

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 and new high-rise condos being built, the population has risen to more than 30,000 residents.

Businesses are returning to the downtown area as well. In 2008, more than 40 companies relocated there, adding 6,500 jobs, according to Downtown Dallas. The Dallas Convention Center hotel, a \$500 million facility scheduled to open in 2012, will bring additional employment opportunities.

"We've made some enormous inroads and progress," Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert said. "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, which opened in October 2009 at a cost of \$354 million.

The Arts District and the rest of downtown will be connected to Uptown by Woodall Rodgers Park, a five-acre deck of lawn, trees, fountains and public spaces scheduled to span the freeway between Pearl and St. Paul streets by fall 2011.

Already, downtown has more than 20 parks or plazas, according to Downtown Dallas, with more on the way. 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, 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 statement about God's place in the revival of downtown. The beauty and elegance of the new First Baptist Dallas building design will enhance the Dallas aura with its distinctive design and artistry, contributing to the city's eclectic blend of historical sites and architectural wonders.