

1990s Fredericksburg Road Economic Development Project

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

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The revitalization of this section of the DECO DISTRICT ON FREDERICKSBURG ROAD, was first conceptualized in 1988 by the Jefferson and Monticello Park Neighborhood Associations, led by presidents Jane Gaitan and Hector Cárdenas. Councilwoman Yolanda Vera was petitioned to help in seeking alternative sources to augment the city-funded Fredericksburg Road drainage project being managed by Eloy Rosales of Public Works. After 1 1/2 years of grant writing and lobbying on the regional and national level, the City of San Antonio was awarded \$1.3 million from the Economic Development Administration (EDA). This project became a first for San Antonio - a partnership with the neighborhood associations, federal, state and city governments, VIA Metropolitan Transit Service, City Public Utility Service, SW Bell Telephone, Fine Arts Commission, Historic Review Board, Planning Department, Public Works Department, Economic Development Department, area businesses and most importantly, neighborhood residents.

Councilmen Bob Ross and Roger Flores have gladly committed their support, providing assistance to the project and in setting up the local business organization. After almost eight years preparation, actual construction has taken approximately sixteen months. Aesthetic elements were designed "pro bono" by local architect Dan Medley. Dan interpreted community ideas, developer George Geis' concepts and Hector Cardenas' sketches of a stone bus shelter into a thematic display of stone work and landscaping typical of the area's rich history. Hector and George then photographed the area for submittal to the EDA.

The neighborhood design team attended over one hundred meetings and initiated hundreds of phone conversations with contractors, suppliers, business owners, city staff, city liaison members, VIA and CPS during planning, design and construction. These efforts along with the emergence of the newly formed DECO DISTRICT ON FREDERICKSBURG ROAD Business Alliance have resulted in a true community project seen as a pilot and model for others. The Fredericksburg Road Economic Development Project, one of the most inclusive, thoughtfully planned works in San Antonio history, is an enhancement of the Greater Jefferson Neighborhood Plan, one of the first neighborhood plans officially approved by City Council and the Jefferson Economic Analysis, completed in 1989 by consultants and neighborhood volunteers.

The Fredericksburg Road Project has been the subject of many articles over the past eight years, including stories by Kathleen Martin of the *Current*, Pat Konstam of the *Express News*, and resident journalist, Mike Greenberg, whose honest in-your-face commentary encouraged neighborhood members to diligently persevere when bureaucratic obstacles were unyielding. His comment "the time is past due to turn our attention from mere preservation of the past to the creation of a present worth preserving in the future" expresses the intent of the revitalization planners. The team did not get all it sought - there are still too many above-ground utilities and wooden poles and not enough stone bus shelters - but it accomplished an outstanding result most thought improbable; and developed a format for future projects that many other neighborhood associations are hurrying to use. The revitalization of the DECO DISTRICT ON FREDERICKSBURG ROAD, officially celebrated November 9, 1996, is a tremendous success.