

Turtle Creek People—May, 2005 Massive Commercial Development Planned Along Turtle Creek Blvd.

*Historic building in Design District to house showrooms, stores,
restaurant*

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Within a few months, the portion of Turtle Creek Boulevard that extends past the heart of the Design District between Irving Boulevard and the Trinity River Greenbelt Park will house a whopping new commercial development featuring several showrooms, design firms, and a restaurant. Jim Lake Companies is spearheading the project, which anticipates the city's plans for reconstruction of the Trinity River Corridor. This latest venture, The International on Turtle Creek, is set to open in the fall, with 30 percent of the space already leased by such clients as Allan Knight & Associates and Ellouise Abbott Showroom.

The company isn't yet releasing the name of a "high-end" restaurant that is also in the process of signing a lease. A smaller coffee shop is also expected to move in later in the year.

The property is being redone with the goal of combining natural elements, like allowing for plenty of light and open space and adding a water wall, to give designers and retailers maximum exposure. In addition, the unique building is literally split down the center to allow through traffic and easier access to parking, not to mention make it visually striking.

With about 160,000 square feet available for lease, this one-story design mecca will feature more than 75 skylights, floor-to-ceiling windows, and custom-designed showrooms for select designers. Clients of Jim Lake Companies can currently pre-lease spaces ranging from 2,500 to 50,000 square feet.

"It's basically like a big box that we've gone through and demolished the center of the building," said Jim Lake Jr., CEO of Jim Lake Companies. "This will let a lot of light in through all of the showrooms."

The building itself has a unique history as a massive distribution center. During the 1950s, it was the largest of its kind in the entire state.

"It was considered a really progressive thing, even then," said Molly DeVoss, who is marketing the space. "It was state of the art."

For years the building has been sitting vacant, due in part, Mr. Lake said, to a lack of interest in that part of the city.

But with the grand plans in the work to remake the area surrounding the Trinity River, he feels that now is the perfect time to saturate the neighboring streets with development.

In June, Mr. Lake will also start on another project for the area: a mixed-use development with a space for retail and lofts for residences.

"As far as long term, we'll be integrated into the Trinity trail system," Mr. Lake said. "We've made good renovations, have good designers and architects, and created a landscaped courtyard. Because of that, we've got new people coming into the district who had not previously looked here before. People need to see it. Once they see it, they understand."

Allan Knight, whose company will be the first tenant to move into the new building at the end of the summer, said that he was attracted to the development because of the opportunity to move into a prime space when the neighborhood is just beginning to take off and prices are low.

"It may look rough right now, but everywhere you turn there's construction going on and orange flags everywhere," he said. "And it's because of the Trinity River."

Mr. Knight also sees a trend in the heart of the Design District, where he now offices that he believes is hurting the neighborhood and the Dallas design industry altogether.

By moving to this new location, he hopes to bring something fresh and new to the trade.

"These streets are going to be a mess. There are vacancies all over," he said of the core Design District streets. He attributes this to retailers coming into an area that was once dominated by wholesalers, like his own business.

"The Dallas Design Center wanted us to come there, but they didn't have the right kind of space for us, and their rates were through the roof," said Mr. Knight. "This development is just more committed to what we're doing, and it will be a big draw for a lot of other people."

