

How Deep Ellum Got It Right

February 13, 2017 | Julia Bunch, Bisnow Dallas/Fort Worth



Facebook



Twitter



LinkedIn



Email



Print



Bisnow: Julia Bunch

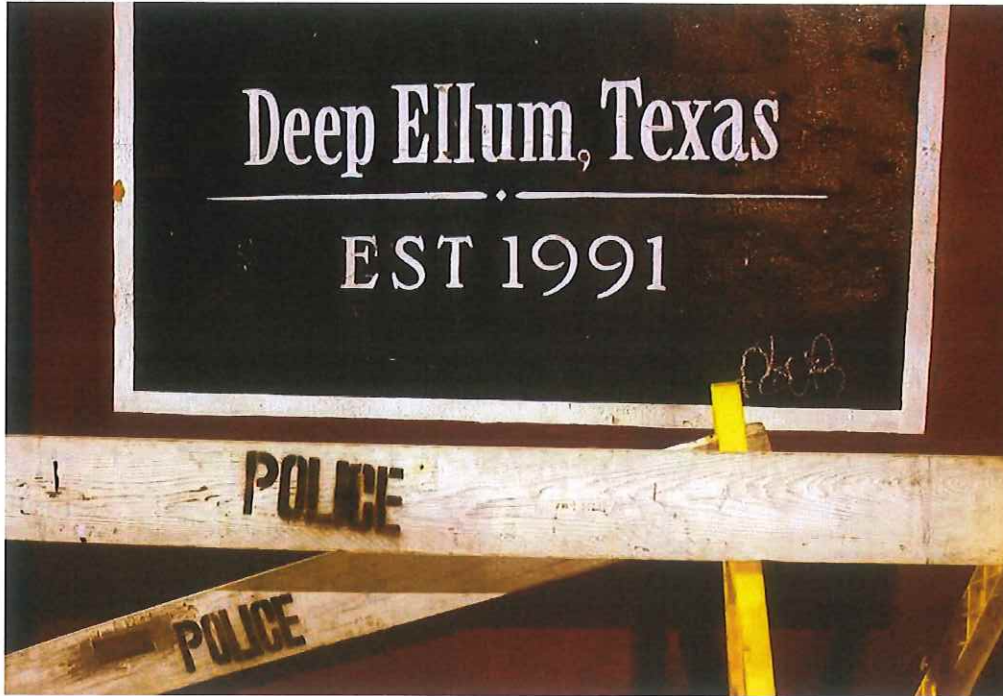
Deep Ellum has quickly become the measurement for successful neighborhood redevelopment in Dallas, but for a neighborhood that has always been intimately tied to art and innovation, bringing it into the 21st century was no easy feat.

Scott Rohrman said his company, 42 Real Estate, **did everything right** in terms of Deep Ellum's real estate — it just did it in an atypical order. First, Rohrman learned about the neighborhood, then he bought some properties and later decided what to do with them.

Over the last five years or so, Deep Ellum has gone from about a hundred owners and landlords to four — 42 Real Estate, Westdale, Madison Partners and, most recently, Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas.

But neighborhood changes were not all relative to real estate. Over the last couple of years, the Deep Ellum Foundation has given residents and business owners a

mouthpiece to voice mobility desires, advocate for more public spaces and solve neighborhood issues.



Terry Shuck/Flickr

Rohrman has worked to keep the neighborhood accessible, not elite. When he saw that some of his parking lot operators were surcharging weekend parking up to \$25, he mandated that prices stay \$2 on weekdays and \$5 on weekends, regardless of events or holidays.

The talk of the neighborhood being over-served (literally) with restaurants does not much concern Rohrman. In terms of patronage to existing restaurants, the neighborhood is fine, he said. But he's hyperaware that all restaurants should be able to offer something different in the existing market. He has had strong interest from concepts like pizza parlors willing to pay double the asking rent, but he will not lease to a duplicate concept. Only two of 42 Real Estate's remaining vacancies could be restaurants.

With the forthcoming D2 subway and the uncertain fate of I-345, the Deep Ellum Foundation has a lot of work to do to mobilize the voice of the neighborhood. After the city voted to fund both D2 and the Cotton Belt rail line last fall, Burnham said the battle is won, but the war to make a better neighborhood is not yet over.



Flickr/Terry Shuck

Deep Ellum has a strong attitude of helping each other out, Deep Ellum Foundation executive director Jessica Burnham said at **ULI North Texas**' Deep Ellum Revival breakfast forum last week. Burnham said it is important to note that the neighborhood already had a personality with events like the Invasion Car Show and the annual Deep Ellum Arts Festival.

Rohrman has worked to keep that personality intact by leasing to the right types of businesses. His Deep Ellum portfolio is only 50% leased, but that doesn't worry him. "We could have filled it two times over, but we're curating the space with a vision to make it happen organically," he said.

The impact of Baylor's more than 10,000 daily workers just a couple of blocks from the neighborhood cannot be ignored. The hospital system is exploring ways for its free and public Baylor Shuttle Bus to make strategic stops within Deep Ellum, Baylor Scott & White campus planner Charles Shelburne said. Parking is the top issue for Baylor employees spending more time in the neighborhood, and Baylor is trying to mitigate that with public transit.

Now that Baylor's joint venture with the American Cancer Society, called Hope Lodge, has a more concrete future in the neighborhood, Baylor's interest in the area has grown.