



8.0 URBAN DESIGN

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Baseline Analysis report characterized the City of Irving as a community with a diverse urban character, crisscrossed by regional arterial corridors, and marked by a perceptible division between the older residential areas to the south and the emerging “edge city” to the north. The City possesses a wealth of existing and potential community resources such as the old downtown and surrounding residential areas; the Las Colinas Urban Center and other high quality, master planned developments; Texas Stadium and other regional destinations; and a well-managed system of parks and open spaces including a greenbelt under development along the Trinity River. However, some aspects of the existing development pattern prevent Irving from realizing its full potential as a City and regional point of destination rather than an area to pass through between Dallas, Fort Worth, and the D/FW International Airport. Important issues include:

- Irving’s development pattern is characterized by a lack of continuity and physical connections between the various parts of the City, due primarily to the fragmenting effects of regional arterial corridors and associated nonresidential development.
- The City’s physical environment is dominated by the automobile and has relatively few amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Many of the City’s neighborhoods and districts lack a distinct identity and sense of place.
- The City has an uneven visual environment and would benefit from creation of a recognizable visual image and identity.

Three goals were formulated to address these issues and to provide a basis for developing an urban design concept for the City of Irving. These goals were:

1. Create an interconnected, City-wide transportation and community access system consisting of vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and rail linkages.
2. Create identifiable urban neighborhoods and districts within Irving.
3. Enhance Irving’s visual image and identity.

These goals have been translated into a proposed urban design vision for the City. This vision states that, in order to reach its full potential, Irving should be a place that:



- Fosters a sense of community.
- Connects home, work, and recreation in a coherent pattern of development.
- Has a distinctive visual identity that is a source of pride to its residents.

In accordance with this vision, the urban design concept consists of a City-wide structure designed to unify Irving's diverse urban environment into a coherent, accessible, liveable, and imageable place. This structure has three major components:

- Corridors
- Neighborhoods and Districts
- Edges and Entrances

Corridors are the major roadway, transit, and greenway connectors that form the City-wide Regional and Community Access Systems. **Neighborhoods and Districts** are local areas within the City that provide opportunities to enhance community identity. Neighborhoods are defined as residential areas bounded by transportation corridors or other edges. Districts are defined as existing or potential centers of activity for the City or larger region. **Edges and entrances** are the key locations that provide travellers with a sense of arrival or entry into Irving. These locations include gateways on important roads at the edges of the City and key entrances from regional arterials to the local roadway system within the City.

In the following text, actions that the City can take to help achieve the urban design vision are identified for each of the three major components. The actions fall into one or more of the following general categories:

- **Public investment** actions are physical improvements undertaken by the City, such as public art, streetscape enhancements, landscaping, signage, and construction of facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- **Regulatory** actions involve changing existing City regulations to encourage new development or redevelopment that is consistent with the urban design vision.
- **Public/private partnerships** are cooperative efforts between City government and private businesses, landowners, or business and civic groups, such as landscaping and beautification projects or neighborhood enhancement programs.
- **Governmental partnerships** are cooperative efforts between the City and other levels of government (e.g., with the Texas Department of Transportation to upgrade the visual image of Airport Freeway).



By developing and putting into place a comprehensive program that prioritizes these actions and identifies short-term and long-term strategies for their implementation, the City can take significant strides towards making the urban design vision a reality.

A major emphasis of the urban design concept is on actions that can be taken to enhance Irving's visual environment. A number of sketches are included to help the reader visualize what these improvements might look like. It should be emphasized that the specific nature of the improvements should be developed in a process involving residents in the creation of a distinct visual identity for the City. This process should draw upon local themes and resources such as the Irving's historical development and natural resources, as well as the talents of local artists.

8.2 CORRIDORS

The various regional and local corridors passing through the City are key elements in the urban design character and visual identity of Irving. As currently existing, the physical character of these corridors is not coordinated nor have they been developed based on a consistent City-wide vision. The regional corridors have a generic visual character that does not create a distinct image for Irving. The appearance of the City's local corridors is not visually consistent and varies depending upon age, party responsible for development, and/or geographic location.

The urban design concept addresses the resultant visual and structural disorder by establishing an organizing framework for the City's corridors. In this framework, the City's corridors are classified into two City-wide functional systems, which are further sub-divided into types. Each type of corridor is proposed to have a distinct visual character that is consistent along its entire length. The various categories and types of corridors are:

- Regional Access System
 - Airport Freeway
 - Rail Transit Corridor
 - Regional Highway
 - Trinity River Greenbelt
- Community Access System
 - Primary Connector
 - Urban Link
 - Secondary Connector



- Neighborhood Street
- Greenway

Design concepts and implementing actions are recommended below to guide City policy for public investment, regulatory controls, and other actions for each of these types of corridors. The purpose of these recommendations is to:

- Organize the City's roadways for efficient wayfinding.
- Unify the various developments and geographic sub-areas of Irving by connecting them with visually consistent corridors. The visual character of these corridors should be based on their type rather than the particular development or sub-area of the City in which they are located.
- Influence development of shared community resources such as institutional, commercial, and employment resources to occur in appropriate locations along the corridors.
- Create visual diversity in the City by varying the character of key roadways.

8.2.1 Regional Access System

The Regional Access System consists of major state highways, rail corridors, and the Trinity River Greenbelt (Map 3). Direct involvement of the City in influencing the visual character of these corridors is limited due to their ownership by the State (regional highways) or other entities. However, due to the overwhelming impact of these corridors on the City's visual identity, it is recommended that strategic enhancements be made in key areas. These enhancements should be jointly undertaken by the City, State, other entities with jurisdiction, and/or the private businesses located along these corridors.

There are four types of corridors in the Regional Access System:

- Airport Freeway
- Rail Transit Corridor
- Regional Highway
- Trinity River Greenbelt

Recommendations for enhancements to improve the experiential quality of these types of corridors are listed below.

Airport Freeway

Airport Freeway (State Highway 183) is the most travelled and intensely developed of all of Irving's regional corridors. It is anchored by Texas Stadium on the east side and D/FW Airport on the west. Highway-oriented commercial uses are



predominant between these anchors. The corridor lacks visual definition and is perceived as a random assortment of uncoordinated commercial activities.

The following strategic public investments in key areas of the corridor and other actions are recommended to enhance the visual character of Airport Freeway:

- Create “Gateway Districts” at both ends of the corridor to provide a distinctive entry experience into Irving (Figures 2 and 3⁽¹⁾). These Districts will have special landscaping, urban design treatments, art projects, and regulatory controls to discourage incompatible uses (see Section 8.4 Edges and Entrances below for design recommendations).
- Establish colorful plantings of wildflowers and ground cover in the medians between the highway and access roads throughout the entire length of the corridor. These plantings will provide a visually continuous aesthetic enhancement without obstructing commercial signage. Native plant species should be used to reduce maintenance requirements and establish a connection to Irving’s natural heritage.
- Enhance major exits with landscaping to highlight entry into the City (Figure 4). This treatment will also provide visual relief from the uncoordinated and intense commercial development along the corridor.
- Form partnerships with the Texas Department of Transportation and private businesses to implement the enhancements.
- Revise current regulations applicable to private businesses along the Airport Freeway access roads to require landscape buffers and other visual amenities in redevelopment projects and consider revisions to existing ordinances to increase requirements.
- Encourage private businesses along the Airport Freeway to undertake landscaping and other visual enhancement projects.

Rail Transit Corridor

Two rail corridors passing through Irving have potential for regional mass transit service. The Trinity Railway Express corridor, which runs parallel to Rock Island Road, is part of the commuter rail service planned to connect Dallas and Fort Worth. In addition, a spur from this corridor connects the Historic Downtown to the Las Colinas Urban Center. Both of these corridors represent opportunities for the City to encourage transit-oriented development, particularly in the vicinity of proposed stations. The following actions are recommended for the City to guide development of the rail corridors in order to enhance Irving’s urban character (Figure 5):

⁽¹⁾ Map 7 at the end of this chapter shows the location of figures included in the Urban Design Element.



- Encourage transit-oriented commercial and residential development within walking distance (approximately ½ mile) of the stations.
- Provide pedestrian amenities such as streetscape improvements, enhanced lighting, and directional signage in the ½-mile radius walking zone around the stations.
- Facilitate intermodal transfers at stations from train to bus, private automobile, and bicycle.
- Establish a landscaped buffer between the rail corridor and Rock Island Road.
- Ensure that the rail corridor does not become a barrier for north-south pedestrian and vehicular movement by providing safe crossings and cross-walks at each of the “Local Connector” streets identified below.
- Participate in transit planning activities to ensure that stations are located where they will most benefit Irving. Factors to be considered are accessibility and ease of use for potential transit riders in the City.

Regional Highway

The LBJ Freeway (I-635), John W. Carpenter Freeway (State Highway 114), State Highway 161, and Loop 12 are classified as Regional Highways. These roadways are not readily perceived as part of the City distinct from the arterial highway system for the Dallas-Fort Worth region as a whole. However, they do impact the image and identity of Irving and should be addressed in the urban design concept for the City, particularly at exits leading to the Community Access System described below. The following actions are recommended:

- Develop areas around exits leading to Irving’s North-South and East-West Connectors (MacArthur and Irving Boulevards) as imageable entrances to the City with landscaping, public art projects, and gateway treatment on the overpasses (see Section 8.4 Edges and Entrances below for recommendations). Public investment in these corridors should be limited to these locations.
- Develop and implement landscaping requirements and other design controls to regulate the appearance of future development adjacent to regional highways.

Trinity River Greenbelt

As part of a greenbelt (the “Dalhoma Trail”) from the Oklahoma border to South Dallas being planned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Elm and West Forks of the Trinity River provide a major opportunity for development of a con-



tinuous multi-use park and trail system linking recreational facilities and activity centers in Irving with attractions throughout the region. The major recommendation for the Trinity River Greenbelt is to implement the *Trinity River Park & Greenbelt Master Plan* developed by the City of Irving Parks and Recreation Department. In implementing this plan, special attention should be given to the relationships of the greenbelt to other proposed elements of the City-wide urban design structure, including Regional Highways, “Primary and Secondary Connectors” (see Section 8.2.2 Community Access System), the “Regional Activity District” (see Section 8.3.3 Regional Activity District), and the “Eastern Gateway District” (see Gateway Districts section).

8.2.2 Community Access System

The Community Access System (Map 4) consists of City-owned streets and other corridors providing access within Irving. These corridors connect residential areas, employment and industrial centers, shopping centers, institutions, and recreational amenities with each other. Visually, the streets that are the primary elements of the Community Access System tend to be indistinguishable from each other and offer few clues as to their relative importance. Moreover, stark differences between the newer roadways in the northern parts of the City and streets in the older parts of south Irving accentuate the perceived north-south divide.

To provide a basis for addressing these issues, a Community Access System is proposed to consist of the following types of corridors, organized according to their proposed function and relative importance in the overall urban design framework of the City:

- Primary Connector
- Urban Link
- Secondary Connector
- Neighborhood Street
- Greenway

Primary Connector

Two Primary Connectors are proposed to interconnect the City’s principal residential neighborhoods and districts with institutional, recreational, and commercial resources: the North-South Connector (MacArthur Boulevard) and the East-West Connector (Irving Boulevard).

As Irving’s principal North-South Connector, MacArthur Boulevard would connect residential areas and community resources such as North Lake Park, Valley



Ranch, Hackberry Creek, North Lake College, the Walnut Hill Lane commercial corridor, Las Colinas Sports Club, institutions along the “Urban Link” (see Urban Link section below), traditional residential neighborhoods in the south, and the Trinity River Greenway.

Similarly, Irving Boulevard should be developed as the City’s principal East-West Connector, linking community resources such as the Trinity View Park and proposed Trinity River Greenbelt, Downtown District, Pioneer Park Medical Center, Plymouth Park Shopping Center, City Hall, and Airport Freeway with residential neighborhoods.

The following improvements should be made to create a consistent streetscape character along the entire lengths of both the North-South and East-West Connectors and to establish visual links through the City (Figures 6, 7, and 8):

- Provide continuous sidewalks on both sides of the streets for bicycle and pedestrian circulation.
- Separate vehicular traffic from pedestrian/bicycle traffic on the sidewalks by planting street trees on either side and in the medians of the roadways. The trees will also create a sense of enclosure and shade along the corridor. Trees should be planted in continuous planting beds landscaped with drought resistant plant material.
- Provide directional signage to guide visitors and residents to destinations within Irving, as part of a coordinated City-wide signage system.
- Provide “traffic calming” cross-walks and enhanced lighting at key intersections for use by bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Bury, where practical, visually intrusive overhead utilities.
- Replace highway-oriented “cobra-head” lights with fixtures that are more compatible with the urban image of Irving.
- Create imageable “entrances” at exits from the Regional Access System (see Section 8.4 Edges and Entrances for specific locations and design recommendations).
- Incorporate public art such as colorful murals or pavement patterns, sculptures, etc. at intersections and at entrances from regional highways.
- Screen parking lots and other visually intrusive uses with urban streetscape elements such as trees and other plant material, decorative fencing, etc.
- Revise current regulations applicable to private businesses located along



these roadways to require landscape buffers and other visual amenities in development and redevelopment projects.

The Urban Link

Mirroring the contrast between south and north, Irving has two distinct centers, the Las Colinas Urban Center and Historic Downtown. A symbolic and functional connection — the Urban Link — should be established to create a synergy between these two districts and to facilitate vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian and transit access for residents and visitors.

O'Connor Road is currently the most direct vehicular route between the Las Colinas Urban Center and the Downtown. However, it is proposed that the Urban Link be established along MacArthur Boulevard to reinforce its recommended function as the North-South Connector (Map 4). From Las Colinas at its northern end, the proposed Urban Link will follow O'Connor Road to Leland Boulevard, turn west on Northgate Drive, and then head south on MacArthur Boulevard. From MacArthur Boulevard, it will run east on Rock Island Road to First and Second Streets, terminating where these two streets join to form Irving Boulevard.

The Urban Link will connect the Historic Downtown District and Las Colinas Urban Center with community resources such as the existing South Irving Transit Center, City Hall and the City Library, the Irving Community Hospital, the Irving Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Irving Arts Center, and MacArthur High School. It is recommended that future institutional development be concentrated along this connection, thereby creating a public-oriented linear core. The Urban Link also supports the proposed concept of the Regional Activity District (see discussion in Section 8.4 and the Future Land Use element of the Plan).

The Urban Link would be subject to the same treatments listed above for the North-South Connector. In addition, the following actions are proposed to emphasize its special function (Figure 9):

- Provide wide sidewalks on both sides of the street for bicycle and pedestrian circulation.
- Plant urban street trees on either side of the street in tree grates to maximize usable sidewalk width. High-canopy trees should be selected to ensure visibility of commercial signage.
- Provide landscaping and attractive lighting fixtures in the median.
- Implement a program to provide colorful banners in the median. The banners should be changed frequently and used to promote cultural activities in the City.
- Limit curb cuts to one entry and exit for auto-oriented developments and encourage shared access drives.



- Incorporate public art such as colorful murals or pavement patterns, sculptures, etc.
- Evaluate the configuration of key intersections such as Leland Boulevard/MacArthur Boulevard and make changes as necessary to facilitate traffic flow along the Urban Link.

Secondary Connector

It is recommended that a secondary system of roadways be designated to interconnect neighborhoods and districts that are not immediately adjacent to the North-South Connector, East-West Connector, and/or Urban Link. Primarily located in the southern part of the City, these Secondary Connectors also serve as the main connections between neighborhoods and community resources such as schools, parks, and shopping areas.

North-south Secondary Connectors include Esters Road, Belt Line Road, Story Road, O'Connor Road/Senter Road, and Nursery Road/Carl Road. East-west Secondary Connectors include Hunter-Ferrell Road, Oakdale Road, Shady Grove Road, Rock Island Road, Grauwylar Road, Rochelle Road, Northgate Drive, Walnut Hill Lane, and Royal Lane.

These corridors should be developed through public investment and regulatory controls to have a consistent visual character throughout the City. The following specific actions are recommended:

- Implement a comprehensive street tree planting program focusing on Secondary Connectors in southern Irving, using native plant species to reinforce the existing wooded character of some of these roadways and to evoke this area's forested natural heritage.
- Plant street trees on both sides on the street in continuous planting beds with drought resistant plant materials to serve as a buffer between vehicular traffic and pedestrian/bicycle traffic on the sidewalks.
- Provide traffic calming cross-walks and enhanced lighting at key intersections for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Revise current regulations applicable to private businesses located along these corridors to require landscape buffers and other visual amenities in development and redevelopment projects.

Neighborhood Street

Neighborhood Streets are all local streets not included in any of the above categories. These streets provide access within neighborhoods and connect to the Community-wide and Regional Access System described above.



Although of limited City-wide significance, the design and character of Neighborhood Streets are important to local residents. It is recommended that improvements to these streets be undertaken at a neighborhood level and be funded and maintained through public-private partnerships between residents, property owners, and government as part of a neighborhood enhancement program. Where actively supported by residents, the focus of these improvements should be to create linkages to local resources such as schools, parks, and the proposed “Neighborhood Centers” (described below in Section 8.3), and to facilitate automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian access throughout the neighborhood. The visual character of Neighborhood Streets should reflect the character of the neighborhood, thereby creating visual diversity in the City and pride among local residents.

Greenway

Irving is bisected by a number of streams that generally run west to east or north to south, emptying into the Elm Fork or West Fork of the Trinity River. These streams provide an excellent opportunity for development of multi-use greenways providing local pedestrian, bicycle, and possibly equestrian access for residents (Figure 10). Together with the Trinity River Greenbelt, streams such as Delaware Creek could form a comprehensive greenway system linking residential areas with parks and other public facilities and institutions located throughout Irving. If developed appropriately, it is conceivable that some residents may be encouraged to use these greenways not only for recreation, but also to commute by bicycle or on foot within the City.

Significant issues to be addressed in developing a greenway system include ownership, effects on adjacent private property, and the degraded condition of many stream channels including the widespread use of concrete channelization. The following actions are recommended to implement the greenway concept as part of Irving’s Community Access System:

- Evaluate and prioritize stream channels according to their suitability for greenway development, based upon factors such as ownership, condition, relationship to community resources such as parks and schools, and significance as a resource for residential areas.
- Based upon the results of the evaluation, prepare and implement development plans for important greenways such as the Delaware Creek. The plans should address trail development, development of “trail-head” entrances at intersections with Local Connector Streets and other suitable locations, signage, and stream enhancement.



8.3 NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

Neighborhoods and Districts (Map 5) are the local residential, commercial, and mixed use areas that help to define the identity of the community as a whole. As described in the Baseline Analysis report, Irving's neighborhoods and districts vary dramatically from south to north. In south Irving, traditional patterns of residential development have evolved over time into somewhat undifferentiated areas dissected by corridors. Conversely, the newer developments north of Northgate Drive are typically contained within isolated districts with strong boundaries and a cohesive visual character.

Clearly defined residential and commercial districts in the north include Valley Ranch, Las Colinas, Hackberry Creek, and the newly created Airport Overlay District. These districts have a well defined development pattern and/or regulatory controls but are relatively disconnected from each other and the rest of the City. Moreover, as some of these districts mature, they could benefit from a new focus for economic development. The following actions are recommended to address these issues in north Irving:

- Encourage connection of existing districts with each other and southern Irving through linkages with the proposed Community Access System.
- Establish a "Regional Activity District" (RAD) to focus development of new entertainment attractions around existing destinations such as Texas Stadium and Las Colinas Urban Center.

With the exception of a few areas like Bear Creek, areas in south Irving generally lack cohesion and could benefit from the creation of more clearly defined residential neighborhoods to enhance community identity. For the most part, residents do not have the opportunity to influence the visual character of their environments, contributing to a lack of identification with a particular neighborhood or community. Stronger regulatory controls to prevent non-complementary uses or visually intrusive development are needed to help create a visually attractive and cohesive environment in southern Irving. In addition, these areas are excessively automobile-oriented and most residents do not have ready pedestrian or bicycle access to community resources such as parks, schools, and neighborhood shopping.

To address these issues in south Irving, several public actions are recommended to foster creation of a sense of neighborhood identity similar to that commonly found in older urban areas across the country. These actions include:

- Initiate cooperative, neighborhood-level planning programs by the City and residents to enhance local community identity. A preliminary delineation of "Neighborhood Identification Areas" has been made to provide a starting point for this effort.



- Establish “Neighborhood Centers” to provide residents with readily accessible shopping and institutional and recreational amenities.

Specific design concepts and implementing actions are described below for the following types of neighborhoods and districts in Irving:

- Neighborhood Identification Areas
- Neighborhood Centers
- Regional Activity Center
- Existing Districts

The existing and proposed locations of these areas are shown on Map 5.

8.3.1 Neighborhood Identification Areas

Although a number of neighborhood watch groups and homeowners’ associations are active in Irving, with a few exceptions, they do not appear to be associated with clearly defined neighborhoods. This has contributed to a low level of involvement of residents in the day-to-day upkeep and development of most neighborhoods. The purpose of the following recommendations is to start the process of creating identifiable and distinct neighborhoods within south Irving in particular. It is important to note that no plan can create what is essentially a coming together of people into cohesive groups. Instead, the plan provides the starting point for a process that must be driven by local residents to succeed. As part of this process, it should be expected that some of the areas described below will split or combine to eventually result in neighborhoods whose residents share common goals.

It is recommended that, for planning purposes, Neighborhood Identification Areas (Map 5) be defined as walkable precincts bound by Regional Access System corridors and/or Primary and Secondary Connectors of the proposed Community Access System (see Map 3). Residents of these areas should be encouraged to collectively participate in the following neighborhood-level activities:

- Identifying and reinforcing a focus or focuses for the neighborhood such as a school, park, or community center.
- Developing a unique visual identity by “personalizing” streets. This can be accomplished through selective planting and streetscape elements that create an image for the neighborhood.
- Implementing a neighborhood level tree-planting program.
- Encouraging new development that is consistent with the architectural character of each neighborhood. Property owners could be encouraged to make facade enhancements to existing incompatible structures.



- Participating in day-to-day maintenance and preservation of public amenities such as streets and parks.

8.3.2 Neighborhood Centers

To further strengthen local residential areas in south Irving, it is recommended that several Neighborhood Centers be created through public/private partnerships at strategic locations relative to the Neighborhood Identification Areas. The purpose of these centers is to provide amenities shared by several neighborhoods, such as convenience shopping, a library or other public facilities, professional offices, and medical facilities. Pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile connections should be provided between the Neighborhood Centers and local neighborhoods, thereby reducing dependence on the automobile and the level of traffic on connector and arterial roadways. A concept for a Neighborhood Center at Shady Grove and Story Roads is illustrated in Figure 11.

Four Neighborhood Centers are proposed in the following locations south of Airport Freeway, each at the intersection of Secondary Connectors:

- Shady Grove and Story Roads
- Shady Grove and Nursery Roads
- Nursery and Grauwlyer Roads
- Grauwlyer and Story Roads

The following actions are recommended to implement the Neighborhood Center concept:

- Through redevelopment and controlled new development, consolidate existing neighborhood-serving commercial establishments and public facilities (e.g., the existing library at Shady Grove and Story Roads) to create a mixed use and multi-functional center for residents of adjacent neighborhoods.
- Establish architectural standards for each Neighborhood Center to promote visual integration and identification with adjacent neighborhoods. The architectural character of the Center should incorporate architectural features unique to the neighborhoods.
- Require landscaping to shade parking lots and as a buffer from adjacent residential areas and Neighborhood Streets.
- Develop pedestrian and bicycle connections, including traffic calming cross-walks, to adjacent residential neighborhoods.



8.3.3 Regional Activity District

Irving is the home of several institutions and major centers of regional activity, such as Texas Stadium, the University of Dallas, and the Las Colinas Urban Center. These destinations are mostly located in the eastern part of the City parallel to the Trinity River. Several new attractions are in the planning stages in this area, such as a potential “theme park” near Texas Stadium and development of the Trinity River Greenbelt.

Irving’s identity, economy, and importance in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan region can be enhanced through the development of new centers of regional activity. These centers should be located so that their cumulative benefit to the City is maximized, potential adverse impacts are minimized, and so that they complement and reinforce each other. To provide a focus for development of these centers, it is recommended that a Regional Activity District (RAD) be created along the Trinity River Greenbelt, extending from the Airport Freeway to LBJ Freeway (Map 5). This area is ideal for this purpose because of the presence of existing destinations such as Texas Stadium, excellent access via a network of regional arterial highways, and its separation from residential and commercial areas within the City.

The following actions are recommended to implement the Regional Activity District concept:

- Encourage the siting of new centers of regional activity in this District to maximize benefits resulting from the proximity of complementary land uses.
- Develop regulatory controls to prevent land uses that would adversely affect the concept.
- Develop and implement architectural and landscape controls to guide cohesive and imageable new development within the Regional Activity District.
- Provide adequate multi-modal connections with the City’s Regional and Community Access Systems to link various areas of the District.
- Develop signs and other identification for the District to promote cohesion and integrated development.

8.3.4 Existing Districts

Existing districts in Irving include Las Colinas/the Las Colinas Urban Center, Valley Ranch, Hackberry Creek, and the Airport Overlay District in the north and the Downtown in the south. These districts are fairly well defined and offer pleasant enviro-



onments for their residents, workers and visitors, and/or have development plans/controls in place. However, the following actions should be taken to address their relative isolation from each other and the rest of the City:

- Establish new or reinforce existing connections, where necessary, with the proposed Primary and Secondary Connectors of the Community Access System.
- Review, and revise if necessary, existing plans such as the Downtown Master Plan for conformity with this City-wide urban design concept.

8.4. EDGES AND ENTRANCES

Defining Irving's edges is the act of establishing what is in the City and what is not. It is similar to defining Neighborhood Identification Areas at a much larger scale, creating a recognizable identity for the entire City. From an urban design point of view, Irving's edges and entrances should be addressed to:

- Establish the perceived boundaries of the City for residents, visitors, and users of the Regional Access System.
- Create attractive entrances to the City.
- Visually indicate Irving's key entrances to travellers.
- Mitigate undesirable edges, or divides, within the City.

The physical character of Irving presents the following opportunities to realize these objectives (Map 6):

- Natural Edges
- Gateways
 - Gateway Districts
 - Major Entrances
 - Secondary Entrances
 - Minor Entrances
- North-South Transitions

8.4.1 Natural Edges

The boundary of the eastern half of the City is defined by the Trinity River, for which a plan for development as a Greenbelt has been prepared. As part of the Greenbelt project, a continuous natural edge could be maintained along the City's



eastern boundary. The following actions should be considered to realize the full urban design potential of this important amenity:

- Design areas of the Greenbelt adjacent to corridors in the Regional Access System to create a significant visual impact on persons entering the City.
- Develop gateway features where the Primary and Secondary Connector roads of the proposed Community Access System cross the Trinity River Greenbelt.
- Use landscaping and native plantings to enhance vegetation within the Trinity River corridor.

8.4.2 Gateways

Four types of gateways are proposed for the City based on the number of users, speed, and type of corridor. These are:

- Gateway Districts
- Major Entrances
- Secondary Entrances
- Minor Entrances

Gateway Districts

As discussed in the Airport Freeway section above, two Gateway Districts should be created at each end of this major regional corridor and destination. The high speed at which motorists pass through this corridor renders the use of signage alone to mark entry into Irving ineffective. Instead, a sustained treatment is required over a greater distance to create an impressionable entry experience.

The Western Gateway District is proposed to extend along the Airport Freeway from the western boundary of the City to the Belt Line Road exit. The current visual experience of driving along this undeveloped portion of Airport Freeway is defined by sparsely landscaped medians, lack of commercial development adjacent to the highway, and three highly visible overpasses at County Line Road, Valley View Lane, and Esters Road. The following enhancements are recommended (Figures 2 and 3):

- Plant a double row of trees in the median separating the highway from the access roadways on either side.
- Establish colorful plantings of wildflowers and ground cover in the median to enhance the ground surface.



- As a public art project, provide large-scale gateway elements to mark the City's boundary (Figure 2). The City logo and signage consistent with the City-wide signage system should be incorporated in this project.
- Provide artistic and architectural enhancements on the three overpasses to create highly visible gateway elements while enhancing their appearance (Figure 3).
- Locate large-scale public art projects at key sites along the corridor.

The Eastern Gateway District is envisioned as a much larger area due to the confluence of several regional roadways around Texas Stadium and the proposed Trinity River Greenbelt. Significant numbers of people pass through this area, which functions as a gateway from Dallas to most destinations in Irving as well as to the D/FW Airport, Fort Worth, and other adjacent communities.

As currently developed, the area would benefit from visual enhancement. The lack of landscaping, uncoordinated signage, adjacent industrial development, an undeveloped river corridor, and the bare parking lots of Texas Stadium combine to form an unattractive entry experience. However, City ownership of the Stadium, the proposed Greenbelt project, and absence of commercial development provide an excellent opportunity for significant improvements. The following implementing actions are recommended within the area defined by the Trinity River, Loop 12, and Airport Freeway/State Highway 183 (Figure 12):

- Plant a double row of trees in the median separating the highway from the access roadways on either side.
- Establish colorful plantings of wildflowers and ground cover in the median to enhance the ground surface.
- Place colorful banners on decorative poles mounted on the highway barrier separating the two sides of the highway. These banners can be used to announce events at the stadium and to generally create a festive appearance in the area.
- Develop the portion of the Trinity River within the Eastern Gateway District as a special area within the Greenbelt system.
- Develop regulatory controls to encourage the replacement of non-contributing land uses with public-oriented destinations that complement the Texas Stadium, Greenbelt, and other attractions.
- Redevelop the parking lots around the Stadium with landscaping, art projects, and attractive signage to improve their visual character.
- Locate large-scale public art projects at key sites along the corridor.



Major Entrances

In addition to the two Gateway Districts described above, Major Entrances (Map 6) should be developed at exits leading from the Regional Access System to the City's proposed Primary Connector System. These entrances will create a positive first visual impression on visitors to the City and help direct them to the Community Access System. Major Entrances should be developed at the following exits:

- LBJ Freeway exits
 - MacArthur Boulevard
 - Freeport Parkway
 - State Highway 161
- John W. Carpenter Freeway exits
 - MacArthur Boulevard (Figure 13)
 - State Highway 161
- Airport Freeway exits
 - MacArthur Boulevard (Figure 4)
 - Belt Line Road
- Loop 12 exit
 - State Highway 356/Irving Boulevard

These entrances should be developed with landscaping, attractive signage, and public art projects.

Secondary Entrances

Entrances to Irving from Secondary Connectors should be improved to mark the boundaries of the City. These Secondary Entrances should be developed with tree plantings and attractive signage as illustrated in Figure 14. The locations of such entrances are shown in Map 6.

Minor Entrances

A number of local roadways that convey minor amounts of traffic should be demarcated at the City boundary but do not require special landscaping or signage treatment. It is anticipated that these roadways will be marked with a standard sign providing the City of Irving population and logo. Signs marking these Minor Entrances should be installed on the following roadways:

- Tom Braniff Drive (north)
- California Crossing Road (east)
- Shady Grove Road (west)
- Oakdale Road (west)



- Rock Island Road (west)
- FAA Boulevard (west)
- Royal Lane (north)
- Hunter-Ferrell Road (west)
- Trinity Boulevard (west)

8.4.3 North-South Transitions

Airport Freeway currently functions as a barrier between neighborhoods to the north and south, limiting access to underpasses located on Secondary Connectors. North-South Transitions should be created at each of these five underpasses to provide attractive connections between the north and the south and to mitigate the perceived divide between these two parts of the City. The following improvements are recommended (Figure 15):

- Provide architectural enhancements and/or artistic elements on overpass walls and structural elements.
- Create continuous pedestrian-friendly sidewalks on both sides of the roadway.
- Install pedestrian lighting under the overpass.
- Provide artistic surface treatments on the vertical surfaces under the overpass to improve visual quality.
- Implement streetscape improvements on the roadways approaching the underpasses to visually accentuate the transition zones at street level and looking down from Airport Freeway.

8.5 CONCLUSION

The preceding text describes a comprehensive set of actions that should be taken to realize the urban design vision for the City of Irving. As described in the introduction, these actions include physical improvements, changes to existing regulations, and partnerships between the City, other levels of government, private businesses, and/or residents. Some of the actions are relatively easy to implement, while others may require a significant commitment of resources.

Because of the far-reaching nature of the recommendations, a strategic implementation plan should be developed to guide the actions to be taken by the City and its partners in the private and public sectors. It is recommended that an organization such as an existing City department, interdepartmental agency, or



public/private partnership be established to manage and coordinate implementation of the urban design concept. Ideally, the members of this organization should participate in preparing the strategic implementation plan. The strategic planning process should identify and involve key players, defines their roles in implementing the urban design concept, and make a realistic assessment of the resources available to them. More specifically, the strategic implementation plan should address issues such as the following:

- Definition of the responsibilities of the management entity.
- Determination of the public and private sector fiscal and human resources that can be applied to implementing the urban design concept.
- Prioritization of the proposed actions based upon factors such as cost, ease of implementation, and effect in achieving the overall concept. For example, certain improvements may be put in place in a highly visible location as an “early action” to generate momentum for implementing the remainder of the plan.
- Development of a phasing and capital improvements plan.
- Involvement of key stakeholders such as the Texas Department of Transportation and private business and civic groups in implementing the plan.
- Assignment of responsibilities for implementing specific actions to individual departments and stakeholders outside of City government.
- Establishment of a process for monitoring plan implementation and making adjustments to address new priorities and emerging issues.

The end result of the strategic implementation plan should be the internalization of the urban design concept in the long-range programs and day-to-day activities of City departments and key public and private partners. If this is successfully accomplished, the City will have made significant progress towards turning the urban design vision into reality.