

Enhancing North Texas' Built Environment:  
Improvements to Design Review in Dallas and Fort Worth

by

Belton Allen Cullum

B.A. in Political Science  
Stanford University, 2003

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in City Planning  
at the  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
June 2007

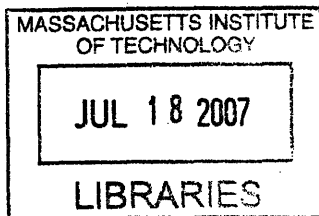
@ 2007. Belton Allen Cullum. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part in any medium now known or hereafter created.

Signature of Author: \_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
May 24, 2007

Certified by: \_\_\_\_\_  
J. Mark Schuster, PhD  
Professor of Urban Cultural Policy, Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
Thesis Advisor

Accepted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Langley C. Keyes, PhD  
Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning  
Chair, MCP Committee



**ARCHIVES**

Enhancing North Texas' Built Environment:  
Improvements to Design Review in Dallas and Fort Worth

by

Belton Allen Cullum

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
on May 24, 2007, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master in City Planning

ABSTRACT

Design review is a government-supported process through which individuals representing the public interest critique, commend and advise proposed development projects' potential impacts on the built environment. These independent public interest representatives come together in a number of forms, including design review boards, planning commissions, and citizen' advisory committees, and they receive various levels of guidance from government in terms of the design criteria upon which they base their judgments and recommendations. This thesis asks what has caused the differences in design review between two cities in Texas, Dallas and Fort Worth, and it suggests adjustments that could improve the process in both of them. The analysis that follows focuses on five key features of the design review – the authority of the design review board, the credibility of the board, the role of the design review board staff, the triggers necessary for project review to take place, and the nature of the design guidelines/standards utilized by board members as they make their decisions. Through the exploration of these five features as they exist in each city, I examine the strengths and weaknesses of design review in Dallas and Fort Worth. Once I have clarified the differences, I consider a number of rival explanations in attempt to describe why the disparity in design review occurs, and I work to narrow down the number of reasonable ones. Then, I offer short term and long term proposals for potential improvement to design review in both cities. These forecasts remain grounded in the political realities of Dallas and Fort Worth but also attempt to assume an optimistic outlook for the future of design review in North Texas.

Thesis Advisor: J. Mark Schuster

Title: Professor of Urban Cultural Policy, Department of Urban Studies and Planning

## Acknowledgements:

This thesis has been an exciting, challenging study of design review in Dallas and Fort Worth. I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to relate my work at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning back to the Metroplex, my hometown area.

I would like to thank my advisor, Mark Schuster, for his guidance throughout this creative process. His thoughts and feedback have been invaluable. I also appreciate the input of my readers, John de Monchaux and Martin Rein.

Most of all, I would like to thank my wife, Victoria, for her love, support and encouragement.

Table of Contents:

Chapter 1: Introduction.....5

Chapter 2: Overview of Design Review.....14

Chapter 3: Differences in Design Review in Dallas and Fort Worth.....28

Chapter 4: Rival Explanations for the Differences.....60

Chapter 5: The Future of Design Review in Dallas and Fort Worth.....86

Chapter 6: Final Conclusions.....115

Bibliography.....121

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Design review is a government-supported process through which individuals representing the public interest critique, commend and advise on proposed development projects' potential impacts on the built environment. These independent public interest representatives come together in a number of forms, including design review boards, planning commissions, and citizens' advisory committees, and they receive various levels of guidance from government in terms of the design criteria upon which they are to base their judgments and recommendations. This thesis asks what has caused the clear differences in design review between two cities in Texas, Dallas and Fort Worth, and it offers modifications that could improve the process in both of them. The focus of these adjustments centers on the cities' central business districts, which I consider the appropriate, practical settings for this analysis.

I did not expect to find design review in North Texas, as I will discuss, but it is present, and it takes on two distinct forms in Fort Worth and Dallas, respectively. This disparity could originate from a number of sources, and determining which of these are the most likely explanations will provide a greater understanding of the circumstances necessary for design review to thrive in North Texas, a pro-business region strongly in favor of protecting citizens' property rights. In addition to exploring the conditions in which design review has developed in the region's major metropolitan areas, I have reason to believe that changes to design review could lead to higher quality urban design in Dallas and Fort Worth, enhancing the urban experiences of residents of and visitors to both cities' CBDs.

My thesis develops in the following manner. First, I detail my expectations for what I thought I would discover at the outset of my research and my view as to why examining design review in Dallas and Fort Worth is particularly important at this point in time. In the second

chapter, I analyze design review as a process utilized by government to affect the quality of urban design in cities' built environments. This analysis includes a general description of design review based on literature research and the exploration of the five features of design review I consider most significant (the authority of the design review board, the credibility of the board, the role of the board staff, triggers set up for design review to occur, and the nature of the urban design guidelines/standards).

The third chapter documents the clear differences in design review in the two Texas cities. This section describes the recent historical role, or lack thereof, that design review has played in Dallas and Fort Worth. Furthermore, through a comparison based on the five design review features in both cities, this chapter establishes Dallas as a development-focused city that places low priority on urban design issues and Fort Worth as a more innovative town that recognizes the importance of pursuing quality urban design in the public domain.

In the fourth chapter, I evaluate possible arguments for these differences in design review in the two cities. Many rival explanations exist. Might the community climate in each city, based on issues such as civility of politics and strength of local business advocacy organizations, be a factor? Perhaps decades-old disparities in urban form led to the differences. And what about the influences of the local chapters of American Institute of Architects? I consider these and other explanations, and I test them in order to narrow down the number of reasonable competing ones. My results are somewhat surprising, with a wealthy Texas family playing a role I had not expected.

Armed with a better understanding of which explanations plausibly explain why design review differs between Dallas and Fort Worth, I focus in the fifth chapter on proposing changes to design review that could improve the process in each city. The changes I suggest are drawn from a combination of literature research and my understanding of the situation on the ground in

North Texas. Rather than through the application of a single “ideal” model of design review, I suggest adjustments that might be made in each city. These suggested changes come in the form of two proposals. The first proposal describes changes that realistically could take place in the short term, given the nature of local politics and the fervent pro-business attitudes within the two cities. The second proposal describes more substantial changes that could occur over the long term, optimistically assuming that each city will have continued to refine design review in its CBD.

My concluding chapter summarizes my findings and draws attention to certain points made by David Carlson, staff member of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and Liaison to the Boston Civic Design Commission, that I consider particularly relevant. Through my time in Boston, I have come to respect design review as it is conducted by the BCDC, and I believe that certain elements of the process, as described by Carlson, can prove useful to enhancing design review in Fort Worth and Dallas. This conclusion also includes a series of recommendations related to my short term/long term proposals and potential steps for implementation, should city officials and community activists consider my recommendations as a starting point for applying more robust design review to their central business districts.

My interest in this research question originates from my spring 2006 experience at a Boston Civic Design Commission meeting and from design review-related readings/discussions in Mark Schuster’s Urban Design Policy and Action course at MIT, in which we explored the potency of the BCDC. Two parts of the BCDC meeting particularly sparked my curiosity to learn about different forms of design review. First, a presentation to the BCDC on a proposed new wing of Massachusetts General Hospital, and the subsequent interaction between commission members and the project team to clarify BCDC questions, revealed to me that developers advancing prominent projects likely to impact Boston’s public realm in potentially

positive or negative ways were being held accountable to a board of qualified, appointed citizens, who were tasked with ensuring that a certain level of quality urban design prevails in the public realm. Second, discussions during the BCDC meeting regarding work sessions, which involve commission members and project teams working together with Boston Redevelopment Authority staff to make development projects more satisfactory to the expectations of the BCDC, illustrated to me the identity of the BCDC as a constructive entity that actively sought to strengthen Boston's urban character, not a reactive organization that stymied design and development. Furthermore, longtime BCDC member Bill Rawn's expectation that design review be both respectful of the past and forward-looking in its decisions excited me as a comprehensive perspective of the role of the process:

Design review must, I think, respond to and strengthen the sense of place of a city, a town, and, indeed, a culture. That sense of place is, by necessity, a combination of tradition and memory joined with aspiration and hope for the future (Rawn 1995, p.95).

This outlook of Rawn, included in his article on the role of the BCDC in the design of the Boston Federal Courthouse, communicated to me the importance he placed on the establishment of the contextual identity of a development project and its contribution to the broader identity of the community in which it belongs. Design review, in his estimation, played a critical part in balancing a significant project's relationship to its current surroundings with the project's potential as an element of the built environment that might exist around it in the future.

Before my attendance at the BCDC meeting and my immersion in relevant course work, I had only a vague idea about the responsibilities of a design review board in a city and had expected it to function more as a restrictive body than as another avenue for creativity. These experiences, however, energized my curiosity about design review. They encouraged me to wonder about the extent to which the process exists in the region I am from and to ask how in this region one might improve it.



I was born in Dallas, I grew up there, I am familiar with the DFW Metroplex (Dallas, Fort Worth, and in between), and I possess a high level of interest in the urban development taking place throughout the area. The region has been beset by urban sprawl for decades, and the appeal of urban development to me relates to the redevelopment and strengthening of the traditional urban cores, the downtowns that had experienced the exodus of citizens and the loss of social energy. Although this emigration of commerce and activity had taken place over a number of years, more so in Dallas than in Fort Worth, these central business districts have seen an upswing in activity in recent years consistent with the renewed attention given to America's downtowns. Having worked in real estate development in North Texas for several years, I had interacted with officials from a number of local governments, but I was unfamiliar with the role design review played in the downtowns of the region's two largest municipalities. Given my past professional opportunities in North Texas, one would expect that I would have had some level of awareness of the process in my community, but, recalling my recent employment in the area, I do not think the subject of design review ever came up.

Before attending MIT's urban planning graduate program, I worked for the Dallas Cowboys Football Club in stadium development. My position with the team enabled me to participate in the search throughout the Metroplex for a suitable site for the organization's planned new 75,000 seat stadium. This search examined sites around downtown Dallas as well as ones in the city's suburbs, and it involved different levels of discussion and negotiation with numerous city officials as the team sought to secure public assistance for the project and city officials sought to determine how the stadium project might prove advantageous to their urban environments. During negotiations with the City of Dallas as well as with other suburbs, including Arlington, where the stadium is currently being built, the potential hurdle of design review, of a board of independent individuals mandated to weigh in on the team owner's design

preferences for the new stadium, never arose. This new sports arena was projected to rise twenty stories out of the ground, and would clearly alter the skyline as well as the urban context surrounding it, wherever it ended up being located, but, to my knowledge, public oversight of the structure's urban design and its relationship to the public realm was never a factor that came up during negotiations.

After my first year at MIT, I returned to Dallas for a summer internship with the Beck Group, an international construction/architecture/development firm with strong ties to the Metroplex. My responsibilities with the Beck Group included monitoring potential construction opportunities around Dallas and Fort Worth for which the company might consider submitting proposals that could lead to its involvement. In this sector of their business, the Beck Group was particularly focused on large scale, publicly-funded construction projects that could strengthen the firm's revenue stream and enhance its regional reputation. In Boston, the types of projects that interested the Beck Group would be obvious candidates for review by the BCDC, and I would expect that Boston-area firms would account for interaction with the BCDC when submitting their proposals. During my work, however, preparation for design review boards was never mentioned, which indicated to me that either these boards did not exist or they possessed such little influence that architects/designers did not see them as important stages in the development process.

Through the perspectives of a private real estate developer (the Dallas Cowboys) and a private design/build firm (the Beck Group), I learned about how real estate development moves forward in North Texas, and I acquired a preliminary impression about the level of emphasis placed on urban design in Dallas and Fort Worth. My initial impression was that the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth preferred not to exert any authority to ensure quality urban design in the public realms of their downtown areas. This lack of authority likely originated from robust pro-

business atmospheres, based on strong support for individuals' property rights and the desire to keep business moving, a view that succeeded in minimizing public oversight of real estate development projects. In my mind, the two cities were extremely pro-development, so much so that any kind of design control on top of basic zoning and safety standards would be considered excessive and inappropriate.

However, upon deeper investigation into the oversight of urban design in the public realm as practiced by each city, I was able to find evidence of design review. Furthermore, I began to grasp the significant disparity that exists in their utilizations of the process. Despite Fort Worth and Dallas being only thirty miles apart and located in the same region of a pro-business, property rights-focused state, intriguing and puzzling differences separate design review in Dallas from its form in Fort Worth. My work considers a series of explanations for these differences and reduces the number of viable explanations to a smaller set, enabling the reader to gain a better understanding of why these two cities prioritize urban design in the built environment differently.

My focus on improving design review in the cities' CBDs instead of on strengthening it as a city-wide process occurs primarily because of the issues of feasibility in Dallas and precedent in Fort Worth. Given the contentious nature of urban politics in Dallas, which I will detail later on, I believe that the creation of a design review board in the city could only take place in the central business district at this point in time. I expect that reaction to city-wide design review in Dallas would include confusion and outrage, as citizens would voice opposition to a process with which they are unfamiliar. Although such emotions could also come forth during the formation of a downtown design review board, I see the process as easier to implement in Dallas' central business district, due to its smaller scale and fewer players. A broader form of design review board might be possible in the more distant future, but

concentration on Dallas' CBD serves as a good start to introduce a comprehensive design review process to the community.

In Fort Worth, the Downtown Design Review Board already focuses primarily on projects in the CBD. The decision of city leadership to center the attention of the board on downtown originated from a desire to limit workload and avoid overtaxing committee resources (Burghdoff interview). As will be discussed, Fort Worth's process was designed to review all projects except for demolitions and interior work, regardless of size, so this restriction of the board's oversight to the downtown area makes sense. A city-wide design review board under the same review parameters would clearly be excessively burdened and less effective. Although the DDRB recently began considering projects in Trinity Uptown, an area north of downtown, I forecast that the limited expansion of the board's duties will eventually split into two boards, with one again responsible for downtown Fort Worth. The preference of the city to avoid a city-wide process compels me to view downtown as the appropriate arena for improvements to design review.

I also want to stress the importance of examining design review in North Texas' largest cities at this point in time, one during which both downtowns are experiencing real estate booms that could have potentially negative consequences on the quality of urban design in the public realm. In Dallas, a number of office and residential towers in the first phase of the Victory District, adjacent to downtown, are nearing completion, resulting in a transformation of the Dallas skyline. Additionally, two new office towers, the Billingsley building and the Hunt building, will soon come online within the Arts District along the northern edge of downtown Dallas, with questions remaining about how these two structures will contribute to the public space in what has become one of Dallas' most important districts. Furthermore, several prominent projects are in the planning process, including the conversion of a number of

downtown office buildings into apartment high rises and the construction of a new facility for the Museum of Nature and Science, making a consideration about the role of design review in the city even more important.

In Fort Worth, planning is underway for Trinity Uptown, a new waterfront mixed use district that will connect to downtown Fort Worth and will include a new \$234 million college campus. The developments of Trinity Uptown will dramatically reshape the northern part of downtown Fort Worth, and city's Downtown Design Review Board will play a key role in guiding the development. Also, as evidenced by Radio Shack's recent construction of its main complex in downtown Fort Worth, the municipality continues to grow in appeal as a location favored by firms for relocation of their corporate headquarters.

With so many development projects currently moving forward in both cities, an examination of design review as it exists in Dallas and Fort Worth is extremely relevant. By scrutinizing design review in both central business districts, proposing explanations for the differences and offering modifications that could improve the processes, this thesis advocates the establishment of design review that is more effective in the context of each city. As the reader will learn, more effective design review does not necessarily mean more of it. Implementation of enhanced forms of design review centers on making the public realms of Dallas' and Fort Worth's CBDs more hospitable for those that live in them and move through them. Through improved design review, these downtowns can become more interactive as built environments, friendlier to pedestrians and more likely to gain reputable urban identities.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of Design Review**

This chapter focuses on providing a more comprehensive understanding of design review. I first offer a broad overview of the process, describing my interpretation of important characteristics as well as its legitimacy and pros and cons of the process. Next, I detail five features of design review I consider essential for determining the effectiveness of the design review board. I rely on a good deal of literature research to describe my understanding of design review, with the intent to communicate which parts of it I believe are most important and why it serves as a relevant tool utilized by municipal governments. Still, the focus of my thesis is on the traits and responsibilities of the design review board – how they figure into design review in Dallas and Fort Worth, how they differ in each city, and how they might be improved upon in the future.

### **Overview**

Design review as a government-supported process in which citizens acting on behalf of the public evaluate proposed development projects' potential impacts on the public realm. These citizens represent their communities whether they sit on a design review board, a planning commission, or another similarly intended committee. The cities for which they volunteer their services offer different levels of guidance and assistance as they carry out their review duties. Board members play a unique role related to the prevalence of quality urban design in the built environment, but the extent of their effectiveness depends on a number of factors.

The uniqueness of volunteer citizens' role in determining the appropriate urban design impacts of proposed projects lies in their intermediary position between the public and private sectors, a position that also strikes a balance between those in favor of strong design regulation

and those supporting the freedom to design at will. Schuster's 1997 description of these citizens' obligation as "third party public interest scrutiny" calls attention to this distinctive source of the critique that development projects receive through the review process (Schuster 1997, p. 209). In their representation of the public interest, these design review boards assume an evaluative, decision-making position that advances the preferences of the public as these preferences relate to urban design. The board typically possesses the options to approve projects, deny them, or table them with the expectation that they will work with the board and/or staff to improve aspects of their designs. The third party stance moderates the direct influence of government while also preventing the developer from acting without public input during the creative development of his project.

Reiko Habe adds to this understanding of design review's unique position through her 1988 description of the process as a third option to two extreme views of the management of urban development:

Design review is the middle ground between a laissez-faire approach to development and the outright manipulation of the community's physical development. It may be seen as a compromise of what planners and concerned citizens think a community should be and that which land owners regard as their property rights (Habe 1988, p. 11).

Habe's perception of design review indicates that the process serves as an alternative to the potential development outcomes that could occur if either pro-regulation interests or pro-development interests possessed prevailing authority over urban design in the public realm. It functions as a valuable volunteer body that forwards a moderate perspective, one that serves as a compromise of the extreme positions held on the role of urban design control within the community.

Design review is one of a series of options a community can employ to influence the design appeal of its public realm. As noted by Bender and Bressi in 1989, "There are several ways to regulate the appearance of a community: design review, zoning, public example,

competitions, and suasion are all possible strategies” (Bender and Bressi 1989, p. 8). While I do not wish to delve into a lengthy comparison of these different methods of what might be described as “aesthetic regulation”, my impression is that zoning functions as the most powerful and widely used tool, but one through which it can be difficult to ensure the quality of projects’ urban designs, both structural and artistic. This difficulty exists because zoning focuses on permitting the minimum level of acceptable development to take place, rather than on mandating a desirable level of design quality. Many communities rely upon design review, as I will discuss, to address these urban design issues and higher expectations for design quality. Such communities also use public example, competitions and suasion, but these three appear to be utilized more in singular instances rather than as ongoing processes that advance long term urban design policy. As I would like for my thesis to serve as a starting point for the encouragement of lasting changes to Dallas’ and Fort Worth’s urban design oversight, I choose to concentrate my attention on design review despite the potential short term effectiveness of these alternatives.

In terms of its legitimacy, design review has retained legal standing for over half a century as a process that advances the well being of the community. The U.S. Supreme Court, through its 1954 decision in *Berman v. Parker* that I have cited from Nasar and Grannis’ work in 1999, maintains that “the values of public welfare include ‘spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy’” (Nasar and Grannis 1999, p. 424). This ruling by the Supreme Court provided authority to elected officials to create a process that influences the characteristics of urban design in the public realm. The wellbeing of the community, in the Justices’ majority opinion, can benefit from a built environment that is directed to be more sensitive to citizens inhabiting it, should public officials decide that the importance of urban aesthetics merits their intervention. The Supreme Court clearly is not mandating that design



review take place in cities across the U.S. – it is leaving the choice up to elected officials, who can best discern whether design review could achieve outcomes that would benefit their communities.

These outcomes can lead to a number of advantages and disadvantages for communities that embrace design review. As described by Brenda Lightner in 1992, politicians, planners and other government administrators considering the implementation of design review perceive the process as a means to achieve a range of valuable objectives. These aims include improving the quality of life, preserving and enhancing unique places, maintaining or upgrading the “vitality” of places, making comfortable and safe environments for pedestrians, improving/protecting property values, making change more acceptable, and making new development compatible or more unified (Lightner 1992, p. 2-3). As she continues, these aims reflect the effects that public officials believe improved urban design can have upon the public realm, making community space more conducive to citizens’ lives (Lightner 1992, p. 3). If implemented appropriately, design review has the ability to enhance the sense of place within a city and to improve the standard of living enjoyed by its occupants.

In terms of negatives, the subjectivity of the process can result in inefficiencies that hinder its effectiveness. Schuster points out that design review has been credited “for its ability to raise the level of discussion of the relationship between design and the public interest and...for its ability to improve the overall quality of the built environment,” but he also acknowledges that it “has been criticized for its arbitrariness..., its vagueness, its conservativeness, and its costliness” (Schuster 1997, p.210-211). The discretionary nature of design review can lead to arguments over the decisions rendered by boards and over the desire for greater clarity in board rulings. Additionally, this subjectivity can impede the creation of cutting edge design in favor of traditional forms, and it can generate increases in project costs as

project teams invest in their presentations to enhance the likelihood of board approval. These potential disadvantages must be accounted for when city officials consider the implementation of design review or adjustments to the process. Design review cannot be employed in every city through a cookie cutter approach, so these drawbacks are likely to arise in different intensities depending on the features of the design review board and the urban context in which it operates.

I believe that design review serves as a valuable process and that a strong form of it benefits the community in which it is conducted. Despite the negatives that can arise, design review plays a constructive role in the shaping of the urban environment. As pointed out in Schuster's 1990 survey of Massachusetts architects, 72 per cent thought that design review "had a positive effect on the quality of building in those places where it is practiced" (Schuster 1997, p. 214). This perception of design review as third-party oversight that enhances the urban design of development indicates the significance of the process. Through third-party oversight that ensures a high level of quality in urban design, design review can affect a community advantageously on a number of levels. As noted in a research project authorized by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and Great Britain's Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 2001, good urban design "adds value by increasing the economic viability of development and by delivering social and environmental benefits" (Great Britain Dept. of the Environment 2001, Executive Summary p. 3). Social and environmental benefits recognized by the CUBE study, such as the creation of safe, accessible, efficient spaces, were touched on above (Great Britain Dept. of the Environment 2001, Executive Summary p. 3). Economically, high quality urban design "delivers high investment returns for developers and investors by meeting a clear occupier demand," which provides "good rental returns and enhanced capital values"(Great Britain Dept. of the Environment 2001, Executive Summary p. 3). By examining design review in Dallas and Fort Worth, recognizing the flaws in

the processes and proposing improvements that result in better urban design, this thesis could help the communities become more valuable, livable places. I now move on to the five features of design review I see as key elements that must be understood in order to gauge the strength of the process in the two cities.

## **Five Features**

I believe that five features of design review determine the effectiveness of the design review board. These features – the authority of the board, the credibility of the board, the role of the board staff, the conditions that trigger design review of projects, and the quality of the urban design guidelines – affect the clarity of the design review mission and decisions and therefore the potency of the board. Further articulating these five features will help me illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of design review in Dallas and Fort Worth, and the differences in the process between these two cities.

### **Authority of the Board**

The amount of authority invested in the design review board signifies the ability of the board to have its decisions implemented as its members collectively desire. In simple terms, the board either possesses a mandate from the city government that makes its judgments final (pending appeal) or the board acts as an advisory body, making recommendations to public officials on the proper course of action the board believes the city should follow with regard to selected projects. Although I illustrate these extremes to make a point about the opposite ends of authority, I am also sure that advisory boards can possess different levels of power. B.W. Blaesser in 2003 further elaborates the feature of board authority with his conception of five design review models generally found in American cities. These models include a design review board with “wide-ranging legislative authority to implement design review plans and

policies” (Model 1); the design review board assuming more of an advisory role to a local development authority (Model 2); the planning commission serving as the primary decision-making authority on design issues, with a design review board again functioning in an advisory capacity (Model 3); the local legislative bodies of smaller towns making final decisions, as advised by planning commissions and assisted by design review boards (Model 4); and the local legislative body taking on all responsibilities, rejecting the need for a design review board in any position (Model 5) (Blaesser in Kumar 2003, p.246-247). As Blaesser notes, power given to a design review board ranges from significant to consultative to non-existent. Determining the amount of authority that a certain city’s design review board possesses - matching one of Blaesser’s models to a city so to say - can reveal telling information about the importance of urban design in that municipality. By “matching,” I mean to describe an existing design review process by tying it to one of Blaesser’s models. The model type that characterizes the power held by a city’s design review board communicates the priority the city places on urban design, given its range of metropolitan issues, as well as whether the city might have “room” to implement a more robust process of design review (moving from consultative to significant design review power, for example).

### **Credibility of the Board**

The credibility of the design review board is an important feature in determining the effectiveness of the board because it underscores the ability of the board to make sound decisions that are respected by citizens. This credibility stems from both the qualifications of board members as well as from the appointment process that bestows influence on them. In terms of qualifications, I speak less to the urban design experience possessed by individual board members and more to the collective experience of the board as a body that represents the interests of the public as these interests relate to the broad concern for urban design in the public

realm. The entire board need not possess elaborate knowledge of urban design, but it should boast a mixture of design professionals and perhaps even untrained citizens who can reflect on design issues in a thoughtful manner, providing informed decisions and guidance on development matters in the built environment. As Bender and Bressi indicate in 1989, this mixture of board members' experience plays an important role in establishing the integrity of the board:

Regardless of its composition, it is desirable to specify the categories of people who will serve on it as part of its by-laws or enabling legislation, both to help establish the board's credibility and prevent its becoming the object of political patronage (Bender and Bressi 1989, p.35).

Bender and Bressi focus less on the specific occupations and backgrounds of board members and more on their categorization within certain groups, such as a design professionals group comprised of architects and urban planners and a layperson group composed of real estate professionals and community activists. By including members from different categories, a design review board, in these authors' minds, does a better job of capturing the will of the public than would a board entirely comprised of architects and urban planners, an educated yet narrow perspective. Defining which specific qualifications are necessary for individuals to serve on a design review board can be difficult, but classifying members into broader categories can give an indication of the diversity present on the board based on experience and the representation of community interests. This diversity, in turn, should enhance the credibility of the board as a legitimate voice speaking on behalf of the community on urban design issues.

The appointment process also affects the credibility of the board because those charged with choosing citizens must be held accountable for their selections. The confirmation system through which public officials approve appointments must be considered transparent, whether board members are appointed by the mayor alone with confirmation by the city council, by the mayor and councilpersons together, or by some other format. A muddled appointment process

jeopardizes the trust placed in elected leaders by their constituents and thereby threatens the trust placed in design review board members to judge urban projects' impacts on the public realm.

The category-based board (touched on above by Bender and Bressi) contributes to the credibility of the appointment process by keeping certain levels of political cronyism from infiltrating the board. It forces members to fall within certain groupings, hindering politicians' abilities to place individuals with ulterior motives onto the board by restricting the candidate pool. Although the category-based strategy need not be as stringent as described by the two authors, a design review board (1) that features a mixture of design professionals and laymen that can speak for the public and (2) whose members are appointed through a clear selection process thereby serves as a trustworthy body. As design review involves discretionary decisions, no matter how objective the process attempts to be, the credibility of the board is of paramount importance because it validates the board's conclusions and enables it to function as a respected voice of the community.

### **Role of Board Staff**

City staff assigned to the design review board play a key role in determining the board's effectiveness. These personnel help board members fulfill their responsibilities, particularly since they serve as the gatekeepers of information that moves through the process. Staff duties can include administrative activities, holding formal and informal feedback sessions with applicants, the preparation of project reports for board members' consideration, design review of minor projects, review of the work of the board and the staff, and the training of new board members (Bender and Bressi 1989, p.36-37). While the role of the staff appears straightforward, certain factors related to staff performance can affect the functioning of a design review board in negative ways.

First, the amount of responsibility placed on staff can detrimentally influence the process. As Lightner points out in 1992, staff involved in design review can often be overworked and inexperienced, with untested planners taking on complex projects and lacking sufficient guidance (Lightner 1992, p.4). A green staff lacks the savvy to expertly prepare and escort projects through design review. A fatigued staff lacks the ability to dedicate the time necessary to ensure that projects receive the attention required. While Lighter attributes exhaustion to staff's difficulty in comprehending complicated design review issues, this weariness and lack of efficiency could also be credited to a shortage in staffing, or, to connect with Lightner, perhaps a shortage in experienced staffing. This issue turns out to be a relevant question when I turn my attention to Dallas and Fort Worth.

The distribution of information (as it is handled by staff) must be considered when researching the role of staff members in the effectiveness of a design review board. Sandeep Kumar, in his 2003 investigation into the exchange of information during design review, indicates staff can possess the power to manipulate information in several disadvantageous ways. Kumar claims that through staff actions (1) information can be discontinuous, meaning that the board does not know about the activities of the staff and possesses concerns about administrative design review approvals that bypass board review, (2) information can be distorted, meaning that staff misrepresents facts or omits them, confusing board members, albeit sometimes unintentionally, and (3) information is used inconsistently, meaning that staff distributes information to board members, applicants and other participants in an erratic manner, providing those involved with the feeling that they are not being treated equally and fairly (Kumar 2003, p.251-257). Although some mismanagement of information can be blamed on inadvertent mistakes, the potential power of staff to control information for the purpose of benefiting their own urban design agendas makes investigating the role of staff in the process extremely relevant.

The metropolitan example utilized by Kumar (an anonymous large Midwestern U.S. city) might represent an isolated instance of unprofessional staff conduct, but it highlights the negative consequences that information manipulation can have on design review. Whether given full authority or operating in an advisory capacity, the design review board must make final decisions based on the best information possible, and they require the complete support of the staff for this circulation of information to occur successfully.

### **Project Review Triggers**

The set of conditions that initiate design review within a city acts as a fourth important feature that shapes the effectiveness of the design review board. These conditions – project review triggers – must be met in order for a municipality to require that a project undergo design review. Projects under consideration for design review need not meet all criteria, only one, with the meeting of each criterion deemed significant on its own to merit evaluation of the impact of the project’s urban design on the built environment. For example, to be subject to design review in Boston, a project must meet one of several standards. The project must be (1) a new or rehabilitated structure over 100,000 square feet, (2) a project of special significance or, by the determination of the BCDC, a project that will have a special urban design significance within the city, (3) a civic project that involves changes to parks, civic or cultural centers or monuments, or (4) district design guidelines intended for adoption by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (Boston Redevelopment Authority – Boston Civic Design Commission). As explained by David Carlson, BCDC Liaison and BRA staff member, the “projects of special significance” clause allows the BCDC to examine projects that are smaller than 100,000 square feet but that still have a significant presence in the city (Carlson interview). These conditions for design review ensure that projects of appropriate importance and impact come before the BCDC. By



establishing a comprehensive series of project review triggers, cities provide their design review boards with the opportunity to regularly exercise their expertise for the benefit of the public.

An improperly devised set of triggers adversely affects the potency of the board. If the criteria for design review are too broad, then too few projects go through the process. Subsequently, the design review board at best only has limited effect on the urban design of the built environment or, at worst, it occurs with such infrequency that it is ineffective. On the other hand, if the triggers are too strict, then too many projects undergo design review. As a result, an excessive number of projects require evaluation, and the process becomes burdensome on the board, the staff, and the applicants. Part of my quest through this thesis is to determine how triggers for design review in Dallas and Fort Worth differ from one another, and how the triggers might be adjusted to make design review in both cities a more effective process.

### **Nature of Urban Design Guidelines/Standards**

Urban design guidelines/standards indicate to board members the course of action to take to protect the public realm from negative impacts of poor urban design. Through reliance on these design directives, the board establishes a foundation upon which to make its rulings, rather than depending solely on their own arbitrary thoughts about what constitutes appropriate urban design for the built environment. Different forms of design guidelines and standards are constructed to control various types of developments within a community. Types include those that regulate development in an entire community, those that restrict design according to identified land uses or zoning classifications in a zoning ordinance, and those that regulate developments in a certain area or district (Habe 1988, p.11). My work scrutinizes the third type mentioned, focusing on design guidelines and standards that are created to help boards monitor and improve urban design in the central business districts of Fort Worth and Dallas. In addition

to these alternative forms, design guidelines and standards differ in the direction given within the suggested corrective action:

Prescriptive standards describe requirements in detailed and specific language, often suggesting specific solutions for design problems. Performance standards, on the other hand, describe the effects required of design without referring to any specific design solution (Habe 1988, p.28).

While certain standards demand that developments meet stringent requirements, others focus more on the outcomes desired than on the means to achieving them. Both function with the intention to compel certain levels of urban design quality within the built environment.

Determining whether the guidelines and standards of Dallas and Fort Worth are prescriptive or performance-based will assist in my effort to understand the priority of urban design within each city. Furthermore, the two options provide me with an alternative approach to consider should the guidelines and standards presently implemented in either city prove to have limited success in achieving their objectives.

Assessing the quality of urban design guidelines and standards can be difficult. For my thesis, I intend to judge design guidelines'/standards' quality based on (1) clarity in communication of purpose and (2) depth in the explanation of detail. Clarity in the communication of purpose requires an analysis of how clearly the design objectives of the guidelines/standards are conveyed to board members as well as to members of the general public. Depth in the explanation of detail involves a look at how well the guidelines/standards flesh out the ways in which a project must adhere to the instructions asked of it. I will need to determine whether prescriptive or performance standards serve each city and if one should be utilized over the other. The clearness or vagueness present within these guidelines/standards greatly affects the ability of the board and the staff to carry out their duties. Moreover, they provide to applicants an understanding about the predictability of the process, communicating to them the ease or difficulty they can expect as their projects undergo review.

## **Conclusion**

Design review provides a government-supported assessment of the impact of projects' urban designs on the public realm. The process typically functions through a unique intermediary body, balancing the relationship between public and private as well as the relationship between those requesting greater design control and those asking for increased emphasis on individual property rights. By examining five critical features of design review, I intend to illuminate the differences in design review as it exists in Fort Worth and Dallas. An assessment of the authority of the review board, its credibility, the role of the staff, the project review triggers and the quality of the design guidelines should reveal these differences in a comprehensive way. Furthermore, drawing out the distinctions in the process in the two cities will aid me in my effort to propose substantive hypotheses that account for the origins of these differences. A better understanding of the origins, in turn, could help the process in Dallas and Fort Worth become efficient, credible and influential in the future.

## **Chapter 3: Differences in Design Review in Dallas and Fort Worth**

At first glance, the difference in Dallas and Fort Worth's emphases on design review appears obvious – Fort Worth has a Downtown Design Review Board and Dallas does not. An individual browsing through the responsibilities of each city's planning and Development Departments as they relate to work with volunteer boards might draw the preliminary conclusion that Fort Worth possesses an advantage over Dallas in terms of attention to urban design because of Dallas' lack of an aptly named design review board. Such an impression, however, would not be completely accurate. Limited design review does occur in Dallas through the work of the City Plan Commission and the Landmark Commission. Fort Worth, as I will reveal, is more innovative than Dallas in terms of its attention to development projects' urban design impacts on the public realm, but the difference is not as clear cut as a first impression might suggest. In this chapter, I consider the differences between design review in Dallas and Fort Worth through focusing on the five features of design review I consider key. I analyze the five features as they exist in the design review activities of both cities, pointing out strengths and flaws and determining exactly how far apart Dallas and Fort Worth are in the importance they place on affecting the quality of urban design in their central business districts.

### **Fort Worth**

Fort Worth's Downtown Design Review Board (DDRB) is a relatively recent product of the city's decision to augment its influence over urban design in the public realm. The city, working with local architecture/planning firm Gideon Toal and with Downtown Fort Worth, Inc., the public improvement district for downtown, created downtown design guidelines around

1998-1999 (Toal interview). In 2001, Fort Worth converted these guidelines into standards and formed the DDRB, which originally consisted of three members but now includes seven, to evaluate projects' adherence to the standards (Fort Worth Dept. of Planning and Development – DDRB). This board convenes once a month to discuss issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness to projects within the borders of the Downtown Urban Design District.

### **Authority of the Board**

Through the granting of these Certificates of Appropriateness (COA), the Downtown Design Review Board possesses significant power, but it does not utilize this power in a threatening manner. The board instead chooses to work constructively with applicants to make their projects conducive to the built environment of the central business district. As noted in the Urban Design Standards manual, the DDRB “reviews all cases within the Downtown Urban Design Standards boundary for permit applications regarding landscape, building edge, walkways, and signs and banners” (Fort Worth Public Improvement District #1, p. 10). Thus, any development project taking place in the downtown area come before the DDRB, regardless of whether it is a new office building or a holiday street sign annually positioned out front of a mom and pop convenience store. The standards' stipulation that “all cases” undergo assessment by the DDRB means that literally every single case must be heard by the board. As Senior Planner Vida Hariri and Associate Planner Dustin Henry point out, the Certificate of Appropriateness awarded by the DDRB initiates the permitting process – any other permits required of a project by the city cannot be granted until the DDRB gives its prior approval for the project to move forward (Hariri/Henry interview). With this ability to confer COAs, the board clearly does not function in an advisory capacity. The DDRB holds a mandate, authorized by the city council, to affect the urban design qualities of development projects in order to ensure their adherence to Fort Worth's Downtown Urban Design Standards.

This amount of authority enjoyed by the DDRB prompts a couple of questions, namely where the DDRB fits into Blaesser's set of design review models, what local citizens think about the significant power held by the board, and citizens' thoughts on how this power is used. The clout possessed by the Downtown Design Review Board matches up with Blaesser's first model, in which the board has been given "wide-ranging legislative authority to implement design review plans and policies" (Blaesser in Kumar 2003, p.246). While the board's rulings are expected to remain consistent with the standards established by the city, the DDRB does not have to answer to anyone once it makes its decisions. An appeals process offers review of DDRB conclusions, but it comes in the form of a procedural review. Appeals focus on whether the DDRB conducted its work in an objective and by-the-book manner, and they do not appear to challenge the case-by-case judgments reached by the board.

In terms of citizens' opinions on DDRB power, I expected skepticism and doubt about this level of influence, especially considering Rawn's opposition to a design review board having absolute authority. Rawn sees design review as a single issue within a more expansive political system, and he does not approve of a board functioning without the credible oversight of public officials (Rawn 1995, p.103-104). Surprisingly, several Fort Worth citizens see the DDRB's power as a positive factor. Ames Fender, Chairman of the DDRB, sees the current system as beneficial because the board, in his mind, has the expertise to deal with urban design issues, and Fort Worth's elected officials, while they desire regulation of the built environment, would rather defer to the decisions of the board than take on a more participatory role in the process (Fender interview). Elaine Petrus, Chair of the Urban Design Committee for Downtown Fort Worth, Inc., seconds Fender's view, noting that the DDRB's structure makes it a strong body and "does pull the politics out of it" (Petrus interview). This interest in removing political input from the process displays a preference for a board of knowledgeable peers to judge projects' urban design

impacts on the public realm rather than for politicians to be more directly involved. But, with the DDRB lacking political supervision, why might citizens feel so satisfied with the work of this volunteer board and not feel threatened by its immense power over the public realm?

Applicants' willingness to adjust their projects to meet members' expectations and the desires of board members and staff not to serve as major obstacles to Fort Worth's urban development play significant, complementary roles in the community's approval of the board's work. James Toal, principle of Gideon Toal, a Fort Worth-based architecture/planning firm, commented that "we felt like that [a powerful board] was the best way to make it a manageable process" (Toal interview). Toal explained that a strong board made developers and investors very aware of design review within the city, and that the robustness of the process encouraged project teams to participate in preliminary review meetings in which they could gauge the opinions of board members and modify their projects accordingly (Toal interview). As a sequential note, the DDRB staff accept and process applications, board members receive the staff-reviewed applications and take part in morning work sessions before DDRB meetings during which they meet with certain project teams, and then official Downtown Design Review Board meetings occur in the afternoon of the same day (once a month) (Hariri/Henry interview). Toal's support for the DDRB's significant power implies that the board's authority induces project teams to become more amenable to negotiation and adjustments to their designs for the purpose of achieving a smooth journey through design review.

While Toal points to project teams' concerns about gaining approval, those involved on the DDRB side reveal their desire that the process not seem excessive to applicants. Fender's comment that the DDRB members "don't want to become an impediment to development" and Hariri's statement that "we try not to get to that point" of project denial indicate that both members and staff seek to avoid confrontations with project teams, instead preferring face-to-

face discussions that can reach mutually agreeable modifications to projects (Fender interview, Hariri interview). Those affiliated with the DDRB see themselves as a key part of the development process, but they do not want to act as a hindrance to it. They recognize the amount of authority they hold but are reluctant to employ it. If I had brought up Theodore Roosevelt's quote "Speak softly and carry a big stick" to DDRB members and staff during my interview, they likely would have agreed with it wholeheartedly as the means through which they try to conduct their activities – work with project groups to determine acceptable urban designs, and only rely upon the power invested in the board if project proponents are unwilling to negotiate their plans.

### **Credibility of the Board**

Fort Worth's Downtown Design Review Board recently expanded from five to seven members, with each member serving a two-year term. The nine-member City Council collectively appoints members, and the board must include at least one individual from each of the following categories: Architect/Design Professional, Downtown Urban Design District Business Owner/Manager, Trinity Uptown Business Owner/Manager, and Real Estate Professional; Trinity Uptown is an area immediately north of downtown on which significant development is planned (Fort Worth Dept. of Planning and Development – DDRB). As mentioned earlier, the credibility of any design review board centers on the qualifications of board members as well as the transparency of their method of appointment and their independence in decision-making.

The requirement that the board hold at least one member from each of the aforementioned categories ensures that individuals with a broad mixture of backgrounds represent significant and relevant community voices that have a stake in the urban design of the public realm. Of the six members currently in place (one space is vacant), three are architects,



two are business owners/managers, and one is a real estate professional. The city's reliance on categories conforms to Bender and Bressi's view that the requirement for board members to represent several diverse categories adds credibility to the board, making it a voice reflective of invested individuals and limiting political favoritism (Bender and Bressi 1989, p.35). Board member William Boecker acknowledges the significance of the DDRB's diversity, noting the value of incorporating a varied set of opinions:

It's a world of specialization. You bring these specializations together that are interlocked in different ways...you've got a real focus on some of these different disciplines...The selection of the board, with their specific talents, their general understandings and their aptitude for cooperation is real important (Boecker interview).

Boecker's comment stresses the benefits gained by creating a design review board that mandates certain members come from professional categories. This proficiency in specific fields, however, does not preclude the DDRB from going through hiccups that might not affect a more experienced board.

Greg Ibanez, Gideon Toal architect and member of Fort Worth's Landmark Commission, remarks that he has seen large, complex projects overwhelm the DDRB during the review process, with project teams providing such a mass of information that the board has difficulty digesting the development proposal (Ibanez interview). The DDRB appears to lack the seasoning that could help it assimilate the presentations of substantial projects in order to provide quality feedback and judgment on relevant project details. This drawback could be attributed to the limited lifespan of the DDRB and the relatively small number of significant projects that come before the board. Some board members may possess proficiency in their own fields but have little in hands-on experience with major projects that could better prepare them for such reviews. The deficiency in practical experience with significant projects likely will fade over time as Fort Worth, a fast-growing city, sees more and more prominent projects, and individuals working in various real estate/design fields participate in their development. Presently, the

DDRB gains credibility through its diverse composition, but this credibility could be enhanced through improved handling of complicated and/or sizeable projects.

Upon the creation of the DDRB in 2001, the selection of citizens for service on the board seemed to emerge out of unofficial meetings between city officials and members of Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. (Petrus interview). This process was an informal roundtable discussion, but the absence of formality in the initial appointment of members could be seen through certain eyes as a bypassing of public input into the selection process. Currently, appointments depend on more highly visible decisions of the city council, with the input of the mayor and the three (of eight) city councilpersons whose districts fall within the central business district taken strongly into account (Fender interview). The city council had considered implementing a one-position-per-councilperson approach, but the limited area of the CBD, affecting only the three districts, led to the existing appointment process (Fender interview). The reliance on city councilpersons to make the DDRB selections provides the process with transparency, openly communicating to the public who holds responsibility for the appointments and compelling city officials to justify their choices, if questioned.

Questions have been raised concerning the role of Downtown Fort Worth Inc., downtown Fort Worth's public improvement district, in relation to the activities of the DDRB, and this brings up the issue of transparency in the board's decision-making process. In the early years of the board, when it was staffed poorly by the city's Development Department, members of DFWI provided assistance to the DDRB as it conducted reviews (Taft interview). Taft claims that the insufficient staffing was the result of the Development Department's construction-oriented focus, customer unfriendliness and slow turnaround time (Taft interview). With the eventual transfer of management of the DDRB from the Development Department to the Planning Department, support for the board improved dramatically, negating further need for close assistance by DFWI

(Taft interview). Still, employees from DFWI continue to weigh in on projects, meeting with DDRB staff to discuss DFWI's perspective on how certain projects should be handled and helping guide applicants through the process (Taft interview). As a key public improvement district within Fort Worth, DFWI has the right and the duty to aid downtown businesses as well as to advocate positions it believes the DDRB should take concerning specific development projects in downtown. However, to avoid unseemly appearances that could lead to questioning of DFWI's influence on DDRB staff and its role as an intermediary between applicants and the DDRB, the design review board and its staff need to establish an appropriate, friendly distance between DFWI and the DDRB to ensure that the relationship does not cloud the public's perception of DDRB independence in its rulings. Overall, the categorization of board members and the appointment procedure work well, providing the DDRB with solid credibility. Gaining seasoning in the review of large, complex projects and taking measures to guarantee the impartiality of the DDRB will enhance the credibility of the board even further.

### **Role of Board Staff**

Fort Worth's Planning Department staffs the Downtown Design Review Board, having taken over for the Development Department a few years ago. Led by Vida Hariri, the staff receives and processes formal requests for Certificates of Appropriateness, sets meeting agendas, visits project sites, writes staff reviews of projects, and makes recommendations to the DDRB on appropriate courses of action (Hariri/Henry interview). My evaluation of the role of the DDRB staff involves a look at the workload and experience of personnel as well as their management of information related to the activities of the DDRB.

The workload assumed by the staff of the Downtown Design Review Board is intensive but manageable. With the DDRB having to review any projects involving external work within downtown Fort Worth, I expected staff's burden to be trying and excessive, a result of the high

number of projects regularly coming before the board. Staff, however, appears to handle their responsibilities well. Two situations related to staff workload did capture my attention – pre-DDRB meeting interactions with applicants and DDRB staff’s willingness to take on more work to ease the burden of the board. First, prior to an applicant’s appearance before the DDRB, the applicant receives staff’s report/recommendation and has a window of opportunity to adjust the project to make it more satisfactory to the expectations of the board (and staff), often leading to a scramble, only hours ahead of the DDRB meeting, in which staff and applicants interact over project changes (Hariri/Henry interview). The ability of applicants to alter their projects following staff review brings them more in line with the Urban Design Standards and serves as a positive feature of the process. Nevertheless, this project modification window intensifies the burden experienced by staff as they work to prepare for each monthly meeting.

Second, in effort to reduce the number of projects that come in front of the DDRB during each session, the board and staff are considering the implementation of a consent agenda, which involves staff conducting the design review of smaller, less significant projects (such as the annual holiday sign in front of the mom and pop store), with the board simply signing off on these marginal project reviews during meetings unless certain aspects of them pique the board’s interest (Fender interview). This tweaking of design review in Fort Worth should decrease the workload experienced by the DDRB, a move that could particularly benefit the board in the future as its realm of authority has expanded to include the Trinity Uptown district. In terms of how this consent agenda affects staff, I expect that it would dramatically increase their duties, a shift they would not appreciate. Hariri, however, sees the potential move as an excellent way to shift a burden from the DDRB to the staff, which she believes the staff can handle and which will make the entire process more efficiently organized (Hariri/Henry interview). Staff’s confidence in its ability to handle the current workload and its expectation that the

implementation of a consent agenda will make the process a smoother one indicate that the case burden undertaken by staff is one they embrace, one that does not currently threaten their capacity to perform their responsibilities well.

With regard to the experience of the DDRB staff, the knowledge and aptitude of Vida Hariri appears to be the motivating force behind the switch in DDRB staff support to the Planning Department. According to Dana Burghdoff, Fort Worth's Assistant Planning Director, Hariri, as the city's Senior Urban Design Planner, had been providing informal comments to the DDRB even during its staffing by the Development Department, and the board members found her insights so helpful that Hariri and the Planning Department assumed an official supporting role, with her reports and recommendations becoming a formal part of design review in Fort Worth (Burghdoff interview). In the DDRB's earlier relationship with the Development Department, staff support appears to have been more procedural and lacking urban design expertise, a problem corrected by Hariri's presence.

An assessment of the staff's management of information necessitates applying Kumar's three points about information use by staff in design review. I see no evidence of his first two criticisms of what can happen with the use of information within design review, and I see some historical evidence of the third. First, concerning "Information is Discontinuous," where board members are not completely aware of staff activities and the decisions made by staff, the combination of (1) the DDRB possessing complete review authority, (2) staff utilizing a standardized review process in bringing cases before the board, and (3) regular communication between chair Ames Fender and senior planner Hariri suggest that an information disconnect does not exist between the board and the staff (Kumar 2003, p.253-254, Fender interview). DDRB staff would be hard pressed to leave board members in the dark or provide them with incomplete information, given the board's power and familiarity with the realm of authority.

Second, focusing on “Information is Distorted,” where staff deliberately distorts, manipulates or withholds information during design review to achieve their own agenda, the focus of the DDRB on Fort Worth’s relatively small central business district means that the cases brought before the board are likely well known by members, making it difficult for staff to deceive the DDRB in pursuit of their own urban design ends (Kumar 2003, p.255). This advantage held by board members could change, though, with the recent expansion of the design review boundaries into Trinity Uptown. Third, for Kumar’s point that “Information is Used Inconsistently,” where unpredictable information distribution results in project review participants frustrated with unequal treatment, DDRB staff, such as Dustin Henry, pay close attention to the delivery of case information to board members and to the careful release of information to applicants and to the public in general (Kumar 2003, p.257). The predecessor to Henry, however, was not as cognizant in her distribution of information, despite the official requirements for information circulation required by the Fort Worth legal department (Hariri/Henry interview, Toal interview). This past failure implies that Fort Worth’s success as it relates to the fair and equal release of design review information has to do more with the detail-oriented nature of the particular staff member than with ensured adherence to a legal framework, a set up that could prove troublesome in the future depending on the quality of staff.

### **Project Review Triggers**

Project review triggers are the conditions that initiate design review for development projects. If these conditions are too lenient, then too few projects undergo review, diminishing the board’s oversight of urban design in the built environment. If the review parameters are too strict, then too many projects come before the board, leading to a burdensome process that makes all involved less effective. As pointed out, any project within Fort Worth’s Downtown Urban Design District that includes changes to exterior surfaces – landscaping, buildings, footpaths,

signs, banners – must appear before the DDRB and receive a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to proceed through the permitting process.

Conditions for design review in Fort Worth are clearly too strict. Every project that affects the public realm of the central business district, from a twenty story condominium development to a Christmas sign that a store owner has placed in front of his entrance for the past twenty years, must undergo review by the entire board in order to proceed as planned (meaning the Christmas sign must undergo design review every holiday season, even if it is the exact same sign). In Dustin Henry's estimation, smaller projects' proponents "roll their eyes" and consider design review a tedious yet necessary process, whereas more significant projects such as new or heavily renovated buildings perceive design review as guidance that can help project teams improve their products (Hariri/Henry interview). James Toal, one of the authors of the Urban Design Standards, indicates that the authors of the Urban Design Standards and subsequently the DDRB recognized that their efforts concerning project triggers would require revisions:

We knew when we put these standards in place that we would learn from our mistakes, or learn how it really plays out. We knew that we didn't get it perfect (Toal interview).

Toal's acknowledgement that the strictness of the criteria for review is an error shows that the DDRB remains a work in progress. His comments do indicate that the creators expected corrections to be made in order to make the process more useful and efficient.

It is a surprise, then, that city officials, community activists, and project applicants have not yet modified this aspect of Fort Worth's design review, although implementation of the consent agenda does appear as a likely prospect down the line. Board member Bill Boecker, like Toal, sees the DDRB as an evolving body and expects that administrative review of less significant projects will occur in the future (Boecker interview). Staff, as mentioned in the analysis of their workload, agrees with this need for administrative review. The tricky part,

though, as Hariri admits, lies in determining where to draw the line in regard to which projects receive placement on the consent agenda and undergo staff review and which projects go through evaluation as performed by the full design review board (Hariri interview). Based on current project review triggers, design review in Fort Worth remains inefficient. Board members, staff and others accept the DDRB as a work in progress and acknowledge the need for corrections, but improvements to review criteria cannot be made until interested parties come together to determine what level of review authority the board should hold to make the DDRB a more productive part of the city's development process.

### **Nature of Design Guidelines/Standards**

Direction given for urban design in Fort Worth's central business district began as guidelines, later transforming into standards that regulate the built environment. Elaine Petrus, chair of DFWI's Urban Design Committee that played a central role in the creation of the guidelines, notes that stakeholders, primarily city officials, DFWI representatives and downtown business owners/managers, proceeded cautiously in the city's first foray into urban design guidance because of concerns over potential threats to individuals' property rights (Petrus interview). The original implementation of design guidelines, however, resulted in unpredictability in the public realm's urban design, as expected. Projects inconsistently applied the guidelines, thereby compelling the stakeholders to create the Urban Design Standards, with input from the community, to ensure greater adherence to the city's urban design goals (Petrus interview). As these standards guide the DDRB in its judgments, I examine them in terms of their clarity in communication of purpose and their depth in explanation of detail in order to analyze their nature more completely.

Broadly speaking, the city, partnering with Downtown Fort Worth, Inc., clearly conveys the purpose of the DDRB and the Urban Design Standards. The reasoning behind the



community's prioritizing of urban design – to create a more enjoyable and satisfying downtown experience through improvements to the built form – is evident in the Urban Design Standards booklet as well as on the urban design-related website pages of the city and DFWI. Although urban design has developed into a higher priority of the city only within the past decade, it appears to have become entrenched in the development process for downtown. As DFWI president Andy Taft describes, the Urban Design Standards function as a necessary component in stakeholders' portrayal of downtown Fort Worth as a unique urban environment:

The vision of downtown has been articulated to such a degree that the absence of design standards confuses the general public and the development community (Taft interview).

City stakeholders have worked for a number of years to create a distinctive identity for downtown Fort Worth, and the standards are seen as a method through which this urban design image can be envisioned and achieved. The Urban Design Standards, as well as the DDRB that interprets them, serve as important forms of guidance for those that affect downtown's built environment. The standards, in Taft's estimation, successfully translate the vision of the city into a format that gives guidance to development interests, DDRB members and the greater community.

With regard to depth in the explanation of detail - meaning how well do the guidelines/standards describe the ways through which projects can/must adhere to the urban design vision of the city - Urban Design Standards materials provide thorough written and visual guidance, though this guidance does not always translate into accurate interpretations of the standards. Fort Worth's urban design standards align with the performance standards discussed by Habe because they do not require specific design solutions, instead only insisting that certain design effects are achieved (Habe 1988, p.28). This approach leaves the design details up to project teams and their subsequent reviews by the DDRB. It can also lead to disagreements over interpretations of the Urban Design Standards, with some contention existing over the DDRB's

understanding of the standards in its rulings. For example, DFWI is in the process of preparing a “mini-critique” of questionable DDRB decisions, an analysis it hopes will encourage the board to pay greater attention to the enforcement of the standards rather than deviating from them (Taft interview). DFWI’s intention to single out instances in which the DDRB failed to maintain strict adherence to the Urban Design Standards exhibits the difficulty that can occur in comprehending performance standards. As an alternative to these critique sessions, further clarification in the guidance provided by the standards could diminish tensions between the board and community stakeholders over different interpretations of quality urban design within the central business district. Too much detail, however, could turn the performance standards into prescriptive standards, a restrictive step almost certainly not desired by Fort Worth citizens.

## **Dallas**

Dallas lacks the downtown design review board that Fort Worth has, but it does possess design review in a more limited capacity. David Dillon, architecture critic for *The Dallas Morning News*, remarks that design review has never been very rigorous in Dallas, that the city is a developer’s town, a real estate town, one focused on short term goals (Dillon interview). Attention to projects’ urban design impacts on the public realm has even appeared to decline in Dallas over the past twenty-plus years, with the city downplaying the role of urban design in favor of encouraging economic development. Urban design last served as a significant priority of the city during the tenure of Weiming Lu as head of the urban design wing of Dallas’ Planning Department, and “Dallas has been living off that legacy ever since,” as Dillon notes (Dillon interview). Mark Wolf, principal at architecture firm James, Harwick + Partners, acknowledges that emphasis on urban design in Dallas has declined over the years as a city priority, but that the outlook for future interest in urban design has become more optimistic with Theresa O’Donnell

taking charge of Dallas' Development Services Department and implementing the city's first comprehensive plan (Wolf interview). My assessment of Dallas' design review capabilities centers on the limited design review powers of Dallas' Plan Commission and its Landmark Commission. However, to more accurately frame design review's minimal role in Dallas, it is necessary to begin with the rise, fall, and transformation of Dallas' Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC).

The Urban Design Review Committee was formed around 1969, at the behest of the city manager who requested professional assistance on issues of urban design around the city (Good interview). Comprised of twelve members, this committee served at the pleasure of the city manager, appointed its own chair, critiqued development projects brought before it by the city manager, never possessed any legal standing or ratified power, but existed for over thirty years (Good interview, Wolf interview). I was stunned by accounts of the UDAC's existence. I had not heard about it before I began my Dallas interviews, despite having lived in the city for twenty-six years, and I was disappointed to hear that it had faded. Apparently, due to the declining interest of each successive city manager in issues of urban design, the UDAC fell into obscurity (Good interview, Wolf interview). This decline represented an important setback to the relevancy of urban design review to Dallas.

Tracking the evolution of Dallas' Urban Design Advisory Committee following the diminishment of its advisory capacity to the city manager has been difficult. To the best of my knowledge, the UDAC has turned into a sub-committee of the Dallas City Plan Commission. Such a move makes the UDAC more official as a political body, but, as I will describe, it remains insignificant as a design review board. Along with the Landmark Commission, the UDAC represents the limited state of design review in Dallas. My examination compares these Dallas boards' design review work against that of Fort Worth's DDRB, and urges me to consider

whether Dallas must take considerable steps for its design review capabilities to match up favorably against its sister city.

### **Authority of the Board**

While the City Plan Commission (CPC) oversees a small component of design review related to its Urban Design Advisory Committee, the primary role of the CPC remains the issuance of zoning recommendations to the city council (Cossum interview). The CPC looks at development issues on a broader scale, focusing relatively little on urban design matters and more on uses of land. The UDAC's authority is quite restricted, and, as a body, the UDAC appears to be somewhat dormant. City Plan Commissioner Robert Weiss, appointed in February 2006 and now chair of the CPC, indicates the commissioners know that the UDAC exists, but, to his knowledge, it has not met during his tenure and it currently does not have an agenda, a point he wants to clarify as chair (Weiss interview). Weiss' lack of knowledge regarding the UDAC likely results from the committee's extremely limited range of authority.

The only codified power of the UDAC is the creation of reports and recommendations on all applications for pedestrian skybridges in the city (Wolf interview, Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges). Once an applicant has made a request for a Specific Use Permit for pedestrian skybridge construction, the UDAC examines the plan as it follows both mandatory standards, such as wall transparency and safety design, and recommended standards, such as matching skybridge design with the connected structures, then the UDAC provides advice to the director of the Development Services Department and the City Plan Commission (Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges). Through this narrowly-defined consultative role, the UDAC clearly possesses limited ability to influence the quality of urban design around Dallas. This structure is similar to Blaesser's Model 4, in which final design review decisions rest with the local legislative bodies, in this case the powerful city council and the City Plan Commission

(Blaesser in Kumar 2003, p.246). The lack of design review authority within the CPC, the city's primary advisory body on issues related to zoning and planning, points to the low priority of urban design in Dallas' municipal government. The UDAC's recent participation in an implementation meeting for the city's new comprehensive plan, forwardDallas!, in which it was designated to act as the core group for the advisory committee on code amendments, indicates that the UDAC might be taking on a more visible role under Weiss' new CPC chairmanship. Nevertheless, the preliminary status of its potential contribution to this forum and its continued service as an advisory body make Blaesser's Model 4 still applicable. The Urban Design Advisory Committee's authority remains extremely limited, but its realm of influence could expand, depending on upcoming contributions to the execution of the comprehensive plan.

While the UDAC possesses a highly restricted range of authority, the Landmark Commission appears to hold a somewhat greater level of influence over urban design, albeit only within the city's historically sensitive neighborhoods. The city tasks the Landmark Commission to encourage the use/reuse of historic buildings, to protect the character of Dallas' historic districts, and to promote economic development in older areas of Dallas, all through its ability to issue Certificates of Appropriateness necessary for developers to initiate projects within historic districts (Dallas Office of the City Secretary – Landmark Commission). In terms of design review responsibilities of the LC as they relate to the central business district, the Commission's influence appears to be restricted to projects within the handful of historic districts in downtown as well as in immediately adjacent areas that could adversely affect the historic districts (Pumphrey/Doty interview). In this realm of authority, the Landmark Commission can have an effect on projects as they relate to the historic districts' character, relying on the Certificate of Appropriateness as their tool to ensure compliance with their expectations. All historic districts in Dallas are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Theresa O'Donnell, Director

of Development Services, states that the guidance provided by this protective status and interpreted by the Landmark Commission functions as the strongest form of design control in the city (O'Donnell interview, Dallas Development Services Dept. – City Designated Landmark Districts).

Due to the few historic districts located within the downtown area and because of its restricted purview, the Landmark Commission cannot be portrayed as a design review body that holds significant influence over projects' urban design impacts on the public realm. As noted by Mark Wolf, the authority of the LC remains fairly limited, and any attempts on the part of the city to encourage project teams to pursue higher quality urban design in their developments requires reliance on regulatory mechanisms, such as the implementation of a planned development district or a tax-increment financing district with design incentives (Wolf interview). Additionally, the authority of the LC is further hindered by the format of the review process. Landmark Commission members receive each month's cases two weeks before the actual reviews take place, but they are not allowed to interact the applicants until the monthly meeting (Pumphrey/Doty interview). Although the LC seems to hold greater influence over urban design matters than the City Plan Commission due to the Landmark Commission's issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness, I believe that the LC also resembles Blaesser's Model 4 because the Landmark Commission's decisions are appealable to the City Plan Commission, and final decisions continue to rest with the powerful city council. The Landmark Commission possesses some influence over projects' urban designs, but its limited realm of authority prevents it from having a substantive impact on the quality of urban design in the CBD.

### **Credibility of the Board**

Credibility, as I intimated in my examination of Fort Worth's DDRB, centers on the qualifications necessary for board members to serve as representatives of downtown/design

interests and on the transparency of the method of member appointment. Regarding qualifications necessary for service on the City Plan Commission, members are not required to possess any experience as it relates to urban design and the built environment (Dallas Office of the City Secretary – CPC). Any citizen of Dallas eligible to run for city council positions is qualified to sit on the CPC. Former city councilmember Willie Cothrum’s comment that “the Plan Commission really is supposed to be a reflection just of the general community” signals the expectation that the CPC’s focus on broader issues of zoning and platting, not on projects’ urban design impacts, necessitates average citizens’ membership on the board. However, if the UDAC begins to play a more prominent role within the community than its review of skybridges, such as through its advisory position in examining the code amendments required by the new comprehensive plan, then the credibility of the City Plan Commission and the UDAC as bodies that can be trusted to make judgments on urban design initiatives will come into question. The city has in recent years begun to fund commissioners’ attendance at the annual American Planning Association conferences, possibly demonstrating a burgeoning commitment to urban design education, but I think that more experience than trips to yearly planning symposiums will be needed if the CPC is to take on increased responsibility related to evaluating the influence of projects’ urban designs on the built environment (Emmons interview).

Turning to the selection of board members to the City Plan Commission, the appointment process, while transparent, is also injected with political oversight that can jeopardize the effectiveness of the CPC. In Dallas, each city councilperson and the mayor appoint a single individual to the fifteen-member City Plan Commission. These appointees are largely chosen for political reasons and typically lack any design experience (Dillon interview). As indicated by Bender and Bressi, this one-appoints-one approach to member selection makes it difficult to establish a well-balanced representation of the community for design review purposes and it can

draw the board into councilmembers' political debates (Bender and Bressi 1989, p.35). Former CPC chair Betty Culbreath acknowledges that this framework for board appointment brings tensions related to Dallas' charged political atmosphere into the work of the commission (Culbreath interview). While this process is less than ideal for achieving broad, objective representation across a community, at least in terms of member experience and commitment to the city over a particular politician or district, modification to this system is unlikely due to councilpersons' continued desire to maintain control over community boards. Given this situation, the clear yet politically-muddled appointment process makes it difficult for the CPC and its UDAC sub-committee to speak as collective, objective voices on behalf of city residents.

With regard to the Landmark Commission, its members must possess certain backgrounds in order to qualify for places on the board. Specifically, candidates must have established experience in historic preservation as well as in fields of history, art, architecture, architectural history, urban history, city planning, urban design or historic real estate development (Dallas Office of the City Secretary – Landmark Commission). These requirements provide the board with credibility in its judgments of projects' design impacts on the public realm. As the Landmark Commission holds a greater role than the City Plan Commission in reviewing projects' urban design influences on the built environment, these conditions for service on the LC do not come as a surprise. The mixture of specialists on the Landmark Commission provides it with a diverse wealth of knowledge that members and the community can trust in as the board reviews its cases.

The Landmark Commission relies on the same appointment process as the City Plan Commission, with the provision that all members must possess historic preservation and urban development backgrounds. The city mandates that LC membership must include at least one real estate developer familiar with historic development, one architect, one historian, one urban



planner, one landscape architect, and one real estate appraiser on the board of fifteen (Dallas Office of the City Secretary – Landmark Commission). In terms of the appointment of members by the city council and the mayor, I would expect that the specific position requirements could pose challenges, such as finding architectural historians and urban historians willing to serve, that might not take place if the city utilized broader membership categories. Also, requiring a minimum six of fifteen slots be held by design/history/real estate-experienced professionals could create complications if certain councilpersons decide to select representatives not of these backgrounds, thereby creating tensions on the board and between city councilmembers. Michael Pumphrey, Chief Planner for the Landmark Commission, remarked that the appointment process has recently resulted in tension between board members, with turf wars arising out of members' expectations for the conduct and activities of the commission (Pumphrey/Doty interview). While requirements on board members' experience enhance the board's position as the will of the public, the individual appointment process seems to counteract these benefits, as can be seen through the squabbling between LC members. The infighting that occurs on the LC, and on the CPC for that matter, due to politics and personalities damages the credibility of each commission as a public board that should concentrate on making sound judgments for the good of the community.

### **Role of Board Staff**

My examination of the role of staff in the activities of the City Plan Commission focuses on staff duties and experience level, as well as management of information, as they connect with the work of the Urban Design Advisory Committee. The UDAC's only codified responsibility centers on the review of pedestrian skybridges, meaning CPC staff just needs to provide support for this function. Based on application and procedural information available on the skybridge permitting process, staff responsibilities include making the UDAC aware of the mandatory and

recommended pedestrian skybridge standards, providing staff opinion on a project's application, and assisting the UDAC members in the formulation of a report and recommendation provided to the director of Development Services and to the entire City Plan Commission (Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges). Gauging the workload of staff as it relates to the UDAC is more unclear. Staff's participation in the skybridge review process itself does not appear challenging or overly time consuming, as it does not occur often. The review of the recently constructed Hunt Building, with its skybridge to an adjoining parking structure, was only mentioned by David Cossum in passing during our discussion, indicating that it was not a major factor in the duties of the CPC and staff (Cossum interview).

Overall, CPC chair Robert Weiss notes, staff are short-handed for the responsibilities the city would like for them to take on, an impression that is seconded by architect Ann Abernathy (Weiss interview, Abernathy interview). Staff's workload as it relates to the UDAC currently does not pose any problems, but an increase in the tasks performed by the UDAC could add to the already heavy burden of staff and threaten the limited effectiveness of the UDAC, a traditionally underprioritized body. As mentioned, this increase in UDAC responsibilities seems to have begun taking place, with the UDAC assembling to present input on the new comprehensive plan's code amendments. Furthermore, given the lack of urban design experience required for service on the City Plan Commission, numerous members of the community, including senior staff, a CPC member, and private participants in the development process expect CPC staff to act as educators of the commissioners on matters of urban design (Emmons interview, O'Donnell interview, Cothrum interview, Wolf interview). Without increased numbers in staffing or a reprioritization of the city's development issues, in which urban design comes to the forefront, CPC staff will eventually face significant workload-associated challenges.

Moving on to the experience level of the staff, Cossum appears to have been a planner with the city, focused particularly on the zoning matters, since the mid-1980s, and Weiss, for one, expresses high satisfaction with his work (Weiss interview). Neil Emmons, a six year member of the City Plan Commission, also expressed his satisfaction with the performance of the CPC staff (Emmons interview). Although I was not able to chart the experience levels of the CPC staff, positive reviews by Weiss and Emmons indicate that staff members possess sufficient experience to satisfy the requests of the commissioners successfully.

Concerns about CPC staff's management of information as it involves the activities of the UDAC and Kumar's three points on mismanaged information revolve around the potential for distortion and inconsistency. With the UDAC mostly dormant and few individuals possessing much knowledge about its handling of information related to the permitting of pedestrian skybridges, this analysis of potential flaws in data organization remains preliminary. First, regarding "Information is Discontinuous," where those conducting the design review are not fully aware of staff decisions, I do not think that gaps in the information flow would be easily achievable by a staff seeking to mislead commissioners because of the limited scope of skybridge reviews (Kumar 2003, p.253-254). Staff would have a tricky time restricting commissioners and the public from viewing information related to the development of sky bridges in Dallas. Second, focusing on "Information is Distorted," where staff alters or withholds information, sometimes unintentionally, this issue is the likely flaw in information flow that concerns me most (Kumar 2003, p.255). Due to the infrequency in the utilization of the Urban Design Advisory Committee in recent years, I believe a high probability exists that unintentional hiccups in the circulation of information, attributed to this irregularity in the use of the UDAC, could create problems in the review of skybridges (or, down the line, in other projects the committee reviews as the CPC engages it more frequently). Third, concerning

Kumar's position that "Information is Used Inconsistently," where unpredictability in the sharing of information produces frustration with unequal treatment of process participants, the structure of the UDAC's role in the permitting of skybridges appears straightforward, but, again, new responsibilities brought upon the UDAC could generate irregularities in the flow of information as staff tries to acclimate to its additional duties (Kumar 2003, p.257). CPC staff currently possesses a limited role in design review that minimizes its ability to affect the information flow. However, the onset of added obligations connected to the new comprehensive plan means that staff should carefully examine its distribution of information as it assumes a greater role in evaluating urban design in Dallas.

Landmark Commission staff members appear to have command of their responsibilities and workload. For proposed changes in Dallas' historic districts, a portion of which are in downtown, staff works with applicants in effort to avoid denial of Certificates of Appropriateness, separates out those projects that are considered routine maintenance from those requiring review by the commission, provides recommendations to the Landmark Commission, prepares the monthly cases for the LC's evaluation, and runs pre-meeting briefings for the commissioners, among other tasks (Pumphrey/Doty interview). In the estimation of Pumphrey and Mark Doty, Senior Historic Preservation Planner, the Landmark Commission sees one to two high profile, significant projects a year, such as the recent conversion of downtown's Mercantile Tower office building into apartment units (Pumphrey/Doty interview). Their assessment of the relatively small number of large scale, highly complex projects that come their way annually indicates to me that their workload is manageable, but likely becomes much more intense when these significant projects undergo review. Experience-wise, Pumphrey has only been with the city for six months and Doty for eight (Pumphrey/Doty interview). Despite this lack of experience with the city, Doty's past private work on historic preservation and

Pumphrey's recent arrival, which he claims was to help bring the department more in line with historic preservation theory as guided by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, suggest that the city has made an effort to improve the design review of projects taking place in historic districts (Pumphrey/Doty interview). Although Pumphrey and Doty are only two members of an eight person staff for the Landmarks Commission, Pumphrey's comments on his intent to improve the performance of the LC staff indicate that he is leading the charge to make the city more consistent and vigorous in its adherence to certain historical preservation criteria.

I believe that the Landmark Commission staff's management of information has raised concerns about the issue of information distortion but that this problem is currently being resolved. Regarding discontinuity of information, staff does not possess the authority to push applicants for Certificates of Appropriateness past the Landmark Commission. Submittal Criteria Checklists inform both applicants and the reviewing commissioners what proposal documents are expected, making it difficult for staff to inhibit this flow of information (Dallas Development Services Dept. – Certificate of Appropriateness for LC). As for the risk of information distortion, my understanding that the city hired Pumphrey to reduce misrepresentations of information by getting staff aligned with fundamental preservation theory primarily serves as an initiative that seeks to address this concern. Staff interpretation of the development code, specifically determining which projects consist of routine work and which ones need review by the Landmark Commission, could present staff members with opportunities to slip reviewable projects into the routine work category, but the likelihood that such stealthily-approved projects would eventually be caught for violations, then traced back to the approving staff member, makes such distortion of information excessively risky. The inconsistent use of information, which would result in unequal treatment of project participants, remains improbable due to the easy availability of application materials and the development code, as well as clear

indication within these materials of the steps required of applicants to gain approval (Dallas Development Services Dept. – Certificate of Appropriateness for LC). Although the employment of Pumphrey seems to address potential distortion of information, time is needed to determine whether he successfully reorganizes staff's approach in their review of development projects in historic districts. Unlike the City Plan Commission, the Landmark Commission does not appear to have any increase in responsibilities in the future, meaning that there should not be any upcoming threats to the current distribution of information by the LC staff.

### **Project Review Triggers**

With the exceptions of applications for pedestrian skybridges or those for projects in historic districts, project review triggers really do not exist in Dallas. This lack of design review triggers, particularly in the downtown area, is exemplified by the recent construction of the Hunt Building; the headquarters of Hunt Oil Company and a twenty story building with an innovative sail-like façade that faces north from the building's location on the northern edge of downtown. As noted by Betsy del Monte, architect at the Beck Group and president-elect of AIA Dallas, as long as the Hunt Building satisfied FAR and height requirements, then the building's urban design, as it impacts the surrounding public realm, would be left to the discretion of the owner and his project team (del Monte interview).

With regard to the Urban Design Advisory Committee of the City Plan Commission, a request for a Specific Use Permit for skybridge construction serves as the only condition that begins a process of advisory design review. As urban design review on the part of the CPC exists only by means of this single trigger, the process prevents an appointed board of citizens from having a more sizeable influence on the urban design of the public realm. This issue refers back to the credibility of the board and it should not take away from the limited advisory role held by the UDAC. It appears that the UDAC is beginning to assume a more important role due

to the implementation of Dallas' first comprehensive plan, but how committee members might be utilized for future design review purposes remains unknown. Dallas is maturing as an urban city, as Theresa O'Donnell points out, a thought that leads me to believe that additional triggers for UDAC review might exist in the future (O'Donnell interview). It is unclear, though, whether city officials and the community at large will call upon the Urban Design Advisory Committee to function in such a broader codified role.

The application for the Certificate of Appropriateness acts as the review trigger for the Landmark Commission, resulting in any development work within historic district borders coming before staff and commissioners for evaluation of impact. The city's development code, as described by Doty, seems to create a clearly understandable division of which projects should come before the LC and which ones consist of regular maintenance that needs no evaluation (Pumphrey/Doty interview). Concerning project review triggers, the development code appears to hit a middle ground that makes it neither too strict nor too lenient in the amount of projects resultantly reviewed by the Landmark Commission. Such a middle ground leads to effective pace of review by the commissioners, as they are well-utilized and not overloaded with cases.

### **Nature of Design Guidelines/Standards**

In its review of pedestrian skybridge projects, Dallas' Urban Design Advisory Committee relies on mandatory and recommended standards for guidance. Both the regulations and the suggestions originate from the "Dallas Building Code" section of the Dallas City Code (Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges). My examination of these standards, as performed before on standards assisting the decisions of Fort Worth's DDRB, focuses on their clarity in communication of purpose and on the depth in their explanation of detail.

The skybridges section of the city website clearly spells out the process necessary for project teams to gain approval for construction of skybridges as well as the UDAC's role within

this process. The city portrays the review of skybridge plans as a method for ensuring the welfare of persons and property within the city by minimizing the negative effects of skybridges, from the impacts of their visual obstructions to their affects on traffic flows and public street lighting (Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges). Furthermore, the Urban Design Advisory Committee’s objective of preparing analysis and recommendations on applications for submission to the Director of Development Services and the City Plan Commission is made evident (Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges). Though this dissemination of information provides commissioners, applicants and the general public with an understanding of the purpose behind skybridges’ design review, the acquisition of this data proved rather challenging. In fact, the only search tougher than tracking down guidance on skybridge permitting has been finding official information on the Urban Design Advisory Committee, apparently due to the UDAC’s recent dormancy.

Depth in the explanation of detail as it relates to skybridge standards offers mixed results. While the standards, mandatory and recommended, provide useful bullet-pointed information – more than I had expected given the limited design review that comes out of the City Plan Commission – the utilization of visual aids could have rendered the standards even more effective. Images included in Fort Worth’s distributions of its Urban Design Standards help to clarify the intentions of the standards, an aspect that could enhance the quality of Dallas’ skybridge standards. Considering the standards relevant to the work of the Urban Design Advisory Committee in terms of Habe’s distinction between prescriptive standards and performance standards, I think that those pertinent to the UDAC represent performance standards in that they do not mandate specific design solutions to issues of concern brought up in the standards. While the standards seek minimum percentages of openness in skybridge sidewalls and in transparency of material and they request interior visual breaks in lengthy crossings as



well as consistency in composition with the connected structures, they do not offer definitive direction in how these ambiguities should be addressed (Dallas Zoning Regulations – Pedestrian Skybridges).

For projects evaluated by the Landmark Commission, commissioners and staff rely on several layers of guidance in making their decisions. These layers include historic district ordinances, private development code, the Dallas City Code, and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (Pumphrey/Doty interview). While reliance on ordinances and codes appear restrictive and unwavering, the Landmark Commission’s mission to provide “pro-active planning that encourages economic development for downtown” indicates that commissioners and staff possess flexibility in determining how certain projects might best fit into the built environment (Dallas Office of the City Secretary – Landmark Commission).

Speaking to clarity in the communication of purpose, this mission of the LC resonates clearly, but the multiple layers of guidance make the overall goal of design review as it relates to historic preservation hard to comprehend for unfamiliar individuals. Staff appears to be accustomed to interpreting the general expectations of these layers of ordinance, code, etc, given their ability to quickly name them to me. In contrast, applicants and commissioners, particularly new members of the Landmark Commission, could have trouble comprehending the collective objective of these layers, based on lack of experience with the different levels of guidance. Staff espouses reliance on fundamental preservation theory, but it must provide project review participants and the general public with an explanation of what this phrase means, how it relates to the city’s “pro-active” approach and how it serves as the foundation for the many levels of guidance staff employs in the evaluation process.

As for depth in the explanation of detail, all layers offer substantial detail, although digesting the specifics may be challenging. There is potentially a lot of information for project

teams to digest as they prepare their applications and a lot of information for commissioners to consider as they make their reviews. Guidance in the form of historic district ordinances, for example, is very deep, where available. These ordinances provide very exact information regarding the Certificate of Appropriateness process and the design requirements for their individual districts. The extent of this information, especially when combined with other forms of guidance, can add difficulty to individuals' attempts to interpret how a project can meet required urban design standards. With the Landmark Commission and its support staff relying on an array of ordinances, codes, and standards, I imagine that they exist as a combination of prescriptive and performance standards. Ordinances of the city likely contain prescriptive sections as they detail community expectations for urban design within specific historic districts. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards, on the other hand, likely serve as performance standards that describe loose fitting national expectations for urban design effects in certain situations, without posing definite solutions that could not possibly be applicable all across the nation. These multiple levels of guidance prevent their designation as either prescriptive or performance standards, but a mixture of the two approaches surely overlays the historic districts in Dallas' downtown area.

## **Conclusion**

Design review in Fort Worth is unmistakably stronger than the process in Dallas. Fort Worth's DDRB serves as a robust process, whereas Dallas' UDAC of the City Plan Commission and the Landmark Commission possess only limited review capabilities. Before I delved into this thesis, I expected that neither Fort Worth nor Dallas utilized any form of design review over projects' impacts on the public realm. Then, as I began this exploration, I gained the impression that Fort Worth relied on extensive design review while in Dallas the process was nonexistent.

Through this analysis of five important features of design review in both cities, I have realized that the process is more potent in Fort Worth, but I have also come to see that it does exist, albeit only at a small level, in Dallas. So why has Fort Worth embraced design review when Dallas has turned its back on the process, only recently beginning to give greater attention to the role of urban design in the city? My next chapter explores a series of competing possible explanations.

## **Chapter 4: Rival Explanations for the Differences**

Attention to the impact on the public realm of development projects appears to be “hands on” in Fort Worth and “hands off” in Dallas. Fort Worth’s Downtown Design Review Board acts as a robust mechanism through which community representatives consider projects’ effects on the central business district’s built environment. Dallas, alternatively, lacks an urban design review board, and instead relies on the Urban Design Advisory Committee of the City Plan Commission and the Landmark Commission to provide limited design review within downtown. Why is design review so different in the two cities? What factors have played significant roles in fostering the creation of rigorous design review in Fort Worth? Why is design review only lightly implemented in Dallas? In this chapter, I examine a range of arguments in an attempt to explain what it is that causes the disparity in design review between Fort Worth and Dallas. In my consideration of each rival explanation, I identify the potential factor, address its validity, and rely on my research to form a view as to its applicability. As will be seen, three particular explanations play central roles in accounting for the difference in the process, but other factors contribute to the process’ dissimilarity in the two cities.

### **Powerful Real Estate Developers**

This first explanation claims that the presence of powerful real estate developers can affect the development of design review. I believe this reasoning to be operating here, based on the influence wielded by real estate moguls of the two towns, but not in the manner in which one might expect. A single wealthy family based in Fort Worth has had a substantial impact on the city’s urban design and its creation of design review. In Dallas, a number of prominent developers take part in the evolution of the city’s built environment, but these influential

individuals have not coalesced behind an agreed-upon agenda that could advance urban design in Dallas' public realm. Collectively, they do not possess the ability of this one family, the Bass family, to advance their real estate interests through a particular design-related vision. Whereas the Bass family is a very big fish in a smaller pond (604,538 population) and faces less potential resistance to its development interests, key Dallas developers are fairly big fish but in a larger pond (1,144,946 population) (Dallas/Fort Worth city Fact Sheets – American FactFinder).

Former Dallas city councilmember Willie Cothrum offered such a description of this contrast, based on his discussions through the years with builders, developers and others in Fort Worth and Dallas:

The Bass family is so dominant in downtown ownership of property and influence over in Fort Worth. It's a smaller area and one group owns a bigger percentage of it... You don't have so many different parties you've got to work with. Well, you don't have that in Dallas... You've got so many different people you've got to bring together in Dallas" (Cothrum interview).

As Cothrum notes, (1) the Bass family's purchase of a significant number of properties that comprise a sizeable portion of downtown Fort Worth and (2) its ability to reign over a smaller downtown Fort Worth without much opposition, enables the family to have a significant effect on the quality of development in the central business district. Several other individuals, including a member of the Bass family and architects Ames Fender and Mark Wolf, also agreed with Cothrum's comment that the smaller area of downtown makes it even easier for the Bass family to manage the built environment (Kallenberg 1996, Fender interview, Wolf interview).

The larger number of significant players in Dallas, all acting within a larger central business district, makes it difficult for them to collectively advocate a certain stance on the state of urban design within the city. Yet neither property acquisition by wealthy developers nor CBD size capture why the Bass family is the primary difference-maker in why design review is different in Fort Worth and Dallas. The historically-aware and community-sensitive vision for Fort Worth

pursued by the Bass family has resulted in the expansion of a unique urban environment, one secured by powerful design review and extensive urban design standards.

The Bass family, long time residents of Fort Worth, consists of four brothers, sons of the late Perry Richardson Bass, and their families. Perry Bass advanced the family fortune originally amassed by his wildcatter uncle, Sid Richardson, through oil and gas investments, and today this fortune is distributed among the brothers – Robert (\$5.5 billion), Lee (\$3.0 billion), Sid (\$3.0 billion), and Edward (\$2.5 billion) (Simmacher 2006, *Forbes* 2007). At the time of Perry Bass' passing in 2006, Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief praised Bass for devoting “his time, energy and dollars to making our city a better place”(Moncrief in Simmacher 2006), indicating his sense of civic responsibility. Furthermore, Bass' obituary noted that under his leadership, “his family led the transformation of downtown Fort Worth from a collection of deteriorating storefronts to a sterling example of urban rebirth” (Simmacher 2006). Although the Bass family primarily made their fortune through energy investments, it directed attention onto Fort Worth's built environment through a series of real estate investments that have created a unique sense of place within downtown Fort Worth. This real estate portfolio is known as Sundance Square. Sundance Square began in 1978 with the family's purchase and restoration of two square blocks of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings located in the central business district, and by 1996, the venture included thirty-eight square blocks of commercial and residential development within downtown Fort Worth's two hundred-block area (Kallenberg 1996). Through these acquisitions, the Bass family's influence over matters affecting downtown has grown. Motivated by a desire to enhance their financial investment as well as their contribution to their community, the Bass family has gained a distinct role in Fort Worth and played a critical part in the creation of the Downtown Design Review Board.

Protection of their amassed real estate investment is partly behind the Bass family's business/community commitment to Fort Worth and its significant role in the formation of the DDRB. With their restoration of Fort Worth's 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and the flourishing of Sundance Square in the late 1990s, the Bass family demonstrated that high quality urban design enhances a project's value (Taft interview). Efforts to encourage others to develop to a similar standard failed, however, as voluntary urban design guidelines promoted by Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. (the local public improvement district) were not strong enough to mandate adherence. City officials and stakeholders transformed these guidelines into the Urban Design Standards, with the Downtown Design Review Board established to interpret projects' impacts on the public realm. Ames Fender, DDRB chair, notes that this push for the creation of standards and the DDRB to administer them originated with the Bass family because they sought to safeguard their investment interests (Fender interview). The Bass family over the years had spent a significant amount of money reconditioning older buildings and integrating others into Sundance Square's "mix of 'Texas Deco and Neo-Classical'" style, and Fender's assertion communicates the desire of the family to ensure that those with real estate investments near theirs are compelled to develop their projects to a certain benchmark of urban design (Kallenberg 1996). Fort Worth Assistant Planning Director Dana Burghdoff seconds this understanding of the Bass family's asset protection strategy, noting that "they've always as property owners put forward the highest quality [of urban design] and wanted to see similar investment from their neighbors" (Burghdoff interview). As shrewd businessmen that have expanded the already considerable fortune passed to them by Perry Bass, the Bass brothers aimed to shield Sundance Square from detrimental development by pushing for the creation of the Urban Design Standards and the DDRB.

Although numerous interviewees credited the Bass family as the central reason for why design review is stronger in Fort Worth than it is in Dallas, tracking the fingerprints of the Bass brothers in the formation of the DDRB is not an easy task. The brothers, as major downtown property holders, surely had a number of discussions with city officials about taking steps to guarantee a satisfactory level of urban design in Fort Worth's central business district. Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. also played an important role in the formation of urban design guidelines and standards, but, as I will discuss later, the Bass family, with its downtown investments, holds significant influence within this public improvement district organization, meaning that DFWI served as something of a proxy for the Bass brothers in its advocacy for the establishment of the DDRB. Such a claim does not take away from the status of DFWI or its positive impact on the community, but simply recognizes that the organization's obligation is to voice the concerns of its shareholders, and its primary shareholder is the Bass family. In terms of the Downtown Design Review Board itself, Bill Boecker's place on the powerful commission demonstrates the continuing clout of the Bass family in downtown development matters. Professionally, Boecker directs the development of Sundance Square for the Bass family, and he has been a part of the project for over twenty years (Boecker interview).

The Bass family's civic interests in Fort Worth serve as the second part of the business/community commitment exhibited by the brothers. Boecker indicates that all four brothers "have a tremendous understanding of architectural disciplines and values," (Boecker interview). He recalled a story about the oldest brother, Sid, going the extra step during the initial stages of the Sundance Square restoration to locate and purchase out-of-state bricks that matched with one building's original design, and also identified the design education of Edward Bass, who studied at Yale's School of Architecture from 1968-1970 following his graduation from Yale College (Boecker interview, Yale University). This design expertise, combined with



DFWI Urban Design Committee chair Elaine Petrus' comments on his passion for downtown and his desire to make sure that downtown development is done right, suggest that his impact on urban design in Fort Worth stems from something more than a desire for a positive return (Petrus interview). Given Edward Bass' design talent and his enthusiasm for Fort Worth, I do not find it surprising that only a few years after he took on the primary leadership role of Sundance Square development in 1996, the city and DFWI began work on the creation of the urban design guidelines that later led to the DDRB. The brothers as a whole pushed for high quality urban design within their properties, but it appears that Edward Bass really instigated efforts to create a comprehensive urban design vision that would apply to the central business district. The Bass family demonstrated its financial savvy through the establishment of urban design standards and the DDRB, but civic loyalty and commitment to unique placemaking via quality urban design should not be discounted as additional factors in the family's decision to promote design review in Fort Worth.

While Fort Worth enjoys the benefits of a single large developer that successfully advanced a particular vision of urban design oversight, Dallas lacks a dominant developer or even a conglomeration of prominent Dallas developers that supports the supervision of projects' urban design impacts on the public realm. As Fort Worth architect Greg Ibanez points out, no one like the Bass family exists in Dallas (Ibanez interview). He commends the design and development efforts of recently deceased Dallas developer Raymond Nasher, such as his downtown sculpture museum/garden, but he maintains that Nasher was just one of dozens of wealthy individuals with development interests (Ibanez interview). Dallas has a sizeable number of successful real estate developers, but one does not tower above the others in terms of property ownership and influence, hindering a single developer from single-handedly implementing an urban design agenda in downtown. Ray Hunt of the Hunt family has a new 20-story office

building coming online along the northern edge of downtown Dallas, as does Lucy Billingsley of the Crow family only a few blocks away, but these developments are more insular and do not act as adjoining additions to visionary family real estate portfolios.

Not only does Dallas have many wealthy developers, but the diverse interests of these developers diminish the possibility that they will unite behind urban design as a community priority. Dallas architect Betsy del Monte recognizes the challenge posed by the dispersed interests of Dallas' elite investors, claiming that a focus such as urban planning could only become a primary concern within the city if these individuals either all concurred on its importance or if they were in fact a small group, as in Fort Worth, not a large one (del Monte interview). The former is unlikely to take place unless a charismatic individual takes charge or an extremely awful project motivates these individuals to agitate for change. The latter is virtually impossible given the large number of wealthy individuals in Dallas and their long term commitments to the community. The unity of a critical mass of these elite developers, though, might be enough to make a difference. David Dillon, architecture critic for *The Dallas Morning News*, indicates that in Dallas there is no wealthy individual with design expertise comparable to that of Edward Bass, whom Dillon considers to be a "center of gravity" for the design review process, along with his family (Dillon interview). So, these wealthy Dallas developers lack not only the dominant status of the Bass brothers or the cohesiveness to form an urban design vision, but they also require training in urban design skills that would provide guidance to the formation of a vision. This combination of factors clearly makes it difficult for prominent real estate developers to positively impact how Dallas attends to urban design in its public realm.

In response to my question regarding his appointment to the DDRB, Bill Boecker joked that he is on the board due to his lengthy experience in downtown Fort Worth's development as well as the fact that he represents "the gorilla,"(a.k.a. the Bass family)(Boecker interview).

While this joke brings to mind the image of a gorilla overwhelming foes and acting as it pleases, I think that the fish analogy mentioned earlier is more appropriate in my comparison of prominent developers' roles in the strength of design review in the two cities. Each of the Bass brothers could be a big fish in Fort Worth's smaller pond or Dallas' bigger pond. United, they possess immense influence over development of Fort Worth's built environment, with no significant challengers to their vision of their community. Through the protection of their investments and their commitments to civic responsibility and high quality urban design, the Bass family continues to see its comprehensive urban design vision become a reality. Such a small group of very big fish does not exist in Dallas, only a large number of large fish that focuses on their own territories. This contrast serves as a main explanation for why design review is more robust in Fort Worth – the most plausible of the ones I consider, but that does not mean that other possible explanations do not also have merit.

### **Government: Elected Local Officials**

A second argument is that the elected city councilpersons of Fort Worth and Dallas cause design review to be different in the two cities. I think that this explanation is not relevant because neither set of publicly elected officials has initiated comprehensive urban design policies, including the creation of design review boards, on their own. On the other hand, I do believe that this claim provides a secondary reason for why design review differs in Fort Worth and Dallas. The political climate in each city plays a role in fostering conditions that are either favorable or unfavorable to the potential implementation of design review. In Fort Worth, a political atmosphere of collaboration and receptivity helped the Bass family in its push to create the Downtown Design Review Board. In Dallas, a sometimes raucous and tense political climate has produced a city council that makes only incremental progress on most issues, including those

related to urban design. Though the actions of elected local officials in both cities have not directly resulted in design review coming into effect, the collective attitudes of the city councils still have some influence on the robustness of the process in each urban area.

Due to the persuasive agenda of the Bass family and constructive, responsive leadership, Fort Worth's city council has functioned as a useful proponent for enhancements to the urban design of the central business district. As Dallas architect Larry Good indicates, the revitalization efforts of the Bass family converted Fort Worth citizens into believers in quality urban design, and Sundance Square's success ignited support for design review (Good interview). While I do not know the status of urban design as a priority of the city government in the early 1980s, Good's impression of the Bass brothers' influence in convincing Fort Worth residents about the advantages of high quality design leads me to believe that their efforts made design of the public realm a more pressing concern of elected officials. Proof that such support exists comes in the form of the city council's approval of urban design guidelines and subsequent authorization of standards and the formation of the DDRB. Architect Greg Ibanez's comments on the consensus-focused nature of the city council suggest that the council's support for the DDRB and the Urban Design Standards would be expected. Believing Fort Worth still possesses somewhat of a small town atmosphere, Ibanez notes that the city council is not contentious, any contention is resolved behind closed doors so that members show a united front, and that the council tends to align with the objectives of those that hold power in the city (Ibanez interview). The activities of the Bass family and council members' willingness to come together behind the agendas of key community members frame the council as a cooperative yet reactive entity that probably would not have pushed for design review without guidance. The city council undoubtedly holds significant power within Fort Worth, and this power has helped make the

Downtown Design Review Board a reality. On its own, though, the membership of the council cannot be credited as a fundamental factor in the creation of robust design review in the city.

Unlike Fort Worth's amenable, supportive city council, Dallas' corresponding public body does not focus on achieving consensus. As a result, it has experienced difficulty in dealing with issues related to the built environment. This status makes the council an improbable player in advancing a design review-related agenda in Dallas. In 1993, the city council did approve a long term 30-year plan, the Dallas Plan, but this urban initiative was privately initiated, terminated after only 10 years due to lack of funding, and had little connection with the activities of the city government (Hicks 2003). As architecture critic David Dillon revealed, a lot of Dallas' problems with design and development have stemmed from racially prejudiced development policies of the 1950s and 1960s (Dillon interview). Past racist actions on the part of the city were detrimental to the African American community, and this suffering remains a factor in the city government today. Racism as it relates to city development was able to take place because of the at-large city council voting format favoring the white elites that existed in the city until 1991, when a federal judge ruled this format unconstitutional and mandated that districts be created to provide minorities with better chances at gaining council seats (Payne 2003, p.112).

Through plans such as the paving over of an African American neighborhood to generate additional parking for Fair Park, the location of the Texas State Fair, the city has antagonized this minority group to an extent that when it finally acquired power, it has greeted efforts at urban improvements in minority-heavy southern Dallas with skepticism and cynicism (Dillon interview). Dillon's comments focused on minority distrust as it concerns development within a certain sector of Dallas, but this view clearly runs through other endeavors of the city council, making it unlikely that council members would come together to discuss an urban design agenda

for the downtown area. Only in the last year has urban design become a higher priority of the city council. The council approved Dallas' first comprehensive plan, including an urban design element, in the summer of 2006. Good attributed the achievement of this plan, forwardDallas!, to the work of Theresa O'Donnell, Director of Development Services, not to the city council, indicating that council members continue to refrain from taking the initiative on implementing urban design measures within the city (Good interview).

Additionally, the 1991 realignment of Dallas' city council districts has had the effect of making the districts more insular, with representatives concentrating on their specific districts rather than the city as a whole. Commenting on the contrasting robustness of design review in the two cities, architect Mark Wolf says that the Dallas city council system, often described as being close to ward politics (members do not collaborate strategically very often and the potential for strife depends on who has been elected and whether these individuals choose to get along) has served as a significant hurdle for garnering attention to citywide issues such as urban design (Wolf interview). With only two of fifteen council districts overlaying downtown Dallas, councilpersons have little interest in promoting the interests of the central business district, choosing instead to place attention on their own outlying districts. Adjustments to the election format of Dallas city councilpersons were undoubtedly necessary, given the disenfranchisement of minorities under the at-large system, but the current system has generally made downtown a lower priority.

Unlike Fort Worth's politicians, those in Dallas have not acted in a cohesive, receptive manner that would aid promoters of design review in downtown. Neither city council has served in a leadership role concerning potential implementation of downtown design review, but the political environment fostered by Fort Worth's leaders has functioned as a more open and constructive one in which things can get done. The combination of racial animosity with regard

to development issues and the inward-looking nature of Dallas' council members toward their districts signify that the promotion of an urban design agenda focused on downtown has, until recently, faced an uphill battle in Dallas. Weak design review in the Dallas CBD, occurring only in historic districts and in oversight of skybridges, confirms that urban design has not existed as a main concern of the city council. Although approval of the comprehensive plan suggests that Dallas' city council might be taking on a more collaborative, pro-urban design role, the negative atmosphere that has pervaded the council chamber in the recent past resulted in a discouraging political climate that has stifled progress and innovation.

### **Government: City Staff**

A third explanation might be that city staff of Fort Worth and Dallas played significant roles in the contrasting strength of design review in each city. Similar to my conclusion on the influence of elected local officials, I believe that the actions of city staff cannot be pointed to as a cause of the difference in design review in the two cities, but I do think that staff serves as a secondary reason for why design review is robust in Fort Worth and weak in Dallas. By secondary reason, I mean that Fort Worth city staff were not a primary proponent of design review, but they did actively support the push for review of projects' impacts on the public realm. In Dallas, however, the declining status of urban design as a priority of the city made it difficult for urban design to come up as an issue relevant to a city staff pressed to act obligingly to private development interests.

The backing of a broad urban design agenda by city staff in Fort Worth, principally Planning Director Fernando Costa, made the implementation of urban design policies more palatable to city politicians and the community at large. Costa arrived in Fort Worth in 1998 around the time that Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.'s Urban Design Committee was beginning to

formulate urban design guidelines (Costa interview). This work by DFWI before the arrival of Costa indicates he did not serve as an initial instigator of improving urban design in Fort Worth's downtown area. Nor did his predecessors, described by DFWI President Andy Taft as individuals that encouraged better urban design but operated during a time when the city placed less value on the issue (Taft interview). Costa did, however, act as an important supportive voice that helped guide the city to a stronger urban design policy that included design review. Elaine Petrus, chair of DFWI's UDC, credits Costa with possessing vision, drive, and credibility that have helped him gain the trust of council members and bring urban design to the forefront of the city's concerns (Petrus interview). As Planning Director, Costa appears to have shepherded the growth of urban design, assisting in the transformation of the urban design guidelines into standards judged by the Downtown Design Review Board. Taft claims that Costa's influence cannot be underestimated and that his communicative ability has played a large part in his effectiveness:

He's got a way of sharing the good news and the value of principles in a way that policy makers understand and can buy into (Taft interview).

With this statement about "sharing the good news" in a comprehensible way, Taft implies that Costa has a talent in explaining the merits of quality urban design in the built environment and that he has successfully persuaded prominent politicians to understand the logic in his argument.

In Texas, where protection of property rights remains a key issue, this skill in promoting urban design and design review is impressive. Costa sees himself as an educator to the community, one that has imparted the advantages of high quality urban design by recruiting notable individuals such as Fred Kent, Alex Kreiger, Andres Duany and Tony Nelson to speak to the community and encourage progressive thinking on the subject (Costa interview). Although he did not mastermind the strengthening of Fort Worth's urban design policy and its creation of the DDRB, Costa, as the chief leader of the planning department, played an important role in



making the advancement of a robust urban design agenda palatable to city leaders and the broader community.

In addition to the activities of the planning department under Costa, Fort Worth's legal department also provided support in the formulation of the Downtown Design Review Board. In her description of the original establishment of design guidelines for the city, Elaine Petrus noted that DFWI wanted to start out with a weaker form of guidance in order to avoid confrontations with those highly in favor of individual property rights (Petrus interview). When the community later decided to move forward with Urban Design Standards and the DDRB, Fort Worth's legal department clearly had to vet the process to gauge its risk to the city. Talking about the DDRB staff's meticulous efforts to abide by the legal framework provided to them for the DDRB application process, planner James Toal acknowledges that staff's attention to following the appropriate format originates from the actions of the legal department and its desire to prevent the city from being sued (Toal interview). Toal implies the legal department has significant clout within the city government and that it played a role in ensuring that the DDRB was not constructed in a way that could lead to lawsuits against the city. These lawyers judged that design review was legal and could withstand challenge to its validity. As will be seen with Dallas, some cities' legal departments are reluctant to venture into the realm of urban design regulation because they doubt the legality of the process.

Dallas at one time relied on an effective urban design section of the municipal government, but the city's increasing deference to economic development priorities has made support for an urban design agenda by city staff extremely unlikely. In the 1970s, an urban designer named Weiming Lu presided over this urban design section of the Planning Department (now, notably, the Development Services Department), providing a design-based contribution to the city's planning efforts (Dillon interview). After Lu's departure at the end of the decade,

Dallas became a kind of “go-go developer town” in which “the planning department at that point lost credibility - it just became project-oriented, developer-driven planning,” as Dillon recalls (Dillon interview). Seeking to capitalize on the real estate boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, it appears that the city aimed to reign in its planning department in order to give developers fewer obstacles as they considered initiating development in the downtown area. This period might have been the opportune time to turn to design review, given the level of growth, but the City of Dallas chose to go in the opposite direction and discourage emphasis on urban design.

Mark Wolf notes that the urban design section of the city government was sometimes down to a token individual, with Dallas’ city managers regularly accepting this low priority status as they thought planners got in the way of development (Wolf interview). Based on my examination of the Dallas Development Services Department, I do not think that this urban design component actually exists anymore. Under the Long Term Planning component, there is an option for the commencement of an urban design study on particular areas of the city, but the city does not have an active agency that examines urban design in the public realm. The disappearance of the urban design component, combined with the emphasis at city hall on economic development, has fostered a timid atmosphere in terms of city staff’s interactions with development project teams. City Plan Commissioner Neil Emmons commends the department staff as wonderful people who do excellent jobs, but he believes that they are afraid to step on the toes of the development community, for fear of the consequences of holding up the development process (Emmons interview). Over the past three decades, planners within the city government have experienced urban design move from a key component of the Planning Department to a nonexistent part of the Development Services Department. Considering this decline in relevancy, there is little chance that city staff would have the ability and the courage to

advance an urban design agenda. Instead, the reduction in staff skilled in urban design has reduced the significance of urban design at city hall, as it has gone out of sight and out of mind.

Furthermore, in contrast to the stringent approval given to Fort Worth's Downtown Design Review Board by the city's legal department, Dallas' legal department until recently has opposed the creation of a stronger urban design program for the city. In Dallas, the conservative city attorney's office has taken on some planning responsibilities, such as the drafting of zoning ordinances, and the office has been reluctant to allow the implementation of design review when zoning is seen as a satisfactory approach (Cossum interview). Development Services Director Theresa O'Donnell indicates that the legal department has loosened up recently and become more amenable to the inclusion of urban design elements in the comprehensive plan, a change in attitude she attributes to sending the attorneys to conferences to show them the benefits of urban design and to persuade them that the city will not be sued by implementing these design measures (O'Donnell interview). O'Donnell's comment gives hope for the future role of urban design in the community, but it also points to the power the city attorney's office has held in preventing an urban design agenda from developing into a significant policy of the local government. Dallas' legal department possesses clout, yet city staffs in Dallas and Fort Worth are not the primary reason for the difference in design review in the two cities. As a secondary reason, the differing attitudes of planning and legal personnel have pushed the process forward in Fort Worth and restricted progress in Dallas. City staffs have made the difference larger, but they are not the primary cause.

### **Semi-Government: Downtown Management Organizations**

A fourth explanation might be that the primary downtown management organization of each downtown area brought about the difference in design review in Fort Worth and Dallas.

Each of these DMOs is known as a Public Improvement District in Texas, and their acting bodies are Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. and DowntownDallas, respectively. I do not believe that this reason applies here because DFWI lacks an independent voice, and DowntownDallas has never maintained a consistent, long term interest in advocating for improved urban design in the city, preferring to focus on economic development. DFWI is clearly a better promoter of monitoring projects' urban design impacts on the public realm, but its efforts function as an extension of the Bass family's commitment to the city.

Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. serves as an excellent advocate for maintaining a high quality of urban design in the built environment, but its role as the representative of downtown's stakeholders places the organization under the influence of the dominant land owner of the CBD. Founded in 1986, DFWI focuses on implementing different facets of the strategic plan that Fort Worth produces every ten years, a plan that includes an urban design element from which the urban design guidelines emerged (Taft interview, Fort Worth Public Improvement District #1). As the agent for all business interests within the PID, DFWI played a key role in the establishment of the guidelines that eventually became standards interpreted by the Downtown Design Review Board. Vida Hariri, senior planner for the city, claims that Fort Worth's design initiatives originate from DFWI, not the Bass family, but she believes that the campaign from DFWI for these guidelines would not have taken place without the real estate development created by the Bass family (Hariri interview). While I agree with her that DFWI served in an important capacity in advancing the design guidelines and that Sundance Square helped convince citizens about the importance of ensuring a certain level of urban design existed in the CBD, I think that there is a more direct link between the PID and the Bass family.

Although the Bass family is only one of scores of DFWI members, its sizeable downtown ownership surely provides it with significant influence over the activities of the organization.

Longtime DFWI member Elaine Petrus points out that the Bass family is not only a major shareholder of DFWI, but she is also “pretty certain that they were instrumental in helping Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. get formed”(Petrus interview). Such a founding role by the Bass family is not a surprise given the brothers’ financial and civic interests in the central business district. Petrus proceeded to downplay the role of the family in a manner somewhat similar to Hariri’s, noting that some of the Bass family business’ staff sits on DFWI boards and committees, but that their influence was diluted because they were just a few representatives in group meetings of twenty to thirty people (Petrus interview). I heard defensive claims such as these during some of my interviews when asking about the role of the Bass family, and my impression is that certain individuals in Fort Worth did not want to attribute the high quality urban design of their downtown area primarily to this single cause. They recognized that the Bass family played a certain role, but they wanted me to know that a broader set of citizens really made an urban design agenda possible in the city. I do not wish to take away from the achievements of DFWI or the work of its staff, but the Bass family’s position as an immensely powerful shareholder within this mid-sized town cannot be ignored. Based on their significant property holdings and past contributions to the community, their influence over the PID, be it direct or subtle, should be expected.

Although DowntownDallas is a PID like DFWI, it lacks the design initiative of its Fort Worth counterpart, meaning that neither downtown management organization independently pursued an urban design agenda for the CBD. Formed in 1993 as a part of the Dallas Plan (the aforementioned privately funded urban design and capital improvements program that shut down after ten years), DowntownDallas engaged in services that provided additional security, street cleaning, and additional landscaping for the downtown area (*The Dallas Morning News* Editorial 1993). The landscaping component of DowntownDallas could tie in with the urban design

program of the privately funded Dallas Plan, but a 2006 article on DowntownDallas in *Texas Real Estate Business* indicated that the concentration of the PID has changed to security, cleanliness and marketing (Sanders 2006). While priorities of security and sanitation remain the same, the switch in the third priority, from landscaping to marketing, serves as a telling sign of Dallas' relentless focus on economic development at the expense of urban design. The absence of urban design as a main concern of the PID is confirmed through an examination of DowntownDallas' website, in which the organization never makes reference to urban design (DowntownDallas PID). This rapid decline of urban design as a priority within the central business district suggests that the downtown Dallas PID has not functioned as a promoter of a comprehensive urban design policy for the city.

A clear contrast exists in how each PID has approached urban design – passionately in Fort Worth and apathetically in Dallas – but the influence of the Bass family as a substantial shareholder of DFWI prevents this contrast from serving as a valid explanation for the difference in design review in the two municipalities. DFWI plays an important role in advancing the quality of urban design in downtown Fort Worth, but a more extensive investigation into the decision-making process of the organization and the influence of the Bass family would be required before I could confidently credit DFWI as a legitimately independent body. Based on my current understanding of the situation, I cannot acknowledge Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. in this capacity.

### **Strength of Local AIA Chapters**

A fifth explanation might be that actions of the local chapters of the American Institute of Architects caused the difference in design review in Fort Worth and Dallas. I do not believe that this explanation is valid because the AIA groups in both cities appear not to have involved

themselves with the urban design activities of the city governments. In Fort Worth, members of AIA I talked with did not mention AIA as a key player in the creation of the Downtown Design Review Board, and some did not even feel knowledgeable enough with the DDRB to talk about it. In Dallas, AIA members have not taken on an active role in campaigning for enhanced urban design oversight by the community and the city government, electing to focus primarily on other design/planning issues.

AIA has a strong following in Fort Worth, but the local chapter appears not to have participated in the creation of the Urban Design Standards or the DDRB. Judging from the depth of the organization's executive committee (twelve members), its employment of a staff member to manage activities and its Fort Worth office, and the comprehensiveness of its website, AIA Fort Worth seems to be a vigorous chapter with a visible presence in the city. I expected that the organization had integrated itself into policy-making decisions and issues related urban design in the public realm, so I was surprised to find that none of the first three members I attempted to interview - Past President Tommy Stewart, President Stephen Darrow, and Vice President of Communication Paul Dennehy – felt familiar enough with the work of the Downtown Design Review Board to comment on it on the record. This lack of knowledge on design review in Fort Worth, despite its recent existence, its strength, and occasional revisions to its duties, indicated to me that AIA Fort Worth did not play a significant role in the formation of the DDRB. Additionally, in my meetings with architects Ames Fender (DDRB chair) and Greg Ibanez (Landmark Commission member), both members of AIA Fort Worth, neither mentioned the organization as a factor in the establishment of the urban design guidelines, or, subsequently, of the Urban Design Standards and the DDRB.

Similar to AIA Fort Worth, AIA Dallas has not worked closely with the city to promote higher quality urban design in the downtown area. Mark Wolf, President Elect of AIA Dallas,

states that the organization has become more involved in city projects over the past six years, pointing to members' work on the advisory committee for the comprehensive plan and their role in completing an enhanced study of the Trinity Corridor, a massive public development project along the Trinity River that runs east of downtown (Wolf interview). AIA Dallas members appear active individually, but it seems that the organization could do more in an official capacity.

Development Services Director Theresa O'Donnell, chief architect of the comprehensive plan, claims that she held a meeting with the chapter shortly after the passing of the plan in which they questioned the strength of the urban design component of ForwardDallas!, to which her response was, "Well, where were you guys? How come the architectural community didn't come out and demand higher standards?" (O'Donnell interview). O'Donnell's questions to the AIA members indicate that they have not attempted to form a more cohesive, formal front through which they could pursue more effectively specific design objectives in collaboration with the city. AIA Dallas President Betsy del Monte's acknowledgement that AIA's role in the comprehensive plan was that of behind-the-scenes work of various AIA members acting together simply because of their common organizational bond confirms that the chapter did not assume an official advisory role in the creation of the plan (del Monte interview). AIA Dallas' absence from this role and its relatively recent return to interactivity with the city indicate that the chapter has lacked the desire to forge an official working relationship with city officials through which it could forward an urban design agenda. The organization is active in the community, but a formal relationship with the city has not been a priority, making it unlikely that AIA Dallas has had any kind of impact on the limited implementation of design review in the downtown area.



## Urban Forms of the Central Business Districts

A sixth explanation would claim that the urban forms of the cities' central business districts act as a cause of the difference in design review in Fort Worth and Dallas. I believe that this argument is relevant here. The evolution of Fort Worth's public realm has kept the importance of urban design in sight and in the minds of individuals that experience the Fort Worth CBD, making design review a useful mechanism to maintain its continuity. In Dallas, on the other hand, the evolution of the public realm has de-emphasized the value of activity on the street, thereby diminishing citizens' recognition of urban design as a critical feature of the city that should be upheld to a certain level.

Fort Worth's urban form retains a connection to its past that has enabled the CBD to gain a unique identity, meriting the formation of design review. This identity, based on the area's distinctive urban design, was capitalized on and expanded by the Bass family. Although Dallas decades ago was ravaged by urban renewal, a point I will discuss shortly, Fort Worth bypassed this process (Dillon interview). Additionally, the CBD did not undergo any significant street realignment, meaning that its smaller 200 foot blocks were preserved and a more fine-grained urban design was able to take place (Dillon interview). Therefore, many of the city's 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings were not torn down to make way for larger, more modern buildings, and the city blocks remained at a smaller, intimate scale. This endurance of downtown Fort Worth's historic urban form appears to have occurred due to the absence of any significant economic opportunity or real estate boom in the city up through the involvement of the Bass brothers in the late 1970s. As described in *The Dallas Morning News*' obituary on Perry Bass (father of the four brothers), downtown Fort Worth had been "a collection of deteriorating storefronts" until the Bass family began making its acquisitions (Simmacher 2006). The Bass family took advantage of downtown Fort Worth's unique 19<sup>th</sup> century feel, building upon this context as they expanded

their area holdings. The effort of the Bass family to preserve the distinctive identity and urban form came, in turn, through the creation of urban design guidelines, then the Urban Design Standards and the Downtown Design Review Board. Without this urban form to build upon, Fort Worth might have transformed into a very different urban setting, one without a pedestrian-friendly environment and the design review that preserves its character.

Urban renewal in Dallas removed activity from the street, minimizing the importance of urban design in the public realm and taking the need for a comprehensive urban design policy out of citizens' minds. In the 1960s, Dallas installed a series of skybridges and tunnels as a form of urban renewal that intended to make downtown easier to navigate and to keep business within the CBD (Dillon interview, Healy 2005). This system has gradually grown so that today it encompasses three miles of pathways around downtown, with primary entrances at four key office buildings (Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau). Dillon described the skybridge/tunnel system as a disaster for Dallas because it sucked life off the streets, a comment echoed by Fort Worth planner James Toal (Dillon interview, Toal interview). In response to my inquiry about Dallas being more "hands off" and Fort Worth being more "hands on" regarding urban design in the CBD, Taft commented that downtown Dallas has spectacular buildings, but no activity on the ground level due to this system, leading him to ask the question, "What is the impetus for the urban design process?" (Taft interview). By pulling pedestrian activity off of downtown's streets, Dallas has prevented attention from being focused on its built environment and the need for enhanced urban design oversight. The insular nature of Dallas' pedestrian system has hindered the creation of a distinct urban character and prevented significant accumulation of advocacy for design review that might arise out of desire to preserve such character.

## **Fear of the Disaster Project**

A seventh argument is that fear of a disaster project taking place causes design review to be different in Fort Worth and Dallas. I believe that this explanation is relevant. By disaster project, I mean to describe a poorly-designed development project that detrimentally affects the quality of urban design in a city's central business district. Fort Worth possesses significant concern that such unsatisfactorily-designed projects could be constructed, and design review serves as a formal method for dealing with them. Dallas, on the other hand, lacks this level of anxiety over potentially troublesome projects, with city leaders generally acting apathetic to the urban design of new/renovated developments in the CBD.

The possibility that generically designed commercial buildings could jeopardize Fort Worth's unique downtown identity played a role in the creation of the city's comprehensive urban design policy that led to design review. DFWI President Andy Taft cited his organization's informal interventions that persuaded 7-11 and Sonic Burger to select design-sensitive buildings that went beyond the cookie cutter approach as two key examples of Fort Worth's concern about the impact of poorly-designed projects (Taft interview). In Taft's estimation, these catastrophe-averting incidents woke the community up and compelled DFWI to move forward with the city to establish the urban design guidelines (Taft interview). Satisfaction with the 19<sup>th</sup> century-based urban context, combined with concern that contemporary design might endanger this identity, encouraged implementation of these guidelines and the eventual formation of Urban Design Standards and the DDRB. The power of the design review board to work with projects or to hold them up, if their designs are deemed unfavorable, prevents the disaster project from harming the urban design of Fort Worth's central business district.

This alarm over potential disaster projects that spurred Fort Worth forward has not come to pass in Dallas. For the most part, city leadership appears inattentive to the impacts of

projects' urban designs on the public realm of the CBD. This attitude became apparent to me through former city councilwoman Veletta Forsythe Lill's recounting of her efforts to highlight to her fellow council members certain negative impacts of development projects on downtown's urban design. In response to her emphasis on urban design's importance and her position that she would not vote in favor of items such as a skybridge or a downtown McDonald's with a drive through, her colleagues labeled each of these issues "a Veletta thing" (Forsythe Lill interview). Forsythe Lill's description of this labeling suggested to me a lack of concern on the part of other city councilpersons for matters of urban design. Whereas Fort Worth's community created a structured process opposing projects that could negatively alter the CBD's urban design, in Dallas, a supporter of good urban design at the highest level of city government had her points on design issues branded as ancillary through other council members' nicknaming efforts. Such an outlook demonstrates to me that encouraging a certain quality of urban design in the CBD is not a high priority of the city leadership. This reality makes the need to review the affects of projects' urban designs on the downtown area a nonexistent issue in the leaders' minds.

## **Conclusion**

I believe that three of seven rival hypotheses explain best why design review is a more robust process in Fort Worth than in Dallas. First, the dominance of the Bass family over real estate development in Fort Worth's smaller central business district enabled the brothers to advance an urban design agenda that ensured the built environment developed to a level satisfactory to their financial and civil desires. In contrast, the presence of several powerful real estate developers in Dallas' larger CBD prevented any one from gaining Bass-like control and impeded their ability to come together behind a plan that would compel development projects to

adhere to certain urban design expectations. Second, Fort Worth's enduring urban form kept attention on the streets and made it possible for the Bass family to capitalize on the character of the public realm. Urban renewal in Dallas, however, took citizens off the streets and their minds off of urban design and design review as important civic issues. Third, fear of the disaster project compelled leadership in Fort Worth to implement an urban design policy, including design review, which protected the character of the city's central business district. Leadership in Dallas, however, did not possess a similar level of concern, choosing instead to pay little attention to CBD projects' urban design impacts on downtown and showing very limited interest in the need for design review. Although elected public officials and city staffs of the two cities did not play primary roles in causing the difference in design review, these two factors facilitated the progression of the process in Fort Worth and its limited implementation in Dallas. These primary and secondary explanations prove useful as I move on to examine improvements to the process in both cities. Armed with the knowledge of which explanations apply, I am in a better position to prescribe modifications I believe should take place and those I think are likely to take place, given the circumstances in each municipality.

## **Chapter 5: The Future of Design Review in Dallas and Fort Worth**

Design review in Fort Worth and Dallas contains flaws that could be corrected. Changes to the process as it exists in each city could make it a more effective tool in the shaping of each central business district's urban design. Therefore, I intend to recognize flaws and recommend adjustments for design review in both cities, aiming to make the process as valuable as possible in each.

My approach to providing suggested changes involves the presentation of short term and long term scenarios for the development of design review in Fort Worth and Dallas. The short term scenario describes flaws as well as changes that could be made in the near future, factoring into account the realities on the ground in a practical manner. This approach considers the political and social circumstances currently present within each city and forecasts what firm steps both cities might take over the next few years to improve design review in their CBDs. The long term scenario describes more substantial modifications that could be made to the process in each city. This more distant vision demonstrates how design review might exist in Fort Worth and Dallas a decade into the future, still tied to the realities of each city but optimistically assuming favorable circumstances for greater oversight of projects' urban design impacts on the public realm.

Although I offer these outlooks for Fort Worth and Dallas, I do not think that there is a single form of design review to which cities should aspire. It would be convenient to apply an "ultimate" model of design review to the two cities in order to lay out how each city must progress to achieve this ideal design review, but circumstances in each city have allowed for the process to develop quite differently, as I have already demonstrated. The contexts out of which

design review has grown in Fort Worth and Dallas make the pursuit of a single model design review by each unrealistic. I mean to draw my recommended adjustments from a kit of design review parts, based on my interpretation of citizens' expectations for urban design oversight in their communities and my understanding of relevant literature. My proposals provide modifications to each process that are selected for their fit, with the intention being to advance design review as far as possible while still considering the conditions present in each central business district. Consistent with my assessment of the differences of design review in Fort Worth and Dallas, this analysis relies on the five features of the process I consider key – authority of the design review board, credibility of the board, role of staff, project review triggers, and the nature of urban design guidelines/standards – to determine improvements that could make the process more effective in the future.

### **Fort Worth: Short Term**

In the near term, Fort Worth is taking a path that could complicate the effectiveness of its design review over time. Though some aspects of the process are suitable for the city and make the DDRB robust, other aspects are flawed and require improvements. Community members have regularly tweaked characteristics of the Downtown Design Review Board, indicating a willingness to adjust the process to make it more effective. These modifications have included increases in membership and an expansion of its realm of authority. However, while I am in favor of the regular examination of the city's design review in order to improve it, I believe that certain modifications have not affected the DDRB in a positive manner. In fact, without corrections, I think that the process in Fort Worth is heading down a path that will likely hinder the board in the future.

### **Authority of the Board**

The robust authority of the DDRB appears to have strong support within the community; it is likely that the process will continue to function with the powerful Certificate of Appropriateness in hand. Citizens believe that the authority invested in the DDRB minimizes outside political influence and keeps the process manageable. Furthermore, Petrus' comment that the process typically flies under the radar, rarely having attention focused on it, indicates that the board tends to make decisions that are non-controversial and agreeable to those in the CBD, reducing the possibility of opposition to DDRB decisions (Petrus interview). Fender's remark that the board does not want to serve as an impediment demonstrates the desire of the board to work harmoniously with applicants rather than deny design decisions that might exacerbate their relationships and be detrimental to the development of downtown. The potential exists for the board through turnover to lose sympathy for CBD interests and to become overly aggressive in its judgments, holding up applications and slowing the permitting process. However, I do not see such a change happening because the city council appears to be careful in its selection of board members who are amenable and focused on the healthy growth of the CBD and because long term DDRB members have fostered a constructive identity of the board that should be hard to alter due to the members' infrequent replacement. Given this effort by the DDRB to maintain constructive rapport with applicants, and, just as importantly, the Bass family's sustained support for this form of design review, I believe that Fort Worth will continue to back the significant power held by the DDRB.

### **Credibility of the Board**

With regard to furthering the credibility of the DDRB, the community has decided not to maintain a smaller-sized, downtown-focused board, and the issue of establishing clearer separation between the board and Downtown Fort Worth, Inc remains unresolved. On



November 14, 2006, Fort Worth increased the membership of the board from five to seven specifically “to facilitate the enforcement of the Trinity Uptown Development Standards and Guidelines” (City of Fort Worth website – DDRB). Trinity Uptown, the industrial district located immediately to the north of downtown, is in the early stages of being redeveloped into a residential/commercial mixed-use district. By spreading out the workload for review of CBD and Trinity Uptown projects amongst a greater number of members, the city believes that it can achieve similar quality in both districts and not trouble itself with the creation of a new board. Despite this expansion, which I believe diminishes the quality of the process, I have hope that Fort Worth might consider a division of the DDRB into two boards in the future. In acknowledging that the city enlarged the board to better handle the workload, Toal mentioned that such was the case “at least for now,” indicating to me that once the redevelopment of Trinity Uptown moves beyond its current preliminary stages, the city might contemplate splitting the DDRB (Toal interview). This separation would allow appointed, categorized DDRB members to return their attention solely to design review within the central business district and would prevent those lacking in CBD experience from taking part in these decisions. Granted, downtown Fort Worth does not cover a huge area, nor does the adjacent Trinity Uptown, so movement away from a single board will probably take time.

In terms of improved separation between the DDRB and DFWI, the latter certainly plays a key role in the downtown community, and it has a right to make its opinion known on the rulings of the DDRB. While I believe that a more official association between the two entities should be established, I find it doubtful that greater transparency will take place in the relationship between the DDRB and DFWI due to the intimate, “small town” atmosphere of city governance within the CBD. Although Fort Worth possesses a sizeable population, its relatively small power base, including the Bass family, consistently plays a major role in decisions

affecting downtown. This reality means that it is relatively easy for decisions to be made in behind-the-scenes conversations that are not seen by the public.

Greg Ibanez claims that this power base is somewhat diverse, but that it is comprised of the usual suspects; the same names can be seen on multiple boards across the city (Ibanez interview). Fender's membership in the DDRB, the Landmark Commission and DFWI serves as a key example. As long as this "small town" nature of Fort Worth continues, I do not think that anyone will challenge DFWI's close relationship with the DDRB, especially with DFWI perceived in the CBD as an advocacy organization that benefits business interests. Most probably consider DFWI's close conversations with the DDRB as the way business is done in downtown Fort Worth. Unless DFWI oversteps its bounds in pushing its position onto the DDRB or certain citizens call into question meetings between the organizations' representatives or members' membership in both, neither of which has happened thus far to my knowledge, I do not think the impetus for change exists on this front.

### **Role of Board Staff**

I am uncertain about the steps Fort Worth has taken to ensure quality performance by city staff, but the city must move forward on the issue of inconsistent use of information, if it has not done so. Unfortunately, in the short term I think that any modifications by the city will be to make staff work on a single board more palatable, leaving open the possibility for difficulties to continue cropping up until two boards with separate staffs are created. While staff appears able to handle the present design review workload, acceleration in the development of the emergent Trinity Uptown district could make staff duties much more difficult.

With regard to the inconsistent use of information and my concern over the need to guarantee a high level of staff expertise to provide consistency in information flow, I am confident that Fort Worth has the proper hiring practices in place to ensure that it employs

talented, competent individuals. Given (1) the DDRB's switch in staff support from the Development Department to the Planning Department to take advantage of Vida Hariri's urban design knowledge and (2) past DDRB administrative difficulties involving failure to follow design review deadlines set up with the assistance of the Legal Department, delaying the process, I believe that the city and board members recognize the importance of bringing in qualified staff. These qualified individuals have helped projects move smoothly through design review, not always the case in previous work of the DDRB. Stakeholders appear to understand past mistakes, appreciate the performance of the staff currently in place, and I imagine that appropriately skilled individuals will join the DDRB staff when necessary.

### **Project Review Triggers**

Although Fort Worth plans to adjust how certain projects are evaluated once they meet the city's criteria for design review, the use of strict project review triggers does not appear likely to change in the near future. DDRB members and staff expect that a consent agenda for administrative review by staff members will be implemented at some point. This modification is intended to keep routine maintenance applications from coming under full review at a DDRB session and reduce the workload of board members. The consent agenda might help the board function more effectively, but the DDRB's continued possession of final approval of all projects (signing off on them at every meeting) means that this alteration would not improve the process by eliminating unnecessary design reviews. Under this consent agenda, applications for a store's annual holiday sign or the replacement of an awning would still come through the DDRB, so the process would be no different for applicants despite an ease in burden for board members. If the city wants to make the consent agenda effective, it would place trust in city staff to perform quality reviews of less significant projects and then approve them without requiring DDRB approval, speeding up the permitting process for minor projects that probably should not come

through design review anyway. Under the present circumstances, though, in which the urban design of the CBD is carefully monitored by the DDRB in a manner supported by the community, I do not foresee the city easing up on the restrictiveness of the project review triggers. Through the implementation of a consent agenda, the DDRB's workload would decrease, but it would maintain the power to review all cases that involve the development of the built environment in Fort Worth. With equal power and less review burden, I see the DDRB becoming comfortable with such a situation and would not expect further changes to the review criteria in upcoming years.

### **Nature of Design Guidelines/Standards**

As Fort Worth relatively recently implemented its Urban Design Standards, I do not envision the city altering them significantly in the near future. I consider the standards clear and comprehensive, so this preservation of the status quo does not surprise me. Concerning my interest in the DDRB making a better effort to explain its interpretations of the standards in its decisions, I do not think that city staff or the board currently place a high priority on providing detailed justifications of their judgments. In particular, I do not think that the posting of meeting minutes with summaries of the DDRB's reasoning will occur because doing so would increase the workload of staff and board members. I do expect that DFWI will convene informal meetings with the design review board or staff to discuss assessments by the board that DFWI deems questionable. These disagreements over interpretation of the standards likely will be resolved behind closed doors and out of the public eye, meaning that any improvement in understanding will not be passed on to the broader community. Unless the DDRB reviews a project very poorly, resulting in turmoil in the CBD over its decision, I think that the DDRB will continue to operate under the radar of public awareness and that any questions regarding its understanding of the Urban Design Standards will remain low key and resolved privately. As I

believe the DDRB has rarely, if ever, denied approval to a project or held up project permitting for a significant period of time, I would not expect turmoil to erupt in the CBD over the DDRB's work any time soon.

## **Fort Worth: Long Term**

Fort Worth already possesses robust design review, but this process still incorporates several flaws that prevent it from achieving greater effectiveness. While the process works quite well at this point in time, my short term outlook points out several instances where adjustments could be made. Without corrections to these faults, the DDRB could become a less productive body down the line. Efforts to address these faults should result in design review remaining an effective method of urban design oversight in Fort Worth's CBD.

### **Authority of the Board**

I find the strong authority invested in the DDRB to be optimal for the circumstances in Fort Worth, a situation in which a retreat in the power of the design review board would threaten the importance of urban design in the city. The Certificate of Appropriateness issued by the Downtown Design Review Board kick starts the entire project permitting process within the central business district, and decisions by the board are appealable only to a board that verifies adherence to DDRB rules, meaning that the board can focus on urban design issues and potential political trouble from city council involvement is removed from the process.

This present format of authority held by the DDRB serves as a good approach for the community of Fort Worth. As a process in the form of Blaesser's Model 1, invested with significant power to implement design review decisions, it establishes urban design as a priority of the city and keeps it in citizens' minds. Movement from Blaesser's Model 1 to a weaker, more advisory model would send the wrong message to the community in Fort Worth. Such a

waning of authority would convey to developers that urban design had become less important and that their projects need not place emphasis on coming before the Downtown Design Review Board. As demonstrated in Dallas by the gradual disappearance of the urban design section of the Planning Department and the decline in relevancy of Dallas' ad-hoc Urban Design Advisory Committee in the 1970s and 1980s, deemphasizing urban design starts a city down a slippery slope that can result in economic development becoming a singular priority. Given the robustness of the authority that currently exists, Fort Worth's best interest remains in maintaining this level of authority and expressing to citizens that management of projects' urban design impacts on the public realm continues to be a top concern.

### **Credibility of the Board**

Although I have for the most part commended the DDRB for its level of credibility, issues of (1) qualifications to judge projects in an extended realm of influence and (2) the transparency of its decision-making process must be addressed in order for the credibility of the board to achieve an optimum level. I believe the categorized membership of the board makes it a trustworthy body, with members selected from the fields of architecture, downtown businesses and general real estate. Furthermore, the appointment of members collectively by the city council and the mayor, rather than a one-position-per-councilperson approach, provides a more open selection process that is visible to the community.

Despite these positives, the city and the stakeholders involved in determining how the DDRB functions should restrict its area of influence to the central business district in order to maintain members' credibility as sound decision-makers in the CBD. Fort Worth recently expansion of the DDRB's realm of authority to include Trinity Uptown is counterproductive, in my opinion. While I am in favor of installing an authoritative body that provides design review within this new district, I believe that the city committed a mistake by adding the area to the

DDRB's realm of responsibility and increasing DDRB membership from five to seven members (with the two new members possessing Trinity Uptown connections) to accommodate the greater workload.

Even though Planning Director Fernando Costa admitted that the DDRB expressed a desire to retain its downtown focus, I believe that the city made this DDRB expansion decision because officials thought that the DDRB's success in the central business district could translate into further design review success in Trinity Uptown, which will have its own set of development standards and guidelines (Costa interview, City of Fort Worth website - DDRB). This expansion dilutes the quality of DDRB decisions and could compel applicants to question the validity of the decisions because members whose origins and area of interest lie in Trinity Uptown now contribute to urban design judgments in the CBD. Although applicants could also potentially question the legitimacy of the decisions by DDRB members whose CBD business interests are affected by certain applications, the board is set up so that members must recuse themselves during applications involving conflicts of interest. Restricting DDRB authority to its original area keeps the five members appointed to the downtown membership slots focused on the central business district that is their primary responsibility, with no distractions posed by applications related to the redevelopment of the adjoining district.

In terms of the second issue, the transparency of the board's decision-making process, the Downtown Design Review Board can achieve greater credibility by maintaining a clear separation between its work and the influence of Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. As the representative body of downtown business interests, DFWI has the right to critique the decisions of the board. However, as a party that speaks on behalf of the business community, not the entire community, DFWI's relationship with the DDRB should take place through formal, public channels. The concern about the ability of the board to act independently, free from pressure of

DFWI, originally came about when I learned that DFWI had assisted in the staffing of the design review board when the Development Department's support was inadequate. Although this particular matter was resolved when the Planning Department assumed the supporting role for the DDRB, DFWI's continuing close relationship with the board, demonstrated by President Andy Taft's intention to provide it with a list of DDRB decisions DFWI considers violations of the city's Urban Design Standards, should become more official in order for the board to uphold its credibility.

A move towards greater credibility of the board would come about by making the relationship between the DDRB and DFWI more official. First, through public disclosure of meetings, those outside of the business community would be made aware of the objectives of DFWI as they relate to urban design and their evaluation of the DDRB's performance. Second, DFWI members that serve on the Downtown Design Review Board should not be allowed to hold positions of significance within the improvement district organization that could result in conflict between their DFWI interests and their duties as civic volunteers who have agreed to judge projects' design impacts on the CBD. Design review board members Ames Fender and Bill Boecker are also members of DFWI – I do not know about their roles within DFWI or if they even participate actively. Nevertheless, in the future, they should be forced to refrain from involving themselves in any development committees related to downtown that could be at odds with their DDRB responsibilities. The city should format the DDRB so that members' connections with other downtown organizations would be vetted, ensuring a greater amount of credibility exists in the decision-making of the board.

### **Role of Board Staff**

Touching on Kumar's investigation of information flow, I believe that Fort Worth should address one staff issue – inconsistent use of information – to improve staff performance and



enable design review to become more effective. With regard to the inconsistent use of information, the city, if it has not already done so, should make the skill sets of senior planner Vida Hariri and associate planner Dustin Henry the qualifications required for their replacements, should they ever leave the city. Through Hariri's urban design knowledge and her communication of this knowledge through her application staff reports to board members, the DDRB has become much more effective in assessing projects. Through Henry's administrative work, the city has overcome the organizational flaws of his predecessor, who was apparently unable to handle the legal aspects of the design review process mandated by the Legal Department. The formulation of urban design and managerial experience requirements for the positions of Hariri and Henry might sound like a simplistic solution to problems of information flow, but Fort Worth, as evidenced, has had trouble getting to the present situation in which its design review functions well. Failure to set up certain qualifications for employment in these positions could result in ill-equipped individuals taking on the roles of Hariri and Henry, returning the DDRB to its past inefficiencies.

### **Project Review Triggers**

Fort Worth should reshape its project review triggers in the future, making them more lenient in order to eliminate excessive design review. To recount, the DDRB provides design review for all projects that occur within the central business district, regardless of project size and with the only exception being demolitions and interior work (Hariri interview). I have taken the position that the Bass family served as a primary advocate for the use of design review within the CBD in order to protect its investments (as well as out of civic responsibility), but I would hope that the Bass brothers would agree with the original architect of the DDRB, James Toal, that changes must be made to reduce the extent of design review in the city (Toal interview). Such changes should center on the exclusion of routine maintenance and annual seasonal signage

from design review. These two adjustments would be straightforward and sensible, but the establishment of a broader cut off point for what to review would present a more significant challenge.

In my opinion, Fort Worth should examine the review criteria of the Boston Civic Design Commission and base their revised triggers on the Boston model. The BCDC reviews (1) new/rehabilitated structures over 100,000 feet, (2) projects of special significance as determined by board members (with staff guidance? need to check with David Carlson – seemed to indicate he would bring projects of special significance to the board’s attention), (3) civic projects and (4) district design guidelines (BRA website - Boston Civic Design Commission). Revised DDRB review triggers should include (1) new/rehabilitated structures over 50,000 square feet, a smaller square footage requirement to capture more projects within Fort Worth’s CBD, (2) projects of special significance as voted on by board members, (3) civic projects and (4) any changes to Fort Worth’s Urban Design Standards (which are narrower than Boston’s district design guidelines and more focused on the CBD). The special significance trigger should allow members to bring attention to smaller projects that still have significance within downtown, as has been the purpose of this criterion in Boston (Carlson interview). These revised review triggers would make design review more clear, removing ambiguity and enabling board members and prospective applicants to better understand what kinds of projects are reviewable. Furthermore, a reduction in the number of projects reviewed would present the DDRB with less time pressure in their review sessions and gives them opportunities to assess projects’ urban design impacts more effectively. Additional time examining significant projects should also help board members gain experience judging large projects, a flaw noted by Ibanez, who claimed that the board has been overwhelmed in the review of massive projects (Ibanez interview). Through

these restrictions on project review triggers, the DDRB should become a more focused and valuable process for Fort Worth.

### **Nature of Design Guidelines/Standards**

I find the Urban Design Standards satisfactory in clarity and in depth, but the interpretation of these standards by the DDRB should be done more explicitly. Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.'s displeasure with some of the design review board's decisions has been documented in this thesis. While DFWI supports the DDRB and sees it as a critical component of the development process in the CBD, its frustration with certain design review rulings failing to match up with the Urban Design Standards indicates that the DDRB could do a better job accounting for how it arrived at its decisions. The DDRB and its staff cannot focus on responding solely to DFWI, however. Improved accounts of its decisions should be made available to the entire community.

Better description, production, and distribution of meeting minutes serve as a good opportunity for the DDRB to justify its decisions and address any potential criticism on its own terms. As there are two forms of design review meeting minutes – those that record decisions and those that describe the debate and reasoning that led to decisions – the DDRB should pursue the latter, not the former. While DDRB staff provided me with documents such as a Certificate of Appropriateness form, copies of application staff reports and meeting agendas, I did not receive any meeting minutes, nor have I located any online. The meeting minutes exist – each agenda lists the approval of the previous meeting's minutes as a duty of the board – but this lack of easy access indicates that they are probably the first form of meeting minutes - simplistic and lacking substance, which would not be a surprise given the high number of projects reviewed by the board. Yet with revised project review triggers, the in-depth publication of fewer decisions should be possible. The DDRB with the help of staff should record both its decisions and its

justifications for making them, then make them available for public access. These reports need not be extensive opinion a la the Supreme Court, of course, but they should reveal the thought process of the board and address any issues of contention in the board's interpretation of the Urban Design Standards. Although I perceive the standards as easily understood and comprehensive, continued disagreement on the part of DFWI with the decisions of the DDRB indicate that discussion of the standards and their intentions should take place. Greater openness by the DDRB in detailing its rulings should signify whether this problem exists in the DDRB's limited communication of its interpretations to the community or in the DDRB's interpretations themselves.

These suggested modifications should help Fort Worth maintain robust design review over the long term. The process is strong right now, but changes that would improve the credibility of the board, instill greater consistency in staff's use of information, revise project review triggers to allow for fewer reviews, and justify DDRB rulings more clearly should make the process more efficient down the line. Such alternations would reduce current flaws in the DDRB that could become problematic in the future as development in Fort Worth's CBD intensifies.

### **Dallas: Short Term**

I do not expect a design review board comprised of design-skilled individuals to play any role in the oversight of downtown's public realm in the near future. Urban design is becoming a more important issue on the level of Dallas' local government, as indicated by former councilwoman Veletta Forsythe Lill and former City Plan Commission chair Betty Culbreath (Forsythe Lill interview, Culbreath interview). However, the city is still in the early stages of this growing appreciation for urban design, so any dramatic steps will likely be greeted with

hostility. Theresa O'Donnell's comment on this gradual shift from an economic development-driven community to one that accepts oversight of urban design in the built environment signifies her belief that Dallas is not yet ready for substantive design review:

It's probably good that we kind of start off slow because people just don't like change, even if it's for the better...If we'd just kind of put the breaks on everything and said tomorrow we're having design review on absolutely everything that's getting built, we'd get killed (O'Donnell interview).

O'Donnell's intention to introduce urban design to the community step-by-step rather than by imposing a radical change demonstrates the cautiousness she considers necessary for design review to take hold one day as an effective process. Switching from little design review to a widespread process clearly would incite significant opposition. However, I think O'Donnell's point was focused less on the potential that Dallas might adopt Fort Worth's approach to design review and more on communicating how far Dallas needs to go to achieve a robust process.

While the urban design element of the comprehensive plan displays Dallas' increased interest in urban design, both Betsy del Monte and Mark Wolf point out that the impetus for the creation of a design review board still does not exist in Dallas (del Monte interview, Wolf interview). This lack of political and design-centered energy, combined with the progress of the comprehensive plan's urban design element, suggests to me a short term scenario in which gradually intensifying interest in urban design could lead to increased design review by the UDAC of the City Plan Commission. The current UDAC only possesses a small design review role, but an expected rise in the esteem for urban design within the city should result in the UDAC receiving added responsibilities. This UDAC might not be an independent body like the DDRB, but it would represent tangible progress and could help make urban design more relevant in Dallas in the future.

## **Authority of the Board**

Originally limited to the evaluation of sky bridges' impacts on the built environment, the UDAC of the City Plan Commission has gained increased responsibilities, but these duties will continue to serve in an advisory capacity and are not focused only on the central business district. Additional responsibilities, such as consultative input on code amendments to the comprehensive plan, give the UDAC a greater role than it has held in quite some time. Based on new CPC chair Bob Weiss' interest in learning more about the UDAC, which had not met during his tenure, I would think that he is a key individual behind its involvement in the implementation of forwardDallas!, and I expect that he would push for the body to become involved in other urban design issues within the realm of the CPC's influence. However, with the City Plan Commission functioning as a city-wide board, the UDAC's higher profile does not necessarily mean that it will contribute more to the oversight of urban design in the downtown area. It could, but the determination of its responsibilities lies with the City Plan Commission and the city council members that supervise its work.

I see the UDAC continuing as a sub-committee of the CPC, and I do not envision any enhancement to its negligible authority in the near future. Realistically, the UDAC's input on urban design matters will grow over time, but I believe that its design review role will remain limited to sky bridges, the evaluation of the comprehensive plan's urban design standards, and assessments of issues occasionally brought before it, such as the code amendments. Regular review of downtown projects' potential design impacts on the public realm of the CBD remains unlikely. Knowing the slow rate of change through which the city intends to make urban design a more prominent issue, I would not anticipate an increase in the authority of the UDAC for some time.

## **Credibility of the Board**

The likely continuation of the Urban Design Advisory Committee as a sub-committee of the City Plan Commission indicates that questions will linger about the qualifications of members to evaluate urban design issues for the community and for downtown in particular. Instead of a new downtown-focused UDAC that would rely on individuals with urban design expertise, the UDAC I expect to carry on in the near future will consist of City Plan Commissioners and will weigh in on city-wide issues. The CPC does not mandate design experience, so there is no assurance that UDAC members will possess any urban design skills that could help them assess projects in their advisory capacity. Furthermore, as a Dallas commission with fifteen members, one from each council district and one appointed by the mayor, the UDAC, currently comprised of seven of these fifteen members, might not even have any downtown district representatives on the committee when issues related to downtown development come up (forwardDallas! Implementation: Code Amendments and Area Plans).

These drawbacks of potential design inexperience and lack of familiarity with downtown will cause the UDAC to be a less credible body in making decisions related to downtown projects, even as it gains a greater role in advising the CPC and the city council. Coupled with a type of appointment process that is looked upon disapprovingly by Bender and Bressi, these deficits can only affect the credibility of the board in a negative way when it renders decisions. Urban design appears to be becoming a more important issue in Dallas, and the possibility that substantive design review might take place down the line is real. However, the UDAC could do more harm than good because the CPC and city council will rely on its unqualified, though well-meaning, advice and in turn make choices that could be detrimental to the quality of urban design in the public realm. These poor decisions, then, could turn people off to oversight of

urban design in Dallas and prevent design review from developing into an integral community process.

### **Role of Board Staff**

The growing emphasis on urban design in Dallas should result in the hiring of additional staff with design expertise, but their ability to affect design review in a positive manner will be restricted by the limited responsibilities given to the UDAC. The employment of extra staff will add members to the personnel supporting the UDAC of the City Plan Commission. Their primary duty will likely be to educate UDAC members on urban design issues. Theresa O'Donnell, former councilman Willie Cothrum, City Plan Commissioner Neil Emmons and architect Mark Wolf all mentioned the importance of staff serving in an educational capacity to CPC members, and I expect an increase in the role of the UDAC will require that the new staff tutor the UDAC-affiliated Commissioners to enhance their competencies in decision-making related to urban design (O'Donnell interview, Cothrum interview, Emmons interview, Wolf interview). Although no staff member in Dallas will likely play the more formalized role in design review that David Carlson does in Boston, the personnel assisting the UDAC could help the body become a more effective, albeit limited, process than if such support did not occur.

As with staff for Fort Worth's Downtown Design Review Board, I assume that local government in Dallas would hire qualified individuals and enough of them to ensure the efficient flow of information. I am not familiar with the hiring practices of the city, but the employment of Michael Pumphrey to lead the staff of the Landmark Commission and improve its performance suggests to me that the Development Services Department will bring in an individual or individuals to join the City Plan Commission staff who will be well-qualified and prepared to facilitate communication amongst the UDAC members, staff and citizens involved in UDAC reviews. Gauging the workload of the UDAC staff remains difficult, but I do not



anticipate an overburdening of staff taking place. O'Donnell's comment that urban design will grow slowly as a city priority in order to get citizens accustomed to it suggests to me that a gradual increase in staff will be able to support the UDAC effectively (O'Donnell interview).

### **Project Review Triggers**

In the short term, I see few changes to the limited project review triggers that currently compel the UDAC to conduct design review. While the existing UDAC really has only one project review trigger – the construction of sky bridges – I believe that the body will examine the urban design of more projects across Dallas due to the urban design element of the comprehensive plan. One example project already occurring is the UDAC's participation in the assessment of code amendments in order to create new zoning tools for the city. The decision to involve the UDAC in this assessment likely originated from the city council along with the City Plan Commission, making their discretion a new trigger. Although I cannot tell whether the city council or the CPC made the decision to involve the UDAC, it would not surprise me if these two bodies, together, thought that the UDAC's input would be useful on the issue of code amendments. The continued guidance of the UDAC as a reviewer of urban design issues will depend on the desires of the council and the CPC to receive additional feedback in the future. Given the importance of the comprehensive plan within the city, the Urban Design Advisory Committee should see an increase in workload, though in a less scheduled, structured way than typically envisioned for a design review board. Additionally, the city council/City Plan Commission project review triggers will require the UDAC to conduct reviews across the city, not just in downtown, thereby probably limiting its effectiveness in downtown due to widespread review commitments.

## **Nature of Design Guidelines/Standards**

Neither the city, nor DowntownDallas, nor any other public or semi-public organization currently promotes urban design guidelines or standards for downtown Dallas. The policy plan for forwardDallas! contains a section that encourages the defining of downtown's urban character (forwardDallas! Policy Plan). The implementation measures to develop this downtown character include the formation of urban design standards that would modify the Dallas zoning and plat regulations to make development more conducive to pedestrians and transit (forwardDallas! Policy Plan). Instead of interpreting urban design guidelines and standards as they relate to certain projects, the Urban Design Advisory Committee will likely play a role in discussing how these standards might be applicable for downtown Dallas and how they could be utilized by a downtown design review board in the future. With the UDAC already taking a role in evaluating broader code amendments proposed by the comprehensive plan, it would not surprise me if the city council enlisted the UDAC's aid in drafting urban design standards for review by a larger set of stakeholders in the future. In addition, judging from the use of images and detailed descriptions of design intentions in the urban design element of the comprehensive plan, I think the UDAC, with staff support, will advance for consideration a Downtown Urban Design Standards document that will be clear and in-depth. The format of the plan's urban design element reminds me of the Downtown Fort Worth Urban Design Standards booklet that I found effective, and I would expect Dallas to maintain consistency in the content it produces when it comes forward with drafted standards for the downtown area.

## **Dallas: Long Term**

Dallas' weak design review, consisting of the limited responsibilities of the City Plan Commission's Urban Design Advisory Committee and the Landmark Committee, provides an

opportunity for the creation of a stronger form of the process that could make urban design more relevant within the community. In the more distant future, I envision the establishment of a design review board independent of the City Plan Commission and the Landmark Commission that would focus exclusively on evaluating projects' impacts on the public realm of the central business district. The process in Dallas might never become as strong as it is in Fort Worth, owing to the primary and secondary differences I have pointed out, but I believe a CBD-centered design review in Dallas could have a significant positive affect on the lives of citizens that interact within downtown and take pride in its development.

### **Authority of the Board**

Even in the best case scenario, design review will remain in an advisory capacity in Dallas. The stronger form of design review that could exist in Dallas would take on the form of Blaesser's fourth model. This model involves the legislative body of the city making the final decisions, as advised by the design review board (Blaesser in Kumar 2003, p.246-247). Under this format, a new Urban Design Advisory Committee (free of the CPC) would approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for projects with urban designs it deems acceptable for downtown Dallas, but the city council would possess final say on whether to issue the permit. Although the process would concentrate solely on oversight of projects' urban design impacts in the CBD, which consists of only two city council districts, I cannot imagine the fifteen-member city council granting substantial power to the board. The challenging political situation in Dallas, which I have described, makes it difficult for me to believe that city council members would ever approve investing an independent UDAC with the authority to advance an urban design agenda without their consent, particularly in an urban area that remains focused on economic development.

The resulting situation would clearly bring politics into the design review process in Dallas. Developers would campaign to city councilpersons to overturn UDAC rulings. While the insertion of a political element into design review could be useful, as pointed out by Rawn and demonstrated by the mayor of Boston's supervision of the Boston Civic Design Commission, I think that the bickering of Dallas' city council would quickly frustrate the process and limit its effectiveness. With the city council possessing considerable power in the city and with citizens having recently voted down a "strong mayor" form of government for Dallas, the city could not arrive at a design review in which the mayor alone would hold veto power. I would like to frame this long term scenario as optimistically as possible, but I cannot conceive of design review in Dallas that is free from the council's influence. Despite this difficulty, giving the UDAC advisory authority would still make urban design a higher priority in the city than its present position (extremely minimal as a priority). Furthermore, it could start Dallas down a road through which a downtown design review board could eventually gain the trust of a future, more constructive council and obtain greater influence over urban design in the CBD's built environment.

### **Credibility of the Board**

In a more distant future, an independent though still consultative Urban Design Advisory Committee would establish credibility through the qualifications of its members and a connection to the work of the UDAC's previous iteration, while avoiding potential complications related to the appointment process. Similar to the Landmark Commission, the UDAC would require certain levels of education and experience of candidates for membership. Knowledge required should center on architecture, architectural history, urban planning and historic preservation. Although backgrounds in real estate development, downtown business ownership, or community activism might also be useful, I do not think these credentials would benefit the

process because of the method of appointment likely to be mandated by the city council. Members of any committee or commission assembled by Dallas' city council are typically selected on a one-councilperson-appoints-one-member basis. As discussed by Bender and Bressi, this one-appoints-one approach to committee membership makes it hard to create a well-balanced representation of the community for design review and has the potential to pull the committee into councilpersons' political debates (Bender and Bressi 1989, p.35). My condition that members must possess design knowledge could diminish the well-balanced nature of the board, but failure to require design knowledge could result in a board stacked with individuals lacking urban design expertise who probably would not make the most informed decisions in assessing projects' design impacts on the built environment. The use of categories to ensure a broad mix of board members might have been an alternative for ensuring participation of individuals with wide-ranging experiences, but, again, Dallas' traditional appointment process complicates matters as one councilperson cannot be asked to appoint a real estate developer while another is compelled to appoint an architect.

The use of the "Urban Design Advisory Committee" name could also enhance the credibility of this stronger design review through the framing of the body as a reconstituted, formalized version of its past form. Architect Larry Good, former UDAC member and chair, mentioned that the committee in the past served at the pleasure of the city manager, that it did not possess authority or legal standing, and that he thought it ceased to exist due to this lack of power (Good interview). The UDAC that might exist over the long term still would not have significant authority, but it would gain legal recognition, serving as an official voice to the city council on matters of urban design in the CBD. In this official capacity, a more relevant UDAC should be able to draw a pool of interested, qualified candidates who would want to voice their opinions on development within downtown. Furthermore, by rising out of the ashes, a new

UDAC would indicate to the community that design review was becoming a more important priority to the city government and that the council was willing to listen to appointed citizens for their thoughts on downtown's urban design.

### **Role of Board Staff**

Through the reformation of the urban design section within the Development Services Department, the Urban Design Advisory Committee will gain staff that would help it perform its design review duties effectively. Despite David Dillon's view that Dallas will never again have this section in its Development Services (formerly Planning) Department, I believe that renewed interest in urban design demonstrated by the urban design element of the comprehensive plan points to the hiring of urban design-experienced staff in the future (Dillon interview). I would expect that these staff members would aid UDAC in a manner similar to the duties of Fort Worth's DDRB staff – assembling applications, reviewing projects, running meetings and work sessions, etc. Ideally, the city would be able to hire enough staff in a restored, empowered urban design section that personnel could perform their tasks to the satisfaction of UDAC members. The employment of too few staff members would burden these individuals with excessive workload that would delay the process. Additionally, the responsibilities of staff and the structure of the urban design section should be set up to achieve efficiency in the flow of information amongst the UDAC, staff and applicants. Obviously, effective information flow is easier said than done. Discontinuity of information, distortion and inconsistent use of information all would probably occur at the outset, but I expect that the city, with numerous commissions and their supporting staffs, would possess the know-how to help iron out these flaws over time.

## **Project Review Triggers**

Presently, the UDAC that is part of the City Plan Commission and the Landmark Commission both work off of limited project review triggers - sky bridge construction and new/renovated developments within historic districts, respectively – that demonstrate Dallas’ limited guidance in terms of the criteria considered appropriate for design review. Therefore, as I did with my long term scenario project review triggers for Fort Worth, I again enlisted the aid of the Boston model as guidance in my establishment of triggers for the new Urban Design Advisory Committee. Given the large downtown area of Dallas and the advisory capacity of the UDAC, modifications should be made to the Boston model to ensure the effectiveness of the triggers in Dallas, as well as their approval by the city government. The UDAC’s review triggers for downtown Dallas should include (1) new/rehabilitated structures over 100,000 square feet (a larger square footage requirement that fits with Dallas’ more pro-economic development atmosphere), (2) projects of special significance as voted on by board members, (3) civic projects, (4) any changes to guidelines/standards created for design review in the CBD, and (5) downtown projects selected by the city council. This last trigger would take into account the UDAC’s consultative status and the possibility that the city council might want to hear the opinion of the UDAC on a project that does not meet any of the first four criteria. The five criteria should collectively serve as a useful net, catching projects that could have significant impacts on the urban design of the CBD and compelling the project developers to justify their designs before the UDAC. The placement of a steady flow of projects before the UDAC and then the council, forcing councilpersons to weigh design benefits against other aspects of projects, should enhance urban design as a priority in Dallas in the future.

## **Nature of Design Guidelines/Standards**

The new Urban Design Advisory Committee should rely on certain standards and guidelines in its judgment of downtown development projects. As discussed in my short term expectations, I would expect the UDAC of the CPC to take the lead in drafting urban design standards for downtown. With an initial draft completed, I would imagine that a larger group of community stakeholders would be responsible for evaluating them and preparing them for authorization by the city council. The primary stakeholders for the vetting of the current UDAC's draft should include members of the City Plan Commission, members of AIA Dallas who work downtown or who have CBD projects, former members of the unofficial UDAC that reported to the city manager, representatives of DowntownDallas, and representatives of key real estate developers. This set of individuals would present a balanced mix of downtown interests that should be able to reach consensus on appropriate urban design principles for the central business district. I would expect that the city council would task certain staff officials, such as Development Services Director Theresa O'Donnell and other employees skilled in urban design and downtown development, to assist the stakeholders in formulating and finalizing this vision for oversight of downtown's urban design.

Additionally, draft work produced by the group should serve as the subject of several downtown charettes so that a broader base of the community might provide input on the identity the Downtown Urban Design Standards would seek to create for the CBD. Despite the city's past disregard for urban design, the recent creation of the comprehensive plan, with its urban design element, demonstrates that community members can come together with city officials to discuss issues related to urban design. The urban design element of forwardDallas! provided a good start with a brief description of potential urban design standards. Following the efforts of the UDAC of the CPC, the broader community stakeholder group would develop this element



even further, preparing the document for city approval. Following the endorsement of the city council, the new urban design standards would provide guidance to the new, independent UDAC as it performed design review around the CBD.

Given my satisfaction with the clarity and depth of the Downtown Fort Worth Urban Design Standards, I would hope that the broader set of stakeholders, like the UDAC of the CPC, would embrace this document and rely upon it as they create design standards for Dallas' CBD. Of course, the Urban Design Standards for Fort Worth focus on establishing a unique identity within Fort Worth's CBD, and the Dallas stakeholders would need to determine the nature of Dallas' downtown identity. Regardless, the clearness of purpose communicated in Fort Worth's UDS and the extent of the information and images provided should offer valuable direction to the Dallas stakeholders in the formulation of quality standards that will assist the new UDAC as it carries out its design review duties.

## **Conclusion**

Whereas Fort Worth possesses a rather robust design review that could use some refinement, Dallas lacks significant design review and has a long road ahead before a substantive process might become a reality. I can envision Fort Worth successfully modifying its process over time so that the DDRB eventually comes in line with elements of my long term proposal. However, I think it will take Dallas quite a number of years to reach the long term proposal I have envisioned, unless occurrence of a significant event that generates momentum in favor of stronger design review takes place. The motivation for dramatic change that could shake Dallas out of its limited design review and gradual emphasis on urban design would most likely come in the form of a colossal disaster project. Such a problematic project would need to affect the urban design of downtown's public realm in a significantly negative manner in order to convince the

CBD community that enhanced oversight must be implemented. Without a dramatic change, Dallas will continue to lag behind Fort Worth in the effectiveness of its design review and in the design quality of the public realm in its central business district.

## Chapter 6: Final Conclusions

Through my thesis work, I have acquired optimism for the future of design review in Fort Worth and Dallas that is a contrast to the pessimism I felt at the outset of this undertaking. When I began my research, I did not possess a feeling of hope about the potential for urban design oversight in North Texas because I expected that design review would not have much strength in either city. This pessimism originated from my expectations about the pro-business attitudes present in each city and my lack of familiarity with design review in my development work around the region. My deeper exploration showed me that the process exists in both cities, though it is much more robust in Fort Worth than in Dallas, an imbalance that kindled my curiosity and pushed me to determine why.

Based on my assessment of seven rival explanations, I have concluded that three serve as the primary ones. First, the Bass family, in its influence over Fort Worth's smaller CBD, has played a critical role in the formation of a robust design review process in the city's central business district. Powerful Dallas developers, on the other hand, have not coalesced to promote improved urban design quality in Dallas' larger central business district. Notably, the powerful advocacy of the Bass brothers in pushing for urban design oversight in downtown Fort Worth is a surprising factor, one I had not anticipated and one that turned out to be extremely important. If the Bass family ever chooses to divest itself from its property investments in downtown Fort Worth, such a move could have interesting ramifications on the strength of design review in the city. Second, the urban form of Fort Worth's CBD keeps activity on the street and encourages individuals to remain more conscious about the downtown area's urban design. In contrast, urban renewal in Dallas has thrust downtown pedestrian movement into skybridges and underground tunnels, deemphasizing urban design as an important factor in the composition of

downtown and making design review less of a priority to the citizenry. Third, Fort Worth's fear of a disaster project detrimentally altering the urban design of the CBD compelled the community to establish urban design principles and the DDRB. Dallas' city leadership, however, has not recognized urban design as an important issue and has paid little attention to the impacts of projects on downtown's public realm. Additionally, although elected local officials and city staffs are not primary causes for the disparity in design review, their actions have helped make the process more palatable in Fort Worth and have limited its advancement in Dallas. The source of my positive viewpoint is my creation of the short term/long term proposals for each city. While the short term proposal provides realistic assessments of slow-changing processes that hinder enhanced efficiency, the long term scenarios offer optimistic possibilities for improving the effectiveness of design review; I think that both communities can start down paths that would lead them towards the hopeful long term visions.

Both cities could make the jump from the short term proposals I have forecast towards the long term proposals I imagined, although it will surely take Dallas longer than Fort Worth to make such a move. I say "towards" and not "to" because I recognize that any progress will take time and exact replication is unlikely. As indicated in my short term scenarios, citizens of both cities seem to be satisfied with the status quo. The Fort Worth inhabitants I interviewed appear pleased with their city's current robust approach to urban design oversight in the CBD, and Dallas residents I talked with mostly appear content with the city's incremental progress in making urban design a municipal priority. The refinement to the process that has to occur in both cities does not need to involve an immediate, jarring overhaul to their current forms of design review. The goal should be to work towards establishing a process that strikes the right balance in each for when design review intervention is appropriate. David Carlson's description

of the BCDC's use of its influence indicates his expectation for how a board should be well-utilized:

The effective use of that [design review] power, though, is in limiting its application to where it's really necessary, to effectuate changes that make something clearly better, and where you can make a clear case that it's better for the argument (Carlson interview).

Carlson points out that restricting design review to instances where the process produces definite benefits maximizes its effectiveness. True, design review by a board of citizens is ultimately subjective, and determining (1) when intervention is necessary and (2) what changes to a project's urban design generate benefits that "make something clearly better" is difficult. Finding the right fit is not easy for any city. Despite these challenges, Carlson's comment on achieving effectiveness through limited intervention that produces clear results communicates to me that the process does not need to be as extensive as it is in Fort Worth, but that it should be employed to a greater extent than it is in Dallas. A better balance between lenient and restrictive forms of design review should be pursued because a more moderate application of the process can make it more productive in both cities.

Furthermore, the process must also be explained to potential critics as one that enhances projects. This issue is not much of a problem in Fort Worth, but in Dallas advocates of design review need to encourage community leaders to perceive the process as an opportunity for a design review board to alter favorably the urban design of projects in the central business district. Presently, I think some developers see design review as an obstacle to the completion of their projects, a negative they would prefer to avoid, if possible. By taking the approach that design review would bring about clear benefits, if applied in specific circumstances, and communicating these benefits, Carlson claims that those promoting design review can obtain the support of city government and real estate developers (Carlson interview). As this support is key, I believe that reliance on design review examples of other urban areas – demonstrations of the civic and

financial advantages gained through the implementation of the process in cities across the United States – should help advocates convince skeptics in Dallas about the merits of the process.

Understanding (1) the need for better balance of design review intervention to make it more effective and (2) importance of framing the process positively serve as two critical elements that will help both cities move towards optimistic visions. Community agreement on the relevance of these two issues strengthens the possibility that my subsequent recommendations will keep Fort Worth and Dallas on the path towards creating more valuable design review.

## **Recommendations**

I see this thesis as a starting point from which both cities could reexamine how design review takes place in their central business districts. I would be pleased, of course, if city council members and the directors of planning/development staffs would study my work and use it to initiate a dialogue on how to achieve better urban design in their CBDs. Ideally, I would like for them to consider my proposals and to take steps to refine the process in each city in pursuit of the long term scenarios, but I understand that I am one voice among many.

Deliberation and consideration of a number of options are the more likely courses of action. At the least, I hope that my work helps city officials understand where weaknesses in their design reviews exist, why each design review possesses the potency that it does, how I envision the processes becoming more effective, and how I believe the processes will develop if certain modifications do not occur.

Should conversations discussing design review in the CBDs of Fort Worth and Dallas lead to consideration of potential action, I suggest that each city employ a planning/architecture consulting firm experienced in advising on public policy matters to perform evaluations of the

processes. These consultants should provide fresh, unbiased opinions that help illuminate design review flaws and present strategies aimed at achieving improvement over the long term. As outsiders, these advisors should be free from any infighting of city politicians and any expectations that they must follow past precedents in their recommendations.

Both cities are familiar with the use of consultants to explore planning-related opportunities, so reluctance to bring in new parties should not be an issue. Fort Worth relied on Gideon Toal for assistance with the creation of its urban design guidelines. Dallas recently retained John Fregonese of Fregonese Calthorpe Associates for assistance in the production of forwardDallas!. While Gideon Toal is too close to Fort Worth's development of design review to be considered a candidate to conduct an analysis of the process, a firm with more of a national reputation and experience with design review should serve as a suitable advisor. A good example of the type of individual/firm either city might want to hire would be Joan Goody of the architecture/planning/preservation firm Goody Clancy. Ms. Goody recently stepped down from the Boston Civic Design Commission, which she had chaired since 1993. She would be able to provide valuable insight into the process as it is applied in Boston and other communities, and how it might function more effectively in Fort Worth and Dallas. The employment of a well-known, experienced planning/design firm as a consultant could be somewhat costly, but the comprehensive analysis supplied by a talented, respected organization should result in constructive guidance that leads to the city's central business district becoming a more hospitable built environment for those that use it.

## **A Broader View**

In addition to my hope that my thesis will act as a starting point for Fort Worth and Dallas to improve design review in their central business districts, I want my work to encourage

others to take closer looks at design review in the cities they enjoy. How robust is design review in Seattle? Why does it possess a certain strength? What are the weaknesses of the process in Phoenix, and what are the origins of these weaknesses? How might design review be improved Denver? How does the process differ in Austin and Boston? I hope that my exploration of the process in two of Texas' largest cities can serve as a template for how to search for answers to these questions. On top of this interest, I wish for my thesis to persuade readers to pay greater attention to the quality of the urban design in their cities' central business districts. Despite the prevalence of urban sprawl, CBDs remain the business cores of communities. As consistent commercial drivers that have begun to experience renewed focus on 24/7 activity downtown, these central business districts should be the subject of an increased conversation in the future about how to make their built environments more amenable to the people that use them and more distinct as places that citizens can take pride in as identifiable, well-designed assets of their communities.



## Bibliography

- Abernathy, Ann. Personal interview. 22 January 2007.
- Bender, Richard and Todd Bressi. "Design Review: A Review of Processes, Procedures, and Potential." Center for Environmental Design Research, University of California, Berkeley, March 1989, 1-69.
- Boecker, William. Personal interview. 24 January 2007.
- Boston Redevelopment Authority (Massachusetts). Boston Civic Design Commission. November 2006 <<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/BCDC/bcdc.asp>>.
- Burghdoff, Dana. Personal interview. 24 January 2007.
- Carlson, David. Personal interview. 19 January 2007.
- "Comback City: Downtown Dallas is poised to rebound." Editorial. *The Dallas Morning News* 7 March 1993.
- Cossum, David. Personal interview. 22 January 2007.
- Costa, Fernando. Personal interview. 24 January 2007.
- Cothrum, William E. Personal interview. 26 January 2007.
- Culbreath, Betty. Personal interview. 27 January 2007.
- "Dallas city, Texas – Fact Sheet." American FactFinder. 2005. Bureau of the Census. March 2007  
<[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo\\_id=16000US4819000&\\_geoContext=01000US&\\_street=&\\_county=dallas&\\_cityTown=dallas&\\_state=04000US48&\\_zip=&\\_lang=en&\\_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=geoSelect&\\_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&\\_submenuId=factsheet\\_1&ds\\_name=ACS\\_2005\\_SAFF&\\_ci\\_nbr=null&q\\_r\\_name=null&reg=null%3Anull&\\_keyword=&\\_industry=>](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo_id=16000US4819000&_geoContext=01000US&_street=&_county=dallas&_cityTown=dallas&_state=04000US48&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=geoSelect&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=ACS_2005_SAFF&_ci_nbr=null&q_r_name=null&reg=null%3Anull&_keyword=&_industry=>)>.
- Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Underground Tunnel and Sky Bridge System." April 2007 <<http://www.dallascvb.com/visitors/listing.details.php?id=517>>.
- Dallas Development Services Department (Texas). Certificate of Appropriateness (for Landmark Commission). January 2007.
- Dallas Development Services Department (Texas). City Designated Landmark Districts. November 2006 <[http://www.dallascityhall.com/historic/html/landmark\\_districts.html](http://www.dallascityhall.com/historic/html/landmark_districts.html)>.
- Dallas Development Services Department (Texas). City Plan Commission. November 2006 <[http://www.dallascityhall.com/development\\_services/plan\\_commission.html](http://www.dallascityhall.com/development_services/plan_commission.html)>.

Dallas Development Services Department (Texas). Landmark Commission. November 2006  
< [http://www.dallascityhall.com/historic/html/landmark\\_commission.html](http://www.dallascityhall.com/historic/html/landmark_commission.html)>.

Dallas Office of the City Secretary (Texas). Boards and Commissions – Descriptions of Boards:  
City Plan Commission, 7 of 50. March 2007 <<http://www.ci.dallas.tx.us/cso/pdf/Bds-descript.pdf>>.

Dallas Office of the City Secretary (Texas). Boards and Commissions – Descriptions of Boards:  
Landmark Commission, 24 of 50. March 2007 <<http://www.ci.dallas.tx.us/cso/pdf/Bds-descript.pdf>>.

Dallas Zoning Regulations (Texas). Accessory Pedestrian Skybridges. February 2007  
< [http://www.dallascityhall.com/zoning/html/accessory\\_-\\_pedestrian\\_skybrid.html](http://www.dallascityhall.com/zoning/html/accessory_-_pedestrian_skybrid.html)>.

del Monte, Betsy. Personal interview. 24 January 2007.

Dillon, David. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.

Doty, Mark. Personal interview. 22 January 2007.

DowntownDallas (Downtown Dallas' Public Improvement District). February 2007  
< <http://www.downtowndallas.org/index.asp>>.

Emmons, Neil. Personal interview. 25 January 2007.

Fender, Ames. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.

*Forbes*. "The Billionaire Rankings: United States." 26 March 2007, Volume 179, No. 6. 154-168.

Forsythe Lill, Veletta. Personal interview. 25 January 2007.

"Fort Worth city, Texas – Fact Sheet." American FactFinder. 2005. Bureau of the Census.  
March 2007

<[Fort Worth Department of Planning and Development \(Texas\). Downtown Design Review Board \(DDRB\).  
November 2006 <\[http://www.fortworthgov.org/?id=12540&terms=downtown design review board&searchtype=1&fragment=False\]\(http://www.fortworthgov.org/?id=12540&terms=downtown%20design%20review%20board&searchtype=1&fragment=False\)>.](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=16000US4819000&_geoContext=01000US%7C04000US48%7C16000US4819000&_street=&_county=fort+worth&_cityTown=fort+worth&_state=04000US48&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=geoSelect&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=160&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=ACS_2005_SAFF&_ci_nbr=null&qr_name=null&reg=null%3Anull&_keyword=&_industry=></a>>.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Fort Worth Department of Planning and Development (Texas). Downtown Design Review Board – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. January 2007.

Fort Worth Department of Planning and Development (Texas). Downtown Urban Design District Standards and Guidelines. December 2006  
< <http://www.fortworthgov.org/PlanningandDevelopment/info/default.aspx?id=17890>>.

Fort Worth Public Improvement District #1 (Downtown Fort Worth Inc.). About Us: DFWI Members. January 2007. <<http://www.dfw.org/>>.

Fort Worth Public Improvement District #1 (Downtown Fort Worth Inc.). *Shaping a Great City: Downtown Fort Worth Urban Design Standards*. January 2007.

forwardDallas! Implementation: Code Amendments and Area Plans. Quality of Life Committee Briefing, 26 February 2007. March 2007  
<[http://www.dallascityhall.com/committee\\_briefings/briefings0207/QOL\\_022607\\_ForwardDallas.pdf](http://www.dallascityhall.com/committee_briefings/briefings0207/QOL_022607_ForwardDallas.pdf)>.

forwardDallas! Implementation Plan: Action Plans – Development Code Amendments 14 June 2006. February 2007 < <http://www.forwarddallas.org/files/up/20060830/DevCode.pdf>>.

forwardDallas! Policy Plan Introduction 14 June 2006. February 2007  
< <http://www.forwarddallas.org/files/up/20060830/PolicyPlanIntroduction.pdf>>.

forwardDallas! Urban Design Element 14 June 2006. February 2007  
< <http://www.forwarddallas.org/files/up/20060830/UrbanDesign.pdf>>.

Great Britain Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Bartlett School of Planning, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Great Britain Commission for Architecture and Built Environment, Matthew Carmona. *The Value of Urban Design: A Research Project Commissioned by CABE and DETR to Examine the Value Added by Good Urban Design*. London: Thomas Telford, Ltd., 2001. May 2007  
<<http://www.cabe.org.uk/AssetLibrary/2327.pdf>>.

Good, Larry. Personal interview. 26 January 2007.

Habe, Reiko et al. *Design Guidelines and Community Character Compatibility*. University of Southern California School of Urban and Regional Planning, Los Angeles, 1988.

Hariri, Vida. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.

Healy, Patrick O’Gilfoil. “Rethinking Skyways and Tunnels.” *The New York Times* 3 August 2005. April 2007  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/03/realestate/03tunnel.html?pagewanted=1&ei=5088&en=9770c1a1365bc853&ex=1280721600&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>>.

Henry, Dustin. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.

- Hicks, Victoria Loe. "Agency folding, but not its vision: From Trinity to downtown, Dallas Plan has forged blueprint for city's future." *The Dallas Morning News* 26 October 2003. April 2007 *The Dallas Morning News Archives*.
- Ibanez, Greg. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.
- Kallenberg, Gregory. "Commercial Property/Downtown Fort Worth; Where Restoration and Building is a Family Affair." *The New York Times* 19 May 1996. April 2007 <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C04E3D81339F93AA25756C0A960958260>>.
- Kumar, Sandeep. "Information in Design Review," *Planning, Practice & Research*, Vol. 18, No. 4, November 2003, 243-263. December 2006 <[http://www.ryerson.ca/surp/content/faculty\\_administration/biographies/faculty/kumar/PR-published-paper.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/surp/content/faculty_administration/biographies/faculty/kumar/PR-published-paper.pdf)>.
- Lightner, Brenda. "Setting the State for Debate," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Design Review*, University of Cincinnati, October 1992, 1-10.
- Nasar, Jack L. and Peg Grannis. "Design Review Reviewed: Administrative versus Discretionary Methods," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 65, No. 4, Autumn 1999, 424-433.
- O'Donnell, Theresa. Personal interview. 22 January 2007.
- Payne, Darwin. *Dynamic Dallas: An Illustrated History*. Carlsbad, California, Heritage Media Corporation, 2003.
- Petrus, Elaine. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.
- Pumphrey, Michael. Personal interview. 22 January 2007.
- Rawn III, William L. "The Boston Federal Courthouse: The Role of the Boston Civic Design Commission," *Federal Buildings in Context: The Role of Design Review* (J. Carter Brown (ed.)), Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1995, 95-104.
- Sanders, Leah. "Building Up in Downtown." *Texas Real Estate Business* June 2006. April 2007 <<http://www.texasrebusiness.com/articles/JUN06/cover2.html>>.
- Schuster, J. Mark. "The Role of Design Review in Affecting the Quality of Urban Design: The Architect's Point of View," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Autumn 1997, 209-224.
- Simnacher, Joe. "FW philanthropist Perry Richardson Bass dies." *The Dallas Morning News* 2 June 2006. April 2007 <<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/city/fortworth/stories/060206dnmetbass.43dd5835.html>>.

Taft, Andy. Personal interview. 26 January 2007.

Toal, James. Personal interview. 23 January 2007.

Weiss, Bob. Personal interview. 22 January 2007.

Wolf, Mark. Personal interview. 25 January 2007.

Yale University. "About Yale | University leadership: Edward P. Bass '67 ('68 B.S.)." April 2007 <<http://www.yale.edu/about/bass.html>>.