



Revitalized buildings in the Bishop Arts District house chic places to shop, eat, and just hang, including The Soda Gallery, which offers soda pop memorabilia such as the clock at right.

# Retro Active

The Bishop Arts District creates a bustling, bohemian backyard for downtown Dallas.



Text by **JUNE NAYLOR**  
Photographs by **KEVIN STILLMAN**

When you're in North Texas and crave a dose of inventive, hip, cool, you don't have to hop on Interstate 35 for a trip to Austin. Just point the car a minute or two southwest of downtown Dallas. There, you'll find the north Oak Cliff quarter known as the Bishop Arts District, a neighborhood with spruced-up, century-old buildings and a wealth of vintage chic. The destination proves ideal for anyone craving a leisurely day (or evening) of gallery-browsing, boutique-dawdling, pub-crawling, and cuisine-sampling.

**B**ishop Arts' growing fan club comes also for the mood, best described as liberal and inclusive, engendered by the diverse, creative population living and working there. Nothing about Bishop Arts feels contrived or fabricated; instead, the neighborhood hums with authenticity. Perhaps best of all, the district's low-gear pace serves as a welcome counterpoint to downtown's hustle, less than five minutes away.

Although the buildings wear plenty of age, the district's current incarnation began to take form in 1996, when Bishop Street Market owner Michael Harrity opened shop. At that time, only a couple of brave restaurateurs had decided to give the



**ABOVE:** At Hattie's, the key lime pie comes blanketed with a sour cream Chantilly sauce. **RIGHT:** The mid-century modern Belmont Hotel and its new restaurant, Smoke, typify the cool, retro vibe of the district.



long-shuttered neighborhood in the shadows of downtown a go. Harrity, a longtime Dallasite who'd been living in Oak Cliff for about a decade, longed for weekend diversions right in the neighborhood. Although the stretch of Bishop Avenue reaching south from Davis Street had fallen on hard times, people like Harrity believed potential awaited within the old storefronts. "People would walk around, admire the old buildings, and wish there was something to do here," he says. Upon graduating from SMU, Harrity decided being his own boss held the most appeal, and he opened Bishop Street Market, a gift and home accessories store, on a shoestring. Bars covered the

store's windows back then, and on his first Friday night in business, a neighborhood patrol officer stopped by, surprised that someone would consider being open in what was then still considered an iffy area. Within three years, Harrity helped form a business association, which launched Jingle Bells on Bishop, an increasingly popular, old-fashioned, holiday festival that just marked 14 successful years. Varied celebrations came along to keep the merriment going throughout the year, and city leaders finally took notice. In 2000, an improvement project with \$2.5 million in city funding brought upgrades, which included planting live oaks

alongside the street, bricking the sidewalks, and installing trolley-era lampposts. The completion signaled that Bishop Arts District had truly arrived. "People from places like Austin and Chicago say this reminds them of their little old neighborhood center because of its funky, small-town feel, right next to downtown," Harrity says. Set aside at least an afternoon and evening for exploring Bishop Arts District. Parking places along Bishop Avenue, and Davis, 7th, and 8th streets should be plentiful, barring a festival in progress. Here's a select guide of places to enjoy during a spin through the district.

## Shopping

**H**arrity's Bishop Street Market stocks cool gifts in the way of handcrafted pewter tableware, oversized coffee table books, aromatherapy candles from Caldrea (love the ginger pomelo), and The Thymes Collection personal care line, as well as interesting little items like pink leather flasks and locally made gourmet chocolates from La Truffe. Harrity also represents many local artists who paint or make pots, jewelry, and candles.

Next door, Decorazon presents contemporary paintings, sculpture, photography, and mixed media from local and international artists in a warm, yet modern, airy space. Across

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the street, Artisans Collective Gallery showcases affordable art, handcrafts, and jewelry from more than 150 Dallas-area artists.

Fashionistas will have trouble leaving anything behind at Indigo 1745, a boutique on 7th Street stocking men's and women's jeans, fragrances, and accessories such as shoes, hats, handbags, and necklaces. Party dresses, costume jewelry, hatboxes, ice buckets, and kitschy knickknacks—all of which appear to have come from the early-Sixties set of the Dick Van Dyke Show—beg perusal at Zola's Everyday Vintage on Bishop.

Down the street, local art hangs on the walls at The Soda Gallery, a space that speaks to the kid in everyone, thanks to a supply of more than 200 varieties of soda pop, including nearly 30 kinds of root beer. Around the corner on 7th Street, Fête-ish displays still more local art, along with a selection of gifts ranging from whimsically painted martini glasses, to the plush, interactive kids' toys called Webkinz.



## Eating and Drinking

**A**nother Bishop Arts pioneer, Tillman's Roadhouse on 7th Street, has built a loyal clientele by serving exceptional Frito venison-chili pie, truffled popcorn, and make-your-own S'mores, and by mixing crystal chandeliers and hunting trophies into the decor. On Bishop, a shop called Hattie's brings elegance in the form of silver serving pieces, antique sideboards, and portraits, while offering a contemporary spin on Southern standards such as Low Country shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes with buttermilk dressing, and bacon-wrapped meatloaf.

Across the street, Eno's Pizza Tavern wows even the pickiest pizza critics with extra-thin-crust pizza topped with the likes of pancetta and arugula, accompanied by a selection of craft beers that includes Brooklyn Lager, Gordon's Ale, and St. Arnold Divine. A block north, Café Brazil brings regulars in droves for exceptional spinach crêpes, chorizo burritos, and the fabulous, bottomless cup of coffee (less than three bucks per), with flavored favorites including snickerdoodle.

For authentic food of Mexico's interior, you must try the Veracruz Cafe. Dishes here, found nowhere else in town, include *queso fundido* with wild mushroom *escabeche*; a “desert” soup incorporating cactus, squash, hominy, and chiles; and *puerco adobo*, cubed pork in a thick, brick-red sauce comprised of myriad chiles and roasted tomatoes. On the eastern edge of Bishop Arts, Hula Hotties, a clever combination of Hawaiian barbecue, Pacific-rim cuisine, and old-style bakery, has quickly become a favorite.

## Relaxing

**W**hen it's time to take a load off, make a five-minute drive to the northernmost edge of Oak Cliff to the Belmont Hotel, which serves as an ideal jumping-off point for forays into downtown Dallas and the much-lauded new AT&T Performing Arts Center. While the lodging shares a simpatico retro spirit with the Bishop Arts District, its look speaks of mid-century modern. A creation of famed architect Charles Stevens Dilbeck, the Belmont made its debut as a fashionable motor court in 1946, just a stone's throw west of downtown. Rescued from near-ruin nearly five years ago, the Belmont found new life with

LEFT: Beverages at The Soda Gallery include nostalgic and regional favorites that are still produced with the original ingredients.

RIGHT: The rustic-lush theme of the decor at Tillman's Roadhouse carries over to its menu, which features chicken-fried hangar steak as well as Port wine-glazed Texas quail.





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Eclectic shops in the Bishop Arts District include Zola's Everyday Vintage, which offers bejeweled Enid Collins handbags and other treasures.

a clever renovation, and now features 68 individually designed rooms within four buildings, the Moderne, the Garden Rooms,

the Bungalows, and the Loft Suites. Views from several of the guestroom patios, as well as from the pool deck and the hotel bar terrace, include the downtown skyline.

BarBelmont, a neighborhood lounge perfect for sipping wine and noshing on hummus and pita chips, encourages lingering, especially when live music plays on Thursday evening. Guests who can tear themselves away can zip across the Trinity River to the new performing arts center downtown, via West Commerce Street, in less than ten minutes.

The Belmont's new restaurant, Smoke, occupies the hotel's former coffee shop and offers inventive handiwork from chef Tim Byres, who cooks with hardwoods by smoking, braising, roasting, and grilling. Byres gathered ideas during research treks across the southern United States as well as Central Texas, slowing down in Austin long enough to draw inspiration from Lamberts Downtown Barbecue.

Yum—another good taste comparable to vintage Austin, right in downtown Dallas' backyard. **TH**

*Writer JUNE NAYLOR looks for frequent excuses to zip from home in Fort Worth to shop in Bishop Arts and have a snack and cocktail at the Belmont. Photographer KEVIN STILLMAN enjoyed dining at the Bishop Arts District's El Jordan Cafe.*

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➔ **TH** ESSENTIALS

## Bishop Arts District

THE FUNKY CHARM of the Bishop Arts District is just minutes southwest of downtown Dallas in north Oak Cliff, near the intersection of Bishop Ave. and Davis St. Call 214/942-0690; [www.bishopartsdistrict.com](http://www.bishopartsdistrict.com).

**Bishop Street Market**, 419 N. Bishop Ave. at W. 7th St., 214/941-0907; [www.bishopstreetmarket.com](http://www.bishopstreetmarket.com).

**Artisans Collective Gallery**, 410 N. Bishop Ave., 214/356-0818; [www.artisanscollective.net](http://www.artisanscollective.net).

**Decorazon**, 417 N. Bishop Ave., 214/946-1003; [www.decorazongallery.com](http://www.decorazongallery.com).

**Indigo 1745**, 370 W. 7th St., 214/948-1745; [www.indigo1745.com](http://www.indigo1745.com).

**Zola's Everyday Vintage**, 414 N. Bishop Ave., 214/943-6643; [www.zolasvintage.com](http://www.zolasvintage.com).

**Fête-ish**, 322 W. 7th St., 214/948-9874; [www.fetehome.com](http://www.fetehome.com).

**The Soda Gallery**, 408 N. Bishop Ave., 214/946-SODA or 866/946-SODA; [www.thesodagallery.com](http://www.thesodagallery.com).

**Tillman's Roadhouse**, 324 W. 7th St., 214/942-0988; [www.tillmansroadhouse.com](http://www.tillmansroadhouse.com).

**Hattie's**, 418 N. Bishop Ave., 214/942-7400; [www.hatties.com](http://www.hatties.com).

**Eno's Pizza Tavern**, 407 N. Bishop Ave., 214/943-9200; [www.enospizza.com](http://www.enospizza.com).

**Café Brazil**, 611 N. Bishop Ave., Ste. 101, 214/946-7927; [www.cafebrazil.com](http://www.cafebrazil.com).

**Veracruz Café**, 408 N. Bishop Ave., Ste. 107, 214/948-4746; [www.cafeveracruzdallas.com](http://www.cafeveracruzdallas.com).

**Hula Hotties Café & Bakery**, 244 W. Davis St., 214/943-CAFÉ; [www.hulahottiescafe.com](http://www.hulahottiescafe.com).

**Belmont Hotel**, 901 Fort Worth Ave., 214/393-2300 or 800/951-2997; [www.belmontdallas.com](http://www.belmontdallas.com).

**Smoke**, 901 Fort Worth Ave., 214/393-4141; [www.smokerestaurant.com](http://www.smokerestaurant.com).