

FOOD AND DRINK EVENTS

FEB **Central Market Cooking**

18 **Classes**

Tue

Central Market
REALLY INTO FOOD

FEB **Open Mic Comedy Night at**

18 **Stan's Blue Note**

Stan's Blue Note Tue, 6:00 PM

FEB **Doc B's Cake For a Cause**

19 Doc B's Restaurant Wed, 11:00 AM

ADVERTISEMENT

THIS IS MEMBER-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT ⓘ

ARTS ENTERTAINMENT > ARCHITECTURE

Why the sale of the former Dallas Morning News building is bad for downtown

Developer Ray Washburne is selling the Rock of Truth to a data center provider.



By **Mark Lamster**
Architecture Critic

Feb. 3, 2025 | Updated 3:03 p.m. CST | ⌚ 3 min. read



In the 1940s the area around the former Dallas Morning News building at Young Street and Houston streets was one of the busiest areas of downtown. (DMN files)



It's been a tough couple of days for those who care about the future of Dallas. Just as the city was coming to learn that beloved basketball savant [Luka Doncic](#) had been unceremoniously [shipped off](#) to Los Angeles, word broke that the old *Dallas Morning News* headquarters, which had been slated for conversion to a mixed-use development, was being sold to a developer of [data centers](#).

The loss of our basketball hero will sting for a long time, but the shift in use of the former *News* building on Young Street will have negative repercussions that potentially last for decades. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a worse outcome for the southwestern corner of [downtown](#).



Back in 2019, when developer Ray Washburne agreed to pay \$28 million for the historic property, he promised a conversion to a 24-hour entertainment hub with housing, a boutique hotel, restaurants and office space. That would have been a boon to the moribund corner of downtown, giving it a new center of vitality.



The Dallas Morning News building on April 5, 2011. (The Dallas Morning News/David Woo)

D News Roundups

Catch up on the day's news you need to know.

SIGN UP

Or with:



By signing up you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

A data center will do just the opposite. Instead of contributing life to the area, it will be inhabited primarily by machines guzzling vast amounts of energy — as much as 50 times more than a typical commercial building by area, according to the Department of Energy.

It is a shame, and especially because hopes for the property were so high when Washburne acquired it. Designed for *The News* by the prolific Dallas architect [George Dahl](#), it opened in 1949 and was known colloquially as the [Rock of Truth](#), after the inscription on the immense stone tablet that still marks its front façade. “Build the news upon the rock of truth and righteousness,” it reads. “Conduct it always upon the lines of fairness and integrity. Acknowledge the right of the people to get from the newspaper both sides of every important question.” According to Washburne, the new owners will leave the tablet in place.

ADVERTISEMENT

Related: [What’s next for downtown Dallas architecture?](#)

How did we get to this point? Washburne blames the city for failure to deliver clear plans on how it will remake the neighboring [Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center](#).

“My preference was to sell it to the city, or develop an entertainment district, but I never got clarity on what they wanted to do,” Washburne told *The News*. “I wanted to do a joint venture, and I spent millions on plans, but I can’t go ahead without a firm understanding of what the city wants to do.”

In a statement, newly appointed City Manager [Kimberly Bizer Tolbert](#) said the city “will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure strong collaboration to the benefit of all.”

ADVERTISEMENT

The sides can say whatever they want, but the upshot is the city has lost out on a golden opportunity. More critically, it has demonstrated that while Dallas prides itself on being a business-first, can-do city, it is often

the opposite, with a weak-mayor governing structure that is fundamentally nontransparent and lacking in clear lines of accountability.

If this is a harbinger of what is to come on the multibillion-dollar convention center remake, Dallasites have reason to be very, very worried.

Related: [New Dallas convention center has developers scrambling](#)

More about: [Downtown Dallas](#)



By **Mark Lamster**

Mark Lamster is the architecture critic of The Dallas Morning News and a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. His 2018 biography of the late architect Philip Johnson, *The Man in the Glass House*, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography.

Connect: