

THOMAS C. LEPPERT
MAYOR



MAYOR SAYS DOWNTOWN HAS TURNED A CORNER
Says Tax Hike and No-Bid Contracts Hurt Company Recruitment

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Contact: Chris Heinbaugh
214-670-0773

Today, Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert said that the survival of Downtown Dallas is no longer in doubt.

“Downtown Dallas has turned a corner,” said Mayor Leppert. “Downtown Dallas is a turnaround play that shows no sign of letting up.”

Mayor Leppert made those remarks today in his State of Downtown Address to the Annual Meeting of DowntownDallas at Union Station.

While acknowledging challenges still remain, Mayor Leppert said years of persistent effort by Dallas civic, business, non-profit, neighborhood and arts leaders have put the city’s core on a solid path to success.

He said the substantial changes over the past ten years are now attracting relocation interest from major firms from around the country.

“In other states where companies feel over-taxed and over-regulated, Texas clearly is benefitting from its business friendly environment,” he said. “Because of the investments we have made, Greater Downtown Dallas is now a top competitor.”

The Mayor praised successes Downtown including the dramatic reduction in crime and the Vacant Building Initiative. He also noted that yesterday, the FBI said that Dallas has now dropped below Houston and San Antonio in crime rankings.

He spoke about the progress of the Omni Dallas Convention Center Hotel saying it is on schedule, on budget, and this week is pouring the 9th floor, and should top out at the 23rd floor in August.

He also spoke of the “Quality of Life” investments such as the AT&T Performing Arts Center and Downtown parks, and said the 40-story arch of the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge will begin rising next month.

The Mayor also discussed challenges facing Downtown, including those caused by the economic recession. The Mayor said the city should not look to a property tax increase to close a large budget shortfall. He said instead, City leaders should focus on boosting property values by bringing firms and jobs to Dallas.

“We need to grow our commercial tax base and raising taxes has never done that here or any place else,” said Leppert.

Mayor Leppert also said transportation is a critical challenge for Downtown. He said the City should not base decisions on DART’s second Downtown light rail alignment and the streetcar system on current economic woes.

“We have to be planning both our light rail alignment *and* our streetcar system – not for next year or for five years from now – but literally for the Downtown that we see in 2020 and 2030 and 2040,” he said.

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The Mayor also took fire at the controversial no-bid concession contracts at Love Field Airport. He said the city should provide a level playing field and that the contracts should undergo “the competitive clearinghouse of an open bid process.”

He said the no-bid contracts send a bad message about the city, making it difficult to attract firms to Dallas.

“These contracts are too important. Love Field’s future is too important. And most importantly, our city’s integrity is too important.”

In closing, the Mayor said the city needed to begin viewing Downtown as more than just the area inside the freeway loop. That as Downtown grows the individual neighborhoods such as the West End, Victory, Cedars, Arts District, Uptown, Financial District, Bryan Place, Deep Ellum and others will grow closely together. While remaining unique, he said they will become part of a unified fabric of a Greater Downtown with 30-50,000 people, businesses, parks, shops, theatres and more.

“By looking forward to what the seeds we are planting will become, we will find the inspiration and determination to get us through the challenges of today, and make the wise choices for tomorrow.”

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