



KESSLER SCHOOL

NONPROFIT

REPURPOSING WITH A PURPOSE: ELIZA SOLENDER HELPS NONPROFITS AND SCHOOLS FIND NEW LIFE IN OLD SPACES

SOLENDER REPRESENTED THE KESSLER SCHOOL IN THE PURCHASE OF THE FORMER CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF OAK CLIFF.

How do you solve the issue of nonprofit organizations getting squeezed out of the communities they serve by the rising costs of real estate in Dallas-Fort Worth? It starts with who you call.

Eliza Solender is president of Solender/Hall Inc., which assists nonprofits with buying, selling, and leasing commercial real estate in North Texas.

Solender/Hall has been highly successful in finding unique spaces, often repurposing stores, banks, warehouses, churches, and even bowling alleys for nonprofit clients.

Repurposing old spaces and helping groups and schools find new spaces is something that Solender has done since starting the firm in 1991. You'll find dozens of local charities among her clients, from the AIDS Interfaith Network and American Foundation for the Blind to the World Affairs Council and Zero to Five Funders. Sprinkled throughout the A-to-Z list are a number of private schools.

Most recently, Solender represented The Kessler School in the purchase of a two-acre

campus with 60,000 square feet of building space that was formerly the Calvary Baptist Church of Oak Cliff. The seller was represented by Roosevelt Broach of Church Realty Inc.

"The Kessler School had to be in a specific geographic area and needed more space—both indoors and outdoors—to be able to increase enrollment and expand programs. When we walked into this historic church, we knew it was the perfect place," Solender said.

Officials with The Kessler School, currently operating in 12,000 square feet at nearby Kessler Park United Methodist Church, plan to restore and renovate the 96-year-old sanctuary, repurposing it as a "gymnasium," serving both as gym and auditorium space. They also will update the educational annex, built in 1953, to better allow for personalized education and current technology needs. On the grounds, they'll add sports fields, playgrounds, and other landscaping.

"The response we've received from our new neighbors in the



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PHOTO: THE KESSLER SCHOOL

Sunset Hill neighborhood, as well as those who have been concerned about the future of the structures themselves, has been overwhelmingly positive," said Cooper Koch, president of the school's Board of Trustees. "We look forward to reactivating these gorgeous old buildings while continuing to grow The Kessler School as an asset and contributor to North Oak Cliff's success."

The school's new location should be ready for students next fall.

Earlier this year, the new Simmons Family Gateway Resource Center opened in a building owned

by Catholic Charities Dallas after Solender/Hall brought the two nonprofits together. Family Gateway, which provides support services to children and families impacted by homelessness, is housing their non-shelter services at the new center. Family Gateway's Emergency Shelter in downtown Dallas, which used to house organization offices, is now solely dedicated to shelter services.

The deal typifies the kind of creativity Solender brings to the table.

At the March opening of the new center, she said, "As commercial real estate continues to increase in value, nonprofit organizations are seeing more of their budget go toward rent and real estate-related costs, thus they have to become ever more creative in how they fulfill their space requirements.

"A transaction like this is so satisfying because it is a win-win for both organizations. We have an understanding landlord who recognizes the unique needs of a nonprofit service provider and wants to find opportunities for collaboration. Both organizations will be able to focus more of their scarce resources on critical community services." —SE