



January 31, 2025

Texas Commission on the Arts

*Submitted via electronic mail to [districts@arts.texas.gov](mailto:districts@arts.texas.gov)*

Texas Commission on the Arts,

As the Cultural District Management Entity, please accept our letter of intent for Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts to apply for our Oak Cliff Cultural District to become an approved Texas Commission on the Arts Cultural District.

The proposed Oak Cliff Cultural District is envisioned as a vibrant, inclusive hub that celebrates the diverse cultural tapestry of our community's artistic and cultural expressions. Our proposal focuses on fostering creativity, preserving history, and leveraging the arts as a catalyst for economic growth and community development. We believe that the establishment of this cultural district aligns with the Commission's commitment to enhancing the cultural landscape of Texas.

Enclosed with this letter, you will find an overview of the history of the area, a cultural district description, our strategic plan priorities, a topline marketing plan, and look at our proposed management structure to illustrate the importance of our Oak Cliff Cultural District. We are confident that this initiative will not only enrich the artistic and cultural experiences of Oak Cliff residents and visitors but also contribute significantly to the broader cultural heritage of Texas.

We look forward to the opportunity to formalize our application, and we welcome any additional information or guidance to ensure the success of this endeavor. Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to advancing the arts and culture in the great state of Texas.

Sincerely,

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Chad West, City of Dallas Council Member District 1

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Jessica Gonzalez, State of Texas House of Representatives District 104

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Royce West, State of Texas Senator District 23

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Dr. Elba Garcia, Dallas County Commissioner District 4

oak cliff cultural district letter of intent



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Rafael Anchia, State of Texas House of Representatives District 103

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Martine Elyse Philippe, City of Dallas Office of Arts and Culture Director

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Kiyundra Jones, Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce CEO

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Petrine Abrahams, Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts President

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Todd Hedrick, Oak Cliff Cultural District Chair

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Sylvana Avila Alonzo, Oak Cliff Cultural District Vice-Chair

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Donna Miller, Oak Cliff Cultural District Secretary

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Augustine Jalomo, Oak Cliff Cultural District Treasurer and City of Dallas Arts Commissioner District 1

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Julia Alcantara, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Flamenco Fever Executive Director

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Carina Arellano, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Texas Latino Pride

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Yanet Andablo, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Avery-Jai Andrews, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Arts Mission Oak Cliff Executive Director and Agora Artists Co-Founder

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Buddy Apple, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee



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Lucy Bocanegra, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Casa Guanajuato

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Shannon Driskoll, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Barak Epstein, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee, Texas Theatre and Top Ten Records Founder and Director

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Aaron Glover, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and The Writer's Garret Executive Director

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Alexandra Hernandez, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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JR Huerta, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and City of Dallas Parks Commissioner District 1

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Charles Johnson, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Flamenco Fever

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Rhiannon Martin, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Suzi Migdol, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Travis Lee Moore, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Kenda North, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Teresa Norton, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Diana Pollak, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee



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Jose Rico, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Rosa “Bella” Rodriguez, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee

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Lori Sundeen Soderbergh, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Over the Bridge Arts Founder and Director

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Rafael Tamayo, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and City of Dallas Oak Cliff Cultural Center Manager

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Claudia Vega, Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee and Activating Reading Communities Organization (ARCO) Founder

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Lily Weiss, Dallas Arts District Executive Director

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Stephanie Keller Hudiburg, Deep Ellum Foundation Executive Director

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The logo for OC SFA, consisting of five colored squares with white letters: a blue square with 'O', a red square with 'C', a green square with 'S', an orange square with 'F', and a yellow square with 'A'.

*committed to the arts & community*

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## History of District

Named for large oak trees lining cliffs, Oak Cliff was established in 1887 by Thomas L. Marsalis and John S. Armstrong and incorporated as a city in 1891 and later annexed by the city of Dallas in 1903. Located across the Trinity River and two miles from the city center, Oak Cliff has retained several of its original neighborhoods including Lake Cliff, Kidd Springs, Kessler Park, Kings Highway, Winnetka Heights, and Wynnewood to name a few. Oak Cliff flourished with businesses, parks, amusements parks, theaters, schools and churches, a hospital, and the first 7-Eleven store over the years. The area underwent transformation after “white flight” in the sixties, with immigrants, Latinos and Black people moving into the neighborhoods and business corridors in the seventies. In the nineties, there was redevelopment in certain areas including Bishop Arts District, Jefferson Boulevard, and Davis Street – Davis Street also known as Highway 80 was a part of a national route that took travelers to Fort Worth. Bishop Arts was started by Jim Lake Sr. whose first tenant was the sculptor Stu Kraft who attracted other artists to the area – thus, Bishop Arts as its shortened name.

In the early 1900s, an artist and well-known premier painter of the American West, Frank Reaugh, is credited with attracting a cadre of painters and sculptors to Oak Cliff. Reaugh established the Dallas Arts Society now known as the Dallas Museum of Art and the Dallas Creative Arts Society. Jefferson Boulevard is home to the Texas Theater, Oak Cliff Cultural Center, a city-owned cultural center, and many Latino businesses. The Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts, co-founded by Frank Reaugh in 1926, continues to present a diverse variety of art, music, and dance programs to residents throughout Dallas County at its home, Turner House, located within the boundaries of the proposed Oak Cliff Cultural District.

Today, Oak Cliff encompasses a large swath of Dallas, located in the South and Southwest areas of the city with more than 330,000 residents. One of the leading non-profit organizations in Oak Cliff, Heritage Oak Cliff, founded in 1975, focuses on strengthening and preserving the rich beauty of more than thirty unique member neighborhoods. They are also a grantor for conservation, beautification, and preservation projects and other projects that enhance each neighborhood. Because Oak Cliff is a large area in southern Dallas, our proposed Oak Cliff Cultural District would be a gateway to the arts and culture scene found in abundance throughout Oak Cliff.

Discussions began in early 2022 that the organic buildup of the Jefferson Boulevard, Davis Street, and Bishop Arts District areas would make for a well-defined cultural district. Jefferson with its mix of Latino retailers and cultural events; Bishop Arts with more than 40 decades of eclecticism and Bohemian mix, and Davis with its complete street redevelopment – all areas bustling with restaurants, retailers, public art, historic



structures, and attractions all come together to celebrate and promote some spectacular “tent-pole” events enjoyed by the thousands throughout the footprint.

Several artists and non-profit arts organizations along with civic leaders and organizations including the Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, Visit Dallas, The Office of Arts and Culture for the City of Dallas, local businesses, and neighborhood associations have realized how this footprint is the ideal candidate for Texas’ next cultural district.

Oak Cliff Cultural District includes the east and west sides of Zang Boulevard from 12th Street running north to West Davis; North and south sides of West Davis moving westward to Rosemont Avenue. East and west sides of Rosemont south to 12th Street, east and west sides to S Willomet Avenue east and west sides south to W Brooklyn Ave east to Buckalew St north to W Page Avenue east to S Tyler Street moving north to 12th Street east to Zang Boulevard.

Conversations are occurring about future expansions of the Oak Cliff Cultural District. This first phase will be the template and standard bearer for future additions, expansions, or other cultural districts within the Oak Cliff area.

### **Cultural District Description**

The Oak Cliff Cultural District is naturally designed to accommodate travelers arriving by streetcar, bikes, public transport, autos, or on foot. Estimated walking time from east end to west end is a little under 30 minutes and about 12 minutes north to south. Visitors can spend a half- or full-day immersed in the cultural amenities found in the footprint including restaurants, live music bars and craft breweries, studios, galleries, public art, municipal buildings, churches, restaurants, concert and theater venues, a city-owned cultural center and library, and presented by other venues for arts and events.

A typical Oak Cliff Cultural District calendar includes workshops, readings, plays, musical performances, classes, exhibits, talks, panel discussions, poetry, Drag Queen performances, screenings, pottery, murals, tastings, parades, wine walks, cook offs, Lowrider gatherings from local artists or one of our several arts organizations and venues found in the footprint. Organizations might include the Oak Cliff Cultural Center, The Kessler Theater, Bishop Arts Theater, The Lost Boys, Revelers Hall, Lady Love, Lucky Dog Books, Top Ten Records, Oak Cliff Coalition for the Arts, Texas Theater, YuYu Cultural Shop, Whose Books, Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Autumn Moon, Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts – Turner House, Wild Detectives, Dallas Mexico Casa Guanajuato, Flamenco Fever, Go Oak Cliff, The Writer’s Garret, Arts Mission Oak Cliff, the Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, or in venues found along the Jefferson Corridor, in the TyPo District (Tyler/Polk), or in Bishop Arts District.



Additionally, visitors can find themselves celebrating month after month in the Oak Cliff Cultural District at the Zora Neale Hurston Festival (January), 15th Annual Dash for the Beads Walk/ Run, Mardi Gras Parade (February), Dallas Arts Month, ART214, Oak Cliff Earth Day celebration (April), SpeedBump Art Tour, 32nd Annual Cinco de Mayo Parade, Heritage 48th Annual Home Tour, or the Dallas is Lit Festival (May), Orgullo (Pride) Festival, Oak Cliff Film Festival (June), Bastille on Bishop (July), Kaiju Go! Japanese Monster Film, Art & Toy Showcase (August), Hay Forum, or Rising Stars Art Exhibit (September), Oak Cliff Flamenco Festival (September/ October), Dia de Los Muertos Festival or Blues BBQ and Bandits (November), Jingle Bells on Bishop, La Virgen de Guadalupe Parade, and Holiday Poinsettia Walk (December).

## **Strategic Plan**

Oak Cliff's Cultural Strategy grew from a process of community - wide visioning and consultation. It shares common goals and strategies between civic, cultural, business, and education sectors.

There are three overarching goals:

Goal 1: Grow and support successful, sustainable arts organizations – existing and future – in Oak Cliff. This goal addresses the needs of arts and cultural organizations throughout the Oak Cliff area, recognizing that our neighborhood's vibrancy depends on a diverse ecosystem of successful artists, performers, and educators. (Current, 5 - year and ongoing targets).

Goal 2: Develop a hub of cultural activity in Oak Cliff to attract residents, businesses, and tourists. This goal is specific to the development of Oak Cliff's Cultural District. Specific programs underway include: - Bastille on Bishop, Blues, BBQ, and Bandits, Cinco de Mayo Parade, Dash for the Beads, Dia de los Muertos Festival, Oak Cliff Film Festival, Orgullo (Pride) Festival, and more.

Goal 3: Engage the creative sector in revitalization, entrepreneurship, education, and economic development This is a long - term goal engaging our arts, cultural, business, and higher education communities to find innovative ways to keep creative graduates and entrepreneurs in Dallas and help them start successful businesses. (Current, 5-yr, and ongoing targets.)

## **Marketing Plan**

An Oak Cliff Cultural District (OCCD) marketing strategy would include positioning the district as a “must see” and “not to be missed” convenient place to spend a half to full day taking in all the district's entertainment opportunities. To make this happen, OCCD would take on a destination marketing approach which would include the following:

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- Development of
  - the OCCD brand
  - website
    - with links to as many OCCD members websites as possible
  - advertising (including social media) plan
    - brand awareness to include the development of a new cultural district and what it is
  - email marketing plan
    - data capture initiative for information about potential visitors and any research initiatives
  - calendar
  - inventory of OCCD members social media handles
    - inventory of all assets in the OCCD
    - restaurants, galleries, theaters, libraries, venues, retailers, points of interest, etc., etc.
  - partnerships for additional marketing and promotional opportunities
    - Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)
    - VisitDallas
      - Convention services and drive market advertising and promotions
    - Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce
    - Alamo Manhattan
    - Jefferson Street Merchants Association
    - Bishop Arts District Merchants Association
    - TyPo Merchants
    - Office of Arts and Culture

## Management Structure

The Oak Cliff Cultural District will be managed by Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts as the Cultural District Management Entity (CDME). An Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee was formed and a liaison identified between OCCD and OCSFA, the past president of OCSFA. The OCCD Committee includes representatives from key stakeholders, including the community members, local government agencies, business, educators, artists, and arts and culture organizations. Our goal is to hire a part-time Executive Director during our first year of operation and expand staff as funding becomes more sustainable.

**Executive Director:** Responsible for the overall coordination, strategic planning, and liaison between the committee and various stakeholders. Manages the day-to-day operations, ensures adherence to policies, develops, and executes marketing strategies



to promote cultural events and initiatives, and oversees community outreach to enhance the district's visibility.

Decisions within the Oak Cliff Cultural District will be made collaboratively with the Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee, the governing body, and The Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts. The Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee will serve as the primary decision-making body, with input from staff and the Oak Cliff community. Regular meetings and forums will be organized to gather diverse perspectives, fostering a participatory decision-making process. While the Oak Cliff Cultural District Committee retains decision making authority, the input and feedback from staff and community members will be integral to shaping the district's strategic direction and initiatives. Staff members will contribute their expertise to inform decisions related to their respective area of responsibility, ensuring a well-rounded and inclusive decision-making process. All decisions will align with the district's mission to enrich Oak Cliff's cultural landscape.

### **The Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts**

The Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts was formed February 8, 1926, in the Lake Cliff studio of artist Frank Reaugh. The founders, nineteen women and Mr. Reaugh, sought to heighten all aspects of art in the community. Mrs. Dwight Horton served as the first president. In the early years, the OCSFA met in the Frank Reaugh Studio, the Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, and the Oak Cliff Dallas Commercial Association Auditorium, owned by Mr. Martin Weiss. In 1933, the OCSFA established its home at the Oak Cliff YMCA, located at Beckley and Tenth Street. When founding member and twelve-year president, Mrs. E. P. Turner, died in 1938, her two sons deeded the family home to OCSFA. The home, located at 324 South Marsalis, served as a memorial to Mrs. Turner and a permanent home for the Society. The property was renamed the E. P. Turner Clubhouse.

The OCSFA's promotion of art, music, poetry, literature, and drama made the organization a civic and cultural asset to Oak Cliff and Dallas. By 1933 membership had expanded to more than six hundred members. The vigorous membership growth brought expanded interests and sub-groups were formed. The Junior Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts formed in 1933, and the Daughters Auxiliary of the Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts formed in 1942. These sub-groups accommodated the expanded interests in gardening, home decoration, historic preservation, and philanthropy.

Plans for U.S. Highway 35E routed the freeway through the E. P. Turner Clubhouse and the organization was forced to relocate. The State of Texas purchased the property in 1957. Proceeds from the sale were used to purchase the current home located at 401 North Rosemont. This new home was renamed the E. P. Turner Clubhouse.



The OCSFA continued with an exclusive female membership for the next four decades. However, over the years membership declined, and in 2000 only twelve members remained. To increase membership, the Society, for the first time, extended membership to men. James Prothro assembled a small group of Oak Cliff residents who began restructuring the OCSFA. In 2001 a Board of Directors was established, and a new mission was adopted.

The Society works steadily to restore and improve Turner House and expand the purpose of the Society. In 2017, the Board adopted a Strategic Plan with new Vision, Mission, and Values statements: "We value the histories of the House and the organization and want both to continue to be assets and resources for Oak Cliff. Our future holds major and minor restoration projects for Turner House and an evolution in our relationship with the community and the arts."

Located in the historic Winnetka Heights neighborhood, the Turner House is the home of the Oak Cliff Society of Fine Arts. This beautiful landmark provides an elegant and charming home for a special collection of Texas art. The gallery space within the historic home offers a unique space to view the Society's permanent collection and temporary exhibits that grace the House throughout the year.



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