

Dallas Business Journal - January 29, 2007

<http://dallas.bizjournals.com/dallas/stories/2007/01/29/story8.html>

Dallas Business Journal

BUSINESS PULSE SURVEY: [Should Dallas voters get another say on a tollway for the Trinity River project?](#)

Old suburbs aim to build new urban oases

McKinney, Roanoke & Duncanville buying into rejuvenation idea

Dallas Business Journal - January 26, 2007 by [Dave Moore](#) Staff Writer

Three North Texas cities are formulating plans to convert their decaying downtowns into thriving hubs of apartments, condos and commerce.

Urban planner Scott Polikov is part of an \$920,000 effort to draw up separate plans for McKinney, Roanoke and Duncanville that will replace those communities' decaying cores with walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods that he claims will drive property values up and build sustained tax bases for the cities.

Polikov's initiatives move away from viewing outlying cities as satellites of Dallas and Fort Worth, and toward making them destinations unto themselves.

Polikov, a native Texan and former Washington lobbyist, is now preaching the gospel of mixed residential and commercial development, referred to as "new urbanism," to many smaller North Texas towns, where decision-makers are joining his congregation, especially Duncanville Mayor David Green.

"You're either going to redevelop and make a community that everyone's proud of, or you're going to decline," Green said. "There's no treading water."

Polikov, president of Fort Worth-based Gateway Planning Group Inc., says that all this can be done at a net gain to the cities involved, as long as there's a collaboration between cities and private partnerships.

One study Polikov commissioned by Austin-based economic analysis firm TXP Inc., showed development in downtown Roanoke would net about \$181,000 annually in new property and sales taxes.

And cities are literally investing in this vision: Duncanville has committed to spend \$295,000 for its plan, Roanoke has committed to spending \$275,000 and McKinney is spending \$350,000.

Beyond Polikov, McKinney has engaged three other firms -- HNTB, Civic Design Associates and Mesa Design -- in planning its future downtown.

New urbanism, in short, focuses on promoting pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods that have a mix of housing, retail and service jobs. The idea aims to restore a sense of community to a neighborhood by mixing homes and commerce.

Smaller downtowns such as Duncanville, Roanoke and McKinney work well with this philosophy because they already have small neighborhoods that have the potential for rebirth, Polikov said.

While Duncanville leaders concede their downtown isn't completely revitalized yet, they don't think it's too far away.

The city of Duncanville bought a block on Main Street to help feed the rebirth of its downtown. The development of the property -- likely with upscale townhouses -- will follow after the city gets plans back from Polikov this fall, Green said. The city paid about \$350,000 for the land, as its contribution to Main Street area improvement project.

Duncanville officials said the development is being aided by \$564,000 in North Central Texas Council of Government grants.

The money will pay for street and sidewalk improvements. Private developers are expected to build the 31 townhouses, which will be built above street-level businesses.

A chance at rail

While access to rail travel isn't requisite to create a walkable downtown, Duncanville, Roanoke and McKinney are planning to include it in their downtown plans.

A complicating factor for McKinney is that State Highway 5 would separate downtown from its potential rail station. As a result, Polikov plans on lobbying the Texas Department of Transportation to reduce the highway's speed to about 30 mph and to narrow the five-lane highway to make it more pedestrian-friendly.



Carroll Burgoon
Overhauler: Scott Polikov, a former Washington lobbyist, is a lead consultant in bringing a mix of commercial and residential development to downtown Roanoke, McKinney and Duncanville.
[View Larger](#)

One problem is that none of the three cities have means of funding a rail line, though there's talk of exempting a rail tax from the statewide cap on sales tax.

"The rail station depends on the action of this year's state Legislature," said Duncanville Economic Development Director Earle Jones. Jones said there's little doubt whether Duncanville will see passenger train travel return to its city limits. "It is a question of 'when', not 'if,' " he said.

dmoore@bizjournals.com | 214-706-7112

Contact the Editor

Need Assistance?

More Latest News →

[Subscribe or renew online](#)

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.