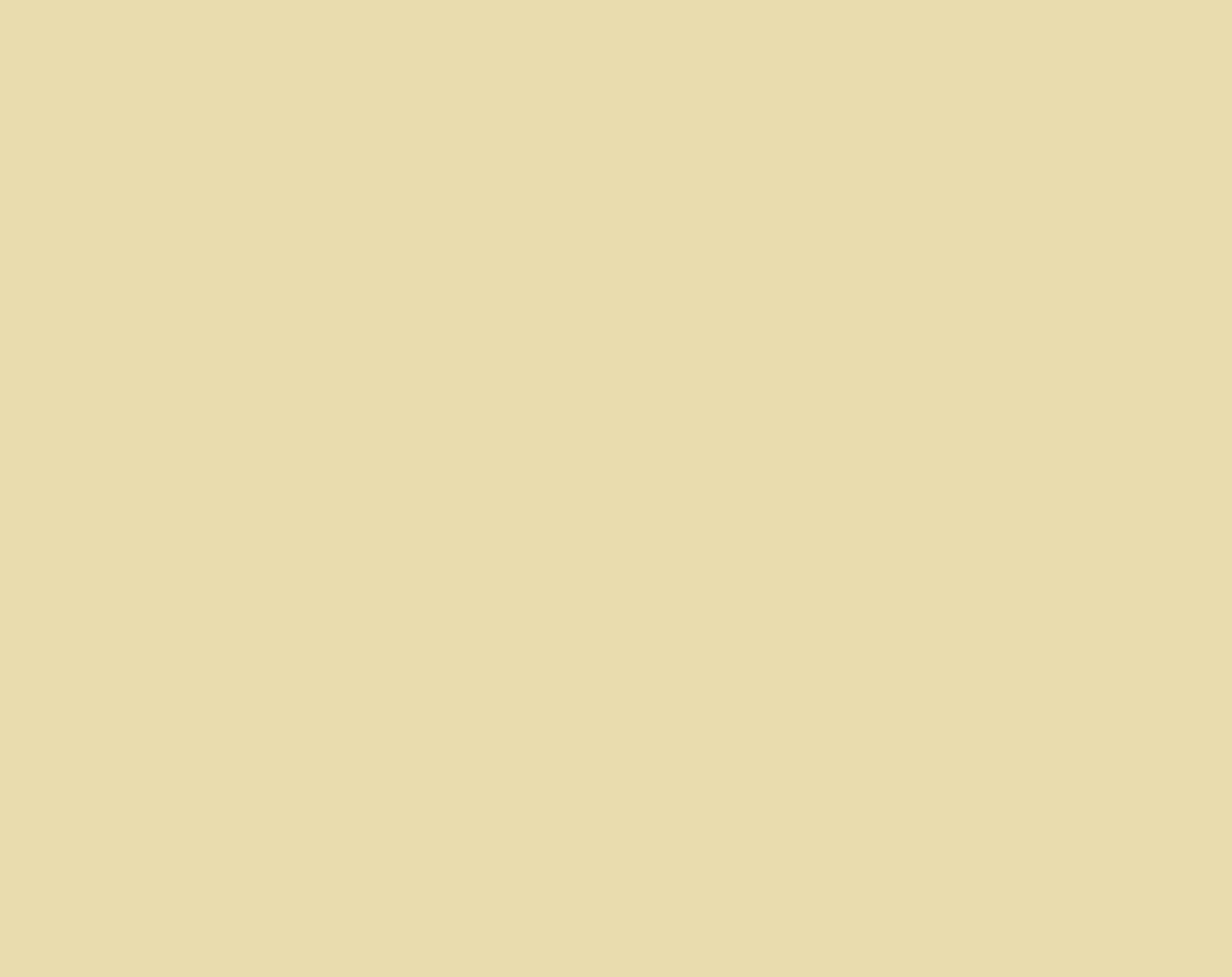

FAIR PARK

A PARK FOR ALL PEOPLE

Report of the Mayor's Fair Park Task Force | 3 September 2014



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Marsha Singer – Irishfest and Earth Day Texas
- Susan Brosin – Earth Day Texas
- Clint Weiss – Mardi Gras Texas Style
- Bryan Buchanan – Buchanan’s Flea Market
- Chad and Nellie Montgomery – Texas Brewvolution
- Michael Jenkins – Music Hall and Dallas Summer Musicals
- Dick Davis – Texas Discovery Gardens
- Dr. Harry Robinson – African American Museum
- Jack Bunning – Dallas Historical Society/Hall of State
- Joan Walne – Proposed Texas Music Hall of Fame
- Brice Beaird – Proposed Texas Music Hall of Fame
- Dapheny Fain – Kwanzaafest
- Leo Hicks – South Dallas Fair Park Trust Fund City of Dallas Staff
- Greg Hudson – Children’s Aquarium at Fair Park
- Ed Campbell – Ed Campbell Company
- Willis Winters – Director, Park and Recreation Department
- Maria Munoz Blanco – Director, Office of Cultural Affairs
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LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

- Don Williams – Foundation for Community Empowerment
- Antonio DiMambro – Urban Planner
- Brent Brown – Executive Director, BC Workshop



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction The Genius of the Place	5
Fair Park Task Force	
Purpose/creation	6
Executive Summary	8
Recommendations	
Enhance access, connectivity with community, city	12
Establish a community park on south side of property	20
Create one organization to be operational, marketing authority	30
More Task Force Ideas	42
Conclusion	46



The genius of the place.

Frederick Law Olmsted, the celebrated landscape architect behind Central Park, once famously implored other designers to “consult the genius of the place in all” when imagining urban parks, a reference to a beloved Alexander Pope poem.

For Fair Park, the genius of the place is significant. Named Dallas’ second city park in 1904, the 277-acre park is fewer than two miles from downtown, and serves as the largest National Historic Landmark in Texas. It boasts museums, performance venues and nonprofit organizations, is home to the largest collection of art deco architecture in the country, and in 2012 was named one of the city’s seven signature parks by the Park and Recreation Department.

It plays host to more than 1,200 events each year, of which the most notable attraction – the State Fair of Texas – draws an average of three million visitors during its 24-day run each fall. Visitors on any given day range from theater enthusiasts catching a show at the Music Hall, to Texas/OU fans continuing the Red River rivalry at the 92,000-seat Cotton Bowl, to school children exploring ocean wildlife at the Children’s Aquarium at Fair Park.

Much like Central Park in the 1980s, Fair Park holds extensive untapped potential. Over the years, myriad reports and studies have examined how to leverage the park’s significant assets, but complex factors have hindered the revitalization that the city of Dallas wants and deserves.

Put simply, the true genius of Fair Park has yet to be realized.

FAIR PARK TASK FORCE

PURPOSE/CREATION

A wealth of opportunity lies in Fair Park. Ranked as America’s 18th most-visited city park by The Trust for Public Land – the only Dallas park appearing on the list – we have in the heart of our city the type of area that landscape architects are attempting to recreate all over the country, with nearly 300 acres of infinite prospects. Fair Park could and should be a beautiful, capably-governed, well-marketed urban treasure that is financially equipped to succeed now and for generations to come.

An intricate system of issues, including misconceptions around park safety, the lack of a cohesive governing body, inadequate funding and the general absence of green space in what is technically the city’s largest park, have served as barriers to realizing Fair Park’s potential as a premier urban park. The Park and Recreation Department has done well in managing the park with the resources allotted, but there is jurisdictional confusion with other groups and agencies who have scheduling responsibilities at Fair Park. The park simply hasn’t been afforded the investment it needs to flourish. The time is right to make that investment.

In 2013, Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings assembled the Fair Park Task Force to examine the future of Fair Park and make recommendations that would address these longstanding challenges and help realize real improvements. Mayor Rawlings’ call to action was to develop a strategy that would capitalize on the many strengths of Fair Park and enable it to reach its full potential.

The plan that follows is the result of 11 months of comprehensive research, weekly meetings and intensive evaluation of how to effect true change in an area that should be the pride of Dallas and a national inspiration.



FAIR PARK TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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Executive Summary

Fair Park is Dallas’ 277-acre signature park. Located fewer than two miles from downtown, its dynamic collection of historic art deco structures, museum spaces, music venues and planning potential provide a framework to transform Fair Park into the crown jewel in a crescent of public parks and trails that stretch northward through Tenison/Samuell Grand Park, White Rock Lake and the Dallas Arboretum on up to up to Flagpole Hill.

A valuable asset, every effort should be made to encourage Fair Park’s success. It already attracts more than seven million visitors a year, significantly more than any other Dallas Park. The signature event, the State Fair of Texas, is a critical tenant that provides the park and city a strong identity with iconic features like Big Tex and the AT&T Red River

Showdown each fall. The rest of the year, Fair Park is a gathering spot for festivals and events that serve all of Dallas’ citizens.

The Dallas City Council adopted a Comprehensive Development Plan for the park in 2003, which was updated in 2007. Parts of the plan have been implemented, including the construction of the DART line, investment in park repair and improvement, and laudatory efforts by the State Fair of Texas to expand programming in the park into the summer. Unfortunately, a combination of inadequate funding and a confusing governance and management structure has limited the implementation of many valuable recommendations in the adopted plans. Now is the time to update these ideas and see them to fruition with adequate funding and accountability.

The key recommendations in our report follow the same overarching theme – putting the “park” back in Fair Park.

PUTTING THE “PARK” BACK IN FAIR PARK

1 Enhance access, connectivity with community, city

- Continue establishing Exposition Avenue/Parry Avenue entrance as the front door of Fair Park
- Ensure the design of traffic – enhanced signage, all entry points and surrounding roads – emphasizes Fair Park DART Station as park’s front door
- Improve Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, along with all entry points and surrounding roads, to enhance access to Fair Park
- Extend Santa Fe Trail directly to Fair Park
- Encourage the lowering of I-30 from Exhibition Boulevard to Grand Avenue and support construction of deck parks that connect Fair Park to Deep Ellum, Baylor Medical campus and the string of parks north along Grand Avenue

2 Establish a community park on south side of Fair Park

- Turn parking lots between Music Hall and the African American Museum, and former Perot Museum and former Science Place, into green areas and develop them into an open, year-round community park
- Build structured parking garages to north, west and south sides of park to reallocate parking space

- Relocate the stretch of fence that runs along Robert B. Cullum Boulevard in between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Avenue so that it sits on the north side of Leonhardt Lagoon (see map on page 21), making the southern area of Fair Park accessible and connective to the surrounding community

3 Empower new organization as operational and marketing authority for Fair Park

- Governing body should have full authority over park’s operations, marketing
- Park and Recreation Board should contract with private organization
- State Fair and all other organizations housed at or using Fair Park should fall under new body’s authority
- 501(c)(3) entity should feature a diverse fundraising board and staff
- City should sufficiently fund the park’s operations, which the Task Force has estimated to be at least \$15 million annually, and finance much-needed capital improvements to the park, estimated at around \$478 million



Through the past decade, Dallas has seen immense progress in the redevelopment and improvement of the city. A revitalized downtown, a booming uptown and the opening of the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, which has stimulated the renaissance of West Dallas, are a few examples. Like the bridge, an investment in Fair Park will be a similar catalyst. It will re-energize not just those 277 acres, but all of South and East Dallas.

If executed correctly, these elements, taken together with a menu of creative ideas from this report and the community, will allow Fair Park to fulfill its potential as a world-class educational and recreational amenity – *a park for all people*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In evaluating how to best leverage the qualities present in Fair Park – numerous as they are unique – we see a clear opportunity to reimagine Fair Park as the premier urban park in the heart of Dallas: a park for all people.

While full authority to evaluate the best course of action should be given to the new governing body that is discussed later in this report, the Task Force has identified what it believes to be the **three most imperative actions** required to put the “park” back in Fair Park: **enhance connectivity** with the rest of the community, **create a community park** in the southern area of the park, and **establish one organization** with full operational and marketing authority for the park.

Enhance access and connectivity with community and city

A misconception among Dallas residents is that Fair Park is isolated, and this coupled with a poor understanding of park safety has contributed to lower attendance rates. In reality, Fair Park is in the heart of Dallas, adjacent to a re-energized Deep Ellum and connected to White Rock Lake and Tenison/ Samuell Grand Park.

Thanks to the efforts of the Dallas Police Department, the police-designated zone encompassing Fair Park/South Dallas has realized a 15.3 percent average crime reduction through the past decade, well ahead of the city's overall 3.4 percent decrease. As of May 20, 2014, six non-violent crimes were reported on the fairgrounds, a negligible amount compared to the park's seven million annual visitors.

In addition to better educating the public about Fair Park's safety, the Task Force recommends taking the following actions to highlight and improve the accessibility of the park.





OPEN THE “FRONT DOOR”

First impressions count. Fair Park needs an impressive entrance. Significant investment should be applied to improve and beautify all entrance points, parking structures and surrounding roads – particularly Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, Robert B. Cullum Boulevard, Grand Avenue and the new Fair Park Boulevard. Traffic flow, signage and design should underscore the Exposition Avenue/Parry Avenue entrance and DART Station as the park’s “front door.” The impact of this extensive remodeling should create a sense of place at Fair Park – a destination that’s easy to find and simple to navigate.

By embracing northside development that allows for high-profile identity rebranding, we should also implement a strong boundary preventing expansion into the private residential area east of Fitzhugh Avenue for

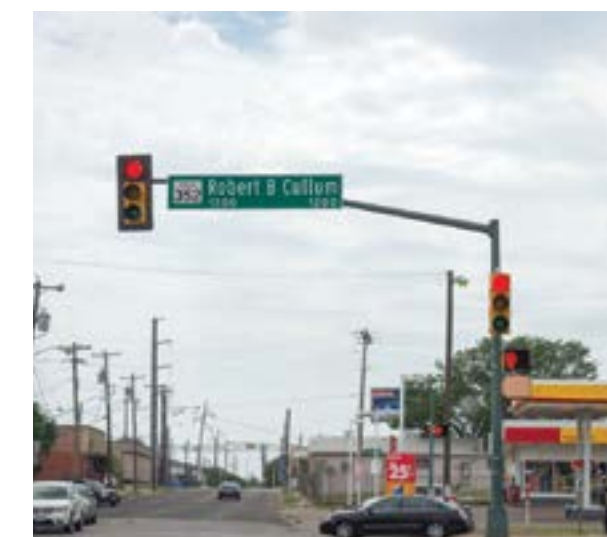
structures not currently owned or leased by the city or State Fair. Priority must also be given to improving this surrounding area and neighborhood, which is essential to any true revitalization of Fair Park.

Rejuvenating Fair Park should be a conscientious effort, and the governing body that is established should work to carefully balance the wants and needs of both the park and the community’s existing residents. Part of this includes maintaining the current South Dallas/Fair Park trust fund and its structure – meaning that greater success in Fair Park will lead to greater economic support for the community. Advancing the lives and opportunities of these residents – stakeholders who can shape the neighborhood’s direction for future generations – is a long-term investment in the success of Fair Park.

INSTALL BETTER SIGNAGE

Stronger signage is required throughout the park to improve way-finding, ease entry and exit for visitors unfamiliar with the area and highlight the convenience of the DART transportation infrastructure, which is used robustly during the Texas/OU Game and State Fair and should be regularly

utilized throughout the year. DART has also reserved the right to expand operations along the north side of the park, further strengthening the connection throughout the city.



STRENGTHEN AND PROMOTE SANTA FE TRAIL LINK

In a city that’s not traditionally “park rich,” Fair Park is a distinct civic asset that should be restructured to be as green as possible, in a way that supports traditional recreational features to combat the idea that Fair Park is an oversized fairground rather a public park.

Fair Park is actually the anchor of a trio of significant parks – White Rock Lake, Tenison/ Samuell Grand Park and Fair Park, all connected by the Santa Fe Trail. The distinction between Fair Park and its neighbors is the attention that has been paid to it – Fair Park should be the highlight of this crescent. It needs the appropriate investment.

This dynamic feature – hundreds of acres of city parks linked by a single path – should be strengthened by extending the trail directly into Fair Park. The trail should then be extensively marketed, signage around it should be enhanced and connectivity issues within the park that obscure the path should be eliminated. This will create a unique marketable angle and encourage the belief that Fair Park is at the center of Dallas and its vast offerings.



LOWER I-30, CREATE DECK PARKS

The Task Force strongly recommends lowering and decking over I-30 as detailed in several reports. Doing so would enhance the entry and exit to Fair Park and strengthen access to East Dallas. Additionally, deck parks should be built to connect Fair Park to Deep Ellum, Baylor Medical Campus and the parks along Grand Avenue, creating a sense of place and improving the aesthetics of the general area.



I-30 DECK VISUALIZATIONS

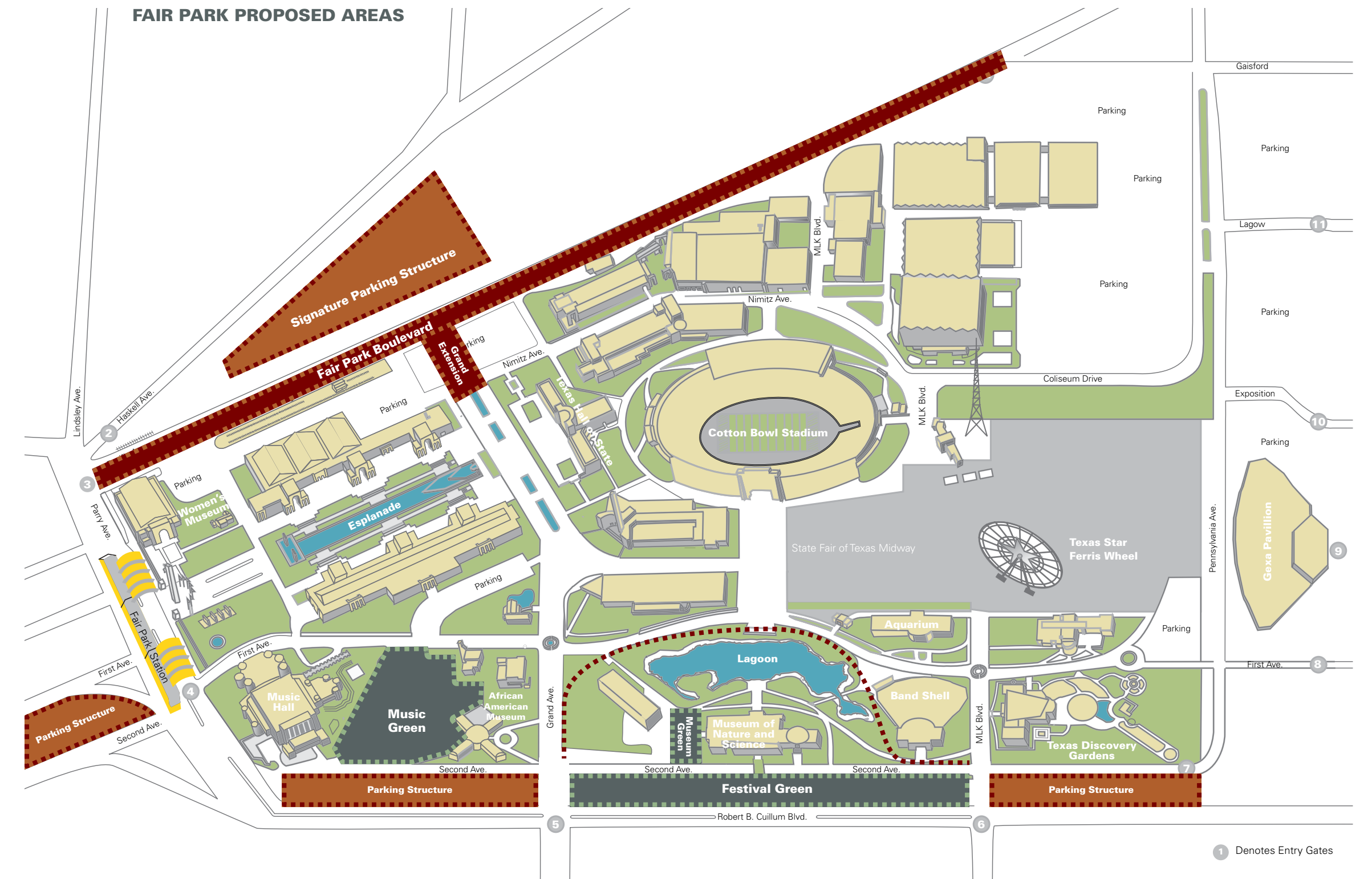


Visualizations from the City of Dallas Transportation and Environment Committee briefing: "The East Corridor: An I-30 / U.S. 80 Design" 12 JANUARY 2009

2 Establish a community park on south side of property

For what is technically the city's largest public park, Fair Park is significantly lacking in green space, traditional recreation features and the open design necessary to encourage robust community use throughout the year.

Several actions must be taken to strengthen its central identity as an "every day" urban park.





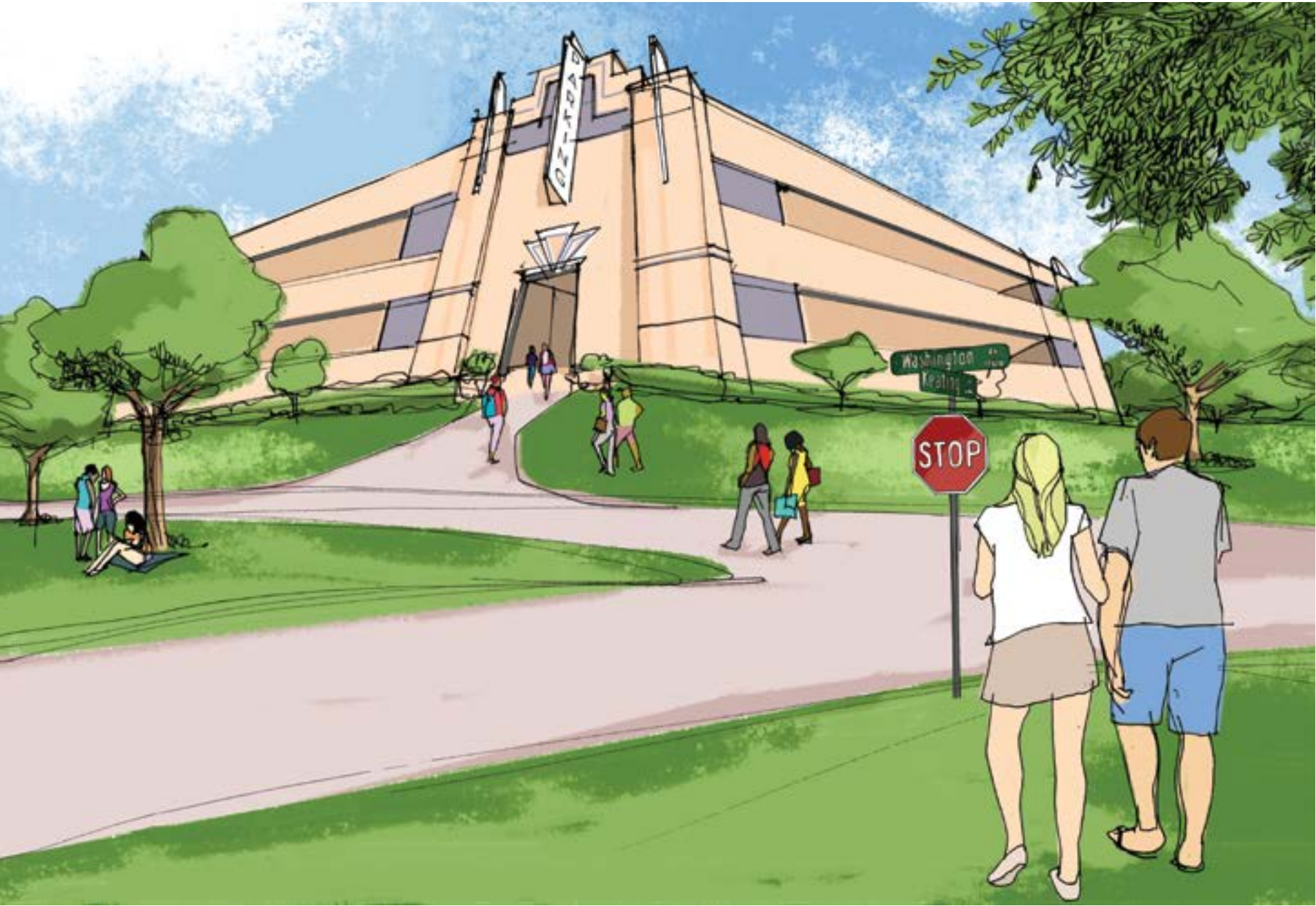
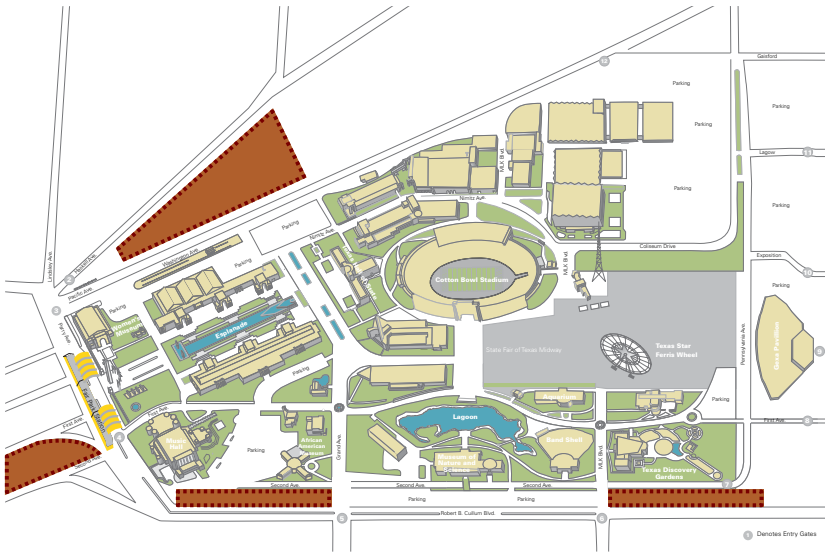
INTRODUCE SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING AREAS

One of Fair Park's strongest assets is its mosaic of museums, organizations, historical landmarks and venues, but they lack the organization required to fully coordinate, support and leverage each offering in its entirety. A well-planned programming concept will serve many purposes in the overarching goals set forth by this committee, primary among them, the need for green space and to better organize parking areas.

The introduction of clearly identified areas sets the stage for unique, programmable areas, similar to the ideas successfully implemented at Klyde Warren Park. General areas could include historic, cultural and children's areas, comprising entertainment districts, a historic core, music green, the Midway, festival lawns, etc., clearly delineated by appropriate signage. It also helps rebrand Fair Park and the surrounding area as a music and performance venue, drawing more visitors, vendors and investment in fledgling neighborhood businesses and the significant vacant space available.

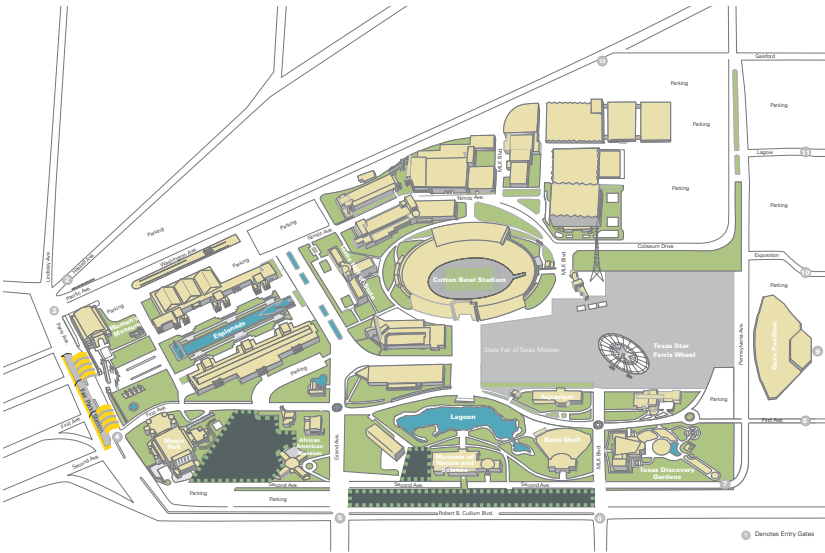
**BUILD STRUCTURED PARKING BUILDINGS
TO NORTH, SOUTH AND WEST SIDES OF PARK**

Currently, parking throughout the park is disjointed and difficult to access and navigate. Concentrating parking in attractive above-ground structures within strategic areas achieves many goals. New parking structures will improve the perception of safety by organizing parking in secure, architecturally-compatible and well-supervised areas; streamline the often congested traffic coming into the park; and support the marketing of exhibit and conference spaces that currently lack convenient parking options. Overcoming this fundamental obstacle to better understand and shape how visitors and traffic interact with the space will be crucial to a successful redesign of Fair Park.



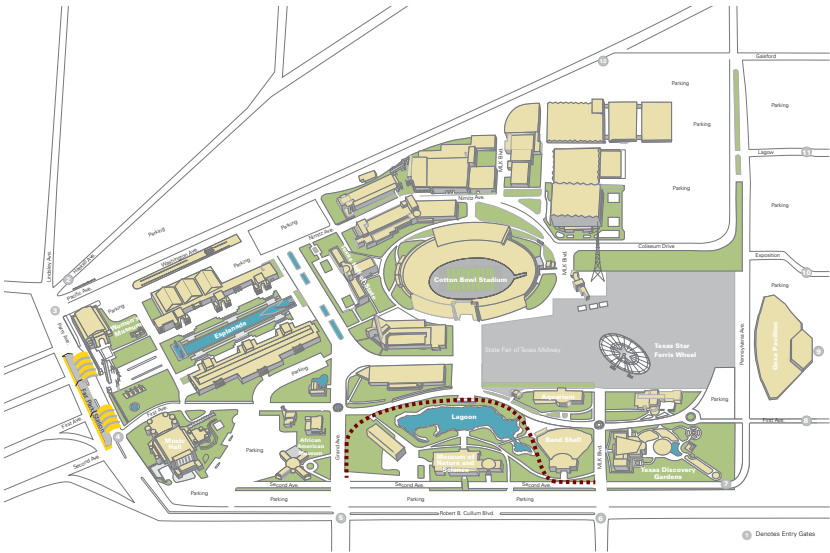
CREATE GREEN SPACE IN FORMER PARKING AREAS

Consolidating the vast space currently allotted to parking will allow for more green areas and a large community park in select lots on the southern border of the park. The parking lot in between the Music Hall and the African American Museum could be turned into green space, and used as a music green for both indoor and outdoor play, concerts and small performances, while the parking lot between the former Perot Museum and former Science Place building could be remodeled to be a museum green with a beautiful view of the lagoon.



MOVE PARK FENCE

The stretch of fence that runs along Robert B. Cullum Boulevard in between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Avenue should be relocated so that it sits on the north side of Leonhardt Lagoon. Once the existing parking areas are transferred into multi-level garages, the area will become an open community park so that the southern area of Fair Park is accessible and connects to the surrounding community.



3 Create one organization to be operational, marketing authority

Currently, the responsibility for park programming lies with a number of disparate bodies, including city departments such as the Park and Recreation Department, the Office of Cultural Affairs, Building and Equipment Services, as well as the State Fair Association, Friends of Fair Park, Dallas Summer Musicals, Live Nation and the other tenants in the park. The process to develop or schedule special events is cumbersome and confusing, absent a clear protocol and primary authority figure.

As a result, the park consistently loses opportunities because third-party leadership finds it difficult, if not impossible, to navigate the system. A central authoritative body will streamline the special event permit process and routinely solicit feedback on potential improvements, attracting more events and encouraging long-term hosting opportunities.

In order to build an effective and productive governing body, the Task Force recommends the following elements be taken into consideration.

It is the resounding belief of the Task Force that the main reason the redevelopment of Fair Park has not advanced in the past few decades is the lack of a cohesive governance structure with the authority to oversee all components of the park.





ONE-STOP SHOP IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS, MARKETING

It is the resounding belief of the Task Force that the main reason the redevelopment of Fair Park has not advanced in the past few decades is the lack of a cohesive governance structure with the authority to oversee all components of the park. A new private, independent 501(c)(3) should be formed and it should have full power and responsibility to manage leases, scheduling, maintenance, operations and marketing, and will act as the sole contact for outside vendors. This body wouldn't be an addition to the current structure – it should serve as Fair Park's sole governing body.





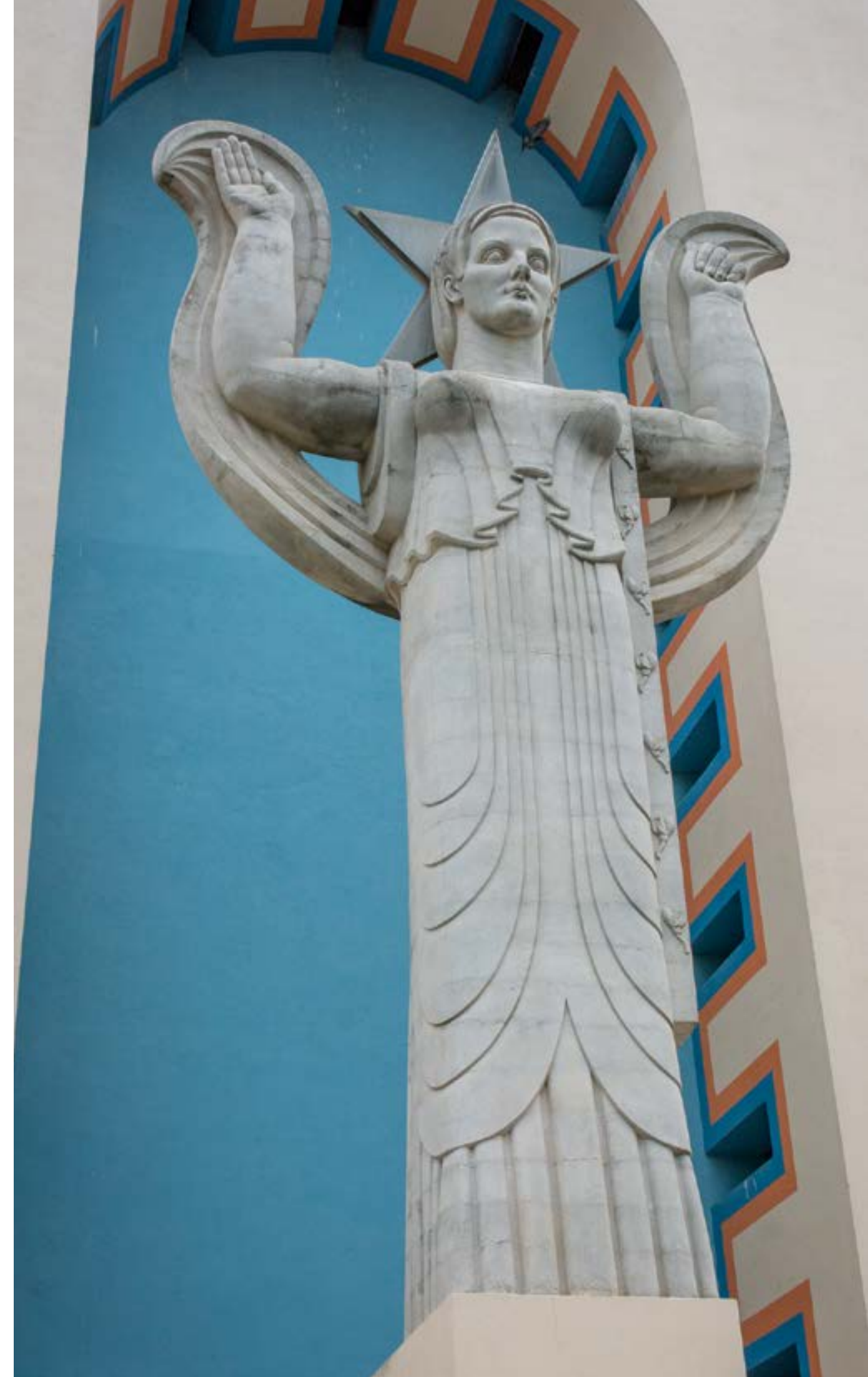
DIVERSE FUNDRAISING BOARD

A new private, independent 501(c)(3) entity should be formed with a board that is inclusive of the surrounding neighborhood, with community- and civic-minded members who are experienced, respected fundraising leaders possessing the ability to effectively solicit capital from the private sector, while generating additional funding from the public sector. In other words, an organization that functions as a one-stop shop – a single group with the power and financial strength to manage all aspects of Fair Park in a way that maintains and promotes the interests of the city and neighborhood.

REPORT TO PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

The composition of the new entity will be at the discretion of the organization itself, but the Task Force has developed recommendations for how it could potentially be organized. Like the Dallas Zoo, the Dallas Arboretum and Klyde Warren Park, it should report to the Park and Recreation Department, underscoring its central identity as a city park.

The new entity should include an executive director and staff, which would be sought through a comprehensive national search, similar to the process successfully used to assemble the Dallas Zoo organization. Staff should include national experts in developing and scheduling events, supported by marketing and branding staff to effectively publicize events. This entity would also be expected to work collaboratively with the Park and Recreation Department, as well as the city to obtain the necessary permits and adequate security, the Office of Cultural Affairs to ensure complimentary programming objectives are met, the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau to diversify event offerings, and the State Fair of Texas to evaluate the possibilities for additional park amenities – dog parks, playgrounds, flexibility in parking usage – to further encourage year-round patronage.



STATE FAIR OF TEXAS IS KEY

The State Fair of Texas is a critical asset and it is the definitive opinion of the Task Force that it should continue its 128-year tenure in Fair Park. It has provided the park with an enduring identity and priceless exposure rarely experienced by public parks, and continues to reinvest in the park, spending more than \$45 million in the past decade. The park should similarly support the mission of TSF and work to elevate it to the world’s preeminent fair. Put simply, the State Fair is the park’s number one tenant and should be treated as such.

The State Fair’s contract should fall under the authority of the new governing body, through which it will be flexible in its boundaries and usage where feasible to ensure the park and its features are organized in the most logical, beneficial way. The long-term prosperity of the Texas State Fair is in the best interest of Fair Park and the city. Any change should be executed carefully and judiciously with full collaboration between the new governing body and the State Fair organization.





CITY MUST ADEQUATELY FUND NEW ORGANIZATION, PARK

After careful review, the Task Force finds great value in the Fair Park Comprehensive Development Plan developed in 2003 and revised in 2007, and strongly believes lack of funding was a key barrier to those goals being implemented. Fair Park must be financially sustainable with dedicated funding sources, revenue generation and partnerships, or this issue will continue to hamper any further revitalization efforts.

This body requires enough funds to successfully launch and build its staff. It is the determination of the Task Force that the city should be prepared to provide in excess of \$15 million annually for Fair Park's operating budget, which includes this organization; the new governing body can determine the precise amount needed and will ensure funds are allocated efficiently and reflective of the neighborhood's priorities. With all existing and future leases and contracts pertaining to the park assigned by the city to this new entity, this money should be provided to this governing body on an annual basis going forward. Additional financial resources will be obtained by the group through a blend of park-generated revenues, public bond proceeds and private donations.

In addition, funds to address deferred maintenance on the historic structures are critical. In regard to capital expense, \$478 million is required to fully repair and revitalize the park, which can be sought in two \$175-million bond program installments, certificates of obligation, other bond propositions and through match funding. Additionally, reconstructing and improving the surrounding roads will cost \$46.5 million, which should be financed through bond propositions for area streets.

It's also the belief of the Task Force that it's inappropriate for the city to expect private funding to underwrite the cost of operations at the current level and add additional funds for improvements. Once the city financially demonstrates its commitment to Fair Park, it will naturally encourage private funds for special amenities, elevating facilities to the level of excellence the community wants and expects. However, private support should never be considered a substitute for government funding for the basic operation and maintenance of a city park.



MORE TASK FORCE IDEAS

If the primary issues inhibiting Fair Park’s redevelopment are addressed, we can channel the creativity of an entire city into these 277 acres. A few ideas of nine individuals follow – imagine what could be created with the imagination of millions. The result will be a park for all people – one where the possibilities are endless, and every visitor is proud of their stake in its future.



DINING

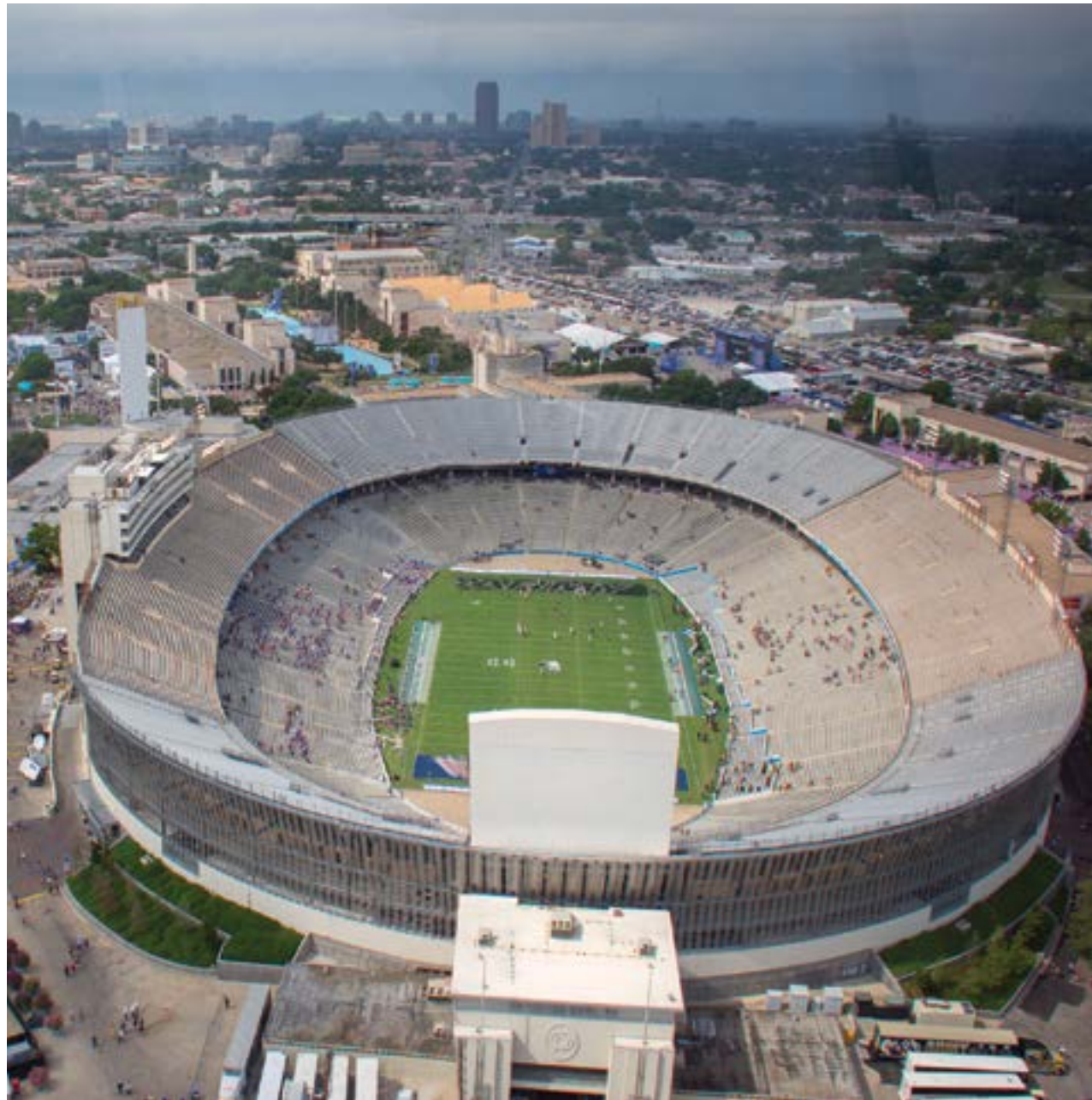
- Cluster of restaurants around entrance
- Space for multiple food trucks
- Food festivals



RE-IMAGINED SPACES

- Expand the Children’s Aquarium at Fair Park to the lagoon and to the former natural history and science buildings to create a major Dallas attraction
- Create a Texas Music Hall of Fame in the Women’s Museum Building with music festivals held all year long
- Transform the Science Place into new SPARK! facility
- Update livestock buildings to be more innovative in technology and architecture (similar to Light Veil at Cotton Bowl recently featured in *TDMN*)





- Create Fair Park Boulevard at northern boundary of park
- Expand Grand Avenue to new Fair Park Boulevard.
- Relocate parking between Music Hall and African American Museum to create music green
- Renovate Old Mill Inn to be the Texas Pub and Beer Garden
- Create above-ground parking structure at intersection of Haskell and Pacific
- Replace the field of the Cotton Bowl with a new multipurpose surface which would give it more flexibility in attracting different sporting and special events



RECREATION

- Add sports, playing fields
- Children's area, which would include playgrounds (could be located in area close to lagoon), children's discovery center
- Water feature/spray park
- Antique markets on the green
- Number of music venues, small performance spaces



GENERAL

- Renovate the coliseum to allow for multiple events such as specialty sports, volleyball, wrestling, gymnastics (UIL tournaments), basketball, tennis courts
- Activities to engage the youth other than the State Fair – bowling alley, skateboard park
- Historically-inspired festivals – chili cook-off, frozen margarita contest
- Dog park



CONCLUSION

Fair Park has all the attributes of a world-class public park: the substantial space, iconic architecture, exceptional organizations, rich history and strong location in a great city. Now, it requires a formidable governing body and sustained funding to leverage these assets and advance it to its rightful place among the country’s greatest greens.

Imagine in the not-so-distant future how a visit to Fair Park could differ from today. Visitors will arrive by DART or follow distinctive directional signs to easily find it by car and park in convenient garages. Others will arrive on bikes via the Santa Fe Trail or simply walk from vibrant adjoining neighborhoods.

Couples will eat meals in sidewalk cafes or enjoy refreshments from food trucks throughout the park. Children will romp in the play areas located throughout the park, including dynamic spray parks, and music lovers will take in an outdoor concert from blankets on the music green. Nearby dog-walkers, sunbathers and ball players enjoy the open green spaces, while a group of young Scouts are on an outing to identify the park’s numerous trees, shrubs and birds.

Several languages can be overheard while walking through Fair Park as it has become a worldwide tourist magnet, drawing thousands from far-flung nations and all corners of the United States. As sundown approaches, patrons begin arriving for the multiple evening events scheduled, including a quinceañera, a lecture by a renowned scientist, a high school athletic competition and the performance of a smash Broadway musical.

Much time and energy has been spent envisioning a brighter future for Fair Park, full of promising visions like this one. It’s time for these imaginings to become reality. The time is right – for Dallas and its residents – to seize the future of this urban jewel, realize the full scope of its genius, and restore it to its true purpose – a park for all people.

Mayor’s Fair Park Task Force





