

## Best Neighborhood: Accessibility, schools keep Far North Dallas neighborhood popular with city dwellers



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ROSE BACA/neighborsgo staff photographer

Aleksandra Rosen waits at a crosswalk with her son Asher, 9, within their Prestonwood Meadows neighborhood, which was rated the best for city dwellers in Dallas.

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In the last three decades, Tom Wood has lived in three homes in Far North Dallas, always within ZIP code 75248.

Now empty nesters, Wood, 69, and his wife, Karen, downsized eight years ago from their home five blocks east of Hillcrest Road to a 1970s brick townhome in Preston Green.

Initially, it was the Richardson ISD schools that drew them close.

But now, it's the familiarity and accessibility to the Dallas North Tollway that's since kept the couple planted.

"I just don't think there's a better area," Wood said.

The area — previously rated the top for empty nesters and families with kids — was also ranked the No. 1 neighborhood within the city of Dallas in the Richardson and Far North Dallas area, according to an analysis by *The Dallas Morning News*. It also scored the best overall in the city rank for the North Texas region.

The neighborhood of single-family homes, townhomes and apartments is bounded to the north by Campbell Road, to the east by Hillcrest Road, to the south by Arapaho Road and to the west by Preston Road and the railroad tracks.

In *The News'* analysis, only neighborhoods within the city of Dallas were considered for the "Best in the City" ranking. Based on a survey of city residents, other factors weighted included safety, affordability, neighborhood aesthetics and ease of commute.

Though the Prestonwood neighborhood comprises a large swath of the area, the specific area is outlined by townhomes of Preston Green to the north and single-family homes of Prestonwood Meadows to the east and Campbell Green to the northeast.

A native of North Dallas, Barry Rosen, 46, president of the Prestonwood Meadows Homeowners Association, grew up in the Preston Trails area southwest of his current home on Brentfield Drive.

He said the neighborhood is in transition as original owners such as Wood downsize, selling to young couples and families with young children.

Like Wood, Rosen said the neighborhood's closeness to the Dallas North Tollway speeds his commute southwest to Dallas' Medical District. He also said the walkability of the neighborhood's sidewalk-lined streets that are shielded by a canopy of trees was a selling point.

"It's an incredible location," Rosen said.

While *The News'* survey results indicated schools were less important to city residents, many of these Far North Dallas neighbors said the area's two RISD elementary schools — Brentfield and Prestonwood — were the deciding factors.

Eight years ago, Rosen moved from Plano into his one-story house on Brentfield Drive for his 9-year-old son to attend Brentfield Elementary, less than half-a-mile walk from his home.

“It’s the closest you can get outside of maybe Highland Park to the attentiveness of a private school in a public school setting,” said Rosen, an alumnus of J.J. Pearce High School.

But a proposal by DART to construct the Cotton Belt Rail Line has Rosen concerned about the future of this quiet neighborhood.

And it has Wood tossing and turning at night, too.

The 30-mile rail line is proposed to run along the north portion of the neighborhood as it passes from Plano west to the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

According to the plans, Wood, co-chairman of the Cotton Belt Concerned Citizens Coalition, said the train is projected to cross the neighborhood 35 feet from his townhome in the neighborhood’s northwest corner.

“We’re not against mass transit on the Cotton Belt Rail Line, but we do want mass transit on the Cotton Belt Rail Line to respect our neighborhood,” said Rosen, also a member of the coalition.

Rosen grew-up with the train passing twice a day along the railroad tracks near his childhood home in Preston Trails.

But this is different, he said.

Many residents are concerned how the rail line’s daily use could impact noise, safety and traffic.

“We’re basically a pass-through for the suburban communities to get to D/FW. With us being a pass-through, we’re saying, ‘Just don’t harm us as you’re going through,’” said Sandy Greyson, the Dallas City Council member who represents the area, which is in District 12.

In March, state Sen. John Carona introduced Senate Bill 1333, which would allow for a public-private partnership to finance the project.

“It’s not going to be the heavy diesel locomotive you usually think of going down the tracks,” said Steven Polunsky, director of the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce.

Since the bill is currently in process, Polunsky said he couldn’t talk specifics on the legislation’s language as it is evolving.

But he said the government has heard residents’ concerns and is working to address them.

“Besides the Cotton Belt, this is the best neighborhood,” Wood said. “We’re not giving up. I’d hate to have to move out of the top neighborhood.”

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