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## Branding a neighborhood? Stick with 'up'

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STEVE BROWN

What's in a name? Shakespeare certainly knew the power of it.

Real estate developers do, too. They love the idea of naming different parts of town, approaching the task with the same zeal brand experts use to sell soap powder or breakfast cereal.

Alas, many of the names they choose go the way of Bab-o and Crispy Critters.

Back in 1983, when I was writing about a new office building going up near Cedar Springs Road and Pearl Street, I casually referred to the emerging development district as Dallas' "Uptown."

The story was about plans for developer Gabriel Barbier-Mueller's Rolex building. This was before the Crescent was built and when the area was still a jumble of old houses, car lots and faded storefronts.

It took a lot of imagination then to find anything uptown about the higgledy-piggledy neighborhood north of the central business district.

But the unlikely moniker stuck – with a push from developers.

Now that Uptown has become a sellable realty brand, developers are scrambling to come up with an area to call "Midtown."

Some folks decided it made sense for the area between Ross Avenue and Woodall Rodgers Freeway. One problem with that – it's already called the Arts District.

Another group wanted to use Midtown for the area around Mockingbird Station. That didn't get much traction either.

Even commercial builders up on LBJ Freeway tried to latch onto the Midtown name – perhaps the silliest notion yet.

Another branding idea that never caught on is to call the downtown area south of Commerce Street "SoCo."

And I've heard the lower end of McKinney Avenue referred to as LoMac.

Other than Lower Greenville, developers around here haven't had much luck with "low" tags

One homebuilder tried to name the East Dallas neighborhood near Henderson Avenue the "Lower M

Streets." Not so good.

And one creative thinker wanted to label Dallas' booming design district "Lower Oak Lawn." Please. Does that mean Highland Park is now "Upper Oak Lawn"?

Back in the 1960s and '70s, the shopping strip along Lovers Lane between Inwood and Preston roads was called the "Miracle Mile." These days, the only miracle is if you can get through the traffic along there.

And Preston Road – running all the way to Oklahoma, it would seem – has been dubbed the "Golden Corridor."

Some wags even try to call the Dallas North Tollway market the "Platinum Corridor."

That may be prophetic of proposed toll increases, but it hasn't caught the public's fancy.

Promoters also take great liberties with what they call Dallas' Central Business District. In the old days, that was city-planner talk for the financial district.

More recently, downtown boosters expanded the concept to include everything from Uptown to parts of East Dallas and the Cedars neighborhood south of town.

True, those areas are somewhat "central," and there is business conducted there, but I still question the practice.

Likewise, now that Oak Cliff has become one of Dallas' most popular spots for new restaurants and shopping, business types are quick to put the "OC" label on areas south of the river that were never traditionally part of the neighborhood.

Of course, Oak Cliff was once called "Hord's Ridge."

I can understand why they were eager to ditch that one.