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Resources and Library: Community Trails Systems

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Trails around Dallas, Texas have sparked improvements and become the new "identity" for many neighborhoods.

▶ Read the background on connecting Ft. Worth-area trails in "Trinity Trails System proposed as major Texas greenway."

TRAILS: THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN DALLAS

By Rick Loessberg, Director of Planning & Development, Dallas County, Texas

If you ask people what they first think of when you mention "Dallas," most will probably say football (the Cowboys), a television show from the 1980s, or traffic. Chances that someone would respond with that they think of Dallas as being a place where people can use a trail to get to work or to go to a restaurant would probably only rank ahead of the response that associates Dallas with alpine skiing.

However, because of the work and coordination of local cities and counties, it is perhaps surprising to learn that there is now a rapidly-emerging trail system in the Dallas area with over 100 miles of major, hard-surface trail.

The trails in this system do not consist of just quarter-mile-long, six-foot-wide sidewalks that loop around a local park— these trails are ten-to-twelve-foot-wide, and more importantly, they go somewhere: they connect with neighborhoods, offices, stores, universities, and light rail stations. The Cottonwood Trail, which comprises part of the continuous twenty-mile trail to downtown Dallas, also intersects with DART's Forest Lane light rail station.



THE AMERICAN AIRLINES CENTER IS AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE KATY TRAIL

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THE DALLAS SKYLINE FROM THE KATY TRAIL

The trail system provides residents with a meaningful alternative method of getting from one place to another, and they offer important recreational opportunities. They travel in and out of older neighborhoods, suburban neighborhoods, and neighborhoods with highways, and at their peak times, some of them carry more people than many city streets and local bus routes.

More specifically, one can now use these trails to:

- Travel from the northern border of Dallas County to the edge of downtown Dallas— a distance of twenty miles;
- See a concert, a hockey game, or a basketball game at the American Airlines Center;
- Get to class at either the University of Texas at Dallas or Southern Methodist University;
- Reach seven light rail stations and three different light rail lines;

- Travel from one city to another without the need of a car, a bus, or a train;
- Enjoy the views of White Rock Lake, Bachman Lake, the Trinity River, or the Dallas skyline; and
- Walk, run, or bicycle to major employment centers like Las Colinas (which is the corporate home for five Fortune 500 companies) or the Telecom Corridor (which includes Texas Instruments and employs over 80,000 people).

These trails have changed areas and become the new "identity" for many neighborhoods. They have taken electrical corridors and abandoned rail corridors— areas that were once empty, unattractive spaces— and transformed them into active and highly-desirable assets.

Restaurants have sprung-up along-side of some of them, and several housing developments have incorporated the names of nearby trails in with their own.



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TRAIL SYSTEM IN RICHARDSON, TEXAS

The local trail system has become so extensive that even though Dallas County contains 900 square miles, there is now a trail no more than about twenty minutes away for most people, and with the \$28 million that Dallas County has already budgeted for additional projects— projects that will extend the present network by another 30 miles— the public's ability to utilize and enjoy this system will only continue to increase over the next few years.

Adjoining communities are also developing their own connections and extensions. One example is the city of Richardson, Texas. With dedicated bike lanes and 20 miles of trail that reach its northern, southern, eastern, and western boundaries, Richardson (population: 100,450) has one of the most complete city trail systems in the Dallas area.

For more information:
For more information about the trails in the Dallas area, please visit Dallas County's website
See interactive map of the Trinity Trails of Fort Worth

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