

# DOING BUSINESS IN DALLAS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE BIG D

by **Joseph Pedro**



**W**ith a low cost of living, large work force, plenty of space, and a convenient central location, entrepreneurs are lining up to make it big in the Big D.

While start-up companies are common, Dallas is already home to an impressive lineup of nationally and internationally known businesses, which include 46 Fortune 1,000 companies, 19 businesses listed as America's Largest Private Companies by *Forbes*, and 113 total head-quarter operations.

Despite the nation's financial crisis, Dallas still shows signs of growth and a certain type of defiance against the recession. The signs of development in this southern metropolis are clearly visible as cranes continue to erect massive skyscrapers, and workers build new roads, rails, and bridges. Much-needed improvements to the city's transportation infrastructure will come with the upgrades to the **Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)** light rail system. With the approval of a \$700 million grant in 2006, two new lines are well underway to completion that will

connect people to up-and-coming areas as well as major event spaces like the Texas Fair.

To further relieve traffic congestion and create new outdoor spaces, the **Trinity River Corridor Project** has been in the works since the late 90s. A major component is the completion of three-signature bridges, designed by famed architect Santiago Calatrava, which will span the Trinity River. The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge is set to open in 2011, the Margaret McDermott Bridge in 2014, and an unknown date for the third. Other components include the creation of two lakes and an Audubon center, as well as a plan to attract businesses through the creation of an impact zone for economic development reserved for restaurants, residential projects, and offices.

Even if your company is not located in Dallas, you will probably find yourself touching ground at Dallas Fort Worth Airport as Dallas is one of the leading convention cities in the country. It has also become a popular pick for LGBT-owned businesses and gay and lesbian organizations. In the past six years, more than 32

LGBT-related conventions and events have taken place in Dallas—bringing in around \$37 million in economic value. In 2009 alone, Dallas booked the largest number of gay and lesbian meetings on record, according to the Conventions and Visitors Bureau. Some major gatherings included the Dallas Fort Worth Pride Movement, the Texas Bear Round-up, and Creating Change—the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force convention.

An assortment of state-of-the-art meeting spaces is just one of the many reasons why businesses choose Dallas. Located in the emerging Victory Park area, the **American Airlines Center** offers a 20,000-seat arena, as well as three meeting rooms, suites, and entertainment space for 18 to more than 350 people. Most likely, you'll be heading to the colossal **Dallas Convention Center**, which has more than one million square feet of open space, making it the largest column-free exhibit hall in the world. It even has the world's largest helipad, in case you want to make an extravagant entrance.

Some lesser-known venues can also provide excellent space for an event. The **Dallas Market Center** is the world's largest wholesale market place, but it can also accommodate businesses with exhibit, meeting, and special event space. For a more natural setting, try a meeting at **Fair Park**. This cultural center is a National Historic Landmark that



Photo: Chad Palmer

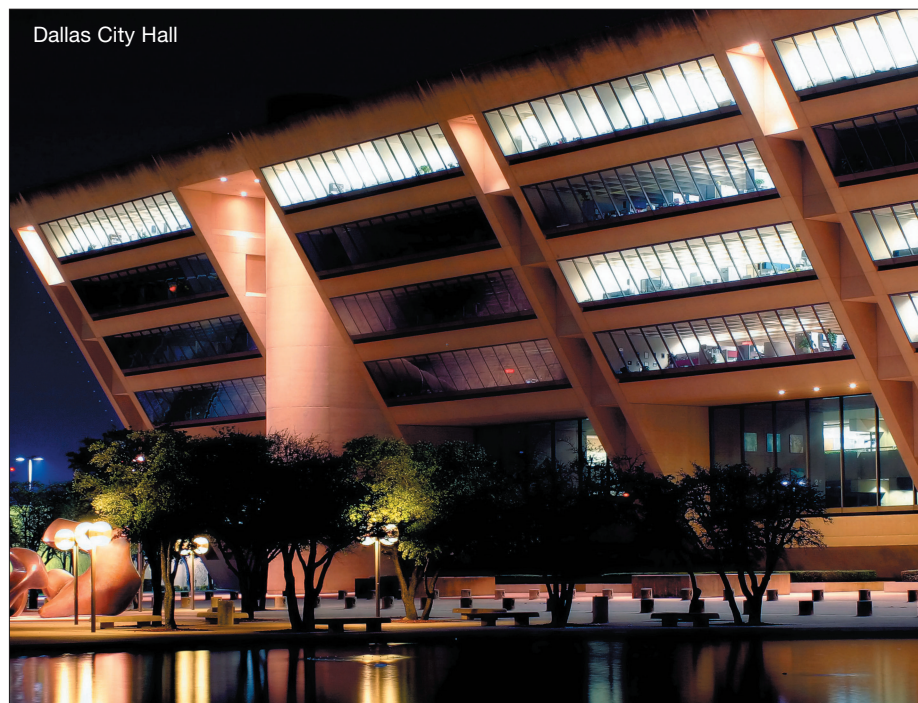
has 277 acres of park areas, museums, exhibit facilities, and indoor space that can accommodate 8,000 guests.

**A**fter a long day working, you'll want to find a comfortable and business-savvy hotel to spend the night. Unfortunately, the convention center does not currently have a hotel. Ground has

recently been broken, however, for the **Omni Dallas Convention Center Hotel** with a grand opening scheduled for 2012. The 1,000-room hotel will provide much needed accommodations in the Historic District and relieve some convention center congestion. The plans include 80,000 square feet of meeting space, restaurants, a spa, and pool facilities.

If you have business to take care of at the American Airlines Center, or just want to stay at one of the newest and trendiest hotels in Dallas, then book a room at **W Dallas—Victory**. This towering hotel has become the center of the burgeoning Victory Park area. Wireless Internet and a generous workstation are available in all the rooms. For more business amenities, the WIRED Business Center is open 24 hours and has PC workstations, fax machines, scanners, and printers. If you're worried about getting to other parts of the city, book the Acura Experience, a signature Whatever/Whenever car service. For an evening cocktail or a meeting over drinks, the **Ghostbar** is not to be missed. Located on the 33rd floor of the hotel, the ultra-chic lounge offers unparalleled views of Dallas. Don't forget to look down: the glass-floored ghostdeck is a dizzying experience.

For swanky, more private digs, check



Dallas City Hall

## businessclass



Photo: Jeanne Hatch

out the **Belmont Hotel Dallas**. This smaller, retro-chic hotel is located in Oak Cliff. The relatively secluded hotel offers a cheery burst of color to brighten even the most lugubrious business trip. With standard and deluxe rooms, suites, two-story lofts, garden suites, and bungalows, the hotel has something for everyone. Business travelers will be excited to find complimentary Wi-Fi, a conference room, private dining room, and a hospitality room.

The **Sheraton Dallas Hotel** is the largest and tallest hotel in Texas, and despite its size, its location downtown is a blessing for business travelers. The recently renovated, 1,800-guestroom property is ideal for large groups. It has 230,000 square feet of ballrooms, boardrooms, and entertainment suites. Also available is a 24-hour business center as well as wireless Internet throughout the hotel.

**T**ired of convention center food? Don't worry. Dallas is home to more restaurants per capita than any other city in the country. For an upscale dining experience, one that will surely impress a client, book a table at celebrity chef Tom Colicchio's **Craft Dallas**. Located in W Dallas—Victory, Craft's cozy, yet exciting, atmosphere complements the food perfectly. With wonderfully fresh, local ingredients, you can't go wrong when choosing a dish. Try the Craft Burger with white cheddar and applewood bacon,

its flavor will haunt you till your next visit.

For a quick lunch meeting, in an LGBT-owned establishment, drop by **Buli Café**, located on the gayborhood strip of Cedar Springs. Co-owner Scott Whittall described the coffee shop's inception as "a part-time retirement project," but the place today has grown into a bustling community establishment with a constantly evolving menu of delicious panini. You can dine al fresco here and enjoy some prime people watching at the same time.

In recent years, the East Dallas/Lakewood area has seen a boom in new business, and locals have been flocking to this fun and funky area. Dinner at **Park Restaurant** is a must: this new spot is extremely popular for its lively atmosphere and chic clientele. Try to sit outside, as the indoor bar area can get quite loud. "Happiness is only real when shared," the menu says, and that is exactly what you should do. The Champagne steamed mussels with shiitake mushrooms, ginger, and spinach are exquisite, and the taco platter that includes braised short rib, grilled chicken, and black beans, could fill even the heartiest Texan. After dinner, play a game of bocce in the outdoor bar area.

**W**ith the completion of the **AT&T Performing Arts Center** in late 2009, the Dallas art scene became hard to ignore. "World-class art is one of the

many reasons LGBT travelers choose Dallas as a travel destination. With the nation's largest contiguous urban arts district, visual and performing arts have never been so accessible," Phillip Jones, president of the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau, said. **The Dallas Arts District** is a city unto itself, with gorgeous museums, performances venues, restaurants, and parks—spend the day exploring. The AT&T Performing Arts Center added much to the area, including an opera house, a theater that holds up to 600, a smaller performance hall, an outdoor performance square, and a ten-acre park. The wide array of spaces has allowed for a diverse cultural offering for visitors and residents alike.

If you are worried that there is not enough time in the day to fit in a visit to one of the city's extraordinary museums and get all your work done, you're in luck. The **Dallas Museum of Art**, **Nasher Sculpture Center**, and the **Crow Collection of Asian Art**, all have special nights when they remain open late, just check their websites for specific dates.

**A**t night, trade that suit for casual wear and head to one of the dozen bars in the Oak Lawn area. The Dallas gay scene is quite stable and consistent in comparison to other large cities. Bars here seem to attract loyal followers, so it is usually a safe bet to head for the city's iconic nightlife fixtures. No trip is complete without a visit to the **Round-Up Saloon**. This staple country and western gay bar is always packed with cowboy hat, tight jean, boot-wearing Texans. If you're not into country, you'll get a kick out of watching these macho-men line dance with one another. Late in the evening, screens come down, and the crowd gathers to dance to Rihanna, Britney, Madonna, etc.

For a more quintessential club experience, check out **Station 4** or **S4**. Come here to groove to the best dance and house music, as glitter rains down from the ceiling. Spend time wandering around, the venue is quite huge, and you'll be sure to find some unexplored areas. By far the most exciting club in Dallas is for the girls. **Sue Ellen's** is one of the largest lesbian bars in the world, and the gals around Dallas take full advantage of it. The massive, downstairs dance floor is always packed and wild on the weekends, while upstairs is mellower with a performance stage, two smaller bars, and an outdoor smoking deck. ■

# dallasresources

## ACCOMMODATIONS

**The Belmont Hotel**, 901 Fort Worth Avenue. Tel: 800-951-2997. This retro-chic hotel offers large, private rooms for those who want to get away from it all at night. Around \$130 a night. [www.belmontdallas.com](http://www.belmontdallas.com)

**Omni Dallas Convention Center Hotel**, 420 Decker Drive. Tel: 214-744-6664. The official hotel of the Dallas Convention Center will open in 2012 and provide conveniently located accommodations. [www.omnihotels.com](http://www.omnihotels.com)

**Sheraton Dallas Hotel**, 400 North Olive Street. Tel: 214-922-8000. One of the largest hotels in the United States is centrally situated and provides all the amenities to make your business trip a success. Around \$200 per night. [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)

**W Dallas—Victory**, 2440 Victory Park Lane. Tel: 214-397-4100. This stylish hotel located in the center of the burgeoning Victory Park area is perfect for doing business near the American Airlines Center. Also home to the 33rd-floor Ghostbar. Rooms average \$360 per night. [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)

## BUSINESS FACILITIES

**American Airlines Center**, 2500 Victory Avenue. Tel: 214-221-8326. A 20,000-seat arena that also has three meeting rooms, suites, and entertainment spaces for events of 18 to more than 350 people. [www.americanairlinescenter.com](http://www.americanairlinescenter.com)

**Dallas Convention Center**, 650 South Griffin Street. Tel: 214-939-2700. More than one million square feet of open exhibit space, making it the largest column-free exhibit hall in the world. [www.dallasconventioncenter.com](http://www.dallasconventioncenter.com)

**Dallas Market Center**, 2100 North Stemmons Freeway. Tel: 800-325-6587. The world's largest

wholesale market place can accommodate businesses with exhibit, meeting, and special event space. [www.dallasmarketcenter.com](http://www.dallasmarketcenter.com)

**Fair Park**, 1121 First Avenue. Tel: 214-426-3400. This cultural center is a National Historic Landmark that has 277 acres of park areas, museums, and exhibit facilities. [www.fairpark.org](http://www.fairpark.org)

## RESTAURANTS

**Buli Café**, 3908 Cedar Springs. Tel: 214-528-5410. A gay-owned "eclectic coffee bar" with a wide variety of sandwiches and a great place to sit outside and get some work done. [www.bulicafe.com](http://www.bulicafe.com)

**Craft**, 2440 Victory Park Lane. Tel: 214-397-4111. Tom Colicchio's world-famous restaurant that is located in W Dallas—Victory. Offering wonderful food and the perfect ambiance for a meeting. [www.craftrestaurant.com](http://www.craftrestaurant.com)

**Park**, 1921 Henderson Avenue. Tel: 214-824-3343. This hotspot in the up-and-coming East Dallas/Lakewood area serves up some delicious plates in a lively environment. [www.parkhenderson.com](http://www.parkhenderson.com)

## NIGHTLIFE

**Round-Up Saloon**, 3912 Cedar Springs Road. Tel: 214-522-9611. This staple Country and Western gay bar is a must hit on the weekends. Polish up on your Texas Two Step to impress these cowboys. [www.roundupsaloon.com](http://www.roundupsaloon.com)

**Station 4**, 3911 Cedar Springs. Tel: 214-526-7171. This monstrous dance bar with cute go-go boys is the perfect place to end your night. [www.caven.com](http://www.caven.com)

**Sue Ellen's**, 3014 Throckmorton. Tel: 214-559-0707. It's all about the ladies at one of the city's wildest bars. Offering cheap drinks, live music, DJs, and good conversation, you can't go wrong here. [www.caven.com](http://www.caven.com)



## ARTS DISTRICT

**Dallas Arts District** is home to Dallas' most significant cultural landmarks and facilities. For happenings, performance schedules, restaurants, and accommodations, visit the official website. [www.thedallasartsdistrict.org](http://www.thedallasartsdistrict.org)

**The AT&T Performing Arts Center**, Dallas Arts District. Tel: 214-954-9925. A recently completed, multi-venue arts center that includes an opera house, a theater, a performance hall, an outdoor performance square, and a ten-acre park. [www.attpac.org](http://www.attpac.org)

**Crow Collection of Asian Art**, 2010 Flora Street. Tel: 214-979-6439. A massive collection of Asian art from ancient paintings to modern-day film, there is something for everyone. [www.crowcollection.com](http://www.crowcollection.com)

**Dallas Museum of Art**, 1717 North Harwood. Tel: 214-922-1200. This world-renowned art museum has pieces from all over the world as well as rotating exhibits. [www.dm-art.org](http://www.dm-art.org)

**Nasher Sculpture Center**, 2001 Flora Street. Tel: 214-242-5100. Home to the Nasher family's stunning sculpture collection, it features a tranquil outdoor area. [www.nashersculpturecenter.com](http://www.nashersculpturecenter.com)

## GAY AND LESBIAN RESOURCES

**Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau** is the official website for travelers to the Big D that also has a fantastic LGBT section. Find info on the community, dining, shopping accommodations, and entertainment. [www.glbtdallas.com](http://www.glbtdallas.com)

**Edge Dallas** is the city's largest, LGBT newspaper. Pick up a copy or read online about news, entertainment, business, technology, health, and travel. [www.edgedallas.com](http://www.edgedallas.com)

**North Texas GLBT Chamber Community Resource and Visitors Guide** is a fantastic gay and lesbian listing of gay-friendly and gay-owned businesses in North Texas complete with maps and some great tourist suggestions. [www.glbtdallas.com](http://www.glbtdallas.com)

