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Promises Made, Promises Kept

by **Lisa Dawson** in [Business](#), [City Development](#)[Bookmark](#)

If you Google pictures of Frisco from the turn of the century, you'll see dozens of images of people near rail cars, alongside railroad tracks and railroad boxcars in the background. That's because Frisco is a city built by the railroad industry. Rail life has been a part of Frisco since 1888 when Frisco was a stop on the St. Louis – San Francisco Railway. Frisco may have been just a stop back in the day for passengers traveling to Kansas City, Tulsa or Houston, but the Frisco we know today is booming beyond passengers' dreams.

Since the early 2000s, Frisco has been one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation. For its roughly 62 square miles, Frisco packs it all in: sports venues, museums, art and culture destinations, restaurants, shopping, parks, schools, hospitals, office parks, government buildings, hotels and let's not forget: dwellings for its 200,000 citizens. For many years, the downtown Rail District was a quieter area of Frisco that didn't receive a lot of attention. Donny Churchman, president and CEO of Nack Development, the development company leading many of Frisco's Rail District projects, says the current renovations and building projects are a real renaissance for the downtown area. "As Frisco has developed, the downtown area has been ignored. It was important to me and my partners to breathe life back into the old downtown," he says. Nack Development, which describes itself as a boutique real estate development company, specializes in multi-use revitalization of downtown areas. "The ultimate vision is to see the community spend their days shopping, dining and being entertained in the Rail District," explains Churchman. "I hope to see businesses not just surviving but thriving."

Some call Churchman "Mr. Downtown Frisco," a name which he says is both humbling and flattering. Churchman points out that his nickname is a complimentary recognition of his vision, but he's certainly not in this alone. "A lot of visions have gone into this, from Matt Calloway, Kristin Green, my engineer, John Lettelleir with the City of Frisco to folks at the Merchants Association."

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Churchman explained that he didn't have the luxury or benefit of having familial lineage to Frisco, however, he did have the honor of sipping coffee with Sam Roach (Frisco businessman and Frisco's first Frisco Economic Development Corporation Chairman) and hearing his stories of being raised in Frisco. "Saturday nights at his grandfather's store became the social point for the town. When possible, I want to share the history creatively. We recently brought in the famous muralist Patrick Ganino to paint a scene on the Ford Building's west side. In the 1920s the Carpenter brothers sold Ford Model Ts out of there, so now the building pays homage to them. Also, Double Dip was a well-known, nostalgic place in Frisco, so I had Ganino include their image in the mural at The Patios."

Tony Felker, president and CEO of the Frisco Chamber of Commerce says he has a front-row view of the downtown resurgence and is excited about the amount of activity he sees taking place. "Obviously, with the Frisco Chamber being located on Main Street and in the midst of this redevelopment, we look forward to assisting with and being a part of this evolving and strong business area," he says. "I especially love that we are getting new business owners interested in the area." Felker says he believes these downtown projects will be a continuous state of evolution as new businesses emerge. "For an area to remain viable, I believe it should always be in a state of change and evolution, and it should always grow into the next best thing possible!"

Although the pandemic has slightly altered the timeline for some of the Rail District's developments, one thing is for certain: Frisco is poised for a major downtown resurgence. Just speaking with a few local business owners who are all currently operating their storefronts and locations in the Rail District, you'll get the sense that a very exciting and fortunate time is upon Frisco. The latest projects for Frisco include a performing arts theatre, luxury brownstones, rooftop patios, retail, dining, office space, parking and perhaps a brewery, if all goes as planned.

The Patios at the Rail

The Patios at the Rail, located at 7511 Main Street, is more than 40,000 square feet of mixed-use space with rooftop patios, dining and retail. The building sits at the corner of Main Street and South County. Tenants include Makers Gym, Atrium Salon + Studio, Tumbleweed TexStyles and La Finca Coffee & Bakery among others, with more restaurants opening in 2021. The rooftop patios serve as a beautiful backdrop for tenants and an outdoor event space for musical performances, movie nights, private gatherings and more. The Patios at the Rail has been the largest development project Nack Development has undertaken in the Rail District.



Tumbleweed TexStyles

Brian Wysong, co-founder and president of Tumbleweed TexStyles says he loves being a part of the Rail District. Tumbleweed TexStyles' storefront, located at the Patio at the Rails, is home to the Texas-inspired apparel and lifestyle brand, which began in 2011. He says their new flagship store is something he and co-founder Jeb Matulich have worked on for more than two years. Both Wysong and Matulich have long-standing Frisco roots. Matulich is a full-time teacher at Liberty High School and Wysong and his wife, Hillary, also taught at the school. "The new developments from Donny Churchman and Nack Development have been a significant catalyst to the downtown area. It not only has brought new buildings but has shined light and eyes to an area that might have been overlooked," says Wysong. He explains other businesses and business owners have been kind and supportive of Tumbleweed TexStyles and the other new businesses and changes coming to the downtown area, fostering that sense of community.

Wysong says he and Matulich are very optimistic about the future of their store, brand and downtown Frisco. "We had the opportunity to open our store in many other developments throughout the DFW area and Texas, but we purposely chose The Patios at the Rail because we believe in the vision set out, the other businesses that are already established or will be soon coming and know it will be an incredible experience."



Atrium Salon + Studio

Atrium Salon + Studio has an effective motto: One. Stop. Shop. The salon goes beyond offering full-service hair salon services; they're also a photography studio, skin lab and beauty bar. Their space includes an open studio space perfect for photoshoots, videos, talent casting or even pop-up events. "Atrium Salon + Studio is truly one-of-a-kind. Our lifestyle rent-by-the hour space offers the community options for photography sessions, pop-up events and collaborations," says co-founder Anissa Shamieh. "We have a blowout bar, professional makeup artists and an esthetician who specializes in facials and waxing as well."



any other salon. Each of our stylists and team members are abundantly talented while believing in the culture we are creating. Our photography space allows a blank slate for artists to create," she says.

Shamieh and her business partner and co-founder Jenny Kulafofski opened the doors to Atrium Salon + Studio in October 2020. "We knew we found a home for Atrium after learning about the redevelopment plan for the Rail District. We're excited to call Frisco home and can already see how this is becoming a destination spot to visit, shop, eat and drink! We know this is just the start of something great."



Makers Gym





Frisco. The unique space will offer creative minds access to some of the best state-of-the-art equipment available. The professional-grade gear will be available for rent, as well as marketing consultations.

Terrance Price, president and owner of Makers Gym, understands the power of creative minds working together. He is an award-winning creative art director and he's been with some of New York City and Dallas' most prestigious, global advertising agencies. "After working as an art director on several global brands in advertising in New York, along with freelancing as a creative director, I realized that there was a lack of access to expensive equipment and other creatives," he says. "Small businesses lack access to these creatives, along with affordable quality content. All of this brought us to our main goal of bridging these gaps and making it possible for creatives a businesses alike to create without limits."



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La Finca Coffee & Bakery opened in October 2020 to the public and has received an enthusiastic welcome from lovers of great food and coffee. Owner Lee Gonzales says the café and bakery are heavily influenced by the traditional cuisine and culture of Mexico. “We have close relationships with coffee farms in Mexico,” explains Gonzales. “We work with local producers and we always support fair wages for the workers. We serve specialty-grade coffee and we like to use the term relational coffee. We have pictures of the farms and farmers we work with in Mexico on the walls of the café; some of the photos I’ve taken myself.”

Gonzales states, “We are a scratch kitchen and make everything in house. We serve traditional dishes like flan, Mexican wedding cookies and Bolillo bread. For breakfast and anytime meals, we have homemade dishes like Chilaquiles, Huevos Rancheros and Molletes.”

The design inspiration for the space is modern industrial, with steel, metal and glass and wood. Gonzales does carpentry work and personally made the furniture, like the tables and window bar. “We recycled a lot of the materials,” Gonzales explains. “We have a large eight-foot table made from recycled boxcar train flooring. It’s a nod to Frisco’s history as a rail town.”

The Nack Theater

The Nack Theater will be the new home of the North Texas Performing Arts of Frisco. Mikaila Montgomery, owner of Humble Vision, the management company for the Nack Theater and the Patios at the Rail, says the theater will have “throwback architecture.” Montgomery states the reasoning behind the name: “The Nack name is a tribute to the Churchman family; Nack was Donny’s grandparent’s name. I’ve been working with Donny for about two years now. He is the most compassionate person I’ve ever met. He wants to take care of the people that work with him and for him.”

This throwback-style theater will seat more than two hundred people yet will maintain an intimate setting. “No matter where you sit, it’s the best seat in the house. It’s an old-time theater. There will be stage performances, plays for local school districts, band performances, dance recitals, concerts, improv and comedy nights ... anything,” Montgomery says. “The theater is really getting back to the arts. It’s raw, natural talent and I think that’s going to be great for Frisco. You don’t have to travel a great distance to get to a quaint place to enjoy performances.”

Towers at the Rail

Eight luxury brownstones located at 8763 7th Street, in the heart of the Rail District, are known as the Towers at the Rail, overlooking the iconic water tower. The Towers are referred to as the ‘height of luxury living.’ All the residences have been purchased in the building and feature architectural details like exposed brick walls and hardwood floors. Churchman says the commercial portion of the project, with office, retail and possibly dining, will be completed by summer.

Innovation and collaboration collide to reimagine the Rail District for a new generation, and the Nack Development team and the City of Frisco have done just that. With shopping, dining, residential living and more, the Rail District is getting people out and walking and enjoying their city.

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North Texas has Moxie

by Amy Richmond in Dining

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On a warm winter night, my husband and I wandered just south of Highway 121 into Plano territory for a night out on the town. One might think the current pandemic would put a hitch in our plans, but Moxie's Grill & Bar proved to be the perfect place. With masks up and hand sanitizer at the ready, we were greeted with a modern, upbeat vibe as we walked through the door.

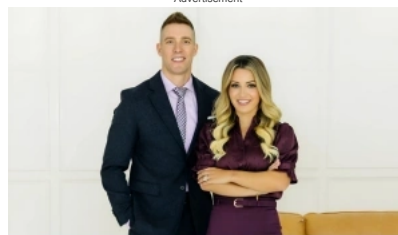




Honey-colored wood blended with pops of green and sprinkles of red in sleek, geometric form. The décor was edgy, yet fun and welcoming. A wall of soft, green moss nestled in a quilt of wood drew us in, and I confess I couldn't help but touch it – after sanitizing of course! A brown plaid, upholstered bench flanked the grey brick wall to the right. We walked past a room of lime-green and grey quilted booths, with chairs perfectly placed at geometric angles. A wall of windows and a well-lit glass wine cellar added a glow to the bursts of lime and honey in the room. Circular lights hanging from the ceiling added an edgy and modern touch, but lest things appear too serious, a lighted sign above the wine cellar playfully beckoned, "I will if you will." Our hostess led us into the next room, where every seat was elevated – literally. Lime and grey quilted high-boy booths sported metal footrests and were on-level with the black and honey high-top tables and bar stools. Geometric black and white tile moated the bar of lighted liquor and flat-screen TVs. In the back, clear glass revealed the kitchen, where the stainless-steel walls seemed quilted too.

Before we could linger, we ventured onward to the outdoor patio, where the fun and edgy vibe continued. Our hostess ushered us to one of the high, grey wicker booths, on-level with the bar stools inside. Red pillows were placed at perfect angles on each cushion, geometric chandeliers cast a modern light and black and white striped umbrellas added an element of whimsy to the whole scene. Our waitress pointed out the QR code link to their menu, and we began the hard process of choosing a drink from their many options. Inspired by the sunset and the daily Happy Hour from 3-6 p.m., I opted for a sweet cocktail to kick off the evening and my husband chose the Old Fashioned, with a peel of an orange and a spear of a cherry, which the waitress had recommended.

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For starters, I tried the Poutine: fresh-cut fries, hot beef gravy, cheese curds and chives. These heavily seasoned fries definitely required a fork! As the temperature began to drop a bit from the sun's absence, these potatoes were just the bit of warmth and flavor I needed at the moment. But as appetizers go, the pot stickers my husband ordered undeniably stole the show. The presentation was beautiful and not at all what we were expecting from the menu description of pork dumplings with chili ponzu and fresh pineapple salsa. Served on an elongated plate, eight elegantly furled dumplings innocently sat on a bed of chili, sprinkled with a confetto of corn, pineapple and mango. It was almost too pretty to eat ... but that didn't last long. Each dumpling provided a kaleidoscope of textures and flavors with just a touch of crunch in the beginning, followed by the tender pork and then punctuated with a perfect blend of sweet and spicy. What a fabulous way to start the evening!





After indulging in the delicious appetizers, it was time to work our way to the main event. Moxie's menu choices were categorized into Steaks, Mains, Bowls and Handhelds. Soups and salads were offered as well, but we were here to get the full experience. Steaks consisted of a 12-ounce prime New York, a tenderloin filet or steak frites. Mains included various selections of chicken, salmon and ribs. Bowls touted beef, chicken or vegetarian themes. Handhelds ranged from a French Dip to an array of burgers designed to satisfy all dietary preferences. My husband's half-rack baby back ribs were truly fall-off-the-bone tender, as promised, and the small house salad and jasmine rice he chose as sides helped to balance the weight of the meal. Based on my husband's rate of consumption, which served as a high compliment, the entire meal was reduced to mere bones in no time. For me, the chipotle mango chicken with lemon quinoa sounded intriguing, but I substituted baby potatoes for the seasonal vegetables and I was glad I did! They helped squelch the heat of the sweet and smoky dry rub on the two chicken breasts that arrived perfected stacked on a bed of lemon quinoa and potatoes. Topped with salsa fresca, slices of avocado and mango puree, this entrée definitely delivered a medley of flavors and spice levels to keep my taste buds entertained!



Somehow, after all that entertainment, we miraculously found room for dessert. So strange how that happens! We looked at our options and both laughed because we instantly knew what each of us would order. Key lime pie happens to be one of my husband's favorite desserts and I've been known to have a huge weakness for brownies. So, the decision was easy! But what we received was far from the norm. I snuck a bite of my husband's key lime pie and I vehemently agreed it was one of the smoothest key lime pies we'd ever had. You can't beat a graham cracker crust, of course, and the whipped cream infused with pecanbits and lime zest topped it off with an unexpected twist. One bite was all I even attempted because I knew my husband was going to fully consume that little slice of heaven!

Fortuitously, I was in for my own surprise when my brownie made its appearance. Yes, the menu had touted it as a white chocolate brownie with warm chocolate sauce, vanilla bean ice cream and real whipped cream, but somehow, I was shocked by what I saw. Perhaps I had been mentally blinded by the word 'chocolate' ... an effect I'm sure I'm not alone in experiencing, but a yellow brownie was not what I was expecting to see! I'll admit, the fact it was called a brownie and was sitting on a bed of chocolate is what really drew me in. I almost had to close my eyes to get past the visual illusion, but a deliciously warm brownie is what I tasted. Oh my, was it good! I offered a bite to my husband, which he declined, perhaps because he was experiencing his own key lime ecstasy by that point, so I was left to happily consume the whole thing!





By the end of our dining adventure, we weren't sure we'd be able to gracefully navigate our way out of the elevated booths, but we didn't care. We had been thoroughly entertained and more than satisfied!

Our dinner out – in the middle of a pandemic – had been a success! It was so refreshing to experience a bit of normalcy in the midst of abnormal times. We quickly realized our annual Valentine's Day dinner could be accomplished after all! Imagine our delight when we learned that Moxie's also offers a brunch on Saturdays and Sundays, starting at 8 a.m. and ending at 3 p.m. After our server's glowing recommendation, this brunch sounds like something that shouldn't be missed either! French toast covered with Crown Royal strawberries, syrup and whipped cream, anyone? Or maybe a brunch burger topped with egg, bacon and cheddar is what you're looking for? Either way, it sounds like there is something for everyone at Moxie's. If you happen to experience Moxie's on a Wednesday, you can enjoy their half-priced wine bottles all day long. But if the rest of the world discovers the hidden secrets of Moxie's Grill & Bar and the crowds make reservations difficult, you can still savor their flavors through their delivery and pick-up options.

Regardless of how you choose to experience Moxie's Grill & Bar, you'll be treating yourself – and your tastebuds – to a fun, culinary adventure! That little slice of normalcy just might help ensure your sanity and the continuance of Moxie's for years to come!

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