

neighbors (with the assistance of a number of local organizations, including Streams and Valleys, Scenic Fort Worth, and the local Sierra Club chapter) were able to convince the applicant to withdraw the case after a five-month effort. Better still, the property owners now have a greater understanding of the importance of their property to the community and are now working together with stakeholders to achieve a quality outcome. In November, they all participated in an Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel to provide ideas on how the area might be developed to create a new destination point in the city.

In November, the Fort Worth city council approved the purchase about 29 acres of land near Eugene McCray Park and Lake Arlington as part of its open space preservation initiative—the third such purchase in east Fort Worth in the program's first two years. This is a major step towards creating better natural and recreational opportunities on the Fort Worth side of the lake.

East Lancaster Avenue and East Rosedale Street

In June, Michael Morris with the North Central Texas Council of Governments announced Lancaster 2.0, a revisioning of East Lancaster Avenue that will result in a curb-to-curb rebuilding of the roadway from downtown to the Arlington city limits. Stakeholders will provide input, culminating in a roadway that incorporates a new mass transit option, a fiberoptic backbone for internet as a transportation/accessibility improvement, and pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements. Construction is anticipated to start by 2026.

Trinity Metro released their draft Transit-Oriented Design Plan for a new mass transit option on East Lancaster Avenue, which is their highest ridership corridor. The plan calls for thirteen stops between downtown and Handley, with a trip taking 12-15 minutes. The actual mode of transportation is not yet determined, but it will occupy its own lane, have stations where ticketing and real-time arrival times are posted, and the ability to turn the traffic lights green. See <https://www.advancingeastlancaster.com/>.

Progress continued in Stop Six with a groundbreaking for Hughes House, the second of six phases of construction to transform this historically underserved neighborhood. Hughes House is a mixed-use development that will bring 210 apartments and townhomes above ground-level commercial space. Hughes House joins Cowan Place, a senior housing development currently under construction.

Union Gospel Mission broke ground on a new 27,000 square foot Community Outreach Center, which will provide formerly homeless people vocational training in the trades of apartment complex maintenance and fulfillment center logistics (forklift training and other warehouse-centric equipment). These skills will help clients be more employable and better able to sustain themselves with a living wage. The center will open in 2023. <https://www.ugm-tc.org/news/723-the-community-outreach-center/>.

The National Juneteenth Museum, which will commemorate the emancipation of

enslaved people in the United States, was announced in June. The 50,000 square foot museum will contain gallery space, a business incubator, food hall, and theatre. It will be located in the Evans and Rosedale Urban Village, the economic and social center for the African-American community in the early twentieth century. See <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/06/22/national-juneteenth-museum-fort-worth-big/>.

During its fall conference in Dallas, the Urban Land Institute, an organization for planners and developers, conducted bus tours around the metroplex. The East Lancaster Avenue Public Improvement District worked with ULI and the city of Fort Worth to organize one of the tours to attract pioneering developers to review the East Lancaster Avenue and East Rosedale Street commercial corridors. The participants were able to see the redevelopment potential of these streets, view progress of the Stop Six Choice Neighborhood construction, and hear about plans for street reconstruction and more new housing that are set to begin in the next few years.

Grow Southeast Urban Farms

Now in its fifth year, Grow Southeast hopes urban farming can be seen as a form of entrepreneurship rather than a charitable enterprise. Some of the locally-grown harvest is donated to food pantries, some is sold at a discounted price to people underserved by traditional grocery stores, and the majority is sold at the Cowtown Farmer's Market.

In addition to backbone support from Healthy Tarrant County Collaboration, CoAct, and Commissioner Roy C Brooks' office, a number of organizations have partnered through grants, trusts, or donations. These include:

- Tarrant County College Northwest Horticulture Program, which grew and donated close to 6,000 transplants, including collard, kale, mustard greens, hot and sweet peppers, and Celebrity and cherry tomatoes.
- USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, which provided a grant in partnership with TCU to grow tomatoes with three different types of low-cost amendments to determine the most cost-effective way

to produce the greatest yield. Dr. Omar Harvey is leading the research team.

- Rainwater Charitable Trust, which provided a generous grant to support a number of infrastructure and staffing needs at Opal's and Tabor Farms.

Here is a brief report on the farms in 2022:

Opal's Farm:

The longest-operating farm in the network, Opal's Farm harvested over 3,500 pounds of food. It hired a full-time assistant farm manager and hosted Farm School Year One, which provided training for two young men in bio-intensive, regenerative methods for building and operating an urban farm.

Tabor Farms:

This was the first year of production, with the first harvest of collards, kale, and mustard greens in April. Despite a Harlequin Bug infestation in May and a growing number of hungry rabbits, the farm produced over 1,300 pounds of food from 21 different crops. The farm hired a fulltime farm manager and a farm hand, and became a Cowtown Farmers Market vendor in summer, selling out weekly.

Mind Your Garden Urban Farm:

Owners Steven and Ursula Nunez work to educate others on the value of urban gardening. With grant support, an outdoor kitchen, classroom/gathering area, and bathroom were built to host cooking demonstrations and classes and Healthy Hours social gatherings. Terraced production beds and demonstration gardens were planted for the first time, and over 500 pounds of tomatoes, hot and sweet peppers, onions, potatoes, and greens were harvested.

Black Wall Street Farm:

This is the smallest of the farms, and despite some challenges, the first year of production for the farm yielded greens, tomatoes, okra, peppers, and other plants.

Urban farming is fraught with uncertainties. A ten-inch summer rain caused the Trinity River to crest and caused considerable damage to one farm, leaving behind silt and fish. Aggressive Johnson Grass, foraging animals, and even theft have been challenges as well. Beginning an urban farm involves city regulations which are not geared toward this type of use. Tree canopy for shade is a requirement, for example, which works against sunshine-loving crops.