

LOCAL NEWS

Mayor gives overview of city projects

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By Lowell Brown / Staff Writer

Denton Mayor Mark Burroughs touted downtown redevelopment, defended city tax incentives and stressed the need for better roads and highways during a “state of the city” address Thursday.

Burroughs offered a broad overview of city projects to a small crowd during a lunchtime speech at Carino’s Italian restaurant. The Apartment Association of Greater Dallas invited him to give the speech and present a proclamation designating February as National Apartment Careers Month in Denton.

The event wasn’t meant to be political, said Kathy Carlton, the association’s government affairs director.

Members wanted to highlight the apartment industry’s activities in Denton, including its residential property management degree program at the University of North Texas — the first of its kind in the state, Carlton said.

Burroughs, a lawyer, plans to seek a third term May 12, and so far no one has publicly announced a campaign challenging him. Candidate filing starts Feb. 6.

Burroughs used the event mostly to highlight ongoing economic development projects such as Rayzor Ranch, Fry Street Village and Unicorn Lake.

The arrival of A-train passenger rail service has spurred a “renaissance” of commercial activity downtown, he said, and city officials are encouraging more multifamily development there to complement new retail shops and restaurants.

Burroughs touted the Denton Airport as an economic engine, saying the city invested more than \$25 million in public infrastructure improvements there in the past decade.

He defended the city’s incentive agreement with the companies renovating Golden Triangle Mall, saying a failed mall at Loop 288 and Interstate 35E would be “devastating” to Denton.

The City Council passed the agreement in August, letting the developers recoup some of their estimated \$60 million investment over time through new sales taxes generated at the mall.

Burroughs said the agreement was worth no more than \$6 million, but city records show the incentive is capped at \$9.5 million or 20 years, whichever comes first.

On transportation, Burroughs highlighted the council’s vote in September to increase street maintenance spending to \$3.5 million, up from \$2.8 million last year. Facing dire reports of deteriorating streets, council members voted to create a separate street fund with two dedicated income streams designed to nearly double street maintenance spending in five years.

Burroughs also stressed the importance of the \$4.4 billion expansion of I-35E from Dallas to Denton, saying city officials continue to work to ensure the state project extends north all the way to U.S.

Highway 380. Denton's population is expected to double over the next 20 to 25 years, with most of the development planned in the northwest quadrant, he said.

"We're working really hard to try to get the I-35E project" funded to U.S. 380, Burroughs said. "There's funding mechanisms that are being explored in the next few weeks, and so you'll be seeing it in the media as to what the potentials are."

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kumquat

8:41 AM on 1/27/2012

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sigh.... depressing. come on people, someone, anyone!!!

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