

Why I Love Forest Hills

Imagine a work of art rendered as a neighborhood.

By Judy Whalen | June 25, 2015 | 12:00 am



Photography by Josh Blaylock

Forest Hills is like a Norman Rockwell painting, a vignette in broad strokes of warm and friendly, small-town color. Children playing under a lush canopy. Neighbors old and young looking out for each other. Extended-patrol police, like the beat cops of the past, ensuring the safety of the streets. Residents running, biking, and walking their dogs along the quiet boulevards. The scene reveals a community beautifully framed by Downtown Dallas, the Arboretum, and White Rock Lake.

Driving into Forest Hills, where large shade trees abound, there is a noticeable drop in temperature. An “ahhhhh” feeling comes over me as I approach home. In this oasis of calm amidst the city, there are close to 600 lots situated to complement the natural surroundings with a diversity of architecture that blends new and not-so-new (circa 1920) homes.

Many of the residents, as well as the trees, are deeply rooted. The long history of neighborhood traditions shining through include the yearly Fourth of July Parade and Party hosted by restaurateur-resident Jack Keller, the Spring Egg Hunt, Holiday Tree Lighting, Halloween Fall Fest, and White Rock

Garden Tour. Forest Hills volunteers its support with For the Love of the Lake organization, Sanger Elementary, the Ferguson Road Initiative, and the Arboretum.

Our neighborhood traces its roots to 1845, when Warren Ferris selected a 640-acre tract of land to homestead. He dedicated the northwest corner of his property for a family cemetery, with the first recorded burial in 1847 and the last in 1906. Ferris allowed neighbors' loved ones to be interred as well, resulting in about 100 souls resting there.

In April 1924, Leon L. Fechenbach dedicated the plat of the Forest Hills Addition, then 6 miles from the city limits of Dallas. The land was bounded by Garland Road (old Bankhead Highway); Lakeland Drive (old John West Road); the Santa Fe Railroad tracks; Highland Road (then called Wilshire Blvd.); and one block of San Rafael Drive. Forest Hills was annexed into Dallas in May 1945.

An advertisement in the November 30, 1924, *Dallas Morning News* depicts an English Tudor house with the headline, "Your home in a forest!" It describes the area: "Your home built among massive oak, elm, and pecan trees ... built within a stone's throw of beautiful White Rock Lake ... is possible in only one addition ... FOREST HILLS. And with the city's announcement of White Rock Lake being turned into a pleasure lake upon the completion of the Garza project, assures you all the advantages at your front door."

From its historic past into the future, Forest Hills remains a masterpiece painting of an All-American spirited community.

Judy Whalen, a longtime neighborhood volunteer/cheerleader, has lived in Forest Hills since 1997.

As published in D Magazine - June 2015