

INAUGURAL REMARKS BY THOMAS C. LEPPERT

Monday, June 25, 2007

Thank you ... I am humbled by this responsibility ... honored by the trust and confidence Dallas has placed in me ... and energized and inspired by the opportunity to serve our city and the possibilities that lie ahead.

Today is about our future ... it is the day we turn our hopes into actions ... it's a day when we turn our dreams into realities ... and it's the day we start turning those possibilities into real opportunities ... and I mean opportunities for *all* of our citizens.

Today is also to say "thank you" ... to Mayor Laura Miller and the council members who have served us well these past years. Mayor Miller led us through some tough economic times the years after 9/11 ... during her term,

she's been a voice for our citizens, working to improve our quality of life ... Mayor Miller, on behalf of all of Dallas, thank you for what you did for our city.

I also want to say "thank you" to the outgoing council members ... Council members Bill Blaydes, Leo Chaney, James Fantroy, Gary Griffith, Don Hill, Ed Oakley, and Dr. Maxine Thornton-Reese ... thanks for your service, the heart you put into our City, and the sweat equity you invested ... Dallas is a better place because of each of you. Thank you.

A well-known philosopher once said, "What is a city but its people?"

If a city is its people, then Dallas is truly a great city, with awesome potential ... on both a national scale and the world stage.

We are a city of people like Mattie Nash, at 85 the unofficial mayor of West Dallas ... and I'll be excited to work with her and watch her community flourish when they become a gateway to the Trinity project.

We are a city of people like Roger Staubach ... not the football player but the entrepreneur ... who took an idea and transformed an industry, creating jobs for our City.

We are a city of people like Mico Rodriguez, who took a few family recipes and a big risk ... built a restaurant empire that stretches from Dallas to Kansas City, and is the standard by which Tex-Mex is judged.

We are a city of people like Larry James ... who directed his heart toward helping those that are less fortunate ... I am eager to work with him on improving conditions in our community, addressing the homeless and creatively identifying housing solutions.

And we are a city of people like Felix Chen ... he has a Dallas based business with operations in China, India and Southeast Asia. This is the future.

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Over the past eight months, my wife Laura and I have had the life-changing opportunity to get to know our city, and more importantly, the people of our City, in a way that few get to see. We've seen the most popular areas of our City ... and also places like Cadillac Heights, Bonton and Joppy.

We've sat in your church pews ... talked on your front porches ... walked in your parades ... had breakfasts, lunches, dinners, coffee and dessert ... we've talked to the retired couple on their evening walk ... the soccer mom on the sideline ... the single mother who's working two jobs ... and the young homeless woman my son Ryan befriended one Friday evening when we were serving meals at the Resource Center ... a woman willing to work, but needing a chance.

And you know what? No matter how different we all seem on the outside ... when it comes right down to it, most people want the same things ... a clean, safe place to live ... a feeling of being *included* –to have their voice heard in their community ... all of us want *hope and the promise of opportunity*, today ... and into the future.

For this, we must bring all our people together ... and understand that our interests and goals are intertwined ... that one part of our City will never excel unless we excel as a City ...

Our people are our city. We are optimists. We have an inner strength and determination that makes our potential *truly limitless*.

It is now my responsibility, and the responsibility of my colleagues on our Council – not just to do well for our city, for the *people* that are Dallas ... but to maximize our potential and become *the best city we can possibly be...* To do this, it needs to be more than words ... it will take a new mindset, an approach that permeates the way we approach opportunities ... the way we are willing to invest in our City ... the way we run our government and the way we face every individual challenge.

It's not enough to reduce crime ... our citizens deserve *the safest city* in America.

It's not enough to provide the basics ... our citizens deserve a city that actually improves their *quality of life*.

It's not enough to improve education ... our children deserve schools that will empower them to *achieve their dreams*.

It's not enough to grow our economy ... we deserve a Dallas where for every *will*, there is a *way* – regardless of where you live or your financial means.

And it's not enough to have racial harmony, though that's a beginning ... what the citizens of Dallas deserve is a renewed spirit of civic pride ... a spirit that says *we are not*

just neighbors, we are brothers and sisters of Dallas ... and when any one of us succeeds, we all succeed.

It's a tall order, but our people deserve nothing less than for Dallas to be *absolutely the best city we can be*. It is our obligation ... it is our duty ... to be responsive to all of our citizens.

I know our new Dallas City Council will become a winning coalition, because we all agree that *our job as your City leaders is to make hopes and dreams come true for all parts of Dallas ... until there are no more parts ... just one unified whole...*

And I believe the operations of our City are in good hands with our City Manager, Mary Suhm. She and her team have my confidence, and we will work together to make our vision of a better Dallas a reality.

As we move forward, there are critical issues facing us. For some cities, these would be daunting ... but for us they are simply opportunities ... opportunities to make life better today, and move our city forward.

First, we must not only address crime, we must produce *results*. For far too long, we've been at the very top of a list we don't want to be on. My friends ... *those days are over*.

Today, we start a mission to make Dallas *the safest city* in America. We will provide Chief Kunkle and our police with the tools they need to succeed – we owe them that much, and more. Going forward, we will have two ... *and only two* ... fundamental objectives by which we will judge performance ... they will be the basis of accountability. First ... **get us off the list of high crime cities**. And second, **build confidence and trust** throughout all parts of our City

in our police and fire-rescue personnel. Success will mean more than just making Dallas safe again ... we will recognize success only when we reduce crime *and* restore the confidence and trust across *all* of Dallas.

Next, we must foster an enduring and stable economy not just in skyscrapers and the city center that serve big business, but also in corner shops that serve small business and the warehouses that serve hourly workers. We must bring growth, jobs and opportunity to areas not realizing their full potential and we will do that by tapping all of our available resources ... that means projects like the inland port ... it means being willing to invest aggressively to attract key production facilities that can generate jobs, housing and shopping opportunities. This will strengthen those communities economically but, more importantly, foster hope. Because when we come together and make real

progress in South Dallas, Oak Cliff, Pleasant Grove and in West Dallas, then *all* of Dallas is better for it.

The great cities of the world are alive, have their own look, personality and energy that draws in people, businesses and opportunities. It's hard to imagine San Francisco without the Golden Gate Bridge ... Paris without the Eiffel Tower ... or Sydney without the Opera House.

For Dallas, the Trinity Project will be the turning point of our city. It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity and will be the catalyst that puts Dallas on the world stage ... ***if we seize the moment and get it done.*** That means putting past conflicts aside, working together for a common goal ... and doing what is right for our City ... to get it completed in a style that will make us all proud.

The great cities of the world all have a vibrant and exciting downtown. So will Dallas.

Soon we'll have a new Arts District to rival the world's finest, a cultural epicenter that reflects the sophistication and the diversity of our city. But that's just the start ... our downtown will further come alive as we encourage mixed-use development, shopping, entertainment, restaurants, sports venues and, very importantly, put in place a Convention Center Hotel ... then we've really got something special. These are not simply projects ... they are the key to our economic and competitive success tomorrow.

Next, we must aggressively protect our environment ... that means having cleaner air, setting the standard nationally for green building and ensuring we have diverse and secure water resources tomorrow. Without those basics, we have

nothing ... so now more than ever we have to focus on keeping our city ***physically*** healthy.

But the greatest opportunity that lies ahead? That's a simple one ... it's education.

I could give you a long list of economic reasons why better schools will benefit everyone in Dallas... but the truth is *we must improve our schools because it's the right thing to do.* If we can't give every child in our city a good education, then no matter how rich our business climate is, we've failed. We've failed those children, and we've failed our future.

For too long, I've heard that making a difference in education here is impossible. That's not true ... it's not true at Townview, named for Dr. Yvonne Ewell ... one of Dallas' great educators, it's not true at Terry Flower's St. Philip's and it's not true at Arrvel Wilson's West Dallas School. We

have real examples of education success with us to today
and I'd like to introduce the stories you haven't read about ...
they are the future, though.

First, let me introduce Jessica Brown ... she was raised by a
single mother and is a National Honor Society student from
Kimball on her way to Langston University.

Next, I'd like to introduce Cynthia Rios. She lives in Pleasant
Grove and just graduated from Townview Magnet. Her
parents are immigrants from El Salvador and Mexico. She is
the first in her family to attend college ... she'll be at
Columbia this fall on a scholarship.

This is living proof of what we can do for today and
tomorrow.

I've also heard for too long that the Mayor and the City don't have a role in education ... Well, let me tell you how I feel about that ... *when a big issue like under-performing schools is holding back an entire city and hindering our growth, it's everyone's problem.*

Starting today, I will use the Mayor's office to impact education, reaching out to the business and civic communities for help and support, and encourage a system that's accountable to our citizens ... because our future depends on it. As part of my efforts in this area, I will lead programs like a summer jobs program to keep older kids in school ... early reading programs in our more challenged areas to help younger kids start school with the best chance to succeed ... and college scholarship opportunities to ensure children have the same opportunity I did.

Our renewed focus on education in Dallas will not end at high school, I'll also be a voice for higher education. We are the only major metropolitan area without a Tier 1 research institution ... we need one, for our economy. And I'll lead for higher education opportunities in the southern part of our city. Paul Quinn and UNT-Dallas can make a difference and provide affordable opportunities, creating our City's future leaders.

And we will get the UNT-Law School in downtown Dallas!

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What I hope to bring to Dallas, with the help and support of this Council, is leadership, ... a new attitude *within* our city government ... a new attitude *about* our city government ... a new way of doing business that I hope will define a new era for Dallas.

With a few guiding principles, we can make it happen.

Foremost, we should be a Dallas that always puts our citizens first.

The way we truly serve our citizens is by making the actions of City Hall match the priorities and needs of our taxpayers, families and real people. It's that simple.

That's why I am committed to doing what it takes to make Dallas safe again – *without raising taxes*. Sure, it's easier to create taxes and put the burden back on the people ... but it's an attitude that takes our citizens and taxpayers for granted ... citizens like Stan and Nelda Golden. They're retired and living on a fixed income ... so when we raise taxes, they're the ones that have to bear the burden. *That's just not right.*

For every big decision there must be a litmus test, ... “are we putting the needs and the best interest of people like the Goldens first?” And the answer should always be ... yes.

Next ...we should be a Dallas that *reaches out* for solutions to our toughest problems and is willing to provide leadership throughout our region.

I have a great amount of respect for our city government, for my colleagues on the Council and for the more than 13,000 city employees who work every day to make Dallas a great city.

But I truly believe that the best ideas to the biggest challenges we face will be found outside of the walls of Dallas City Hall. I’m a big believer in reaching out and asking for help ... it’s something I’ve done my whole life, and

it's what has helped me go farther in life than I ever dreamed I could go ... and it's what brought me here, to stand in front of you today as Mayor.

And as we look ahead, and take on the tough challenges we face as a City, I plan to reach out beyond the walls ... to engage the best and the brightest ... to reach out to our academic community and to involve the business and civic community.

And, we will also reach out for economic growth. We belong on a world stage. Our competition is no longer Plano, Fort Worth or even Houston ... it's New York, Chicago, and LA ... and London, Shanghai and Dubai.

We will be successful when we reach out and showcase our city ... *and when we do, the rest of the world will take hold.*

And, I've saved the best for last ...

As a City, we must send a positive tone from Dallas City Hall

... as individual leaders and as a team.

Unfortunately, we are too often known for being an adversary, not an aid. We've watched neighboring cities celebrate when they've won the prize ... *and it hurt us.*

We need to change our tone.

Rather than punishing business ... City Hall needs to start promoting business.

Rather than alienating opportunity ... we must start inviting it.

Rather than dictating consequences ... we need to start listening and producing results.

To be successful, City Hall must be the solution. We move forward, when we become a resource and a partner with our citizens and our businesses.

We need to be known as a City where our government is known for good business judgments – putting the interest of our people first and being operated in a way that simply reflects the goodness, quality and values of the people of this city.

We have so much potential ... so much to aspire to ... so much to hope for ... so much to look forward to for our City ... but to achieve it we have to be supporting and working with our citizens, our businesses and our new opportunities ... our job at City Hall is to block, tackle and find the opening

so they can score ... because they're the ones carrying the ball for Dallas!

So today, I ask you to see Dallas City Hall with fresh eyes ... as a resource ... as a partner ... *as your teammate.*

Thanks so much to all of you ... for taking the time to come today. It shows your commitment to our city, and to a positive vision that we share.

Now let's go work hard, and do great things for this city that we all love!