

Mayor-Elect Mike Rawlings  
City of Dallas  
Inaugural Remarks As Prepared  
June 27, 2011

Thank you. I am humbled by the confidence this city has placed in me, and I am energized by the great potential for our city's future. Today is about beginnings. It's about turning our hope into actions. And it's about making our dreams for this city ... a reality.

But before we talk about what lies ahead, I would like to take a minute to thank some important leaders who helped bring us to this critical point ...

I would like to thank Mayor Leppert for his energetic and thoughtful leadership. Mayor Leppert initiated a refocus of City Hall on improving the reputation of Dallas as a business-friendly city – drawing new business here like Tenet Healthcare and AT&T. And he restored a positive tone and respectful debate at the horseshoe. As a citizen of Dallas, I am grateful for his service.

I am also grateful for the service of Mayor Caraway, stepping into the Mayor's office . He has worked hard since February ... focusing on the good of the city and working to foster goodwill throughout our neighborhoods ... thank you for your service.

And I would like to thank outgoing councilmember's Ron Natinsky, Dave Neumann and Steve Salazar for the gift of your time and talents. Dallas is a better place because of the hard work and service of leaders like you. Councilman Natinsky, through our thoughtful debate you already have made me a better mayor, and I hope you will continue to contribute your ideas and service to our city.

I would like to thank the leaders behind the scenes at Dallas City Hall ... our world-class City Manager Mary Suhm, our assistant city managers, our Police Chief Dave Brown, our Fire Chief Eddie Burns, the department heads and the more than 12,000 city workers who get up every day and go to work for a better Dallas. Without you, our city is nothing ... and I thank you for the service you provide to our city, and our families.

I would like to recognize and thank the distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps from both Houston and Dallas who are here today representing 25 countries. Your presence at this event highlights our city's important role and responsibility in the international arena. As mayor, I look forward to developing a close working relationship with each of you in order to maintain and strengthen our cultural and economic ties.

I would like to thank my friends Roger and Marianne Staubach, Tom and Jennifer Karol, Joe and Isabell Haggar, and Steve and Sandy Nelson.

And, I would like to thank my family ... my wife, Micki ... my children Michelle and Gunnar ... and my mother, Nelda Moore. Without your love and support, and every now

and then a swift kick in my backside, I would not be here today ... and I thank you for being by my side in this great journey.

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As you may have heard over the past four months, I come from the business world ... so it's only natural that as I step back and look at the challenge before us ... the job of helping our city realize it's full potential, and the job of taking care of our taxpayers and families ... that I will apply some of the lessons that helped me succeed in the business to City Hall.

In business and in life, I've always found great success in building the right team for each challenge, and making sure they are invested in success. Addressing our city's challenges is no different ... I already owe every member of our City Council a debt of gratitude for your commitment and service, and I know that each of you are invested in the betterment of our city and our citizens. I truly believe that here today, with this Council and with our city leadership that we have the right team, the right blend of knowledge and skills, to take some big steps forward and put our city on a new, upward trajectory.

And "TEAM" is the critical word here ... Henry Ford once said that "if everyone is moving forward together, then success will take care of itself." And I believe that saying to be true. This is not about me or any one of the council members ... or any individual in Dallas ... it truly is about us.

Over the next days, weeks and months, our to-do list for Dallas will be extensive. We will always be a work in progress, we will never finish the job of making Dallas a better city ... but it's my hope that the cornerstone of our work together is our deep sense of community, the realization that we are neighbors to each another ... neighbors that we are told to love just as we love ourselves.

And as we work and grow together, we need principles that bind us ... and beliefs that will serve as guideposts us through some very tough challenges in a quest to move our city forward ... I propose these:

***First, let's be a city that embraces diversity and honors our differences.***

In the last days of our campaign, I was fortunate to meet a persnickety senior citizen who lived in an assisted living center in East Dallas. I'll tell you – this woman was not afraid to speak her mind on any topic! We walked out of a long meeting together and a small group was lamenting about how much easier things would be if we were all more like one another ... and that statement really upset her ... she turned to me and said "why can't we all be different and just love it?!"

Funny thing is, we are so different and at the same time so much alike ... because in our great diversity we still find the most talented, hardworking, family-minded people in America ... I have seen it over the years, and especially over the past few months of the campaign. When it comes to making a difference and touching lives ... these people are the real heroes:

- Like Rafael and Maria Isabel Narvaez, parents of five children, the youngest is a sophomore at Molina High in Oak Cliff. They came from San Luis Potosi, Mexico to give their family a better life. Rafael owns and runs a successful construction firm they started in 1995, that has survived despite tough economic times. Rafael struggles with English, but he is still learning. They are community leaders, starting a Nuestra Casa San Luis to help their community stay in touch with its roots, and they have moved from alienated immigrants to active business and community leaders and have strengthened their own family, and their community.
- There's Kay and Zouhair Bashour ... Kay's family fled communist China to give their family a better life. She came to America from Taiwan to go to graduate school ... where she met her husband, Zouhair. He was from Mali, literally 200 miles from Timbuktu ... he fled Mali after a military coup left that country unsafe for his family. These two met at Baylor in Waco, married and later moved to Dallas ... their son Fouad graduated from Lake Highlands High Schools, attended Duke University is now a partner in a private equity firm and lives in North Dallas.
- There's Nickolas Papanickolaou who came to Dallas from Greece in 1951 when he was 17 yrs old ... a sponsor brought him here to work in a restaurant. 16 years later he bought his own restaurant that he had for 30 years. He and his wife, from Sparta Greece herself, have two children that they raised in East Dallas, where they went to Lee Elementary, Long Middle School and Woodrow Wilson High ... and their daughter Reena Morris just served as the Co-Chair of the Centennial Celebration for White Rock Lake
- And there's C.R. Steele who came to Dallas from Terrell Texas in 1940 so he could have a better job. He worked for the Airport, and then in 1942 he had saved enough money to start his own service station – the very first service station in South Dallas. He had five children, and they all had a luxury he was not afforded – they were college graduates. His son Cleo was the first African American to graduate from SMU Law School, and went on to be a judge, and one of the longest-serving civil servants in Dallas history. C.R.'s service station is still open today, down on Hatcher Street – he's 89 years old, and he's down at the station every week.

As a Dallas citizen, I'm truly blown away by the global makeup and the personal stories of our city – and stories like these truly inspire me, and there are thousands of them ... They give our city so much heart.

Plus, all these cultures have such great food! For the past four months, I feel like I've been on a world culinary tour without leaving our city. I've had high tea with the Indian

leaders in North Dallas, tamales with Hispanics in East Dallas, fresh fruit with the Turkish community, Chinese food with the Asian community, and barbeque at Eva's in Southwest Center Mall! And I have loved bite of food, and every minute that I've spent getting to know every community of our city.

As a mayor I see diversity as an opportunity. An opportunity to learn ... an opportunity to understand ... an opportunity to show respect ... and an opportunity to take some of the good from each of our communities to build a plan and a vision that serves all of us.

I am also truly impressed with the talent of our young people, and especially our young professional women. In all of our communities ... Latina, African-American, Asian, Indian and Anglo ... we have young women leaders running companies, developing policy and literally re-shaping the business and political landscape of Dallas. And there's nowhere that the influence of our professional women is more evident than here on our City Council, where nine of our 14 members are successful women, and later today we will most likely appoint one of these women as our Mayor Pro Tem.

So as we stand together, let's choose to make our diversity a trademark we can be proud of, and an asset that strengthens our bond as brothers and sisters of Dallas. If we can succeed in this, then our communities and our City will be better for it.

**Next ... let's be a city of opportunity.**

When I came to Dallas more than three decades ago, I had college degree in philosophy (which didn't exactly guarantee me a job on Wall Street), and \$200 in my pocket. Times were tough in much of America, but like today, I knew that there was opportunity in Dallas ... and I was right. Coming to Dallas was one of the best decisions that I ever made ... There is no place with more promise, no place better at embracing the newcomer – but what I have learned over three decades of hard work and real-world experience, is that opportunity doesn't just happen ... we have to make it happen.

The opportunities that I had as a young graduate thirty plus years ago were created by a city leaders long before I thought of coming to Dallas, and to continue to be a city of opportunity tomorrow ... we must begin planting those seeds of opportunity today.

To do this we will need to utilize all of our available resources ... *and there's no better place to start than one of our City's greatest untapped resources: the Southern Sector.*

*The Southern Sector is 60% of our land mass and 15% of our tax base ... and those number just don't work, so I've already set a goal to grow the tax base in the Southern Sector by 30% over the next 5 years – tripling the current rate of growth.*

We've made progress over the past few years, like the Bishop Arts District, but we must do more. There are aren't enough jobs .... There's not enough growth ... there's not enough opportunity.

It's time for less talking and more doing – to turn our good intentions into results-oriented actions, starting with solving the housing crisis in the Southern Sector. We must have safe, quality homes for families ... then comes new development and job creation ... and with that comes economic growth.

Growth in the Southern Sector will not come easy, but already we have some great assets to work with, and some great leaders who are eager to take on this challenge.

Within the next six months, I am committed to appointing six leadership teams made up of business leaders, stakeholders and community leaders to draft and implement growth plans for 6 areas that are ready for investment.

I know with all the smart leadership we have in this City, that if we come together and get behind the right plan, that together we can make great things happen in the Southern half of our City.

***We can, and we must.*** And I look forward to my first State of the City address next year, and to reporting real growth, real opportunity and real changes happening in the Southern Sector.

***We have another huge untapped resource for creating our city of opportunity, and it's at a critical juncture, and that's the Trinity Project ...***

I truly believe that the Trinity Project can be transformational our city ... *if we put past agendas aside and find common ground, and get it done.*

It will be a difficult process. But nothing worth doing is ever easy. But I do believe – and I think most of my colleagues would agree – that it's a project worth doing for our city. I think we will agree that our city and the quality of life of our citizens can be much improved if we get this right, and I believe that we will agree that this is the type of project that can re-define the face of our city, and the public image of our city if we can get it done.

So as we go forward, I ask my colleagues, city staff and our citizens ... let's engage in a healthy, honest debate. Let's listen to each other, and let's make this project about doing what's in the best interest of Dallas today, tomorrow and even for our next generation. Once we have consensus on how to move forward we must break the big vision down into manageable pieces, and get these pieces *done quickly*. Swift action is the key. And let us never lose sight of the fact that the decisions we make over the coming years on this project will be the reality that our children, our grandchildren and even their children live with.

***And finally, when it comes to opportunity we have the ultimate untapped resource: and chance to re-define how we work with Dallas ISD to improve our schools.***

When it comes to creating opportunity there is no single greater contribution we can make than to educate our children. Period.

In business terms, an educated mind is an appreciating asset that will pay dividends to our city.

*In human terms, an educated mind is a life that is forever changed for the better.* And isn't that why we are all here, trying to make a difference ... trying to make life better? Strengthening our schools will strengthen our neighborhoods, our families, our economy – and our future.

With the departure of our Superintendent, we have the very rare opportunity to re-define the city's relationship with Dallas ISD and put our children and our city on the right track moving forward.

That's why within my first 90 days as mayor, I will bring together Dallas ISD, the education non-profits, the Dallas Regional Chamber and Dallas city leaders to create a strategic agreement defining how we will work together to improve our schools.

I made education a central focus on my campaign, and I plan to put actions behind my words. Because I do believe that if we can succeed in making our public schools great, that then we will be on our way to being the truly great city I know we can be.

I've talked about helping our City realize its potential, well these are only three areas where I see potential ... but it is GREAT potential. Succeeding on any one of them would have a huge impact on our City ... but I think we can succeed on all three. And when we do, I believe we can bring opportunity that is beyond our dream wildest today.

***Finally, our last guiding principle ... let's be a city that strives for excellence.***

Simply put, this is an area where we must re-define how we see ourselves ... and re-calibrate our expectations ... because there is simply no reason for us to expect anything but the best for our city.

Dallas is the ninth largest city in America, but the DFW region is the *fourth largest metropolitan area in America* behind the New York City metro area, the greater Los Angeles region and the Chicago metropolitan region.

It's time for us to be a leader among our peers. And that means setting clear and definitive goals ... and aiming high.

I've said over the past few months that it's time to put the "Big" back in Big D, and as we look to define ourselves I would like to challenge our leadership with some goals to make Dallas a Top Five City in some key areas that will best serve our families and our future:

*Goal 1: Let's be one of the Top 5 safest big cities in America ...* the City Council worked hard to increase the size of our police force and get Dallas off of one of the most notorious lists in America – the list of Most Dangerous Big Cities ... well, I don't think we should give an inch to crime. Fact is, our citizens can never be too safe. Period.

*Goal 2: Let's be one of the Top 5 best urban school districts in America ...* we can't be a great city without great public schools. Our schools impact us at every level ... our families, our neighborhoods, our economy, and our future. Traditionally, schools are not a priority at City Hall ... but that's about to change because the state of our public schools is an issue that affects every single one of us. And I know that if we collectively embrace this challenge and make it a priority that we will help not only our schools, but also our families, our neighborhoods ... and our future.

*Goal 3: Let's be one of the five best cities in America for small businesses ...* Small businesses account for 80% of the businesses in Dallas. They are the economic engine of our city, and it's time to ramp up the horsepower of that engine, grow our commercial tax base ... and shift the tax burden from our homeowners to our commercial tax base. Economic growth is not a luxury, it is a necessity ... and the biggest and most immediate impact we can have on growth will come from our small businesses. This must be a top priority.

*Let's be a Top 5 destination for conventions and tourism ...* like it or not, we've made the investment and our new convention center hotel opens in November. Now it's up to us to make this investment pay dividends to our taxpayers. We need to work regionally on accomplishing this goal. When we leverage the Michaelangelo and Pisscassos at the Kimball Museum and the old stockyards and Sundance Square ... with international soccer and soccer at Cowboys Stadium, the Texas Rangers in Arlington ... with our world-class arts district, sports teams, shopping and restaurants here in Dallas ... then DFW goes toe to toe with any city in the nation as a rich and diverse tourism and convention destination.

*Let's be one of the Top 5 healthiest cities in America.* As individuals, our health means everything. And a city can only be as healthy as its citizens, so I would challenge our leadership and our citizens to find new ways to support the health and well-being of our people. We have one of the nation's largest park systems, including more than 350 parks, more than 85 miles of jogging and biking trails ... and a crown jewel of our city, White Rock Lake, which turned 100 years old this year. Let's put these parks and recreation amenities that we are working so hard to preserve during tougher and tougher budgets to work for our families. Let's use our city to improve our personal health, and as employers and neighbors, let's find ways in our own smaller communities to make health a priority. And as a mayor, I will lead by example and work hard over the coming year to improve my own personal health.

Over the years, in business and in my civic leadership people have often accused me of "thinking big" ... and that's the attitude I plan to bring to Dallas City Hall. But we're not

just going to think big ... we are also going to put big actions behind those ideas ... and we're going to accomplish some big goals that will help make life better for us all.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to those we serve to always do our best – to always strive for the best. Starting here today, I ask my colleagues on the City Council, our City Manager and the leadership at City Hall to join be in taking on these big challenges ... and let's focus on great expectations, not our limitations.

I want to close with a quote that my daughter, Michelle, gave to me last year when I was speaking to a group about our success on the homeless issue ... she said:

Dallas is a city full of believers, people who are moved by good, and motivated by hope. They are people who get behind things, people who are willing to share what they have for a chance of something better. We call this Dallas' can-do spirit. And it's real. I've witnessed it.

Let's not take that spirit for granted – *instead, let's put it to work for Dallas, starting today.*

Thank you all for being here. Thanks you for caring about our city ... ***and now let's go to work.***