

From: [GRA](#)
To: [Maura Gast](#)
Subject: Dallas: What's Good for the Goose Is Good for the Gander — Except at City Hall
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GRA NOTE: This is an opinion piece, so consider the source. If reasonably accurate, then certainly noteworthy.

What's Good for the Goose Is Good for the Gander — Except at City Hall

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[Opinion](#)

March 1, 2026



AI-generated dramatization of Dallas City Hall demolition

By Ed Zahra, Zahra Design Group

We've all been shell-shocked to see the Dallas Economic Development Corporation's new report estimating that repairs and modernizing City Hall could exceed \$1 billion over 20 years. The consultants based the estimate on their assessment, describing the building as "structurally aging," with mechanical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and electrical systems operating beyond their intended Estimated Useful Lifespan (EUL).



Photo by Karen Eubank for Candysdirt.com

Comparative EULs Are Needed To Make a Decision on City Hall

But wait, before you bring in the bulldozers, consider that the consultants forgot to compare the EULs for all the other downtown 400,000-square-foot candidates for City Hall. They, too, are past their EULs. To compare apples to apples, all potential buildings must provide the same 20-year criteria, cost analysis, and condition assessment before a prudent stay/relocate decision can be made.

Here are the EUL facts missed by the "experts" about how [City Hall](#) measures up against potential City Hall To-Be's:

Building	Year Built, Major Remodel	Age in Years
City Hall	1978	48
Renaissance Tower	1974/1986	52
717 N Harwood	1980	46
Plaza of the Americas	1980	46
Thanksgiving Tower	1982	44
AT&T Plaza	1984	42
Founders Square	1915/1984	111
Bank of America Plaza	1985	41
Comerica Bank Tower	1987	39
Chase Tower	1987	39

 Photo by Karen Eubank for Candysdirt.com

If you then study the Certified Commercial Property Inspectors Association [EUL Chart for Commercial Building System and Components](#), it shows:

Building System	Estimated Useful Life in Years
Copper pipe plumbing – supply, waste	50+, 60-80
PVC plumbing – supply, waste	50-60
Concrete retaining walls, foundation	50-75, 80-90
Concrete interior ceiling, flooring	70-80, 50-100
Fire sprinklers	35-40
Elevators	25
Escalators	40
Electrical transformers	30-35
Cooling systems	15-25
Lighting	20-25
Glass windows	25-30
Heating systems	20-40

So, besides plumbing and concrete, every office building listed as a potential new City Hall has an infrastructure operating beyond their intended EUL. The claim that the end of system EULs is reason enough to move City Hall to one of these other buildings is baseless.

The only difference is that the private building owners and property management

companies have kept up with proactive maintenance budgets to keep their buildings in operating condition —something our leadership has never done. Now they face a staggering bill to pay the piper.

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Then, Finance Chair Chad West, who has served on city council since 2019 but never voted to fund maintenance requests, is the first to accuse past patchwork repairs of being “irresponsible and unacceptable.”

He should have also used these terms to describe the property management performance that he and the current and past mayors, city managers, and city councils failed to provide us stakeholders by kicking the “Pro-active maintenance budget” down the road. This is a glaring example of planned obsolescence by neglect that took place before our very eyes.


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The Other Elephant in the Room

The other elephant in the room that the “experts” forgot to mention is what happens to one of these office building alternatives when a large-scale gathering or protest takes place? What if the protest turns violent? What if it destroys facades, disrupts traffic ingress and egress, threatens the safety of the other tenants’ workforce, and makes guests at adjacent buildings and hotels vow to never return?

Office leases get cancelled, long-time residents flee, restaurants and retailers close, and a true doom loop would engulf downtown like a runaway train. At least our “bunker” City Hall was purpose-built to withstand catastrophic threats of every type without affecting nearby properties, as would be the case if it were moved elsewhere in the city center. Speaking of “bunker,” where is the relocation, design, and build line item cost of our new hardened 311/911 Emergency Services Department, or the City Hall demolition cost and environmental impact addressed?

 Photo by Karen Eubank for Candysdirt.com

As an active owner, manager, and marketer who lives and breathes real estate, I know there is no owner who would agree to their contractor, architect, or workforce taking five years to renovate their building. Why do all bureaucrats think that time does not equal money as it does in the private sector? Is it because they have no actual skin in the game? Is it because they are using our taxpayer dollars like it's Monopoly money? Is it because they spent \$300,000 to have the EDC do what staff couldn't and want something (regardless of whether it's accurate) to show for it?

Whatever the reason, this monumental upcoming decision has been rushed, has not been transparent, needs an independent analysis, and *must give* the [1,326,087](#) owners of City Hall the opportunity to decide on what the future should be for The People's House.

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