

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE April 23, 2026

TO City of Dallas Landmark Commissioners

FROM Historic Preservation Office

SUBJECT **Landmark Commission Authorized Hearing**

District 13 Landmark Commissioner, David Preziosi, FAICP, has requested that the Landmark Commission authorize a public hearing to consider recommending approval of initiating the historic designation procedure for the McShann Road Neighborhood (also known as the *McShann Estates*), located along McShann Road (north and south lines) from Montfort Drive to Preston Road. Attached is the statement of intent for your review.

This is a hearing to consider recommending approval of initiating the historic designation procedure and not the designation of property at this time.

Service First, Now!

*Rhonda Dunn, Ph.D.*

Rhonda Dunn, Ph.D.  
Senior Project Coordinator  
Historic Preservation Office

Enclosure(s): RD

c: Matthew Sapp, Asst. City Attorney  
Raeesa Parvez Patel, Planner, Historic Preservation  
Elaine Hill, Landmark Commission Secretary  
Christina Paress, Sr. Planner, Historic Preservation  
Adrian McClendon, Code Enforcement Officer, Historic Preservation

Marcus Watson, Chief Planner, Historic Preservation  
Trevor Brown, Manager, Planning and Development  
Arturo Del Castillo, Asst. Director, Planning and Development  
Andreea Udrea, Ph.D., Deputy Director, Planning and Development  
Emily Liu, Director, Planning and Development

March 9, 2026

Dr. Rhonda Dunn  
Office of Historic Preservation  
City of Dallas  
1500 Marilla  
Dallas, TX 75201

**RE: Request to initiate the Landmark Designation process for the McShann Road Historic District**

Dear Dr. Dunn,

We would like to request that the McShann Road neighborhood be placed on the next available Landmark Commission meeting agenda to discuss initiating the Landmark Designation process to create a historic district for the neighborhood based on the map provided.

The neighborhood has prepared a history and justification for the neighborhood to be considered for landmark designation as follows.

The significance of McShann Road must be understood within the post-Civil War era, when newly emancipated African Americans pursued landownership despite legal restrictions, racial hostility, and systemic exclusion. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the McShann family acquired farmland in North Dallas, establishing a rare and enduring pattern of multigenerational property ownership.

In the mid-1950s, Dr. Mansell McShann and his family intentionally developed a portion of this inherited land into a residential enclave for African American professionals at a time when segregation and racially restrictive housing practices limited where Black families could live. By the 1960s, McShann Road had become a stable and prominent middle-class African American community.

Residents of McShann Road faced discriminatory housing and lending practices, including redlining, racially biased underwriting, and limited access to conventional mortgages. Many families were required to purchase land first and self-finance construction, often required to provide downpayments of 50% or more. In addition, residents were subject to poll taxes that restricted voting rights, exclusion from nearby public accommodations, and segregated public education. Despite these barriers, families established professional practices, built substantial homes, and intentionally transferred property across generations.

The history of McShann Road reflects broader national patterns in which African American communities were displaced or erased through redevelopment and public policy. There are examples throughout the US, most notably including Seneca Village in New York and Black

Bottom in Detroit, both of which were destroyed through urban renewal initiatives. Today, McShann Road faces similar pressures from overdevelopment and land use changes that threaten to erode its historic integrity and cultural identity.

Historic landmark designation for McShann Road would formally recognize and protect one of the city's earliest affluent African American residential streets in North Dallas. Landmark designation will preserve the area's historic character, architectural integrity, and multigenerational legacy while safeguarding it from increasing pressures associated with rezoning, overdevelopment, and gentrification.

McShann Road embodies a continuous narrative of African American history, spanning post-Civil War emancipation, Reconstruction era landownership, mid twentieth century suburban development, and modern community preservation. The continuity of land stewardship from emancipation through the present establishes a direct and tangible link to significant historical themes in local and national history.

Several homes along McShann Road were designed by the renowned Dallas architectural firm Pratt, Box & Henderson, enhancing the architectural significance of the street. The residences reflect mid twentieth century suburban design associated with stable upper-middle-class development. The integrity of materials, scale, and layout contributes to its eligibility.

McShann Road is directly associated with patterns of African American advancement in Dallas, including professional achievement, civic engagement, and community formation during segregation. Its development represents a rare example of intentional suburban planning by and for African American professionals in North Dallas.

Hidden under the veil of systemic racism, McShann Road cultivated a metaphorical modern-day maroon society, where residents built homes, nurtured families, and created a thriving, self-sustaining community. Residents transformed the area into a vibrant neighborhood, constructing their own homes and establishing a center of African American life rooted in resilience, pride, and collective purpose. By the mid-20th century, the street was home to doctors, educators, corporate professionals, attorneys, clergy, and entrepreneurs, whose presence fostered networks of mentorship, social cohesion, and professional achievement. McShann Road stands as a testament to the strength, vision, and unity of the generations who shaped it and continue to inspire its historical imprint.

Because of the uniqueness and significance of the McShann Road neighborhood, it potentially meets nine of the City's Landmark Designation Criteria for Eligibility, including: history, heritage and culture; historic event; architecture; architect or master builder, historic context, unique visual features, national and state recognition, and historic education.

McShann Road offers a tangible connection to the shadows of the past, preserving layers of African American history that are often overlooked in mainstream accounts. The neighborhood spans multiple eras, connecting the emancipation of enslaved people, the

efforts of Reconstruction, the limitations imposed by Jim Crow laws, the progress of the Voting Rights movement, and the rise of African American professional leadership into the mid-twentieth century. This continuity allows McShann Road to tell a powerful story of perseverance, achievement, and community across generations.

From its origins in post-Civil War land acquisition to its emergence as a distinguished African American professional enclave, McShann Road represents resilience, foresight, and multigenerational stewardship. Its historical depth, architectural integrity, cultural continuity, and documented significance under multiple designation criteria warrant formal landmark designation. Recognition will ensure that McShann Road's contributions to the history and heritage of Dallas are protected and preserved for future generations.

Based on the above documentation and significance of the McShann neighborhood, it is worth consideration for landmarking and for the Landmark Commission to discuss initiating the designation process for the neighborhood at the next available Landmark Commission meeting.

Sincerely,



David Preziosi, FAICP  
District 13 Landmark Commissioner



Evelyn Montgomery, PhD  
District 2 Landmark Commissioner



Scottie Smith  
District 7 Landmark Commissioner

DESIGNATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION REPORT

DATE: 03/18/2026
TIME: 5:45 pm
MEETING PLACE: Virtual or 2922 Swiss Ave (Wilson House)

APPLICANT NAME: LMC DESIGNATION COMMITTEE

Address: McShann Road Neighborhood

Date of Designation Request: 03/09/2026

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Approve with conditions Deny Deny without prejudice

Recommendation / comments/ basis: (Include/list designation criteria met.)

Move to recommend initiation of McShann Rd Neighborhood as an Historic District. It appears to meet the following criteria: 1) History Heritage; 2) Significant Persons; 3) Architecture. 4) Architects 5) Historic Context 6) Nat'l. & State Recognition; 7) Education.

Designation Committee members' vote(s): (Y [Aye]/N [Nay])

Y Daron Tapscott Y Shelley Hartsfield Andrea Hamilton
Y Evelyn Montgomery Y Sheniqua Cummings
Y Marcel Quimby Y David Preziosi Ricardo Munoz
Michelle Wurtz Penton Shani Dixon

Ex Officio staff members present Rhonda Dunn, Ph.D.

Simple Majority Quorum: yes no

Maker: Preziosi
2nd: Quimby

Designation Committee members in favor:
Designation Committee members opposed:
Basis for opposition:

[Handwritten signature]

CHAIR, Designation Committee

DATE: 03/18/2026

Members of the Landmark Commission may attend, and a quorum of the Landmark Commission may be present.

## Fact Sheet: McShann Road

Meeting Date: March 18, 2026 | Subject: Initiation of Historic Designation

### 1. Location & Geographic Context

- **Primary Location:** Situated between **Preston Road and Montfort Drive**, two blocks south of **I-635**.
- **The "Preston Hollow" Context:** While the historic "Old Preston Hollow" was established south of this area, the broader Preston Hollow community continued its affluent development northward during the 1950s.
- **Social Significance:** McShann Road developed as a premier **affluent Black neighborhood** within the general vicinity of the historically white, affluent Preston Hollow area—a rare and significant "suburban foothold" in North Dallas.

### 2. Historical Significance (1870s–1960s)

- **Reconstruction Era Roots:** Continuous land ownership by the McShann family since the **1870s**; the site served as a working farm for nearly 80 years before development. This land represents a rare instance of **Black family land stewardship** in North Dallas from the 19th century to the present.
- **Visionary Development:** In the 1950s, the family transitioned a portion of the farm into an intentional residential enclave for Black professionals during the Jim Crow era.
- **Economic and Political Resilience:** Homeowners overcame redlining and systemic financial discrimination; families were often denied 5% down bank loans and forced to pay **50% of construction costs upfront** to secure builders.
- **Context of Oppression:** Before the 1960s Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, Black residents in Dallas faced mandated Jim Crow segregation and economic disenfranchisement. The creation of McShann Road was a direct act of resistance and self-determination against these barriers to political and economic influence.

### 3. Professional & Social Achievement

- **Medical Pioneers:** Home to a pioneering medical group including **Dr. Powell, Dr. Watkins, and Dr. Prince**. This group integrated Dallas healthcare, ensuring

Black women could finally have their babies delivered at higher-tier hospitals (such as **St. Paul**) for the first time in the city's history.

- **Corporate Trailblazers:** The street was home to high-level corporate executives, including a resident who served as **Vice President of Urban Affairs**—a historic first for a Black professional in a major corporate role during the 1970s.
- **Educators, Clergy, and Business Leaders:** A verified hub for the city's Black elite and civic leadership.
- **Dual-Professional Excellence:** In most instances, the wives were college-educated and excelled in their own professions—as educators, corporate managers, and civic leaders—alongside their husbands, creating a unique enclave of **multi-generational Black professional excellence**.

#### **4. Architectural Significance & Master Builders**

- **Famous Architects:** Features significant works by the renowned Dallas firm **Pratt, Box, and Henderson**, specifically the "Texas Modern" residences at **5624 and 5731 McShann Road**.
- **Design Integrity:** An intact collection of mid-century modern and ranch-style architecture, reflecting the high-end **custom planning of the 1950s and 1960s**.

#### **5. Educational Significance**

- **Living Classroom:** Documents the transition from 19th-century Reconstruction-era farming to 20th-century professional life and medical progress. It provides a tangible link to a story of resilience often missing from official city records.

#### **6. Urgent Threats to Integrity (March 2026)**

- **Density/Subdivision Threat:** Current developer attempt to tear down the original founding home at **12703 Preston Road** to replace it with **four high-density townhomes**.
- **Commercial Encroachment:** The opening of an unauthorized **24-hour social club at 5944 McShann Road**, threatening the residential peace and historic character of this enclave.

## **The "Ask" for the Commission**

We urge the Landmark Commission to **initiate the Historic Overlay process immediately** to protect the architectural scale and the profound social legacy of McShann Road from incompatible development and commercial misuse.

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# REQUEST FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presented by the McShann Road Homeowners Association  
Lisa Fletcher, President  
(972) 743-1955  
LFletcher@midtownbuild.com

## **Executive Summary**

### **I. Introduction**

The significance of McShann Road must be understood within the post-Civil War era, when newly emancipated African Americans pursued landownership despite legal restrictions, racial hostility, and systemic exclusion. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the McShann family acquired farmland in North Dallas, establishing a rare and enduring pattern of multigenerational property ownership.

In the mid-1950s, Dr. Mansell McShann and his family intentionally developed a portion of this inherited land into a residential enclave for African American professionals at a time when segregation and racially restrictive housing practices limited where Black families could live. By the 1960s, McShann Road had become a stable and prominent middle class African American community.

Residents of McShann Road faced discriminatory housing and lending practices, including redlining, racially biased underwriting, and limited access to conventional mortgages. Many families were required to purchase land first and self-finance construction, often required to provide downpayments of 50% or more.

In addition, residents were subject to poll taxes that restricted voting rights, exclusion from nearby public accommodations, and segregated public education. Despite these barriers, families established professional practices, built substantial homes, and intentionally transferred property across generations.

The history of McShann Road reflects broader national patterns in which African American communities were displaced or erased through redevelopment and public policy. There are thousands of examples throughout the US, most notably include Seneca Village in New York and Black Bottom in Detroit, both of which were destroyed through urban renewal initiatives.

Today, McShann Road faces similar pressures from overdevelopment and land use changes that threaten to erode its historic integrity and cultural identity.

### **II. Purpose of Request**

This request seeks historic landmark designation for McShann Road in Dallas, Texas to formally recognize and protect one of the city's earliest affluent African American residential streets in North Dallas. Landmark designation will preserve the area's historic character, architectural integrity, and multigenerational legacy while safeguarding it from increasing pressures associated with rezoning, overdevelopment, and gentrification.

McShann Road embodies a continuous narrative of African American history, spanning post-Civil War emancipation, Reconstruction era landownership, mid twentieth century suburban development, and modern community preservation.

### **III. Justification Under Landmark Preservation Criteria**

Included below are six of the ten criteria provided for consideration in the evaluation of McShann Road for landmark preservation.

#### **a. Justification for Historical Context**

McShann Road represents Reconstruction era African American landownership and the evolution of that ownership into a mid-twentieth century professional enclave. The continuity of land stewardship from emancipation through the present establishes a direct and tangible link to significant historical themes in local and national history.

#### **b. Justification for Educational Significance**

The street functions as a living educational resource. It illustrates post emancipation land acquisition, segregation era housing discrimination, redlining, poll taxes, and the creation of generational wealth within a marginalized community. The intact nature of the neighborhood allows future generations to study and interpret these themes through a preserved built environment.

#### **c. Justification for Architectural Significance**

Several homes along McShann Road were designed by the renowned Dallas architectural firm Pratt, Box & Henderson, enhancing the architectural significance of the street. The residences reflect mid twentieth century suburban design associated with stable upper middle class development. The integrity of materials, scale, and layout contributes to its eligibility.

#### **d. Justification for Historic Context**

McShann Road is directly associated with patterns of African American advancement in Dallas, including professional achievement, civic engagement, and community formation during segregation. Its development represents a rare example of intentional suburban planning by and for African American professionals in North Dallas.

McShann Road offers a tangible connection to the shadows of the past, preserving layers of African American history that are often overlooked in mainstream accounts. The site spans multiple eras, connecting the emancipation of enslaved people, the efforts of Reconstruction, the limitations imposed by Jim Crow laws, the progress of the Voting Rights movement, and the rise of African American professional leadership into the mid-twentieth century. This continuity allows McShann Road to tell a powerful story of perseverance, achievement, and community across generations.

#### **e. Justification for History, Culture and Heritage**

Hidden under the veil of systemic racism, McShann Road cultivated a metaphorical modern-day maroon society, where residents built homes, nurtured families, and created a thriving, self-sustaining community. Established on land purchased in 1870, residents transformed the

area into a vibrant neighborhood, constructing their own homes and establishing a center of African-American life rooted in resilience, pride, and collective purpose. By the mid-20th century, the street was home to doctors, educators, corporate professionals, attorneys, clergy, and entrepreneurs, whose presence fostered networks of mentorship, social cohesion, and professional achievement. The heritage, history and cultural relevance of McShann Road stand as a testament to the strength and vision, and unity of the generations who shaped it and continue to inspire its historical imprint.

#### **f. Justification for Historic Event**

McShann Road is closely associated with pivotal moments in the history of African-American community-building and social advancement in Dallas. Established on land purchased by emancipated African Americans in 1870, the street evolved into a thriving residential enclave where homes became communal spaces for organizing, mentorship, and civic engagement.

The creation of McShann Road in the mid-1950s as an intentional African American professional enclave constitutes a significant historic event in Dallas history.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

From its origins in post-Civil War land acquisition to its emergence as a distinguished African American professional enclave, McShann Road represents resilience, foresight, and multigenerational stewardship.

Its historical depth, architectural integrity, cultural continuity, and documented significance under multiple preservation criteria warrant formal landmark designation. Recognition will ensure that McShann Road's contributions to the history and heritage of Dallas are protected and preserved for future generations.