

Join us as we dispel myths, shed light on city's divide

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- Column: KEVEN ANN WILLEY

Dear Readers:

No matter what part of the Dallas area you live in, it's important that the city, the region's epicenter, be strong and prosperous. With the northern part of the city reaching build-out, this increasingly means tapping into southern Dallas' reserves of undeveloped land and unrealized economic opportunity.

Did you know that the part of Dallas that's south of I-30 or the Trinity River makes up almost half of the city's land mass but accounts for less than a fifth of its property value? Or that 41 percent of the city's population lives in the south, but only 14 percent of Dallas' bank branches and 20 percent of its restaurants are there?

Southern Dallas has suffered from generations of neglect; the divided city has institutionalized economic injustice and done a disservice to residents. So why should residents elsewhere care? Because persuading our leaders - from north and south - to invest in southern Dallas today offers the opportunity to right past wrongs and to equalize tax burdens by more fully developing the hundreds of thousands of acres of vacant or underutilized land in our city's southern half.

That's why The Dallas Morning News is plowing ahead in its 2-year-old Bridging Dallas' North-South Gap project. I hope you will pick up a copy of The News on Sunday and check out our special expanded Points section, where we reveal new data clarifying the nature and dimensions of the opportunities ahead. And don't miss the interactive maps and six virtual "helicopter tours" of the area that we've built specially with you, the reader, in mind.

Southern Dallas is an area the size of Atlanta, but you can tour it all online in just a few minutes.

What makes this package unusual is the depth of the research. The editorial board's project team, directed by Deputy Editorial Page Editor Sharon Grigsby, partnered with the Institute for Urban Policy Research at the University of Texas-Dallas to cull federal, state and local databases to quantify north-south disparity. The data dispel certain myths (crime really isn't higher in southern Dallas than in the north, for example) while confirming other differences, such as income, education, work commutes - even grocery store accessibility.

If you're into numbers, here's just one example from the Points section: A 3,400-square-foot building and land in a troubled area in Grand South Dallas is appraised at \$82,500 and pays \$2,069 in taxes. But a piece of property half that size in more orderly Oak Lawn is appraised at \$409,500 and contributes \$10,269 in taxes.

Our goal with this project is to refocus the attention of City Council members, Dallas ISD trustees, business and religious leaders, and interested citizens from across the region on finding strategies to bridge the gap. Making southern Dallas an area where people want to live, work and play will benefit residents from Denton to Duncanville.

So check out the Points section in Sunday's Dallas Morning News. Take the tours, access interactive maps and find other useful information by visiting our Web site: dallasnews.com/opinion/northsouth. And tell us what you think.

Keven Ann Willey

Vice President and Editorial Page Editor

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