

## **Topic of the Month: Sustainable development**

March marks the onset of spring, when temperatures warm up, patios bustle, trails come alive and outdoor festivals bring food, music and fun to communities across the region.

Many of the places and activities we enjoy this time of year are the result of thoughtful infrastructure planning and long-term investment – what we call sustainable development. But sustainable development goes beyond buildings and infrastructure; it's about creating connected, walkable communities that support everyday life.

This year, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) celebrates a milestone: 25 years of regional leadership in advancing sustainable development. For our March Topic of the Month, we're reflecting on how the RTC - through the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) - has worked to align transportation and land use, helping communities grow in ways that strengthen mobility, support local economies and enhance quality of life across the Dallas–Fort Worth area.

### **A Look Back: 25 Years of NCTCOG's Sustainable Development Program**

In 2001, the Regional Transportation Council launched the Sustainable Development Funding Program to encourage growth that is better tailored to the region's long-term needs. The program was designed to support mixed-use development, revitalize historic downtowns, strengthen infill areas and maximize investments around passenger rail stations and corridors.

As the first chapter in a broader story, its launch laid the groundwork for a quarter century of sustainable growth across North Texas.

Through four funding cycles (2001, 2006, 2010, and 2018), approximately \$197 million has been awarded to local governments to help integrate transportation and land use planning. As the program marks its 25th anniversary, it stands as a testament to the power of long-term regional collaboration.

That long-term thinking has been essential in a region experiencing extraordinary growth. The Dallas–Fort Worth area grew from 5.1 million residents in 2000 to 8.6 million in 2025. By 2050, North Texas' population is set to cross the 12 million mark.

Historically, development patterns have been spread out, increasing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and placing pressure on infrastructure. As the region grows denser, aligning development with transportation options becomes even more critical to managing congestion, supporting air quality and maintaining quality of life.

Over the past 25 years, sustainable development investments have helped reshape communities across North Texas. Projects spanning east to west, from Dallas to Fort Worth – to smaller communities in between and beyond – have improved walkability, strengthened connections to transit and supported mixed-use neighborhoods.

Beyond financial support, the program offers technical guidance, regional coordination and a clear framework to help align local initiatives with broader mobility and development goals. This combination of funding and collaborative planning makes it easier for cities to implement innovative solutions that enhance mobility, strengthen local economies and improve overall quality of life for residents.

### **Transforming Communities: Standout Projects from Fort Worth to Dallas**

As the region has grown, it has faced rising congestion, increasing vehicle miles traveled and limited transportation options in areas without walkable, mixed-use development. In response, the Sustainable Development Funding Program has helped communities make better use of existing infrastructure by improving access to transit and supporting walking and bicycling.

Some of these projects include:

- On the western side of the region, Fort Worth’s **South Main Urban Village Project** stands out as a powerful example of corridor revitalization done right. Supported by program funding and guided by Near Southside, Inc., the South Main initiative added pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements that helped transform the corridor into a more walkable, mixed-use destination. The project has since attracted significant private investment, resulting in rising land values – a sign of its long-term impact.
- On the eastern side of the region, Dallas’ **Lake Highlands Multimodal Connectivity Project** strengthened connections around the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Lake Highlands Station. The project created a trail link between the station, the nearby town center and the White Rock Creek Trail, improving both recreational access and everyday mobility.
- Several projects across North Texas demonstrate how strategic investments can generate lasting benefits for both community development and regional mobility. In Richardson, the **Eastside** transit-oriented development project - located between Galatyn Park Station and Arapaho Center Station - highlights how enhanced connectivity can transform access and opportunity. A shared-use pedestrian and bicycle trail links the development directly to both stations, connecting residents to the broader DART network and the regional Veloweb system. With residential, retail

and office spaces integrated into the mixed-use site - and its location within the Telecom Corridor employment hub - residents can commute, shop and meet daily needs without relying solely on a car. The result is expanded transportation choice and stronger ties between housing, jobs and transit.

- In Dallas, the **Edison/Hi Line** project in the Design District offers another strong example of long-term impact. This high-rise mixed-use development features residential units, ground-floor retail and restaurant space, all supported by transit connections and pedestrian-oriented improvements. Enhancements along Edison Street and Hi Line Drive, including sidewalks, landscaping, and signage, improved walkability and strengthened links to key destinations such as the Katy Trail, Victory Station, the Santa Fe Trail and the American Airlines Center. By seamlessly connecting housing, transit, trails and major employment and entertainment centers, these projects illustrate the program's enduring value for mobility and community vitality.

### **Celebrating the program's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

Celebrating the program's 25th anniversary is a meaningful moment for both the sustainable development team and NCTCOG as a whole. It highlights how long the region has been committed to linking land use and transportation in a way that supports healthier, more connected communities.

Over the years, the program has helped cities plan for growth around transit, encourage infill development and create places that are easier to navigate without relying only on a car. For staff members, the anniversary is a chance to look back at the partnerships, projects and local successes that have come out of the program, while also recognizing how much the region has grown and how the program continues to adapt to new challenges.

For NCTCOG, it reinforces the value of long-term planning and continued investment in projects that improve mobility, support local economies, and enhance quality of life across North Texas.

### **The next 25 years**

With the rapid growth forecast in the region, transit-oriented development continues to play a critical role in long-term planning. As the region continues to blossom, focusing growth around transit stations will help manage density, expand transportation options and make more efficient use out of existing infrastructure.

Through [Regional Transit 2.0](#), NCTCOG is helping shape a more connected and efficient public transportation system for the future. This initiative emphasizes stronger regional partnerships and improved transit access for moving more people in less space.

For 25 years, NCTCOG has helped cities turn sustainable development principles into results. The investments made since 2001 have positioned North Texas to manage rapid growth with intention and foresight. As the region continues to evolve, sustainable development will remain central to building communities that are connected, resilient and ready for the future.