

One more reason to call downtown home

Dallas Center for the Performing Arts an integral part of revitalization, says **HOWARD HALLAM**

With the start of 2008, we are now less than two years away from the opening of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts — a project first envisioned more than 25 years ago and now rapidly becoming reality.

Come to the Dallas Arts District and stand outside the Performing Arts construction site, where crews are hard at work on two of the center's signature venues: the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House and the Dee and Charles Wylie Theatre. Then slowly make a 360-degree turn. In almost every direction, you will see spectacular new office buildings and residential towers that have recently been completed or soon will be. Few if any downtown centers are experiencing the new development that Dallas is enjoying today.

Seven years ago, 27 courageous Dallas leaders launched the most ambitious and largest cultural project in the city's history — the campaign to build the Dallas Center for the Per-

forming Arts.

The founders of the campaign were dedicated to building the most significant cultural center in America since the opening of Lincoln Center in New York City nearly a half-century ago.

They may not have realized at the time that this unprecedented effort could become a catalyst for the kind of downtown resurgence Mayor Tom Leppert speaks about so frequently.

Today, the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts figures prominently in the residential revival under way downtown. The city has hit the half-way mark in its goal to fill the central core with 10,000 residential units.

In an recent article in *The Dallas Morning News*, Mr. Leppert and others discussed the need to create the best downtown environment in the nation.

When the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts opens in fall 2009, we believe the city will achieve that goal. We haven't just been constructing the facilities. We have been working to fill them with events and activities that will bring downtown alive with activity.

The center expects that more than 400 productions will take place annually on its indoor and outdoor stages. The announcement that TITAS, Dallas' nonprofit presenter of the

world's most acclaimed touring music and dance companies, will move its performances to the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts is just one example of what downtown can anticipate.

Performances by the center's resident companies — the Dallas Opera, Dallas Theater Center, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, Texas Ballet Theater and Anita N. Martinez Ballet Folklorico — as well as a Broadway series, the Brinker International Forum and a wide range of concerts, festivals, lectures and films will enrich our city.

But the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts will have much more to offer downtown residents and visitors. The 10-acre Performance Park that unifies the Winspear Opera House, Wylie Theatre, Annette Strauss Artist Square and City Performance Hall will be a natural outdoor gathering place, a respite in the heart of downtown.

The unprecedented success of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts campaign reflects this city's ability to prepare for the future. The campaign has generated 114 gifts of at least \$1 million or more — a figure unrivaled in any campaign to build cultural facilities in this country. The community's generosity is far from over. Families and companies continue to

show their commitment with contributions of all sizes, from \$1 to multi-million-dollar gifts. We have responded with our own commitment to reach fundraising goals and to keep the project on schedule and on budget — no easy task for a major construction program where 95 percent of the campaign funding is being raised from the private sector. And we are holding administrative costs to 5 cents of every dollar donated.

Downtown Dallas requires many elements to make it feel like home to the thousands of people living in the city's center. Retail stores, restaurants and other amenities are all part of the mix that creates an inviting neighborhood. But current and future residents also want a vibrant downtown alive with action and excitement.

The Dallas Center for the Performing Arts will fill that role in more ways than many of us can even imagine. And the best news is that it will happen in less than two years.



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