

**THOMAS C. LEPPERT
MAYOR**



**MAYOR'S ADDRESS
2009-2011 Council Inauguration
June 22, 2009
Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center**

**For Immediate Release:
June 22, 2009**

**Contact: Chris Heinbaugh
214.670-0773**

Mayor Tom Leppert:

Good morning and thank you for being here.

Today is a day of reflection, to recognize what we have accomplished by building on the ties that bind us.

And it's day of renewal ... when we can

* Renew our civic pride ...

* Renew our commitment to Dallas and all its citizens – a commitment to continue our quest to make Dallas the standard by which all other great cities in the world are measured. ...

* Renew our hopes for a bright future for all parts of our City

It's also a day to commend our Council members, who have served our City so well these past years.

I know from working side-by-side with them, that we have a committed team of leaders.

Two years ago, I stood in front of you as your new Mayor.

At that time, we had a sense of enthusiasm and optimism at a time our nation was experiencing a strong economy.

Well, some things have changed since 2007.

But despite the economic challenges we all face today, I assure you that this Council's enthusiasm and optimism has never waned.

The dream of making Dallas the finest City in America for families is alive and well.

How will we make this dream a reality?

It will require FOCUS, FORTITUDE AND FORESIGHT.

We must have the FOCUS to relentlessly target our resources and efforts at the most important challenges and opportunities.

We must have the FORTITUDE to meet and overcome all obstacles and naysayers.

And we must have the FORESIGHT, even in today's tough times, to look forward ... to never lose sight of the promise ... to invest, to build, and produce economic opportunity for all parts of our city.

You don't accomplish that by cowering when the storms hit, you accomplish that by moving forward in spite of the storms.

During my address two years ago, we laid out ambitious plans ... plans many said we could not ever attain.

On that day I said we would "start turning possibilities into real opportunities ... and we have ...

And these successes also show us the great things we can accomplish *when our whole city works together as a team ... for the good of everyone.*

First, *our city is a safer place to live because we focused on our people's number one priority.*

Through the hard work of our citizens, our police force, their leadership and city leaders, the crime rate in Dallas is in a free fall ... *in fact*, last year we saw double digit declines, and this year, *crime is down almost 19% compared to last year.*

No other city in the country can match those results.

We did it by increasing our police force, without raising taxes, as we promised ... and by changing the way we police our communities AND by focusing on cleaning up our neighborhoods.

Bulldozers have taken out motels and dilapidated houses that previously were havens for nothing more than drugs and crime.

And at those moments, you saw in the eyes of churchgoers at True Lee Missionary Baptist Church or the elderly couples that lived across the street from the crack houses on streets such as Crest and Alabama ... a sense of hope and a belief that their neighborhoods had finally come to a better day.

There is more to do to make Dallas even safer.

But, I can tell you without hesitation that our crime fighters have the momentum, and that the day is coming when Dallas will be at the top of a new list – the list of America’s safest cities.

By working together, we’ve also achieved great successes in economic development, *and not just in the areas you would expect ...*

Yes, companies like AT&T and Tenet Healthcare now are calling downtown Dallas “home”. ...

And, yes, the Park Lane Place development at Central and Park Lane is open for business, and already generating new tax revenues ...

And yes the people in Lake Highlands are eagerly awaiting the Town Center.

But we have also focused our efforts on the southern part of our City, and have now set the stage to begin investing over a half billion dollars into areas that for many years were essentially ignored.

We spoke two years ago of the need for new grocery stores in these parts of Dallas.

Well, less than a month ago, we celebrated a new grocery store opening in the southern part of our City ... and by the end of this year, we will have another.

And there will be more.

We are also seeing our strong Houses of Faith take a lead in investing in their communities.

Bishop Jakes, Pastor Haynes, Rabbi Stern, Pastor Rush, Bishop Farrell, Pastor Johnson and Bishop Martin and many others are all spearheading projects that invest in both people and communities.

On other important fronts, we have finally secured a new law school for our downtown ... an educational resource that will enrich our students, our workforce and our downtown.

The University of North Texas at Dallas is now an independent, stand-alone university – the first major public university campus in our city, and it’s located in our Southern Sector!

Paul Quinn is also making real strides and is another important institution of higher learning in South Dallas.

And, we may very well be closer to a Tier One research institution in this region ... a must for the economy of this century.

For these educational gains, I want to say to Senator Royce West and Representative Dan Branch, thank you for your leadership.

When it comes to the environment, we’ve solidified our position as a leader in this nation ... we were one of the first to adopt comprehensive green building standards ... we are setting the standard in purchasing renewable energy and

utilizing alternative fueled vehicles ... and we're recognized by the EPA for our Environmental Management System.

As a City, we've learned that sound environmental policies keeps our citizens healthier, and it makes good economic sense, too.

And when we talk about big accomplishments, I am happy to say the Trinity Project is moving forward ... we have overcome challenge after challenge ... *and it will become a reality.*

Voters have gone to the polls twice and made their direction clear ... get it done.

They understand the critical nature of flood control, they see the potential for recreation and economic development and they realize the major role this project plays in our transportation future.

From the foresight to see this project become the face of our City in the next century, comes the fortitude to persevere ... to seek solutions rather than surrender and to work in partnership rather than quit.

And ... we can finally look forward to the groundbreaking of the new Convention Center Hotel.

For twenty five years, we knew its importance ... we saw the negative impact of failing to move.

But, finally, focus, fortitude and foresight won out.

Make no mistake, *this hotel will be a success.*

It will anchor our \$1 billion convention center.

It will secure Dallas' spot among the top ten convention cities in America and it will be the genesis of new downtown development.

And thanks to people like Luis Spinola, a local Hispanic contractor who has worked with us to create a new model, it will also provide prospects for emerging minority companies.

It was never about a hotel, it was about our future ... it was about choosing hope over fear ... it was about believing in the great potential of our city instead of conceding to mediocrity.

It shows that we have faith in our City, ... and that investing in Dallas will pay dividends today and tomorrow.

And in the near future, we will see great examples of teamwork that are destined to change the face of our city *for generations* ...

Within months, we will put the finishing touches on a world-class arts complex!

The day is very near when the citizens of Dallas can look down Flora Street and across the Woodall Rogers Deck Park at an Arts District that truly reflects the energy and diversity of our City ...

And in an area of real promise but too little attention, we are making real progress in revitalizing West Dallas.

Through a diverse group led by the Dallas Faith Communities Coalition and Phil Wise, and a group of dedicated neighbors, business people, educators, and community organizations, we are focusing on comprehensive and sustainable redevelopment of West Dallas.

Through the work of DHA, the City and non-profits, Rhoades Terrace and Turner Courts are making way for a new Bon Ton.

And, due to the leadership of people like Mike Rawlings, Larry James and Joe Clifford, we are making inroads in helping those less fortunate.

The partnership that is the Bridge has placed 500 people in jobs and over 800 in permanent housing.

These exciting projects may seem very different on the outside ... but they will be successful for the same reason, and that is because good men and women, saw the possibilities, and decided to bring people together to make that possibility ... a reality.

And finally, I want to address an issue that is close to my heart where we are making an impact – education.

I believe that more than any single issue, education will impact the strength of this City in the decades ahead, which is why we launched a series of Education Initiatives ... programs ranging from early reading that will touch well over 10,000 kids and give them a better chance of succeeding when they enter school ... to scholarships, over a quarter of a million dollars last year alone, that not only provide resources but provide incentives to stay in school ... to enlisting our businesses to help improve the physical appearance of our schools ... to internships that show the importance of an education..

These programs have touched students like Jasmine Lampkin, who will be a senior at Carter High School next year.

Jasmine is 17, she's the oldest of 4 children.

This summer Jasmine is proud to have her first job, due to the Mayor's Intern Fellows program.

She's working in the office of a local PR firm.

Jasmine had always thought that she wanted to be a nurse, but after her first few days in a professional work environment, she said that she had changed her mind ... she might just want to go ahead and become a doctor!

I can tell you first hand that scholarships and opportunities like these don't just change one life, they have a ripple effect for generations.

We recognize that our programs will not turn around education in Dallas, but we know they provide support to the changes underway at Dallas ISD.

Our public education system has to improve substantially if we are to serve our next generation and our City.

***** It's always gratifying to see a City forward ... to see the accomplishments of FOCUSED efforts, the FORTITUDE to overcome obstacles or past failures and the FORESIGHT to lead toward even greater horizons.

You saw a Council that worked together in a professional way that would make any City, state or business proud, and one that reflected the goodness of our City's people.

You also saw that we moved forward by walking together ... understanding "that one part of our City will never excel unless we excel as a City".

You see, from where I sit, I have seen the best of Dallas which is its people.

Some you know and most you don't.

It is Edna Pemberton, Adelfa Callejo and Anna Hill ... the instigators, the cheerleaders, the drivers of so much that is happening in their communities.

They epitomize the concept of civic involvement.

It is Ebby Halliday.

At 98, she is the backbone of a major business, she never stops and I don't know anyone that loves this city as much as she does.

She is always willing to step up and to take a stand for the right principles.

She is the successful business person that gives back for all our benefit.

And it's Elba Garcia.

I have sat next to her on long Wednesday's and had the privilege to work with her on issues ranging from crime to kids to animals.

She is a fighter for her constituents but she also knows the benefit of the "greater good".

She is the public servant.

It is these people and so many more that make a great City.

They understand that Dallas has so much potential, *but it takes all of us working together to fulfill that potential.*

But we are not without great challenges ... and one of the biggest obstacles in the road ahead will be reconciling next year's budget in this very, very difficult economy.

So the challenge for all of us is continuing to provide the highest level of city services without asking our taxpayers to pay any more than they already do ...

everyone is feeling the impact of the economy, so the last thing we need from our city government is to place an even heavier burden on our families.

As we deal with this situation, though, we have a strong staff led by our City Manager, Mary Suhm.

She is knowledgeable, caring and focused on providing the core services our City needs.

We've asked her and her staff to dig deeper beyond just budget cuts ... and look at every sector of city government to make structural changes.

I believe we can find creative, cost-saving solutions that get our taxpayers the most for their money, and still provide the level of service that our citizens deserve.

Already, we've begun hosting a series of City Budget Forums where citizens can voice input and share their ideas on next year's budget – and this will be followed by our Councilmembers holding Town Hall meetings.

The truth is, every single one of us have the power to assist our City in this tough economy.

You can volunteer at our libraries, the local rec center, or the Zoo ... lending a hand to help preserve the assets that so many of us depend on.

There's an old Kenyan proverb that says:
Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.

Now more than ever, we need to be an unbreakable City ... we need our city leaders, city staff and our citizens to team-up and work together to keep Dallas strong as we ride out this economic storm.

I can tell you from my business experience, it is these times that are the true opportunities to build, to create advantages.

And that is what must continue to do.

We need to stay focused on our priorities of public safety, stronger neighborhoods and creating economic opportunities *for all*.

We need to insure that we have a public education system that is not only designed to SURVIVE, but instead to produce young people that can SUCCEED on a global level.

And we need to aggressively invest in Dallas, finding new opportunities.

This also means telling our story around the nation and the world ... and making sure the City is an entity that is easier to work with ... to do business with ... And thereby producing a city that is even more competitive.

I'd like to end today by saying – , *there is no better place to be today than Dallas, Texas.*

Despite the current economic challenges, we are a city that continues to move forward ... because we understand that while *the challenges slowing us down are only temporary, our determination as a City to fulfill our potential is permanent.*

We are a city that views challenges as opportunities for betterment ...

We are a city that is being shaped by our possibilities instead of being defined by our problems.

And we are a team that has the positive momentum fueled by the winning spirit of our citizens on our side ...

I am proud of our City, I'm honored to serve every single one of our citizens, and I look forward to working with every single one of you.

And I know that we will succeed ... together.

May God bless each of you and may God strengthen our resolve as we move forward united in purpose and committed in goal.

###