

Heritage Crossing Update: Jan. 30, 2012

During a special called meeting Jan. 30, the Irving City Council authorized city staff to proceed with an initiative designed to inject new energy into the Heritage Crossing development project, long considered by city leaders to be a key to the economic health of South Irving. Council members voted in favor of allowing city officials to enter into negotiation with the developer, Heritage District LLC, and with Comerica Bank to find ways to eliminate road blocks to progress. By re-engineering its 5-year-old exclusive relationship with Heritage District LLC, the city seeks to clear the way to bring in additional developers. By doing so, the city anticipates an increased pace of construction on the mix of homes, businesses and scenic open spaces envisioned for the area. Heritage District LLC's owner, Lubbock developer Delbert McDougal, was hired by the city in 2006 to prepare the Heritage Crossing area for development. City officials indicate that preparations for redevelopment are completed. Of the 85 properties that have been purchased to date, 17 tracts have been established and are ready for development. A tax increment finance district has been created along Irving Boulevard to fund infrastructure improvement. In addition, design guidelines and land-use restrictions have been adopted and a vision has been created for the area. Thus far, actual construction in Heritage Crossing has been hindered by the lingering recession, which created one of the worst development climates in decades. Heritage Crossing, the 640-acre area bounded by West Pioneer Drive, Britain Road, Shady Grove Road and MacArthur Boulevard, is considered the key to revitalizing Irving's historic Heritage District and to jump-starting economic development throughout South Irving. Signs of change abound in the downtown/Heritage Crossing area. Trees have been planted along Irving Boulevard, utility lines have been placed underground and dozens of new solar-powered streetlights have been erected. Since 2006, eight businesses have been redeveloped and 19 new businesses have been attracted to the area. Meanwhile, six dilapidated and crime-plagued apartment complexes were demolished and the land has been prepared for development. Crime has been reduced 35 percent in the area. The city is pursuing a negotiated route to resolve its relationship with Heritage District LLC in order to avoid the potential of costly—and time-consuming—litigation. Rather than have the land now held by the developer become tied up in a lawsuit, the city wants to pursue development initiatives according to its timetable.