

# New Gene Patrick Plaza Extends Footprint of Downtown

Sarah Bahari









Longtime former Arlington City Council member Gene Patrick devoted much of his career to driving the revitalization of downtown Arlington.

On Sunday, his efforts continued to pay off.

Members of First United Methodist Church of Arlington, along with city and community leaders, gathered to celebrate the opening of the renovated North Street and the church's new Gene Patrick Plaza.

"Gene's passions were his family, his church, this city and downtown Arlington," said Randal Rose, a friend of Patrick's. "Today is a perfect day to celebrate a man who made things happen for this city and this church."

The new plaza, which is part of a nearly \$800,000 capital campaign, features a redone traffic circle, revamped entrances to the church and steps, more accessible handicap parking and sidewalk streetscape to match downtown.

The project aims to bring the downtown landscape further north while improving safety and accessibility of the Old Town district, said Bart Thompson, chairman of the church's buildings and grounds committee.

"This extends the footprint of downtown," Thompson said.

Begun in August 2013, the renovation was made possible by the City of Arlington, Arlington Tomorrow Foundation and the church's capital campaign.

Community leaders said Patrick's vision is the force behind the new plaza and the renovation of North Street between Center and Mesquite streets.

Patrick moved to Arlington at age 11, living just blocks from First United Methodist Church. He was an original staff member of Six Flags Over Texas and became an expert in design, costuming and animation. Patrick traveled the country producing shows but returned to Arlington in 1985.

"His experience took him around the world," Mayor Robert Cluck said, "but he never forgot his hometown of Arlington. Thank God he didn't."

Patrick served as the at-large District 8 City Council representative from 2003 until he resigned in 2011 for health reasons. He died in September 2012 at age 72.

During his service, Patrick became known as a chief champion for the resurgence of the city's downtown.

"This was Gene's vision and passion," Thompson said. "He was instrumental in the downtown revitalization."