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Hurst kicks off construction of conference center

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HURST — Mayor Richard Ward took the controls of a front-end loader Thursday to kick off construction of a 50,000-square-foot conference center that city leaders hope will be a magnet for redevelopment.

The \$17 million Hurst Conference Center will include a 14,400-square-foot ballroom, meeting rooms, exhibit space and covered parking.

It will be built on vacant land on Campus Drive near City Hall, an area that officials call Hurst Town Center. Several hotels and office buildings have gone up in the area in recent years.

It is part of a redevelopment effort dubbed Transforming Hurst that includes the Heritage Village, which has a new fire station and soon-to-be-open Hurst Senior Center.

"It's an exciting day for the city of Hurst," Ward told about 35 people gathered for the groundbreaking. "We know this state-of-the-art facility will be a great economic driver for this area.

"We are truly transforming Hurst."

Construction is scheduled for completion by September 2010, and bids are lower than expected, City Manager Allan Weegar said.

The project is being paid for through a special sales tax for economic development, hotel-motel tax collections and city reserves, Weegar said.

Officials believe that the center will attract small trade shows and conventions with up to 1,000 people and will serve as a community center for receptions, weddings, exhibits and other functions.

Weegar said the center will be the largest convention space in Northeast Tarrant County after Grapevine's. It will be owned by the city but will likely be operated by a private management firm, Weegar said.

Architect Ron Hobbs designed the space. AUI Contractors will handle the construction.

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The conference center is being built on Campus Drive near City Hall, an area known as Hurst Town Center. Courtesy city of Hurst

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