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Leppert lashes out at no-bid contracts for Love Field vendors*RUDOLPH BUSH*

Mayor Tom Leppert said Tuesday that awarding no-bid contracts to the present concessionaires at Love Field "makes a mockery" of Dallas' image as a business-friendly city.

"If we want the best deal, for both the city and for consumers, those contracts must be open to everyone in Dallas," Leppert told a luncheon audience of the Downtown Dallas business group. "We should not simply settle for the status quo."

The city staff has recommended the long-term, no-bid contracts be awarded for retail to Hudson Retail-Dallas, a joint venture owned in part by state Rep. Helen Giddings, and for food service to a company owned by Dallas restaurateur Gilbert **Aranza**.

Handing out such contracts "tells all businesses ... that we do not have a level playing field" in Dallas, Leppert said.

"It tells taxpayers that the city does not know how to cut a good deal ... that the biggest contract that the city will do for years did not go through the competitive clearinghouse of an open bid process," he said.

"And perhaps the worse message of all: That it's not the best deal you have to offer but who you know that matters at Dallas City Hall.

"I can tell you," the mayor said, "that's not a label we need."

On other subjects, Leppert:

· Praised the convention center hotel, saying it already has signed contracts for room nights valued at \$17 million.

· Promised the arch for the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge over the Trinity River will begin to rise next month.

· Exhorted fellow council members to join him in holding the line on taxes, saying a rate hike would hurt the city's economic growth.

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