

PLACE: Dealey Plaza
Dallas, Texas

OWNERSHIP: City of Dallas, Texas

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: This area (3.07 acres), called "The Front Door of Dallas," was acquired by the City of Dallas for the construction of the Triple Underpass at Commerce, Main and Elm Streets. The property was transferred to the Park Board for maintenance purposes in 1936. Named Dealey Plaza, September 19, 1935 (city minutes, City of Dallas, Dallas, Texas, Volume 8, page 457), in honor of George B. Dealey, Publisher of the Dallas News and long outstanding in Dallas civic affairs, the Triple Underpass was officially opened on Friday afternoon, May 1, 1936. On March 2, 1940, funds were appropriated to carry out improvements consisting of a program for complete re-landscaping and new structures.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Dealey Plaza focalizes on incoming and outgoing traffic between downtown Dallas and the major highway systems to the north, west and south of the city. The Plaza is bounded on the north by Elm Street, on the east by Houston Street, on the south by Commerce Street, and on the west by the Triple Underpass.

The width of each concrete roadway through the Plaza is 40 feet. The Main Street roadway divides the Plaza and handles both eastbound and westbound traffic. The Elm Street roadway flows traffic one way toward the west from Elm Street, sweeping southwesterly toward the Triple Underpass. The Commerce Street roadway flows traffic one way eastward in a southeasterly direction from the Triple Underpass to Commerce Street.

The declining angle, east to west, of the entire Plaza area is approximately 3 degrees, or about a 1-foot drop per 20 linear feet. The distance from Houston Street to the Underpass is approximately 495 feet by way of Elm and Commerce Streets. When traveling by way of Main Street, this distance is approximately 425 feet. The road level at the Triple Underpass is approximately 24 feet lower than at the Houston Street level.

Sidewalks, 10 feet wide, exist on the north side of the Elm Street roadway, on the west side of Houston Street and on the south side of the Commerce Street roadway.

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Concrete pergolas are located on the northwest and southwest corners of the Plaza overlooking the roadways and lawn areas. Concrete peristyles, pylons and reflecting pools are located on the northeast and southeast corners of the Plaza. Evergreen shrubs, trees, and flower borders are situated in the Plaza area.

Steel and masonry structures enclose the Plaza. At the northeast corner, the Texas School Book Depository and Dal-Tex Buildings rise to heights of 94 feet and 110 feet respectively. On the Plaza's east side stand the Dallas County Records Building, 93 feet high; the Dallas County Criminal Courts Building, 124 feet high; the Old Court House, 73 feet high; the Neeley Bryan House, 12 feet high; and the 179-foot-high steel superstructure for the Dallas County Government Center. On the south side of the Plaza, the United States Post Office Building rises to a height of 114 feet, and to the west is the railroad right-of-way, which passes over the triple roadways at a height of 23 feet, 4 inches.