

**Dallas Regional Chamber**

**LEAD YP Class of 2021**

**Economic Development Issue Area**

April 21, 2021

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, over 140 companies have moved into the DFW area. As a result, the greater Dallas is now faced with challenges of efficiently and appropriately providing for the rapidly increasing population. At the forefront of the discussion surrounding how to accommodate the extraordinary pace of growth are concerns related to infrastructure expansion, transportation dexterity, advancement with respect to school systems, and development of affordable housing options. At the forefront of the discussion regarding how to optimally provide for Dallas's evolution are legislative objectives, citizen preferences, and overall affordability and quality of life for Dallas's population.

## **Infrastructure**

The city of Dallas and its citizens will need to anticipate continued population growth and promote solutions that minimize strain on the city's infrastructure. For the purposes of this section, the term "infrastructure" refers to the fundamental facilities and systems serving residents of the city Dallas like public utilities (e.g., water, sewer, gas, and telecommunications) and services (e.g., emergency response, health services, parks and recreation).

Earlier this year, millions of people across Texas lost electricity during one of the coldest days in decades. Because residents dripped water from their faucets to protect the pipes in their homes, the water system depressurized, and water supplies became contaminated. As a result, half of the state went under a water advisory. Millions of state residents were without power and water for several consecutive days, and impacts from the power grid shutdown cost state residents millions of dollars in lost productivity and repairs. The state of Texas operates independently from the national power grid, and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) manages the flow of electric power to residents. The power grid had too little power to meet demand, and in many cities, like Dallas, the critical infrastructure wasn't entirely on the same grid circuit - meaning that the rolling blackouts to preserve electricity never rolled, so some residents lost power for days and some on the same grid circuits as hospitals never lost power. What that meant for Dallas residents is that their infrastructure failed. These recent events provide a dramatic example of the disastrous effects of not having a strong and stable infrastructure.

Fortunately, North Texas is well positioned with access to natural resources and telecommunications infrastructure to support a growing population. The city of Dallas can keep pace with projected demand for utilities by prioritizing securing reliable utility sources. The region is located in a geologic formation known as the Barnett Shale, considered the "granddaddy" of all U.S. shale, a rich source of natural gas. Similarly, AT&T and Texas Instruments are headquartered in Dallas, and the region is a strong telecommunications hub. Similarly, Dallas ranks #3 in global data center market size and is home to hundreds of data centers. Because high-speed fiber connectivity is abundant in the area, Dallas residents have fast and reliable wireless connectivity.

There is also reason for optimism because the city of Dallas is already making massive investments in infrastructure. In November 2017, Dallas voters approved a \$1.05 billion bond program that includes funding for flood control and storm drainage, cultural and public safety facilities, and parks and trails. Young professionals should research their ballot in upcoming election cycles and vote to approve financial allocation to bonds, which can only be used for capital projects. They

can make an impact and support infrastructure by voting to endorse bonds programs that fund these types of improvement projects and city services in the future. To find more information, young professionals can view sample ballots on the Dallas County Elections website and research bond proposals. Voting is free, and the time commitment and required skills to research bond measures and exercise the right to vote are low.

While the city of Dallas is growing rapidly, certain areas are growing faster than others. Suburban sprawl into the far North Texas region continues at a rapid pace with several companies moving their headquarters to affluent suburban areas like Frisco, McKinney, and Plano instead of the city center. This population growth in previously undeveloped suburban areas costs the city millions of dollars to build out necessary infrastructure. However, less dense commercial and residential areas like the suburbs generate far fewer tax dollars for the city and require more city services than their taxes and fees support. Because state and federal funds have diminished for major projects in recent years, city officials have had to come up with innovative solutions for funding.

One such example of innovating funding is public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships are cooperative arrangements between two or more public and private sectors, typically of a long-term nature. Because state and local tax revenues do not cover the cost of infrastructure for the growing population, developing cities like Dallas should lean on multi-partner donors who can offer more funding and layer in other sources of funding like loan financing and government funds. The City of Dallas Public-Private Partnership is a program through the Office of Economic Development that assists for-profit companies and developers to offset project or operational costs through a number of economic development incentives. Funding for the design, land acquisition and/or construction of eligible infrastructure upgrades include public streets, traffic improvements, including signals, water and sewer utilities, stormwater management, and related facilities or uses consistent with this purpose.

As more and more people move to North Texas, officials must think strategically about city planning, and public planning considerations, including park and city space planning, should enhance the city's livability. Investments in dedicated bike lanes, bike sharing programs, walkable districts, and parks and trails provide residents access to recreational opportunities and increase property values. Young professionals are wise to promote investments in infrastructure like city parks, and Dallas residents are doing just that. The city of Dallas recently voted to approve a massive public-private partnership investment to reinvigorate Fair Park. Fair Park First, a non-profit organization that oversees the management of Fair Park, and Spectra, a Comcast-owned events management and promotion company will oversee Fair Park's day-to-day operation. The deal between the city, Fair Park First and Spectra is set to run for 20 years, with Dallas contributing over \$34.6 million for the first 10 years.

## **Housing**

### **Summary of Issue Area**

*Population Boom.* DFW grew in excess of 1,350,000 residents from 2010 through 2019 (a 21% growth rate), nearly double the national population growth rate over the same period. From 2020 through 2029, DFW is expected to add another 1,400,000 residents (an 18% growth rate). This amounts to a record-breaking number of new residents for the fourth largest metro area in the

United States (behind only New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago). We can reasonably expect the population of DFW to exceed 9,000,000 by 2030, up from 7,500,000 in 2018.

Top 10 metropolitan areas by population growth, a 3-year and 10- year comparison:

LARGEST POPULATION INCREASES (2010–2019)			LARGEST POPULATION INCREASES (2017–2019)		
MSA	POP DIFF		MSA	POP DIFF	
1 Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1,181,071		1 Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	236,039	
2 Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	1,118,905		2 Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	189,455	
3 Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	743,999		3 Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	168,051	
4 Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	717,766		4 Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	147,932	
5 Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	601,996		5 Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	111,608	
6 Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	583,094		6 Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	94,266	
7 Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	530,604		7 Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	90,370	
8 Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	499,581		8 Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	87,909	
9 Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	468,986		9 Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	86,510	
10 Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO	412,716		10 Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV	85,080	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

So, where are all these new residents going to live? The fact is, DFW, like many other cities, is experiencing a housing market boom and affordable housing solutions are at the forefront of the issue. Here is a look at what is driving this boom in DFW.

*Disparate Supply and Demand.* The recent surge in home sales has resulted in unusually low inventory of homes for sale and home prices hitting record-setting levels. As compared to one year ago, there were 71% fewer homes on the market in the DFW, meaning there are currently fewer homes for sale in the North Texas area than any time over the past twenty years (including the post-financial crisis time period).

Historically low mortgage rates are one of the strongest factors driving demand. Rates are beginning to rise ever-so gradually and, therefore, not yet disrupting current market momentum. While rates currently hover just above 3%, some expect that rates will need to surpass 4% before having a cooling effect on the housing market. The low supply of houses is also a result of years of underbuilding and lagging residential development following the Great Recession. This was exacerbated by the pandemic-stunted rate of building and development. Further, the administrative and regulatory process for obtaining a developer permit in Dallas is notoriously onerous, again, intensified by the pandemic, sometimes taking three to four months to receive a permit that may only take a couple of weeks in cities, such as Seagoville or Farmersville. On the whole, North Texas issued 16% more building permits in 2020 than it did in 2019 but Dallas was down 36%.

Texas is home to 7.7 million individuals aged 20 and 38, the largest group of adults in Texas. An oft-recognized influence in the elevated housing demand is the population of Millennials (constituting nearly 10% greater portion of the population in Texas than Gen X) and the segment

of the population most likely to experience lifestyle shifts including marriage, starting families, thus—purchasing (their first) homes.

Further intensifying the housing shortage is the rising cost of materials. Those familiar with the construction sector report that the cost of lumber has reached astronomical inflation. This is partly a result of sluggish building materials production, which could alleviate, at least in part, as the economy continues to reopen but, nevertheless, the high cost of commodities, such as lumber, can currently add \$20,000 to \$50,000 to the typical cost of new residential construction.

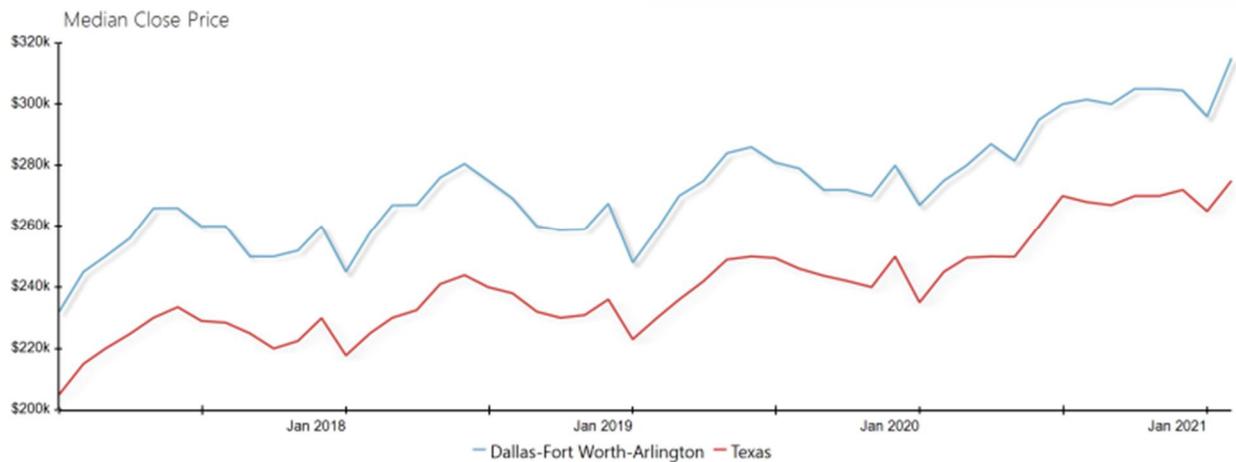
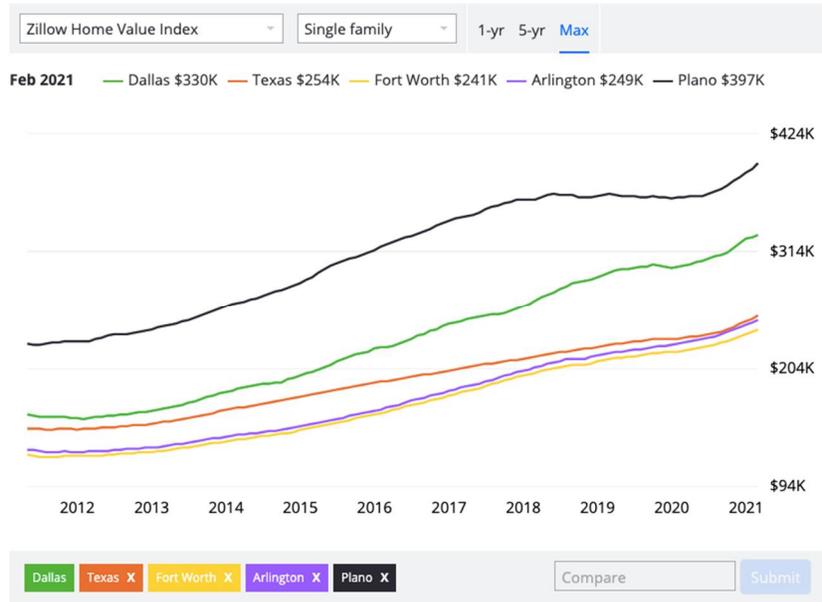
In some cases, buyers are competing with not only population migration to Texas but also commercial investors. And, yet another contributing factor limiting the supply of homes is the prevalence of older homeowners postponing listing their homes in favor of downsizing, a natural progression of the typical course of aging. All of the foregoing has left prospective purchasers in a quandary: delay the contemplated home purchase or pay more.



*Rising Home Prices.* According to the Dallas Federal Reserve, as of 2019, DFW was the least affordable of the major metro areas in Texas, as a function of home prices to the number of low-wage or under-employed workers. As home prices in DFW rise, an increasing number of residents are seeing greater than one-third of their paychecks going to rent, which is a concerning situation suggesting a lack of affordable housing options in the area based on typical wages.

In terms of sales and price growth, Dallas/Fort Worth/Arlington is ranked 22nd in the nation, up 15.7% year-over-year in 2021. Buyers commonly experience the fatigue of exhaustive searches, bidding wars, and (perceived) overpayment. There is a distinct absence of homes available in the \$150,000–\$400,000 price range. For those who can absorb the cost, buyers are faced with the choice of paying more to secure a property and end the home search. And the trend of steadily increasing home prices is expected to persist for the foreseeable future, aggravated by the fact that the number of homes on the market has plummeted by over 50% in less than a year.

While north Texas added about 40,000 new homes in 2020 and is expected to add another 40,000 in 2021, median DFW home prices have nearly doubled over the past decade with an increase to around \$315,000 as of February 2021. And, the cost of homes is expected to rise another 10% over the next twelve months.



Time Period	Dallas Metropolitan Area Real Estate Appreciation
Last 5 Years	58%
Last 10 Years	66%
Last 20 Years	136%

*Affordability Crisis.* While there is a clear housing supply and demand imbalance in DFW, the housing shortage is most prominent for lower-income households. Many people disagree on the precise definition of “affordable housing” but, most would agree that the term is generally a function of the relationship between household income and housing costs. This is often broken down into measures of existing homeowners to repay their mortgages (“repayment affordability”), and would-be homebuyers (“purchase affordability”) capacity for financing approval to allow them to purchase (often first) home. Further, homeownership demand can essentially be quantified as a measure of income (but, also including wealth and credit worthiness) to the relevant cost of

homeownership. For example, according to typical federal mortgage funding guidelines, a household income of \$150,000 should expect to be approved for a loan amount of about \$375,000. This means that for a household making \$75,000, homeownership in Dallas, based on the current rate of increasing median home sale prices, is quickly becoming unattainable, if not already so.

*A Need for Change.* With national jobs reports noting modest gains in employment to offset the catastrophic pandemic losses, construction jobs are seeing marked gains in recent months. More construction workers on the job should logically lead to an increase in housing inventory and, optimistically, the potential for a leveling-off of home prices. A gradual expected increase in interest rates could have a similar cooling effect to the housing market, in turn giving more individuals an opportunity to enter home ownership. Nevertheless, uncertainty is the name of the game. As in-migration to Dallas and the surrounding areas from higher cost-of-living states such as California and New York, will home price increases level-off or subside?

The objective for the future of DFW housing might be stated as: providing affordable housing to residents from all demographics and stations, of central importance thereto is offering a range of choices of housing types, locations, price points, amenities, and relevant urban services.

A study by BAE Urban Economics Inc. found that over 270,000 Dallas households will likely experience overcrowding issues and/or cost burdens by 2045. Moreover, the study found that workers in some of the fastest growing and most prevalent occupations in DFW must spend more than 30% of their income on housing to afford rent at or around \$1,100 or to purchase a house under \$250,000.

Finding ways to make building or revitalizing affordable homes options (for purposes of this discuss, assume an “affordable home” is priced at \$250,000 or less) more attractive to developers could certainly help but, this remains a challenge because of building and labor costs and restrictions on density and lot size across various municipalities (Dallas has 212 municipalities). Building smaller homes on smaller lots seems fundamentally sound but many Dallas communities take a “not in my backyard” approach, which often proves difficult for developers and city officials to overcome.

*Attempts at a Cure.* In the Spring 2018, the Dallas City Council unanimously approved the Comprehensive Housing Policy, a plan that sought to tackle affordable housing shortage in Dallas. Specifically, the plan set forth the following objectives: “1) Create and maintain available and affordable housing throughout Dallas, 2) Promote greater fair housing choices, and 3) Overcome patterns of segregation and concentrations of poverty through incentives and requirements.” The plan promised tens of thousands of affordable residential units over a three-year period but produced only a few hundred in the first year—less than 5% of the plan’s goal. The plan relied on and proposed homebuyer subsidies, tax freezes, homeowner incentives for firefighters, cops, and teachers, rental assistance, and developer guidelines but ultimately failed.

Similar programs have been contemplated by the City Council’s various housing and development subcommittees, Housing and Homelessness Solutions Committee, Housing Policy Taskforce, and Dallas’s Office of Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, including

streamlining the process to obtain building permits and modifying requirements for new developments.

The Office of Economic Development has considered a home loan program aimed at easing access to affordable housing options for Dallas residents. Although only in the conceptual stages, such a plan would aim to create over 3,000 affordable housing units per year for 25 years through fundraising and underwriting affordable housing development. Further, land use plans may include city-initiated rezoning that opens up new land for affordable housing, such as duplexes and fourplexes. This will likely be aimed at small-scale investors and developers and target land convenient to DART facilities. These initiatives target housing for individuals making between 30 percent and 120 percent of the area median income, or \$17,500 and \$72,500. The city will likely attempt to achieve these goals through development incentive programs but could also employ fee waivers and tax abatements measures. Regardless of the plan, it's likely that heavy incentives will be essential because, for example, Preston Center developers stand to lose upwards of \$240,000 per year by including 10 800-square foot affordable units in a housing development as compared to building exclusively high-end units.

Efficient, holistic city planning will go far to combat the affordability housing crisis and address the underlying variables. This discussion will likely encompass advancement in various factors contributing to Dallas's socioeconomic disparity. Addressing the region's poor and middle class is vital. For illustrative (and not exhaustive) purposes, such a comprehensive plan may include strategic land development to combat food deserts, cultivate diverse job centers focused on mobility, facilitate transformation of vacant commercial spaces into a mix of business/entrepreneurial centers and denser (and, therefore, affordable) housing solutions. Regardless of the plan forward, the benefits of density must be considered. While it might seem that low-density urban sprawl housing may be cheaper, this is not entirely true when considering other contributing factors such as transportation costs and stress and utilities costs for single-family housing. Because, on the whole, individuals that earn the area median income cannot afford to live in Dallas, more cost effective, high-density communities can provide countless individual and societal benefits. Options such as repurposing older hotels or unused commercial properties are worthy of consideration.

#### How Young Professionals Can Affect Change in Housing

At first glance it may appear Dallas's housing market is thriving, but as evidenced by the affordable housing crisis discussed herein, this is only part of the story. To help facilitate constructive development of Dallas housing, it is essential that more citizens get involved and provide diverse perspectives and proposals. The residents of Dallas must be a part of the decision-making process. Dallas faces financial and socioeconomic barriers to equitable growth. Dallas, however, is strong and resilient. Countless public, private, and philanthropic organizations are marshalling these efforts and providing vast opportunities for proactivity and, while economic development in Dallas is facing decades-old quandaries, housing must remain of primary importance. It is fundamental that people can actually *afford* to live in Dallas.

Change also comes from Dallas area governing bodies and city council. As mentioned herein, the city council and its various committees are contemplating several approaches to the housing issue including incentives and assistance programs for low-income housing developers. It also stands

to reason that the city and county can and should resolve to develop available land into more dense living accommodation to increase their quality of life.

Along with attending relevant meetings, young professionals can serve on a related board or special action committee working on the Dallas housing issues. Regardless of the means, take the opportunity to get involved. Become informed and knowledgeable about housing proposals and try to understand how these may impact the city and its residents.

#### Organizations Working on the Housing Issue

There are, undoubtedly, steps that can be taken to incentivizing housing development for low- and middle-class. Optimal results will likely be achieved if the private sector works collaboratively with local government.

*Dallas Housing Authority.* The Dallas Housing Authority (“DHA”) is one organization making efforts toward change by partnering with developers. For over eighty years, DHA has served Dallas, Collin, Rockwall, Tarrant, Kaufman, Ellis, and Denton Counties by providing “quality, affordable housing to low-income families and individuals through the effective and efficient administration of housing assistance programs across North Texas.” The DHA has various programs aimed at reducing struggles for Dallas residents with regard to housing. Two notable DHA programs are North Texas Housing Partners, which strives to encourage and facilitate public-private housing partnerships, and DHA Cares, which leads DHA’s charitable and philanthropic efforts and community engagement. For young professionals looking to get involved with DHA’s efforts, volunteering with DHA Cares is a good place to start.

*North Texas Fair Housing Center.* The North Texas Fair Housing Center (“NTFHC”) “is a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination in North Texas.” To achieve its missions, the NTFHC provides free programs including counseling, discrimination complaint investigation, and educational programs. In addition to various other services such as preparing fair housing reports and representing under-served communities in Dallas, the NTFHC offers grants for community development, specifically for projects and programs that “invest in Dallas neighborhoods of color; foster homeownership; and promote diverse, inclusive communities.” Such programs may include housing rehabilitation for vacant or abandoned housing, new construction, and repairs; neighborhood stabilization, accessibility modifications, and down payment assistance for individuals who are up to 120% of area median income. Volunteer opportunities exist through NTFHC including becoming a “tester” that works with the investigation of housing discrimination complaints Dallas.

*CitySquare Housing.* An example of the numerous homelessness-focused organizations in Dallas is CitySquare Housing (“CSH”). Since 2001, CSH “has developed or constructed almost 1,000 residential units, 200,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, and” focuses on “immediate permanent housing solutions for the chronically homeless in the city of Dallas.” CitySquare, which also provides assistance on food security, legal representation, and more, has several volunteer and donation opportunities.

*Others.* The Real Estate Councils of Texas (“RECsTX”) is a Texas coalition—with a branch in Dallas and various subgroups specific to young professional—“formed to serve as a unified voice

for the commercial real estate industry in Texas to establish a statewide economic footprint, advocate for sound public policy, and educate policymakers on the potential impact of legislative and regulatory measures on the real estate development industry.” Government and city administrative bodies can influence the supply of affordable housing through various mechanisms such as regulatory, incentive, and infrastructure changes. The City Council Housing and Homelessness Solutions committee (“HHSC”) and Dallas’s office of Homelessness Solutions also provide information related to this issue. Specifically, HHSC is on the frontline of Dallas’s housing development from the legislative and governance perspective. Attending a committee meeting can help with understanding and ways to get involved. The City of Dallas has various committees, offices, and departments aimed at combating the housing issues plaguing Dallas such as Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization office which works “to create and maintain affordable housing throughout Dallas, promote greater fair housing choices, and overcome patterns of segregation and concentrations of poverty through incentives and requirements.” The Office of Economic Development, Planning & Urban Design, and Sustainable Development and Construction are also working diligently on these areas. These offices and departments provide extensive information, resources, meetings, and workshops related to Dallas housing.

## **Schools**

It has been said that schools are the lifeblood of a community. They are the driving force behind educating our youth, they allow for critical social development, they give parents a reliable place to supervise their children while they provide for their families, and they afford teachers opportunities for thriving, rewarding careers. The roles schools play and the benefits they provide are enormous. Not only are they important to youth and teacher development, but they play a key role in community economic development. For all of these reasons and more, investing in school systems and surrounding programs are some of the wisest a community can make.

Dallas is home to the second-largest school district in Texas and the seventeenth-largest school district in the United States. It has 232 schools across elementary, middle school, and high school levels and approximately 155,000 students attend those schools each year. Like several large school districts across the nation, Dallas faces the reality that serving a wide area comes with its challenges. According to 2019 data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) approximately 86 percent of Dallas students are considered economically disadvantaged. By comparison, school districts throughout Texas with larger than 50,000 students average about 59% of their students as economically disadvantaged. You could argue this makes it more difficult for Dallas educators to teach young people who may not have the support needed to excel to the best of their capabilities. You could also argue it makes the task at hand even more important. The connection between educational performance and individual life success have been proven significant by a variety of studies. A joint study by the University of Illinois, University of Houston, and University of Tuebingen followed randomly selected students from high school until over 50 years afterward. The study concluded that students who showed more interest in high school and had higher writing skills reported higher incomes, and also tended to have higher occupational prestige than their peers.

When considering the link between more interested and higher performing students and higher levels of professional success and income level, it becomes difficult to ignore the large impact the education system has on the economic mobility of an individual, and community as a whole.

Economic mobility is defined as the ability of an individual, family, or some other group to improve (or lower) their economic status. The DFW metro area currently ranks in the middle of the pack among U.S. metro areas in measures of upward mobility. It ranks slightly below average in college attainment rates, median household income, and small business per capita. There is certainly opportunity for improvement within the school system that has potential for a direct impact to Dallas' economic development.

To its credit, Dallas seems to recognize keeping students interested in school work, minimizing drop-out rates, and increasing student performance is of critical importance. However, while Dallas has shown improvements in minimizing high school drop-out rates over past years, 2019 data shows it still sits just under 3%, which is higher than the state average of 1.8% for school districts with the highest numbers of students. Dallas hopes to continue reducing drop-out rates to follow closer in line with state averages and has recently made big investments toward that effort. The school district sponsored, and Dallas voters passed, a \$3.4B bond in 2020 that devotes \$3.2B to renovation of existing facilities, upgrades of infrastructure, and construction of new and replacement campuses. The remaining \$200M will be invested in upgrading technology for better student connectivity, classroom technology, communications systems, enterprise systems, and cybersecurity. Today's technology-savvy students should benefit from technology upgrades creating a more enjoyable and interactive experience. Young professionals looking for ways to get involved in bettering our school infrastructure should first look at voting for special bond packages such as this. Of the approximately \$1.3M registered voters in the Dallas ISD area, it is estimated that only 350,000 voters, or 27%, turned out to vote for the bond package. A significant way to make a difference is to vote for positive initiatives that can positively affect our students and school system.

In addition to voting, the public policy front provides more opportunities for young professionals to become involved to affect change. Organizations like "Leadership ISD" exist to train citizens to become leaders advocating for keeping students at the center of education policy. It provides fellowship programs and training for those interested in paths to school board governance positions.

In addition to investing in schools themselves, it is also important to look at supplemental programs supporting children to both motivate them to perform to their highest potential during school, and also educate them as to career opportunities available to them after graduation. Dallas ISD has significant initiatives on this front. The first is the Pathways in Technology Early College High School Program (P-TECH), and the ISD will soon enroll almost 25 percent of its students. P-TECH offers students tuition-free college classes and presents the opportunity to earn 60 hours of college credits, industry certificates, and associate's degrees while attending high school. The DISD website has great information on its P-TECH program and notes the success of the program is based largely on its significant partnership with industry partners in both the public and private sector. Volunteers from industry partners devote time and energy to these training programs. Young professionals wanting to get involved should consult the Dallas ISD website to see if their current employer is an Industry Partner. If so, there are likely opportunities to volunteer to support the program. If not, there is information on how to become an industry partner.

Additional industry sponsored organizations exist to train young students on available career opportunities post-graduation. "ACE Mentoring of Dallas/Fort Worth" is one such organization

that exists to educate high school juniors and seniors to career opportunities offered by the Architectural, Construction, and Engineering professions. Their programs integrate hands-on activities, tours, field trips and weekly interaction with industry firms. Other industry segments have similar type programs and there is great opportunity for young professionals to become involved in the lives of students and make a difference.

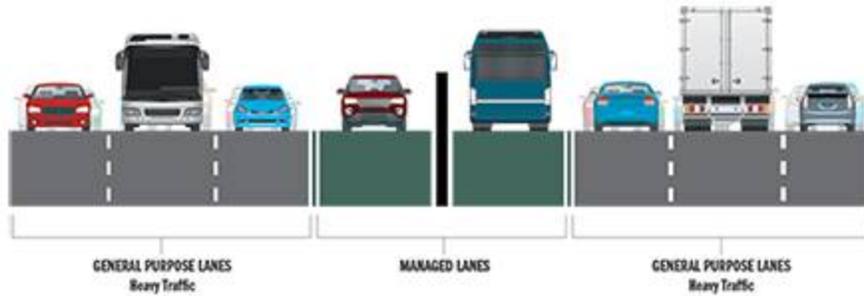
Lastly, younger grade school and middle school students can also benefit from supplemental programs. These programs keep children occupied during summer hours and the time between school ending and guardian pick up. They allow for increased social activity and further training. “Dallas Afterschool” is one such program that has 150 partner sites across the school district. It has trained over 1,200 afterschool program professionals and impacted over 12,000 students. The program’s mission is to level the playing field for children of all races and economic backgrounds by informing community stakeholders, supporting after school summer programs, and coordinating community resources. Volunteer opportunities are available to support things like school-supply drives, career days, etc. There are also young professionals’ groups and membership opportunities for continued fundraising, volunteering, and awareness throughout the year.

It is critically important for Dallas ISD leaders, citizens and industry professionals to take an active role in supporting the growth and advancement of our school infrastructure, as well as our students. As a whole, the education system cares for and supports our future community leaders, provides potential for a better life for the economically disadvantaged, and generates talent that will contribute to our community’s economic development via business in the future. There are many rewarding ways to become involved and make a difference.

### **Public Transportation**

The Dallas Fort-Worth metroplex by the year 2040 will have to sustain public commuting the size of Chicago. As of 2021, the DFW area is home to roughly 6.3 million people that commute to and from work. The most commonly used form of commuting is the use of a personal vehicle and the freeway systems, which has the most managed lanes of any metro in the United States. Aside from the freeway system, mass transit options such as Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and the Trinity Railway Express (TRE). The Public Transit options are one of the most underutilized systems in the country given that the DFW area encompasses 9,000 square miles of North Texas. The question is are riders choosing to drive alone because they can afford to or is the Public Transit option not adequate enough to support daily commuting?

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDot) is responsible for all the managed lanes in the state of Texas. The purpose of a managed lane is to reduce the traffic congestion and provide the rider an accurate time estimate to their destination. The use Managed lanes helps maximize the roadway efficiency and improve traffic flow for both the managed lanes and the general-purpose lane. The different types of managed lanes include High occupancy lanes (HOV) lanes designated for riders with 2 or more passengers, Express lanes for through traffic but has fewer exits, toll lanes that require a fee to access, restricted lanes are designated for bus or trucks with more than two axles, and reversible lanes that can be directed to either direction of the highway.



The Managed lanes that encompass the DFW area are North Texas HOV lanes which include East R.L Thornton Freeway (I-30) and U.S. North Central Expressway (75). TEXpress lanes which are all toll roads that include NTE TEXpress, LBJ TEXpress, I-30 TEXpress, I-35 TEXpress, SH114 TEXpress, SH 183 TEXpress, Loop 12 TEXpress, I-635 East TEXpress total to more than 100 miles of roadway and connect Dallas, Tarrant, and Denton counties throughout the DFW. These Tolled roads ensure that the traffic is always moving at least 50 mph so that the driver may commute in the fastest way possible. A Map of both the Dallas and Fort Worth Managed Lanes can be accessed at the Texas Department of Transportation website.

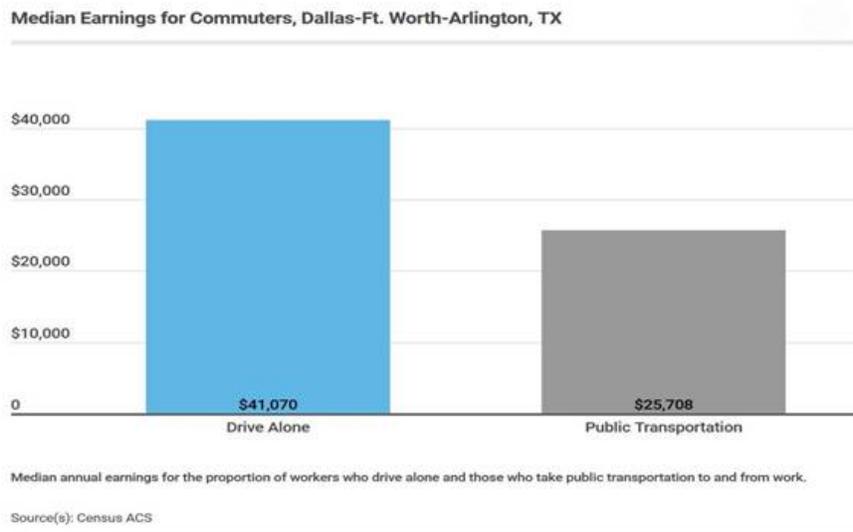
The DFW has invested billions into the current status and the future of the managed lane system. Over 80 percent of DFW citizens use this as their form of commuting. I believe young professionals hold the power as far as the prioritization of what will be prioritized and maintained with local government and private companies because the growing population will lead to the creation of more managed lanes in the near future. I believe that if a DFW citizen has the ability to own and drive a personal vehicle they will always choose that as a commuting option. As the average cost of living along with housing prices continue to rise we have seen that people will choose to live further away from the two major cities and commute to and from work. Aside from a daily commute, managed lanes play an important role in the economic development of the Dallas Fort-Worth. TxDot along with its private partners will continue to create new additions to the spider web of managed lanes. These additions will lead to job opportunities in the construction of the new additions, and transportation companies that provide freight services will grow and require more workers. There has been a similar investment of \$10.8 billion dollars into the DART system and although the majority choose to drive, the DART system is impacting the economy in different ways.

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) is a regional transit agency that was founded in 1983 services 13 cities of the DFW area that include Addison, Carrollton, Cockrell Hill, Dallas, Farmers Branch, Garland, Glenn Heights, Highland Park, Irving, Plano, Richardson, Rowlett, and University Park. The DART light rail system has over 93 miles of total service distance with 65 stops. They have a total bus fleet of 692 with 10,325 stops. DART also provides a very important connection between DFW’s two largest cities Dallas and Fort Worth. The Trinity Railway Express was created in 1996 as a commuter rail line that as of 2019 averages 2 million riders a year. This has been a pivotal option for commuters that work and live in both cities.

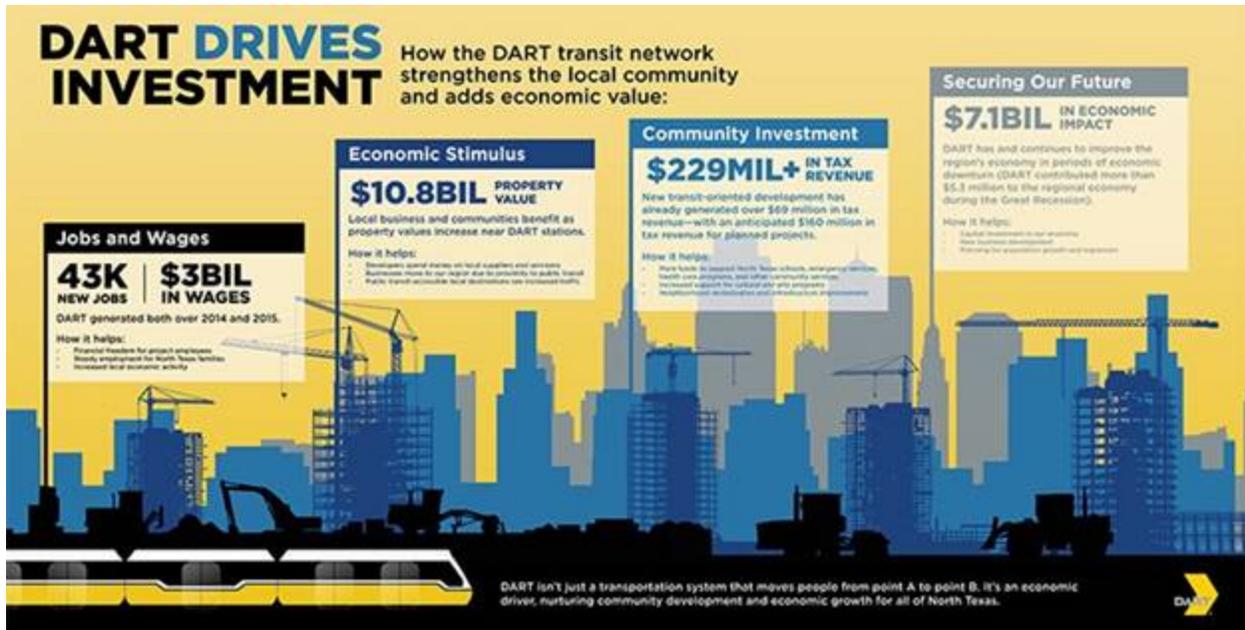
The chart below provided by DART shows an overview of the total usage for 2020.

3.0 RIDERSHIP		
MODE	FY20 ANNUAL	FY20 AVERAGE WEEKDAY
Bus	27.7 million	88,300
Light Rail	20.1 million	62,600
Commuter Rail	1.3 million	4,300
Paratransit	643,800	2,200
Vanpool	309,700	1,200
Dallas Streetcar	189,400	550
Total System	50.1 million	159,100

The numbers are skewed because of the pandemic, but the low usage DART can be attributed to many factors. As stated, before 80 percent of all DFW residents use a personal vehicle and the managed lanes system to commute to work. Commuting through mass transit options like DART adds a longer commute because the rider may have to use a combination of the buses and light rail system. The riders that utilize DART on average less than residents that drive their own vehicle, which gives support to the thought that once a DFW resident begins to earn more they will choose to drive their own vehicle.



The underutilization of the DART system highlights a discrepancy between mass transit users and managed lane users, but there has been a positive impact with the additions made to DART from its original design. Through a combination of Private and public funding there has been an investment of \$11 billion towards the DART rail light system. This investment has had a positive impact on the economy by the construction of new projects near the rail system. Businesses and projects have gravitated to locations near the Rail systems because it leads to more revenue, increased property value, job creation, and overall growth for the community. Although the use of the DART system remains low at the moment, DART and its partners have laid the groundwork and preparation for the future increased use of Public Transportation that will be a result of the increased population of DFW.



Young Professionals play an important role in the future of public transportation, we will affect the future design of DFW. The choice of using Public Transportation versus Managed lanes and a personal vehicle dictates where businesses choose to locate at and in turn dictates where jobs are created. DFW will continue to grow and the combination of both Mass transit and Managed lanes will be ready to handle the influx of residents.

**Conclusion**

While Dallas has undergone a marked evolution in the recent decade, further efforts toward thoughtful economic development that will allow residents and business to thrive are essential. This initiative will require extensive involvement, discourse, and cooperation of residents, the private sector, and city and regional leaders. Dialog and action facilitating economic development, specifically in the areas of infrastructure, transportation, schools, and housing are essential and must continue to develop in depth and breadth. Coordinated efforts toward equitable and sustainable growth will allow Dallas to continue to prosper.

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