

Corridor cooperative:

How Missouri City leaders, developers and property owners are working together on new opportunities in the Texas Parkway/Cartwright Road corridor

BY BRANDI SMITH



JEFFREY BONEY



DANNY NGUYEN



LOGAN HAVEL



REGINALD PEARSON

So often when *REDNews* covers development in the suburbs, we're highlighting growth in as-yet-undeveloped areas. Think: massive master-planned developments, such as Grand Central Park near Conroe. However, many communities are reinvesting in existing areas. A key example of that is Missouri City, where city leaders are working with the real estate community to attract redevelopment and reuse.

From his early memories of Missouri City, District A, City Councilman Reginald Pearson recalls a time when the corridor of Texas Parkway and Cartwright Road was the retail core of the community.

"I've been in the community since 1991 and I can tell you that area had a movie theater, hardware store and some major retailers, including Walmart," says Pearson. "It was basically the mecca of Missouri City at the time."

For decades before that, the intersection was the center of gravity for the bedroom community, which was "on the cusp of making the transition from a rural to a suburban community," per Logan Havel, a broker with commercial real estate and development firm Read King.

"In fact, when he retired from coaching and became a full-time rancher, Missouri City is where Bum Phillips decided to put down his roots and run cattle on over 2,000 acres," says Havel, adding that the modern freeways we know so well had yet to be built. Times, as they do, changed and so did Missouri City.

"Today, Missouri City is an amenity-rich community with award-winning schools and an all-around great place to live," Havel says.

The construction and/or expansion of Beltway 8, State Highway 6, US-59 and the Fort Bend Toll Road shifted traffic away from the Texas Parkway and Cartwright Road. For example, daily traffic on Texas Parkway totalled 32,137 in 2017. Texas Department of Transportation data reveals an additional 12,000 (44,712) traveled Highway 6 each day.

As traffic made a move away from Texas Parkway, so did retailers, such as Randalls, Kroger and Walmart.

"People tended to gravitate toward Highway 6," says developer Danny Nguyen of DN Commercial Real Estate. "For years, the area was underutilized because of the obsolete shopping centers. It looked old."

"Outdated" is the word Councilman Pearson uses to describe a lot of the retail properties in the corridor today.

"It needs to be updated," he says, echoing what he's heard from his constituents.

Pearson and District B Councilman Jeffrey L. Boney have made revitalizing the Texas Parkway/Cartwright Road corridor a priority for the city.

"I am passionate about it because I've heard the feedback from my constituents. I've heard the people say the same things over and over and over again. I don't want our voices to be ignored, I don't want us to have the same narratives used time and time again as to why redevelopment can't happen," Boney says. "We need to figure out ways in which we can make it happen."

One part of his solution was to team up with Pearson to launch the Texas Parkway/Cartwright Coalition.

"The reason that I wanted to do this is because we wanted to hear directly from the constituents about the concerns or issues that they may have, as well as their wish list of things that they would like to see in the area," Boney says.

The wish list is a long one. In addition to retailers such as a wireless company and coffeehouse, as well as medical facilities, he says people who live in the area are hungry for more dining options.

"We've never had a casual family dining location where families and individuals can go and have a nice sit-down meal," says Boney, who built his home in the Quail Green subdivision nearly 20 years ago. "Many of those would-be customers have to go elsewhere to patronize those types of businesses instead of staying in their own neighborhood."

Nguyen, a former councilman himself, shares the goal of reinvigorating the area.

"I want it to be fully developed because the people in that area deserve quality services and products," he says.

The veteran developer saw the corridor's potential a decade ago when he bought property at 1655 Texas Parkway.

"About three years ago, I was able to bring in Discount Tire. It opened in 2017 because of my effort, because I believed that one day Discount Tire would come to the area," says Nguyen.

He also owns a 65,000-square-foot building in the 1700 block of Texas Parkway, which he redeveloped. As a result, Nguyen has brought in retailers such as Citi Trends, Shipley Do-Nuts and Dollar General.

"This area is underutilized and overlooked. It's a great potential market. Developers and investors should take a bold step to put the money in and start to renovate, start to redevelop the market," Nguyen says. "I believe in the project."

Continued on Page 10 >

Corridor cooperative:

< Continued from Page 8

So, too, does the team at Read King, which is marketing just more than 51 acres of raw land in the corridor. About 30 acres are zoned for residential, while the remainder is zoned for commercial.

“The intersection of Texas Parkway and Cartwright, specifically, is a strategically located intersection that is completely surrounded by development and is prime for new first-class retail and new home development,” says Havel. “The strong demographics in the area, combined with excellent visibility, access, traffic counts, no floodplain issues, and favorable zoning means this site offers potential buyers a wide range of opportunities to develop a variety of product types and be successful.”

While developers such as Read King and Nguyen are stepping up, a priority for Councilmen Boney and Pearson is addressing some of the eyesores in the area. Boney says the city is trying to work with those property owners to educate them about economic development incentives that would help them improve their product.

“We try to explain to them that if they truly want to be a good community partner, they wouldn’t want, say, a strip center in this condition in their neighborhood,” says Boney. “We want them to treat us as they would want to be treated. The Golden Rule, you know?”

Pearson says he’s heard constituents complain about the state of some properties, which he understands completely. Before he was elected to the city council, he admits he wondered if the city was even making an effort to clean up the area. He’s since learned there are limits to the steps the city can take.

“We can’t fine property owners if their property doesn’t look nice. We can only fine if they’re in violation of something,” Pearson says. “We have been trying to work with these landlords and encourage them to do some things and holding them accountable. That’s been my priority since I joined the council.” Boney acknowledges, however, that responsibility doesn’t fall solely on the shoulders of property owners.

“It takes all of us working together,” he emphasizes. “It takes the business owners, the property owners, the city staff, our leadership on council, the stakeholders, and the residents in the community. We all have to care enough about this area of town to make it a reality.”

There are already signs of progress. In addition to the retailers Nguyen helped bring to the area and Read King’s property, Centex Homes is close to completing Mustang Trails, a 227-home development off Cartwright Road. The Quail Valley Shopping Center, which includes Foodarama as an anchor, has taken advantage of the city’s economic development incentives to improve its property, according to Boney. He also points to two senior housing projects that are under construction in the area.

Pearson adds that there are a few parcels of property that are privately owned that are up for sale if developers or investors are interested.

“There’s a lot of thriving economic development going on,” he points out.

For its part, the city is stepping up its efforts as well. City leaders recently approved a \$2.5 million beautification effort for the Texas Parkway/Cartwright Road corridor. The project will improve the entrance to the parkway, update lighting and add landscaping.

“I have to mention that we partnered with TxDOT to repair and improve turnaround spots. Right now, if you try to make a U-turn, you’ll fall off the lip.

The road is going to be widened so you’ll be able to make a legitimate U-turn without feeling as though your car’s going to fall off the side of the road,” Pearson stresses.

He says he’s also looking forward to the construction of a veterans memorial near City Hall on Texas Parkway. The city has been fundraising to get the project off the ground and hopes to reach its goal of \$750,000 by the end of 2019.

The efforts of today will hopefully result in a brighter tomorrow for this part of Missouri City. *REDNews* asked Boney, Pearson, Nguyen and Havel how they would like to be able to describe the Texas Parkway/Cartwright Road corridor in 10 to 15 years. Here are their hopes:

Councilman Boney: “I want it to be one of the key destination spots in Missouri City. Right now, little in the area is driving traffic. Development and redevelopment in the area will bring forth additional tax revenue for the city and potentially lessen the burden on residential property owners for years to come. So I’m excited about the area and what it’s going to look like in 10 to 15 years.”

Councilman Pearson: “I would like to be able to describe it as having new life. It’ll be an updated, revitalized area of shops, businesses and entertainment. It will meet the demands of the community, providing the services that are needed.”

Nguyen: “I’d like to see more new buildings, along with old buildings renovated in order to survive. Because of the pressure of survival, we’ll see some of older shopping centers step up and renovate because quality buildings will attract quality tenants. As a result, people who live in the corridor will have all the products and services that they need.”

Havel: “Our hope at Read King is that in 10-15 years, the intersection of Cartwright and Texas Pkwy. is a regional hub that continues to not just meet the needs of the community, but provides shopping, dining, and experiences that bring the community together and enhance the quality of life for the residents of Missouri City.”

If you can see yourself or your company as part of that vision, contact Joseph Esch at JosephEsch@MissouriCityTX.gov. ■

