

A Place to Build a Dream On

When you visit the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) Metroplex and take a good look around, a curious thought hits you – there is seemingly no good reason for why this place could have possibly come to be.

There are no oceans, no lakes, no ol' man rivers, no significant waterways of any source once required to harbor a major city in viable economic, social, and political status. There are no mountains, no peaks, no valleys, no geography of any sort to beautify the mundane order of man-made life. But where it is scarce is the source of its strength. Creation does not emerge from abundance.

DFW is not often thought of as a great plain, but it is within the Great Plains proper. What began as a little house on the prairie is today the fourth most populous metropolitan area in the United States. If existing migration patterns continue, it will eclipse Chicagoland for third position inside of ten years. It's insulated from the economic booms and busts prone to elsewhere in Texas, currently home to 24 Fortune 500 and 43 Fortune 1000 companies spanning a variety of industry.

Texans move out, not up, to the environs of major city centers. The northern suburbs of DFW creep closer to the Oklahoma border every day. The mid cities laying in the 35-mile expanse between Dallas and Fort Worth have no more land to develop. There is no longer any indication of where Dallas ends, and Fort Worth begins.

Dallas is not Fort Worth, and Fort Worth, the 13th most populous U.S. city on its own, is certainly not Dallas. While the citizenry of the two megalopolises fiercely cling to their own unique senses and sensibilities, they often blend into one monolith when counting demographics. We will do the same in this article.



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The 30th Annual ALSD Conference and Tradeshow is headed to Dallas AND Fort Worth in 2020. A lot has changed in the ten years since the ALSD last hosted an event in DFW. Construction in the Metroplex has outpaced almost everywhere else in the known universe in that time. What's new? Art museums. Opera houses. Corporate headquarters. Apartment buildings. Highways built literally on top of highways.

In terms of sports and entertainment construction, we are delighted to showcase the brand-new Dickies Arena in Fort Worth and the \$1.2 billion Globe Life Field in Arlington, with more exciting venue announcements on the way. DFW is a place of our industry's time, a place where latest and greatest resides, and a place you have to visit to understand how it all connects.

Dallas is more than the place Kennedy was shot. Fort Worth is rich beyond the setting for a Will Rogers story. But the question still remains – how did this place get here? And what the heck does any of this have to do with sports?

THE ROAD

When I moved to DFW a decade ago, there was no why, only a why not. But that sort of Millennial motivation for mobility is a recent American phenomenon. Through the Civil War, most Americans remained in cities or farms fastened to the edge of the continent. Not the

frontier. Not the wilderness. The American West started as vast nothingness sprinkled with log cabins without neighbors. When one left the east, it was always with a reason, mostly to run away, but at times to run towards.

German and Irish settlers, immigrants of all eastern European varieties, the poor, the bruised, the left behind, the never was, wanted criminals all trafficked the early

PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY JARED FRANK

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interior trails. The stories passed down of wagons covered in bravery chasing sunsets are more romantic mythology than historical fact. The truth is at the time of their departures, our heroes were considered a rotten batch of deadbeats.

But the road changes a man and his story. He stumbles upon a new point of view. It changes a woman. She assumes a new role. It changes a child who becomes something other than the elders.

These deadbeats forded the Red River not as Germans or Irishmen, not as discarded or lost souls, but as Texans. The idea of Texas is beloved within its borders, mocked almost everywhere else. And surely, it is a place with ancient warts aplenty, but by picking up these breadcrumbs of history, the people of this place and what they did with it, even if it's not your tin cup of whiskey, at least makes sense.

THE ECONOMICS

Despite being a flat place on the periphery of civilization, the formations of Dallas and Fort Worth were not random despite the stories told by their native sons. Fort Worth was where the west began and remains an epicenter for stock shows and rodeos. Dallas was a natural outpost on the outer rim of the cotton fields of East Texas that spilled into much of the Old South. Both fell on established trails and trade routes, the nation's first interstate highway system, full of buyers and sellers, cattle to ferry and cow pokes to ferry them.

Like all towns dotting the maps of westward expansion, the arrival of the railroad catalyzed its fortunes. Dallas became the market center of the post-Civil War cotton boom, the place its crop was warehoused and shipped boxcar after boxcar to the manufacturing mills. Disciples of mercantilism sharpened their pencils. The brokers, the bankers, and the lenders all saw their coin multiply.

These high priests of the cotton trade weren't trusted by old money back east. They weren't sophisticated in the eyes of coastal cosmopolitans. And they were considered

swindlers in the minds of the rugged explorers who didn't stop their westward exploration in DFW. It's always been a place that stands alone, at times, not solely by choice.

THE ESSENTIALS

To this day, the anthem of DFW is written in the ink of optimism. A refrain of construction cranes ever-blooms above the fruited plain. Its people wake every morning on the right side of the bed, expecting good things to happen to them because they will make them happen for themselves. They live embedded in the bright side, when kissed by the sun, when flayed by the sun. They are creators of destiny, living with the audacity to believe they matter in a universe that tells us no one does.

This mindset originates from that first band of pilgrims with enough desperation to look west and enough mettle to pick up for them. They left not knowing what that "what" was or where "out there" would be, but they went anyway. And for the first time in their lives, it would be the forces of nature, not other men, that determined their fates.

When the wind rushes down the leeward side of the Rocky Mountains set free upon the continent's plain, there are no barriers left to break it from spinning unmercifully upon the amber waves of grain and homes speckled among the sprawling flatlands. But on front porches, the resolute people of DFW stare at the horizon line with unbending optimism and watch the storm (we literally do) should one approach.

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THE REASON

DFW is an American anomaly. It's not the South. It's not really the West. It was a new kind of settlement in the center of everything in the middle of nowhere. Like all new societies, it was not burdened by the legacy weight of existing mores. The cowboys were independent from any social or political assembly. Their horses made do with a drink from the meager Trinity River. The entrepreneurs, eyes closed by the sun, kept a peeled watch for opportunities unknown. There was no good explanation for its existence except for the ambition that made it exist.

Similarly today, there aren't always obvious reasons to build a new sports stadium. The Rangers didn't have to replace Globe Life Park with Globe Life Field, the former having life left in its steel beams and concrete slabs. Fort Worth didn't have to erect its next generation of the Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum. But like their ancestors who walked the old road before there was a road to a place without any qualities distinguishing it as a feasible place, our sports and entertainment brothers and sisters in Dallas-Fort Worth dream something bigger, something better than what was before.

I invite you to read ahead to page 70 to preview the venue tours, visionary award recipient, and schedule high points coming to the 2020 ALSD Conference and Tradeshow in Dallas-Fort Worth. Additional venue tour and speaker announcements will be made when they exist. And they all will have good reasons to.

Kindly,



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