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Uptown rail requires land from Waterwall Park, more

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The recently dedicated Gerald D. Hines Waterwall Park and the Williams Tower area will lose nearly 12,000 square feet of land adjacent to Post Oak Boulevard, if the Uptown light rail project goes forward as designed.

That estimate comes from a Metropolitan Transit Authority street reclassification plan, dated March 13, 2009, that shows total land needed for the project beyond the current rights of way along Post Oaks will involve 48 parcels of land and total 138,647 square feet — about 3.2 acres.

Metro has said construction of the line is expected to begin in one or two years.

From Hidalgo to Alabama streets, Metro wants to acquire land primarily from the west side of Post Oak, near the Williams Tower, according to Michael Williams, project manager of Uptown Corridor. This is because existing buildings are located close to the east property line.

Based on the reclassification plan, the largest loss of land occurring beyond the right of way on Post Oak would take place in front of the property occupied by Dillard's, which would lose 29,476 square feet of property along its west side. That would appear to include the ramp leading to the second-story of the garage.

Across the street, the southwest corner of the Galleria property would lose 1,019 square feet.

"From Alabama to Westheimer, we shift our acquisition line toward the east side to avoid the buildings in the Galleria," Williams said.

While the dimensions cited in the reclassification plan are subject to change, the scope of the project combined with the density and development in the area would make substantial alterations extremely difficult.

According to the reclassification document, the state of Texas would be asked to part with the second largest amount of land — 14,259 square feet — between Hidalgo and Monterrey Plaza on the east side of the street.

Williams said from Richmond to Hidalgo acquisitions would be on the "east side only" since the properties are either publicly owned or smaller than what is generally required for large developments. The properties on the west side are major developments and town homes.

Among the other land needed beyond rights of way, according to the reclassification plan:

1705 Post Oak, where California Pizza is located, would lose 8,386 square feet of land;

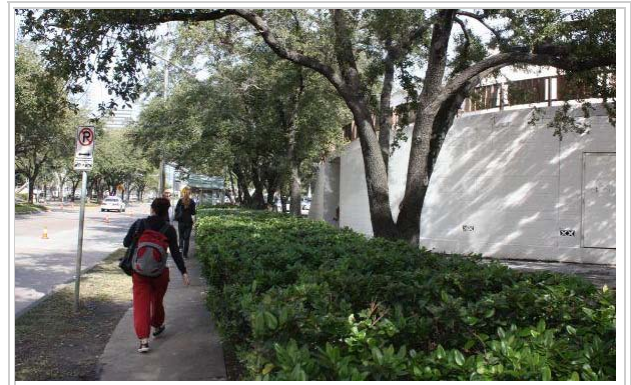
1901 Post Oak, the site of Lofts on Post Oak, would lose 1,236 square feet;

2001 Post Oak, around the front of the Hilton Houston Post Oak, would lose 1,520 square feet;

The properties from 2019 to 2521 Post Oak, roughly from Maggiano's Little Italy restaurant to Starbucks Coffee, would lose a total of 4,857 square feet;

The Inverness Townhomes, 800 Post Oak, would lose 3,301 square feet.

A spokeswoman for Metro said the agency could not discuss the status of specific property acquisitions due to ongoing negotiations.



The paved area adjacent to Dillard's would take a significant move to the west, according to plans.

Metro characterized the property owners who have been approached as “for the most part receptive,” but added none of the property has been purchased yet.

The reclassification plan showed that along the east side of the roadway, at least some property would be taken without interruption from Alabama to Interstate 610.

On the west side, less total land would be needed. None would be taken on the west side from West Alabama to just north of Westheimer Road, from just north of San Felipe to Westbriar streets or Uptown Park to Interstate 610.

Williams said from San Felipe to west of Uptown Park the acquisitions are concentrated more heavily on the south side of Post Oak due to efforts to replicate the current centerline.

From Westheimer to San Felipe, the center line will be similar to the street’s existing one, “except for the fact that Post Oak is not a straight line through this area.”

Metro’s centerline for Post Oak turns slightly to the west between Guilford Court and Ambassador Way.

According to Metro, the completed Uptown light rail would necessitate 23 signal lights along Post Oak from Richmond Avenue, north to Interstate 610 — about half of them new.

A Metro-generated traffic analysis of April 2009 stated the only median openings along Post Oak after completion of the rail will be at intersections that have signals — streets and driveways between intersections will be for “right-in, right-out” traffic only. That would include right turns only for vehicles exiting merchants’ parking lots.

The Gerald D. Hines Waterwall Park, consisting of the water wall and greenspace between it and Williams Tower, was dedicated Dec. 17 to honor Hines for the imprint he had left on the Galleria area as an urban designer.

To view the entire map, <http://www.hcnonline.com/pdf/uptownMap.pdf>

Properties for acquisition

Following is a list of owners, addresses and amount of property to be acquired for the Uptown light rail route, according to a Metro proposed reclassification plan, dated March 13, 2009.

Manhattan Homeowner Assoc., 3030 Post Oak Blvd., 270 square feet

Heins REIT, 2800 Post Oak, 4,612 sf

Heins REIT/Post Oaks Assoc., 2800 Post Oak, 7,277 sf

Houston Galleria, various addresses, 1,019 sf

Dutch Plaza Properties, 5002-5026 Post Oak, 100 sf

2020 Post Oak LP, 2020 Post Oak, 3,774 sf

Crescent POC Investors, 1900-2000 Post Oak, 10,387 sf

Boulevard Place LP, 1702-1800 Post Oak, 9,022 sf

Teachers Insurance/Annuity, 1300-1550 Post Oak, 4,189 sf

Post Oak Ltd., 1200 Post Oak, 1,948

Inverness Townhome Assoc., 800 Post Oak, 3,301 sf

755 Post Oak Inc., 755 Post Oak, 1,017 sf

Gateway Ridgecrest Inc., 777 Post Oak, 5,088 sf

Prosperity Bank, 1011 Post Oak, 1,469 sf

GC 107 Post Oak Holdings Ltd., 1111 Post Oak, 1,734 sf

McDonald’s Corp., 1405 Post Oak, 3,453 sf

Messina Properties, 1605 Post Oak, 4,699 sf

Brucette’s Inc., 4920 San Felipe St., 2,408 sf

Martino Ltd./LLHPCP Ltd., 1705-1751 Post Oak, 12,623 sf

GHD Industrial Ltd., 1801 Post Oak, 2,044 sf

Unit holders/lien holders, 1901 Post Oak, 1,236 sf

RES/VLS Real Estate, 2001 Post Oak, 1,520 sf

WMJK Ltd./Bank of America, 2019-2521 Post Oak, 4,857 sf

Rice University Corp./Hines Interests/others, 4925 Westheimer, 29,476 sf

West Lake Post Oak Center, Ltd., 2801 Post Oak, 420 sf

Hines REIT, 0 Post Oak, 3,581

GDH 200 Ltd., 0 Post Oak, 420 sf

State of Texas, 0 Post Oak, 14,259 sf

730 North Post Oak LP, 730 N. Post Oak, 1,077 sf

CC Financing I Trust, 777 N. Post Oak, 1,367 sf

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