

DOWNTOWN DALLAS

Dallas' downtown, once virtually dead after business hours and on weekends, is experiencing a revival.

Downtown Dallas, a nonprofit organization working to revitalize the area, confirmed in its 2008 annual report that the heart of the City now has more than 150 shops and restaurants. And with dozens of aging buildings converted into residential housing as well as new high-rise condos being built, the population has risen; the 2010 census report shows that more than 6,000 people now reside in downtown. Since 2002 more than \$2.3 billion of development and reinvestment has taken hold in downtown, according to the Dallas Morning News.

Businesses are returning to the downtown area as well. In 2008, according to Downtown Dallas, more than 40 companies relocated there, adding 6,500 jobs and making it home to a predominant business center of 2,500 businesses representing a variety of industries. The Dallas Convention Center hotel, a \$500 million facility that opened in 2012, has brought additional employment opportunities.

"We've made some enormous inroads and progress," said former Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert. "All of a sudden, you have a lot of the vitality you want."



The Dallas Arts District is one of the shining accomplishments of downtown revitalization. Established in 1983, this 19-block neighborhood now includes world-class facilities, such as the Dallas Museum of Art; the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center; the Nasher Sculpture Center and the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts. In addition, the Perot Museum of Natural Science, opened in December 2012, has since experienced overwhelming ticket sales.

The Arts District and the rest of downtown are connected to Uptown by Klyde Warren Park, a 5.2-acre deck of lawn, trees, fountains and public spaces that spans the freeway between Pearl and St. Paul streets, opened in October 2012.

Already, downtown has more than 20 parks or plazas, according to Downtown Dallas. The most ambitious is the Trinity River Corridor Project, which is being billed by the organizers as “one of the most monumental public works and economic development projects ever attempted.”

The project will cost about \$2 billion with much of the work expected to be completed by 2014. It will transform the area into a giant urban park while protecting against flooding and improving transportation through downtown. The project will be highlighted by bridges on Interstate 30 and the proposed Woodall Rodgers Extension designed by famed Spanish engineer/architect Santiago Calatrava.

And now First Baptist Church is contributing economically, aesthetically and spiritually to the continued growth of Dallas’ re-born city center by making a grand statement in the revival of downtown. The beauty and elegance of the new world-class First Baptist Dallas building design, which will open Easter 2013, will enhance the city’s aura with its distinctive appeal and artistry, contributing to Dallas’ eclectic blend of historical sites and architectural wonders.

The new campus will provide three-quarters of an acre community space accessible at all times to those downtown. In addition, this space will act as a passageway for those walking from N. Ervay to St. Paul Street, helping to make downtown Dallas more pedestrian friendly.

The sweeping glass concourse structure, including a sky bridge over St. Paul Street, connects the new Worship Center and Horner Family Center and Parking Garage. A high-impact cross-tower and fountain, suitable for baptisms, are surrounded by the community space, creating a spiritual oasis in the middle of downtown. The design is intended to provide a concert hall of worship in the heart of the Dallas’ Arts District that will project how great God is.

The new campus is aiding in the revitalization of downtown Dallas and providing a re-birth of the church, thriving with new energy.