

**From:** [GRA](#)  
**To:** [Maura Gast](#)  
**Subject:** Dallas faces a dilemma: Buy former DMN building or revamp \$3.7B convention center plans?  
**Date:** Saturday, February 22, 2025 9:42:27 AM

**EXTERNAL: USE CAUTION** when clicking on links and opening attachments!

[Report Suspicious](#)

## Dallas faces a dilemma: Buy former DMN building or revamp \$3.7B convention center plans?

The Dallas Morning News

Story by Devyani Chhetri, Nick Wooten, The Dallas Morning News

February 21, 2025

Crews work on the streets near the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in downtown Dallas, December 2, 2024.

Tom Fox/The Dallas Morning News/TNS

[Plans to turn the old Dallas Morning News building into a data center](#) have Dallas leaders debating [buying the historic property](#) or revamping the \$3.7 billion renovation plans for the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center.

The city's maneuvering on its design plans comes after [developer Ray Washburne](#), the current owner, told *The News* that he is selling the former newspaper headquarters property at 508 Young St. to a data center because he hadn't heard from the city about its vision for the building.

That could significantly alter project plans, placing an industrial space in the heart of the development instead of a mixed-use hotel and entertainment district. But council member Paul Ridley, who oversees part of downtown Dallas, said on Thursday he was confident the city would not let that happen.

"It's a test of wills," he said.

The Dallas City Council has [scheduled a closed-door meeting](#) on Wednesday, Feb. 26, to "Deliberate the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property located at 508 Young Street" according to a public agenda. City officials also held similar deliberations on Feb. 5 in closed session.

Ridley said it was his understanding that Washburne had contacted the city about opening negotiations again to use part of the Young Street property for the convention center. But city leaders are working on alternatives.

“So there is still hope that that can happen, but we’re also in the meantime looking at options for the design of the convention center that don’t require the use of that property,” he said.

Washburne maintains that he has a “firm contract” with an unnamed data center. He told *The News* Friday that he wasn’t aware of plans to exclude his property. “I don’t care,” he said. “It would make my life easier.”

In a Feb. 7 interview, Washburne expressed concerns that the city would try to interfere with his sale.

City Manager Kimberly Bizer Tolbert reiterated the city would not publicly discuss or comment on negotiations.

“The City remains committed to developing the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center master plan in the most efficient, cost-effective way possible,” Tolbert said Friday evening in a statement. “This project has the potential to be a major, long-term benefit to the City, and we will not publicly discuss or comment on negotiations.”

---

The sun rises on Eddie Bernice Johnson Union Station with Reunion Tower seen behind the building in Dallas, on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025.

Liz Rymarev/The Dallas Morning News/TNS

When Washburne bought the property in 2019 for \$28 million, he said he planned to turn the campus into a mixed-use hotel and entertainment district. Two years later, *The News* reported [Washburne was working with developer Jack Matthews](#), who is also leading the project to redevelop the convention center.

The city found a mechanism to fund the \$3 billion in convention center improvements in late 2022, when voters approved using hotel occupancy taxes to pay down the debt incurred by the city.

Last March, officials told the City Council that the convention center's original orientation would have to shift to accommodate Texas Department of Transportation interstate projects and improvements to the Union Pacific line.

The new plan shifted the convention center's footprint 90 degrees away from the southwest corner of Memorial Drive near Interstate 30 and closer to the old newspaper campus on Young Street, now owned by Washburne.

Then months later in September, the city hired the architecture firm Perkins&Will to come up with design and construction plans.

Washburne said he had received no formal indication from the city that they planned to use eminent domain. He said he was willing to discuss the matter further and mentioned that moving the data center into another one of his properties is a possible solution.

He owns multiple downtown properties, including the landmark [Founders Square building](#) on Griffin Street near the convention center and [the downtown Dallas Greyhound Station](#).

"The city needs to make me an offer so I know what to do," Washburne said in a text message Friday evening. "In the meantime, the data center continues to do their engineering work. If (the city) gave me something that's real to think about, I will.

2131 N Collins Ste 433-721  
Arlington TX 76011  
USA

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Change Subscriber Options](#)