



City of Dallas

Fair Park Operations Model and Revitalization Strategy

**Parks, Trails, and Environment
December 1, 2025**

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Purpose



To inform the Council about recommendations for park operations going forward and integration of new strategies and park elements to maximize fiscal sustainability and activation



Background



- City has utilized two operational models at Fair Park
 - Government Model - City perform all services
 - Privatization Model – Private vendor perform all services
 - Both models had benefits and drawbacks
- There is a need to reimagine how Fair Park not only operates but how it's activated for the community and region and the type of attractions and amenities that draw people to the park - all while being focused on financial sustainability
- There are many partners on the campus that can contribute meaningfully to the success of the park
- While a non-profit or quasi-governmental operating model may organically develop over the next 3 to 5 years, it's important to not wait and implement change now so Fair Park can be a thriving community and economic asset to the City



Operations Model



- **Hybrid Model** – Using lessons learned over the past 30 years, recommend proceeding forward with model that utilizes best of previous two models that accentuate benefits and minimizes shortcomings
 - Hybrid model involves City retaining direct control of overall campus operations
 - **Part 1 – Utilize Dallas Park and Recreation** to self-perform services it can provide effectively and responsibly
 - Services include: overall contract management of all entities on the campus; grounds and facilities management; capital improvements; local community programs and events
 - **Part 2 - Utilize private companies** in areas of their expertise to ensure performance at highest level
 - Through contracts with measurable objectives, seek a variety of key services: security; food and beverage; parking; venue management at key facilities; events sales/booking/marketing; sponsorship/revenue development; event and festival management
 - **Part 3 - Utilize non-profits** to leverage City funding through private philanthropy and third-party funding and may assume operations for specific functions over time



Revitalization Strategy



- To revitalize the park and maximize its potential as a key asset for the City, a park for local and regional residents to enjoy, and as an economic development engine for the state, region, City and surrounding communities, we propose the **“5 Pillars for Fair Park”**
 1. **Maximize the benefit of having successful campus partners**
 2. **Develop regularly-occurring community programs and events that include local and surrounding neighborhoods small business opportunities**
 3. **Aggressively pursue large scale campus activations**
 4. **Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities on the campus**
 5. **Develop and nurture non-profits to benefit and leverage resources for the campus and key facilities that may evolve into operating partners over time**



Pillar 1 - Maximize the benefit of having successful campus partners



- There are multiple successful institutions that call Fair Park home
 - State Fair of Texas, Texas Discovery Garden, ZoOceanarium at Childrens Aquarium, Broadway Dallas at Music Hall, Dallas Historical Society at Hall of State, African American Museum (AAM), TBAAL at Women's Museum, LiveNation at Dos Equis Amphitheater
- Presence of well-established institutions present a unique opportunity which is unlike anything in the region – important to capitalize and improve upon the visitation that they bring to the campus
- Too frequently the institutions operate as silos during most of the year – this is beginning to change with partnerships between AAM and Broadway Dallas (as an example) and the uniform cooperation and collaboration that occurs during the State Fair
- **Strategy** – Develop a cornerstone program that encourages collaboration between campus partners with joint programming, events, and festivals to drive attendance and revenue opportunities



Pillar 1 - Maximize the benefit of having successful campus partners cont.



State Fair of Texas
~2.3M visitors



Texas Discovery Garden
~100K visitors



Dallas Historical Society at Hall of State
~160K visitors



Broadway Dallas at Music Hall
~450K visitors



African American Museum
~80K visitors



TBAAL at Women's Museum
~250K visitors



ZoOceanarium Group at
Children's Aquarium



LiveNation at Dos Equis
~550K visitors



Pillar 2 - Develop regularly-occurring community programs and events



- Leonhardt Lagoon and immediate surroundings represents a great area to host programs, small concerts, and events for family-friendly experiences in the core of the park
- Cotton Bowl and Coliseum can be utilized by DISD and adjacent school districts to host signature athletic events
- Park can attract local small business opportunities to provide goods and services as a related activation
- **Strategy** – Develop recurring programming and events such as movie nights and local concert series and develop small business/local vendor opportunities to be held around Lagoon seasonally



Pillar 2 - Develop regularly-occurring community programs and events



Leonhardt Lagoon



Chapultepec Park



Chapultepec Park - Kiosk



Band shell



Pillar 3 - Aggressively pursue large scale campus activations



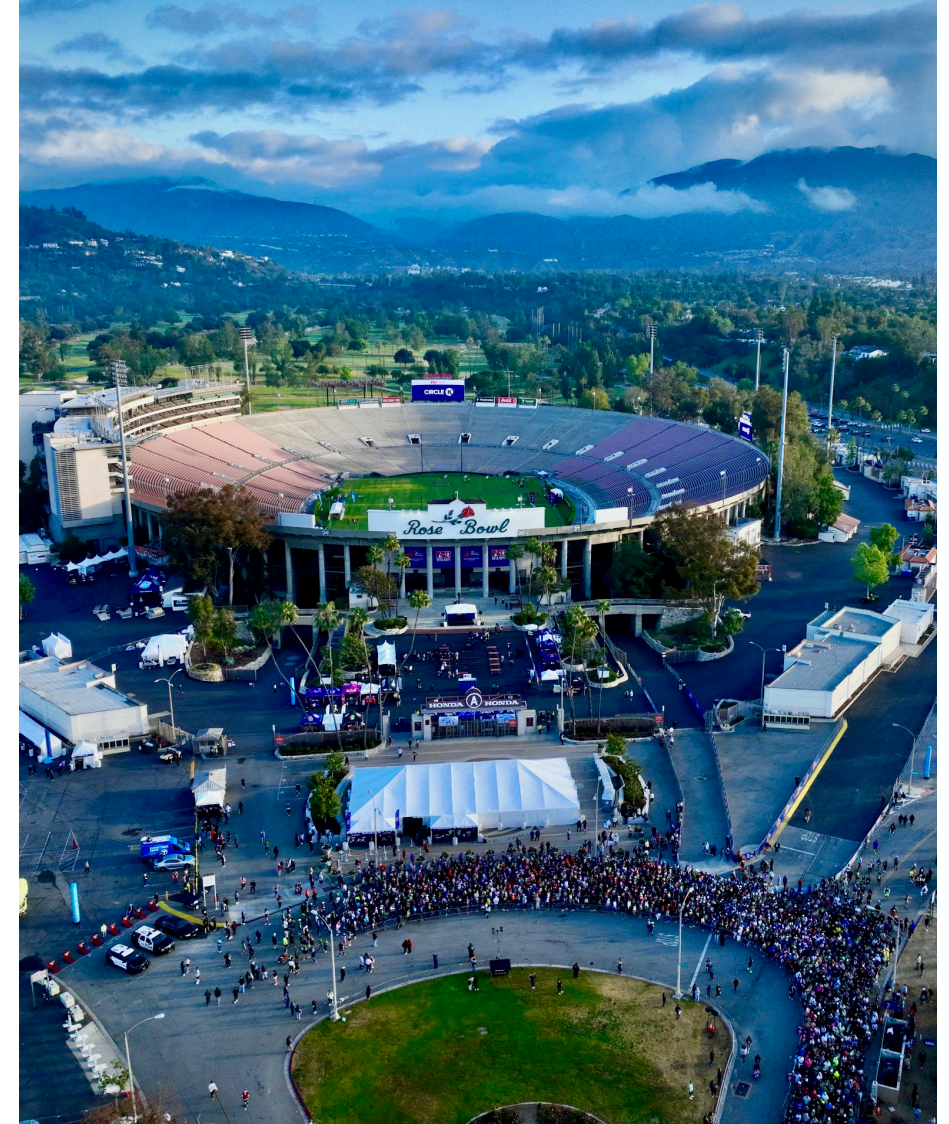
- Size of campus at 277 acres with large open areas around Coliseum and lots 5,10,11, and 12 can accommodate large crowds and festival infrastructure
- Staff has collaborated closely with the Rose Bowl executive and operations team in Pasadena, CA to understand best practices for and monetization strategies of a large stadium and festival grounds that includes music, athletics and trade shows/signature flea markets
- Cotton Bowl renovations have added suites and other amenities that should make the facility more competitive in the marketplace
- Coliseum 2017 Bond Program renovation of restrooms, lighting, seats and back of house have positioned facility for better activation as compared to recent past
- **Strategy** – Work with existing campus partners including Livenation and other large entertainment partners to secure large concerts, music and arts festivals and other significant shows and events



Pillar 3 - Aggressively pursue large scale campus activations



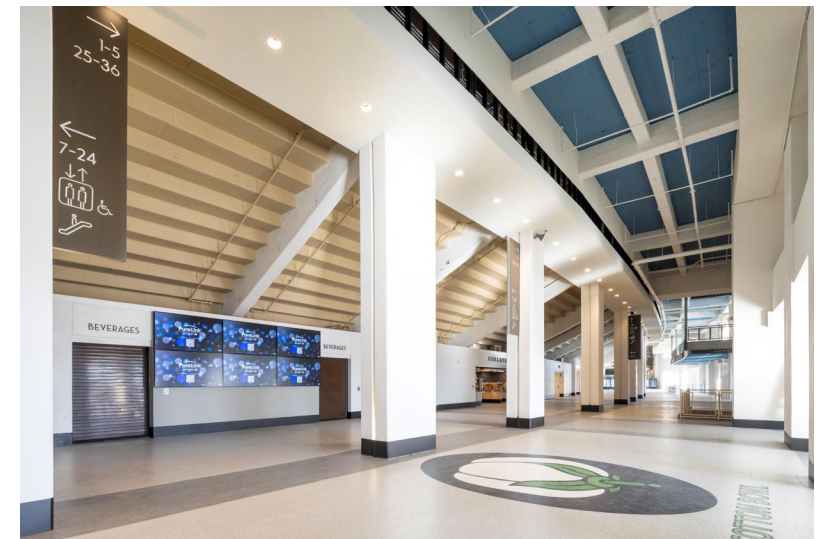
Rose Bowl – Pasadena, CA



Pillar 3 - Aggressively pursue large scale campus activations



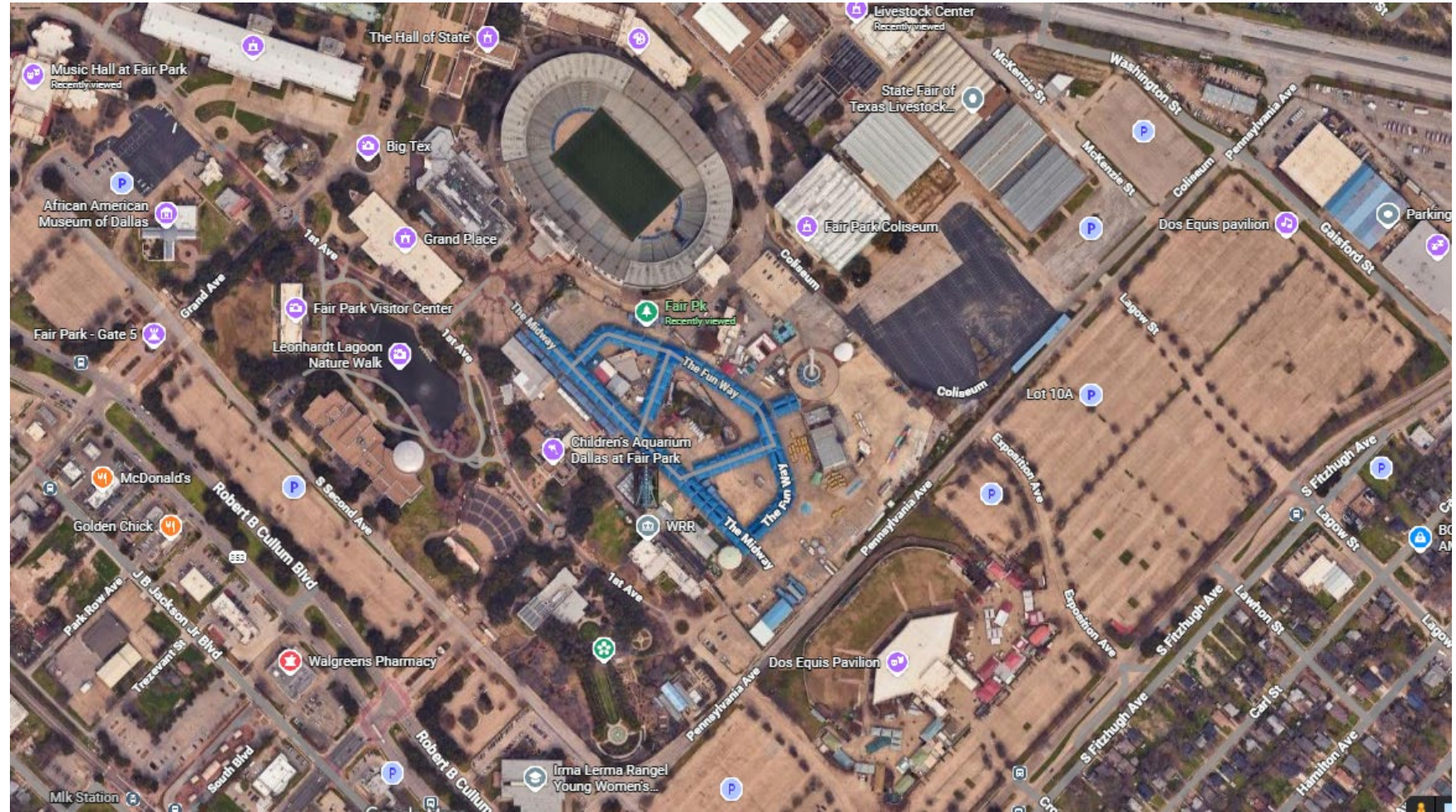
Cotton Bowl – Dallas, TX



Pillar 3 - Aggressively pursue large scale campus activations



Coliseum



Pillar 3 - Aggressively pursue large scale campus activations cont.



Cotton Bowl Stadium



Rose Bowl Stadium



Year Opened



Capacity



Municipally Owned and Operated



Multi-Event Venue



National Historic Landmark



Non-Profit Partner



Pillar 4 - Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities on the campus



- Retail, restaurants, and hotels can function as compliments to existing park amenities and serve as standalone park attractions while providing revenue streams important for fiscal sustainability through ground leases and revenue sharing
- Staff has studied the concept of thoughtful and seamless integration of these elements (restaurants, retail, hotels), conducted site visits of leading “next generation” parks in the US and Mexico, and met with executive staff to understand best practices
- Fair Park currently has no retail or standalone restaurants despite ample space for new or infill development
- **Strategy** – Conduct economic development study with key partners and implement a development process informed by study findings that could yield significant attendance and revenue to the park and generate job opportunities for the local and surrounding communities



Pillar 4 - Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities on the campus



Parque La Mexicana



Year
Opened: **2017**

Land Area: **71 acres**

Attendance: **2 million visitors per year**

How is it
funded/
operated: **City government entered a 40-year concession agreement with a neighborhood association.**

Park is maintained entirely from revenue generated by concessions, commercial venues, parking lot and bathroom fees.



Pillar 4 - Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities on the campus



Brooklyn Bridge Park



Pier 1 – garden bar



Pier 1 – cafe



Park aerial view

Year Opened:	2010-2015 opening of Pier 1-6
Land Area:	85 acres
Attendance:	5 million visitors per year
How is it funded/operated:	Managed by Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy.
	Operations are supported through a mix of revenue streams: concessions, parking, permits, events, and development of parcels within park site.



Pillar 4 - Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities on the campus



Brooklyn Bridge Park cont.



Pier 6 – dog-friendly patio at restaurant



Pier 5 – ice cream store



Pier 1 - 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge



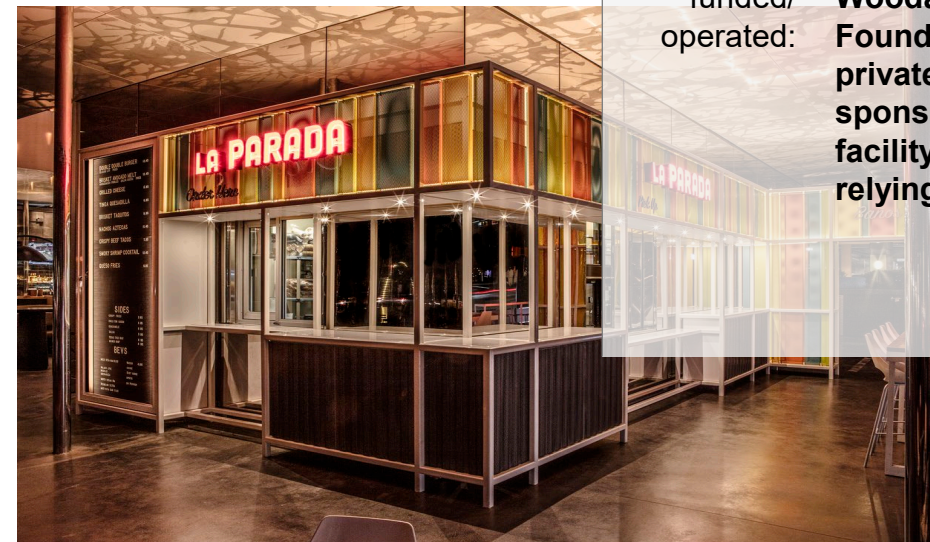
Pillar 4 - Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities on the campus



Klyde Warren Park



Year Opened: **2012**
Land Area: **5 acres**
Attendance: **1.3 million visitors per year**



How is it funded/
operated: **Operated and maintained by Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation through private donations, corporate sponsorships, event and facility revenues without relying on city funding.**



Pillar 5 - Develop and nurture non-profits to benefit and leverage resources for the campus and key facilities



- Beyond traditional monetization of existing and new assets, a key elements of future success and financial sustainability is partnering with existing or new non-profits
- Those organizations can leverage private philanthropy more successfully than government and provide advocacy around important issues facing the park
- **Strategy** – Create new Cotton Bowl Foundation (modeled on Rose Bowl Foundation) to support the largest and highest revenue potential facility and develop or partner with an existing non-profit that will focus on the arts and cultural assets, historic exhibit halls and venues, and agricultural facilities of the park



Pillar 5 - Develop and nurture 501c3's to benefit and leverage resources for the campus and key facilities



Band Shell



Centennial Hall



African American Museum



Briscoe Carpenter Center



Coliseum



Cotton Bowl



Food & Fiber Pavilion



Next Steps - Current



- Operational
 - Secure short-term key contracts with private experts for services
 - Security
 - Parking
 - Food and beverage
 - Janitorial
 - Event ticketing platform
 - Event booking management platform
 - Event sales and booking
 - Select facility venue management
 - Targeted marketing for community programs/event/small business series



Next Steps – 90 to 180 days



- Operational
 - Secure key three to five year contracts with private experts for services
 - Initiate procurements for all short-term service contracts
 - Sponsorship and Advertising revenue contract
 - Work with CAO for dedicated attorney to be funded by Fair Park
- Revitalization
 - Review and modify, if necessary, all existing contracts at tenant facilities to ensure all entities are participating in the success of Fair Park
 - Pursue and secure new tenants in vacant buildings
 - Finalize event attendance surcharge implementation
 - Initiate an economic develop study led by Dallas Economic Development Corporation (EDC) in partnership and consultation with local chambers of commerce and local/surrounding Fair Park area business associations
 - Partner with Dallas EDC and City of Dallas Office of Economic Development to identify and secure economic development deals for hotels, restaurant and retail establishments (based upon study) to secure new funding streams for the park and create job opportunities for surrounding neighborhoods





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