

Dallas Contemporary to redo industrial space for new home

Center could help create district like Soho or Chelsea, official says

09:50 AM CDT on Tuesday, July 3, 2007

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The Dallas Center for Contemporary Art has purchased a building in a rapidly evolving commercial district.



Dallas Contemporary
An artist's conception of the planned renovation at 161 Glass St.

The Dallas Contemporary – now located on Swiss Avenue – plans to convert a former sheet metal plant in the old Trinity Industrial District into a complex for galleries and design space.

The building renovation at 161 Glass St. is just part of the redevelopment of the industrial district northwest of downtown Dallas.

Artists, design firms and more recently residential developers have zeroed in on the area across Stemmons Freeway from the Victory complex.

A Houston investor is negotiating to buy more than 30 acres of buildings and land in the Dallas Design District for mixed-use development.

The Dallas Contemporary's new building is less than a block from the Trinity River levee off Industrial Boulevard. Several nearby buildings have already been renovated for new uses.

"With the new Dallas Contemporary as its centerpiece, this section of the Trinity riverfront could grow into Dallas' version of Manhattan's Soho and Chelsea gallery districts," predicts board president Tom Lind.

"Being a leader in the contemporary world," he said, "it's a great place for us to be on the cutting edge."

The planned Trinity River improvements and nearby construction of the Calatrava Bridge were also factors, Mr. Lind said.

"That's going to create a lot of synergy in that area," he said.

The Dallas Contemporary board looked at potential locations all over the city, including some near the Arts District, before picking the Design District building.

The Dallas Contemporary has hired Edward Baum, former dean of the School of Architecture at University of Texas at Arlington, to design its \$6 million facility, which will be about three times the size of the current operation.

"This is a great building, and as an architect, Edward Baum really understands what Dallas Contemporary is trying to do," said Dan Boeckman, building committee adviser and a Dallas Contemporary donor.

"His design takes advantage of this distinctly urban space, capturing the spirit of the neighborhood, yet keeping the whole project within a budget that's realistic for a relatively young institution."

The sprawling industrial building will contain 12,000 square feet of art displays, plus offices and education space. And 24,000 square feet will be leased to art- and design-related businesses.

An outdoor exposition space will also be included.

The Dallas Contemporary has been in the Wilson Historic District in near East Dallas for 26 years. Its lease with the Meadows Foundation expires in 2009.

About 20 art exhibitions a year are held in the current facility at 2801 Swiss Ave.

Funding for the new location was provided by donors. NexBank provided the mortgage.