

RICHARDSON

Bush station key to city plan

Development will entail rail stop, may lure Cotton Belt line

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Empty fields south of the Bush Turnpike represent a rare opportunity for Richardson, the chance for a largely built-out city to master-plan a vast swath of property.

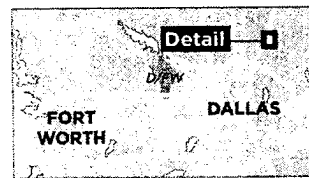
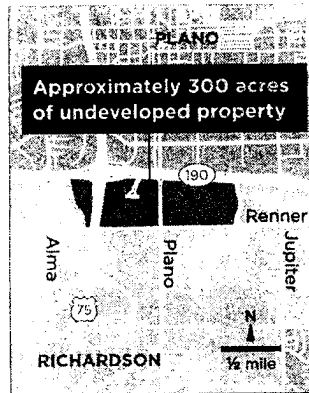
Key to the area is the one bit of infrastructure that has been in place for years on an otherwise empty expanse of grass and trees: the Bush Turnpike rail station.

Undeveloped land is scarce and a precious resource in Richardson.

"It's important that we come up with a long-range plan for that area that's sustainable," City Council member Steve Mitchell said. "This is a prime location. We need to put together a plan that gets it right the first time."

What planners Scott Polikov and Larry Good have come up with so far is a plan that incorporates the rail station, adds a dense, urban environment, takes advantage of visibility from a major highway intersection and tries to blend into existing neighborhoods.

Property owners plan to file development proposals next month, and a final City Council decision is expected



KYLE ALCOTT/Staff Artist

by the end of the year. But it could take up to 25 years before the entire 300 acres is built upon.

The area adjacent to the rail station alone is big enough to make an impact. It has as much land as four existing mixed-use developments along the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Red Line, including those at the Mockingbird, Spring Valley and Galatyn rail stations. The other is adjacent to the line on Campbell Road but not at a DART station.

"This really has the opportunity to be a second downtown for Richardson," Polikov said.

His Gateway Planning Group is working for Parliament Group, owner of land

east of the DART line. Caruth family entities own the property west of the tracks, and they have hired Good Fulton & Farrell to design their portion.

Richardson officials stressed that the plans could give them a leg up over Plano on the route that the future Cotton Belt rail line takes, an issue that DART and regional transportation officials are studying. Turning the Bush station into a transit hub could feed foot traffic and development there. In turn, the development could help finance the Cotton Belt line.

The proposal calls for buildings that could change from residential to commercial depending on market demands. It would preserve creeks and trees and add to trails now under construction that cross under Central Expressway and Renner Road.

The main spine tying the area together would be Infocom Drive, a block south of

the turnpike, which would be built as an urban Main Street, with bike lanes, wide sidewalks and public areas and a pedestrian-friendly form of on-street parking.

But several issues remain unresolved. There's the density of the far eastern part of the development and how it would mesh with existing neighborhoods. New to Richardson would be form-based zoning, which regulates the look of buildings and how they interact with the street more than the kinds of residence or business they contain. And council members and plan commissioners may not want to cede approval powers to city staff.

Nevertheless, the overall plan was greeted warmly at a work session last week.

"I love the project," commissioner Barry Hand said. "I love the vision. I'd like to take a measured approach. I'd like to be sure we're putting in a good mix."

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