



— Staff Photo By Tom Turner

MOVING FORWARD: Tyler Mayor Joey Seeber on Wednesday delivers his state of the city address, hosted by the Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce.

Tyler 'Open For Business'

Mayor's Focus On Economic Growth, Regional Cooperation

By **ADRIENNE GRAHAM**
Staff writer

Tyler Mayor Joey Seeber on Wednesday said the city is "open for business" at the annual state of the city address hosted by the Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce.

Seeber said economic development is critical to the city's future growth.

As part of the Tyler 21 plan, he said the city will continue to provide incentives for industry expansion within the city.

He said it is also important Tyler

lead the way in regional coordination and working with surrounding community leaders when it comes to gaining legislative support.

"The city puts its money where its mouth is. It's never said no to an economic development project that has been brought to it," he said.

Recommendations for future economic development include encouraging international partnerships, marketing Tyler as a regional retail market, ensuring the completion of Loop 49, promoting more commercial flights

from Tyler and pursuing industry recruitment and expansion efforts.

Seeber spoke during the chamber's quarterly membership luncheon.

Henry Bell III, the chamber's chief operating officer, said 305 people attended the event in the Tyler Rose Garden Center.

Tyler 21 and the importance of cooperation between communities surrounding Tyler were key topics Seeber also discussed in the speech.

See OPEN, Page 6A

OPEN Continued From 1A

"As I think about my last year as mayor, I could not be more grateful," Seeber said about city staff and individuals who contribute to the Tyler 21 committees.

Seeber spoke of how the Tyler 21 working committees have toiled throughout the year to take general concerns of Tyler citizens, and find applicable solutions.

Seeber said the Tyler 21 plan is directly based on community input.

Tyler 21 focuses on six key areas: congestion mitigation and traffic, north end revitalization, downtown development, historic preservation, parks, recreation, open space and lakes, housing and neighborhood identity, and public facilities and services.

According to Seeber, traffic is the No. 1 concern of Tyler's citizens when looking toward the future.

He said the half-cent sales tax that began 11 years ago will make it possible for the city to spend \$45 million in cash over the next two years on improvements and projects to help alleviate the problem.

He said projects are already in the

works to expand or extend Grande Boulevard, Old Omen Road and Sunnybrook Road in the near future.

The Tyler 21 Congestion Mitigation and Traffic Committee is also looking to improve public transit, connectivity to Broadway Avenue, and is working with surrounding cities to plan future projects.

Seeber said other accomplishments during the last year include hiring the city's first arborist and planning the construction of two fire stations.

The mayor also talked about the importance of looking to surrounding communities when planning for the future.

Seeber told the audience he visited with regional leaders in Austin last week, and Lindale Mayor James Ballard, who attended Wednesday's speech, was pleased to hear it.

"We need to have a regional focus. We need to work with all the counties surrounding us," he said.

Seeber also said Tyler's tax rate is the lowest among comparable cities in the state of Texas, and that the city's general obligation bond debt will be paid off by

the 2007-08 fiscal year.

LT CLASS 20 GRADUATES

Also Wednesday, Cindy Klein, Leadership Tyler executive director, and Seeber handed graduation plaques to LT Class 20 participants.

Class 20 includes Jason Adkison, Simmons Real Estate; Kim Beckham, Central Baptist Church; Shelia Billingsley, KLTV Channel 7; Karen Boehm, Smith County Juvenile Services; Leslie Bookman, Trinity Mother Frances Health System; Robert Carnes, Bucher, Willis & Ratliff; Hannah Cottrill, United Way of Tyler/Smith County; Debby Davis, Elegant Events; and T Dertfelt, Intradermal Beauty.

Also, Jason Ditto, Diamond Control Systems; Jo Dobbs, Interlink Real Estate; Kristy Everitt, Henry & Peters; Stuart Gilpin, YMCA of Tyler; Larry Goddard, Tyler Independent School District Foundation; Tricia Harty, Firstbank; Mike Henderson, Bancorp South; Justin Holt, Capital One; and Nancy Johnson, Texas Spine & Joint Hospital.

Also, Matt Marshall, The Pillsbury

Group; Chris Massey, J. Bennett White PC; Jennifer Moreman, East Texas Communities Foundation; Hannah Oliphant, Learning Rx; Tanya Redic, Harold Carter Realtors; Ben Reed, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.; Harnet Renner, Brook Hill School; Dawn Rhodes, Fox 51; and Carroll Roge, East Texas Medical Center Regional Healthcare System.

Also, Angela L. Rowell, Fourth Partner Foundation & Parent Services Center; Kim Russell, Community Advocate; Bill Smart, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department; Andy Stinson, Ramey & Flock; Troy Thibodeaux, ETMC Tyler; Randy Turner, Arms, Shilling & Pye; Debbie Wood, The University of Texas at Tyler; and Brad Wyatt, MACS Financial.

Leadership Tyler, a nonprofit organization, has a mission to foster a life of community service among people who attend its annual program. Its curriculum is intended to educate participants about issues that affect the community and provide leadership tools to help them address the issues and motivate other people.