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Dallas hired firm to find, recommend new sites for new Mavericks arena

City officials signed off on a three-month agreement worth up to \$75,000 with Hillwood Urban Services in April to help find a new home for the NBA team

By [Everton Bailey Jr.](#) and [Nick Wooten](#)
Staff Writers

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The Dallas Mavericks' lease at American Airlines Center ends in 2031, and the team has indicated that it wants to move into a new home.

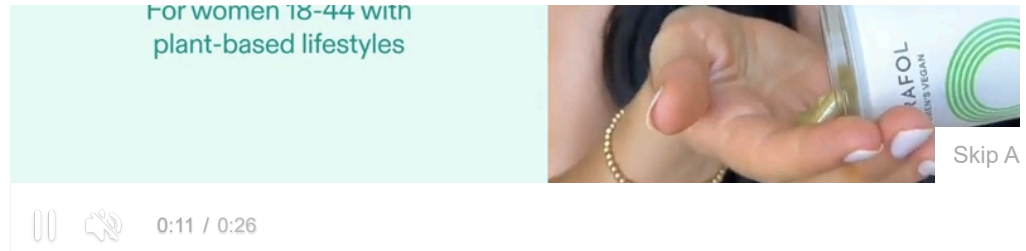
ELÍAS VALVERDE II / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Dallas hired a commercial real estate investment and development company earlier this year to find potential sites for a new Dallas Mavericks arena, city records show. The contract was up last month, but the city has not discussed the results publicly.

City officials signed off on a three-month consultant services agreement worth up to \$75,000 with Hillwood Urban Services in April to help research and suggest new locations for the team to move from American Airlines Center.

An advertisement for Nutrafol Women's Vegan supplement. The background is a light teal color. At the top, the word 'NUTRAFOL' is written in white capital letters. Below it, a dark teal rounded rectangle contains the text 'Nutrafol Women's Vegan:' in white. To the right of the text is a close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, looking down. The bottom of the advertisement is partially cut off.



The agreement specifically calls for the firm “to provide site identification, site evaluation, feasibility analysis, engagement, and final site recommendations for a Dallas Mavericks arena...”, according to a city administrative action document approved by Rosa Fleming, convention and event services director, Lisa Mares, assistant city attorney, and Robin Bentley, assistant city manager.

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Administrative actions allow Dallas’ city manager to approve contracts under \$100,000 without City Council approval. Representatives from Hillwood declined to comment on their work for the city. Bentley declined to comment Wednesday, and Fleming didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

“There are no scheduled council briefings on this, and we have nothing to report,” said Rick Ericson, a city spokesman.

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The Dallas Morning News requested from the city any reports produced by Hillwood Urban Services related to the deal and was told “no records exist.” The city responded to a separate public records request for copies of all agreements and contracts with Hillwood Urban Services this year by appealing to the Attorney General’s Office to prevent the release of any of the documents.

Dallas is citing sections of the Public Information Act that allow municipal governments not to release competitive or bidding information, allow for confidentiality of certain economic development information and protect third-party privacy or property interests.

“The submitted information...pertains to an active agreement to which the city is a party, and the purpose of the agreement is to facilitate and assist with the terms of an agreement between the city and business to locate and/or stay in Dallas,” the city’s appeal to the attorney general’s office said. “Thus, the city believes that the release of this information would reveal financial or other incentives that are being offered to a business prospect.”

“The city has not reached an agreement with a business prospect to which the requested information pertains.”

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A ruling from the AG’s office is pending.

An item on the Dallas City Council’s Wednesday agenda uses similar language and mentions “Project X.” Still, it is unclear if it is related to the Mavericks’ arena or another business. For example, the city has also been in discussions with Saks over keeping its downtown Neiman Marcus location open.

Scheduled for closed session, the item calls for the council to “discuss or deliberate commercial or financial information that the city has received from a business prospect (Project X) that the city

seeks to have locate, stay, or expand in or near the City of Dallas and with which the city is conducting economic development negotiations; and deliberate the offer of a financial or other incentive in connection with Project X.”

City officials haven't provided further details regarding Project X.

Hillwood developed American Airlines Center and the surrounding Victory Park neighborhood. The group also handled the site evaluation process when a location for the then-new arena was being sought.

Ross Perot Jr., the firm's founder and chairman, was the majority owner of the Mavericks when construction on American Airlines Center began. Mark Cuban [bought a majority stake in the franchise in 2000](#), and the arena opened in 2001.

The Mavericks' lease at American Airlines Arena, which they share with the NHL's Dallas Stars, ends in 2031.

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In late July, Mavericks CEO Rick Welts told *The News* that city officials proposed several possible sites for a new arena and that the team was focusing on two of them to assess their suitability.

“Neither may work, and we may refocus on others,” Welts said on July 29. The CEO also previously told *The News* that the team was looking for a location between 30 and 50 acres and set a goal of picking a new site by late 2025 or early 2026.

A group of developers, landowners, a Dallas County commissioner and other well-known figures in commercial real estate [shared their suggestions](#) for where to build a new arena with *The News* in March. Some of the possible locations they mentioned included near the new downtown Dallas convention center, Dallas City Hall, the site of the former Valley View mall in North Dallas, and the land currently occupied by the Dallas County jail. Dallas County Administrator Darryl Martin [told *The News* on Aug. 7 that so far, no one had approached the county for negotiations](#), indicating that the jail site was unlikely to be used for a new arena.

Along with the location for a new Mavericks arena, who will pay for it will also draw heavy interest.

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In San Antonio, officials are [mulling a potential \\$1.3 billion downtown arena for the San Antonio Spurs](#). Bexar County plans to use up to \$311 million from taxes on hotel rooms and car rentals for the project, but that depends on voter approval in the fall. The Spurs have promised to contribute \$500 million and will also pay for any extra costs that exceed the budget. The city has agreed to provide up to \$489 million in funding.

But San Antonio Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones is pushing to delay negotiations over the new arena, asking for a new financial analysis of the facility and at least two community meetings to gather residents' input.

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