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During my campaign for mayor, I asked one of Dallas' most successful investors if he thought, using trading parlance, Dallas was a buy, a sell or a hold. In short, what did he see as our city's future?

After a thoughtful pause, he looked at me and with certainty answered, "A buy!" He added, "Dallas is going to take off in the next decade." I agree and feel confident about the future of our city as I see what is happening all around us.

There are many signs of success — whether it's the successful opening of the new Omni convention center hotel, our designation as the fastest-growing economic region in the U.S., or our being home to the No. 1 public high school in America. However, it's the projects that are coming online that give me the greatest sense that something special is happening right before our eyes. In the next 18 months, we will have a stellar list of new attractions that will transform our city:

- The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, a cornerstone in the Trinity River project, will connect downtown Dallas to West Dallas.
- The deck park over Woodall Rodgers Freeway will reunite the core of our city with Uptown.
- The Perot Museum of Science and Nature will establish Dallas' place in the world of science and nature.
- Belo Garden will provide an open space of green in the heart of downtown.
- The City Performance Hall is the final piece in our world-renowned Arts District.
- An eight-acre, world-class Children's Garden will open at the Dallas Arboretum.
- A modernized Love Field will be the first impression to travelers of our city.

And so much more.

How did all this happen — and during the most difficult time since the Great Depression? We all know the answer. It's the people and our attitude.

Dallas citizens are a unique mix of mostly outsiders with native Dallasites who all believe in opportunity. We believe that we are capable of creating the best quality of life for ourselves and our families. We combine a hopeful belief in the future with a love of hard work to reach our goals.

I always believed this was true, but I wanted to make sure it wasn't just an urban myth; so I asked a researcher to poll Dallas citizens and compare their attitude about our future to the rest of America's. When asked, "Are our best days ahead of us or behind us?" 45 percent of Americans said "ahead of us," while 44 percent said "behind us." When Dallasites were asked the same question, 65 percent said "ahead of us," compared with only 15 percent saying "behind us." Our minority community was even more optimistic, giving support to the theory that we really do look at our future differently than residents of other places in the U.S. do.

But this positivism raises an important question, maybe the most important question: What's next? We need to take this sense of optimism and put it to work against the things that will truly transform Dallas: ensuring every Dallas child gets a great education, growing southern Dallas and helping to provide the same sense of opportunity for the many working poor in this city.

We face major challenges and should never let our positive beliefs hide those realities. It's that same attitude that can build a bridge that will conquer these problems. My 2012 wish is that we do just that.

As we toast the New Year, my suggestion for our elixir is: two parts Dallas optimism, one part intellectual honesty, one part sense of humor (so we don't take ourselves too seriously) and a splash of cynicism, just to keep it real. I think it's the right recipe to make sure our dreams for 2012 and the rest of the decade are realized.