

Dallas approves 20-year, \$390 million plan to redevelop Hensley Field

The master plan calls for turning the city-owned, 738-acre site of a closed naval air station into a new mixed-use neighborhood



Automobiles fill the former ramp areas at Hensley Field on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, in Dallas. The Dallas City Council approved a master plan to redevelop the 738-acre area into a new neighborhood with thousands of new homes and jobs. (Smiley N. Pool / Staff Photographer)

By [Everton Bailey Jr.](#)
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A [20-year plan to redevelop Hensley Field](#), a 738-acre site of a closed naval air station on Mountain Creek Lake in southwest Dallas, into a new mixed-use neighborhood received the green light from the City Council on Wednesday.

It's estimated to cost around \$390 million to turn the city-owned property into a new walkable community with more than 6,800 new homes, over 12,000 jobs, new parks and waterfront trails, a marina, a possible film studio and other amenities. [The master plan](#), developed by the city's planning and urban design office and Austin-based design firm McCann Adams Studio, calls for the work to be done in three phases and suggests tax-increment financing as a way to pay for public infrastructure and other improvement costs.

That's estimated to raise between \$198 million to \$243 million in property tax revenue over 20 years. A combination of bond money, federal infrastructure grants, American Rescue Plan Act money and other financing methods are suggested as ways to make up the rest of the cost.

Future Hensley Field Redevelopment



[1/8] Renderings show what future development at Dallas' Hensley Field could look like. (City of Dallas / City of Dallas)



The council's master plan approval Wednesday allows the city to move forward with finding a developer for the overall project and planning for zoning amendments, design standards and other guidelines. But the site is also [still contaminated with toxic chemicals and other contaminants from decades of military use](#).

"Now we have an opportunity to make something beautiful of this location," said council member Casey Thomas, whose district includes Hensley Field. "It's almost like a blank canvas."

The Navy in a 2002 court settlement with Dallas agreed to clean up the site and, according to city officials, has spent \$92 million thus far doing so. But the work is ongoing, and the area hasn't gotten approval from state and federal environmental regulators that Hensley Field meets residential standards.

It's not clear when the cleanup will be finished.

Hensley Field landmarks

The city of Dallas owns this 738-acre lakefront site that housed a Naval Reserve Aviation Base from the 1940s to 1998.



SOURCE: City of Dallas

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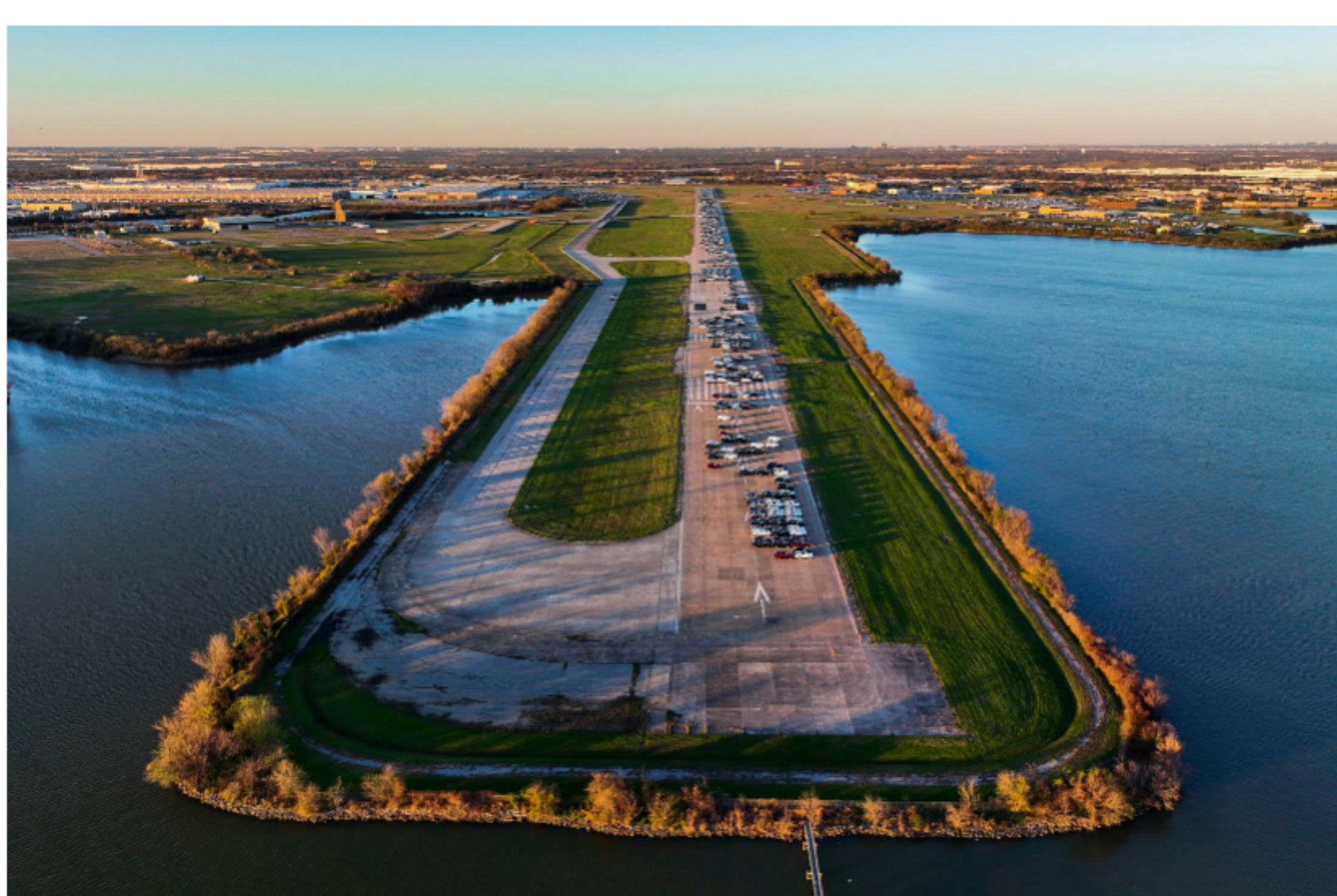
Parts of Hensley Field today are used for a random assortment of city storage, including [old police squad cars](#) and [Confederate-era monuments](#). The city also leases out parts of the property, including almost 100 acres to Jack Cooper Transport, a logistics contractor that stores vehicles from the General Motors plant in Arlington.

Aircraft maintenance hangars built in the 1940s and 1970s, military officers' houses from the 1930s and a 1-acre cemetery that has been around since the mid-1800s are historic sites there that could be preserved or repurposed, according to the master plan.

Council members lauded the master plan and the planning of the redevelopment before approving it, citing the community input and potential for the project to increase the city's tax base and spark development in an area of Dallas largely left untouched.

Council member Jaynie Schultz, who represents North Dallas, called the vote "a huge moment" and described the project as "a treasure in our city".

"This is one of the greatest projects that's going to happen in the future of this city," she said.




Automobiles fill a former runway at Hensley Field on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, in Dallas. (Smiley N. Pool / Staff Photographer)

Council member Adam Bazaldua noted the potential business a film studio could bring to the city and said the lack of one has driven projects out of Dallas. He highlighted television show *Queen of the South*, which [premiered in 2016](#) and [filmed largely in Dallas](#) but as of 2019 [moved production to New Orleans](#).

"We have the ability to be a contender in a market that both coasts have been monopolizing," Bazaldua said. "With our weather, with our lack of an income tax in our state, we have a lot that is very desirable here for film to be. But we don't have a lot to market."

The city bought the Hensley Field site in the late 1920s and leased it to the U.S. Army to train reserve pilots. A naval reserve air station was built in 1941, administration of the field was transferred to the Navy in 1949 and the air station remained operational until 1998.



 [Everton Bailey Jr.](#) Everton covers Dallas city government. He joined The Dallas Morning News in November 2020 after previously working for The Oregonian and The Associated Press in Hartford, Conn.

[✉ everton.bailey@dallasnews.com](mailto:everton.bailey@dallasnews.com) [🐦 @EvertonBailey](https://twitter.com/EvertonBailey)