

Dallas Breaks Ground on Long-Awaited Police Training Center

September 3, 2026

The September 3 ceremony marked a major step forward, but completing the academy still depends on closing its remaining funding gap.

DALLAS- After more than three decades of promises, planning and temporary solutions, Dallas has officially broken ground on a new Law Enforcement Training Center at the University of North Texas at Dallas.

City leaders, police officials, university representatives, community partners and private donors gathered September 3 to mark the beginning of a project intended to transform how Dallas recruits, educates and prepares its police officers.



The new multi-building training center will occupy approximately 20 acres of the UNT Dallas campus. Plans include classrooms, computer laboratories, indoor and outdoor physical-training areas, community and event space, and a Criminal Justice Center that will connect police training with higher education.

The facility is expected to open in 2028.

“This is a generational investment in public safety,” said Lynn McBee, the city’s workforce czar and one of the project’s leading fundraisers.

Dallas Police Chief Daniel Comeaux described an ambitious goal for the department during the groundbreaking ceremony.

“We want to stop crime before it happens,” Comeaux said.

Replacing a “Temporary” Academy Used Since 1990

The groundbreaking represents an important turning point for a project Dallas officers have awaited for decades.

The current Dallas Police Academy operates from a rented Red Bird facility that opened in 1990 as a temporary location. More than 35 years later, Dallas recruits are still being trained there.

The new center is designed to provide the space, technology and educational resources required by one of the largest municipal police departments in the country. It will also create a partnership between the police academy and UNT Dallas that city and university leaders believe could become a national model.

UNT Dallas faculty members will help teach academy recruits, evaluate police programs and conduct research into the effectiveness of public-safety initiatives. Officers completing the Dallas Police Academy may earn as many as 42 hours of academic credit toward a bachelor's degree.

"For too long, police training and higher education have run on separate tracks," UNT Dallas President Warren von Eschenbach said. He described the center as an opportunity to bring those tracks together through a new model of education and professional preparation.

Mayor Eric Johnson said Dallas officers deserve "world-class training, tools and resources," adding that the new center will establish a higher standard for police training.

City Manager Kimberly Bizer Tolbert has said the project will provide significant benefits for police recruiting while introducing a curriculum focused on community policing and effective crime-reduction methods.

Ground Has Been Broken. The Work Is Not Fully Funded.

The groundbreaking does not mean that all the money required to complete the academy has been secured.

The current estimated cost of the Law Enforcement Training Center is approximately \$227 million. Funding committed to the project has included \$50 million approved by Dallas voters in the 2024 bond program, state funding and private donations.

The City Council has also authorized the city manager to pursue an additional \$15 million in state grants. Even with those resources and continued private fundraising, city officials have identified a remaining funding need of approximately \$82 million.

That amount is included in Proposition A, the \$443 million public-safety bond proposition Dallas voters will consider on November 3.

UNT Dallas acknowledged the unfinished funding picture in its official announcement, stating that the remaining amount needed to close the gap is expected to come from continuing fundraising and the November bond election.

The distinction is important:

Ground has been broken. The project has not been fully funded.

Previously committed funds have allowed Dallas to begin moving the academy forward. Proposition A would provide the additional public funding identified by the city as necessary to finish it.

Former Dallas City Council member Tennell Atkins connected the milestone directly to the coming election during the ceremony.

“This November, Dallas voters will decide on a public safety bond,” Atkins said, describing it as an opportunity to invest further in the people and resources Dallas needs to remain safe.

One Academy, Two Distinct Training Facilities

The UNT Dallas academy should not be confused with the separate specialized Public Safety Training Complex proposed near Dallas Executive Airport.

The university site will house academic instruction, basic and advanced police education, physical training and the Criminal Justice Center.

The specialized complex would accommodate functions that are not appropriate for a university campus, including a firearms range, emergency-vehicle operations course and a simulated tactical village.

Proposition A contains funding for both projects, along with three other major public-safety infrastructure needs:

- Replacement of the Dallas Police evidence and property-storage operation
- Relocation of 911 dispatch and emergency operations from the City Hall basement
- Replacement of Dallas Fire-Rescue Station No. 4

Together, the five projects reflect a broader challenge confronting Dallas. The city has grown, technology has changed and the demands placed on police officers, firefighters, dispatchers and emergency managers have increased. Much of the infrastructure supporting those professionals has not kept pace.

A Milestone Decades in the Making

The September 3 groundbreaking is more than a ceremonial photograph. It is evidence that Dallas can move a long-delayed public-safety project from discussion toward construction.

It is not, however, the finish line.

The city has the land. The plans have been developed. Public, state and private partners have committed substantial resources. Construction is beginning, and the academy is expected to open in 2028.

The remaining question is whether Dallas will provide the resources necessary to finish what it has finally started.

For officers who have trained for decades inside a building that was never intended to become a permanent academy, the answer will determine whether this groundbreaking becomes the beginning of a completed facility or another chapter in a project Dallas has already waited too long to deliver.

