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MESQUITE

# City bids farewell to 51-year-old City Hall

Employees will work out of a new, \$41.3 million building starting Monday

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Mesquite's finance, municipal court and marketing employees will move this weekend to its new \$41.3 million city hall, which officials hope will be a symbol of a progressive, modern city.

It's reminiscent of the excitement in 1960, when Mesquite was among Dallas' first booming suburbs and built the original City Hall on Galloway Avenue. That building will be demolished to make room for parking for the new facility, which faces Galloway Avenue a half block north.

Movers descended on the municipal complex at the close of business Friday. On Saturday, tech crews will be setting up work stations. Monday, employees report for work in their new digs.

"It is antiquated, it's old and it smells," Don Simons, the city's finance director, said of the building he has called his professional home since 1990. "With all those indignities we had endured for years, it didn't take long to get excited."

Few among the 55 to 60 employees will miss the lack of windows, the wood paneling in the council chambers or the asbestos. Instead, they'll be working in environmentally friendly interiors and an open plaza with terraced landscaping.

A water fountain, commissioned artwork and fancy exterior lighting will welcome visitors. Residents who choose to stay at home will soon be able to connect to their City Council via streaming video.

"It's not that the building itself is critical from an image perspective," said John Mayner, who has spent the last couple of years marketing Mesquite and whose office is connected to what was the city's former jail in the bowels of the old building. "It's that the practicality is there to provide our residents with improved services."



Movers transferred equipment and supplies from Mesquite's old print shop to the new building on Friday.

Photos by Rex C. Curry/Special Contributor

As City Hall was expanded in the mid-1970s and renovated over the years, Mesquite enhanced its regional role by effectively utilizing the LBJ corridor. The city's population grew exponentially in the '60s and '70s and by 50 percent more in the '80s.

However, as new freeways and new suburbs came to life, Mesquite was no longer drawing the same interest. Mesquite still has plenty of developable land, but its growth is now middle of the pack for Dallas County.

A few years back, the city refocused under what its leaders called "Project Renewal." Mayner was hired as Mesquite's first marketing director and found people "were feeling kind of beat-up."

"There was a sense that our best days were behind us," Mayner said. "There are always going to be those newer, sexier exurbs, Frisco, Allen, Mc-



Mesquite's new city hall opens Monday with environmentally friendly interiors and an open plaza with terraced landscaping.

Kinney. And it had started with Richardson and Plano. Here, it's rebuilding and reinventing."

Mesquite protected its retail presence by getting to the front of the line and finishing its upgrade on LBJ, leav-

## Mesquite city halls

Year opened	1960	2011
City's population	27,526	139,870
Square footage	47,000	144,703
Price	\$236,198	\$41,293,712

ing the current construction headaches along the freeway to North Dallas.

The city also helped update a 1960s landmark, the Mesquite Rodeo, with luxury boxes, a video board and a private club. The rodeo has regained its grandeur among top rodeos in the country.

However, City Hall was beyond a retrofit. Its space had run out, air conditioning ducts were outdated, and inner workings were unsuitable for technology. Mesquite decided five years ago to use certificates of obligation to build anew — but it will keep its administrators in an office it bought and refurbished in 1990 a mile north on Galloway Avenue.

The city opted to build its public safety facility first. The Mesquite police department moved in early 2009.

"Everybody from that point saw the reality — that the police building had really happened," Simons said. "Understanding what's coming has certainly been something that has kept people going the last several years."

The new city hall, Phase 2 of the complex, will be functional Monday, though the city will not host a grand opening until Oct. 25, after the old one is demolished. Temporary parking, detailed online at [www.cityofmesquite.com](http://www.cityofmesquite.com), is in place for those who pay utility bills or court fees in person.

A third phase is also designed, but officials have said it's decades from actually happening.

Charlene Orr, the city's historic preservation officer and director of the nonprofit Historic Mesquite Inc., said the former City Hall has architectural significance and that she hates to lose it.

"However, as a midcentury modern building, we don't embrace them as we do our 'antique' structures," she said. "The building has so many issues we couldn't really overcome."