

As 2010 winds down, we turn our collective attention to 2011, where there many challenges facing our local leaders. Two of the most important challenges we face concern our downtown area and our school system. While these challenges are certainly not in the "quick fix" category, we would like to see improvement in the following areas:

— Two-thirds of the downtown project are, for the most part, cosmetically complete. Both Main Street and Connally Street have received much-needed makeovers and look great. Up next is the revamping of Heritage Square and once that is completed, the desired downtown "look" will have been achieved.

But while the bricks are clean and the trees are beautiful and inviting, there is something missing: the people. Less than a handful of retail businesses have chosen to relocate or to open on Main or Connally (or on the square) since this project began. And with so few businesses as attractions, the customers aren't swarming to the area, either.

Where the city has faltered is in promoting its crown jewel. Where are the incentive programs for new businesses? Yes, the facade grants are nice, but facade grants alone aren't enough - especially when the city controls how those facades will look. What about tax breaks for new businesses? What about recruitment programs? What about promotional billboards and advertising programs.

City officials have put a lot of time and money into developing our new downtown look. But it will be a waste if more businesses and more customers don't join in on the plan. The current strategy isn't working. It is time for a new plan.

— The Sulphur Springs Independent School District had a strong year based on the Texas Education Agency's accountability ratings. Now it is time to take a big step forward.

The district had four campuses given Exemplary ratings, with two campuses given Recognized ratings and two more receiving Academically Acceptable ratings. In 2007, those numbers were reversed, with just two campuses receiving Exemplary ratings, two as Recognized and four as Academically Acceptable. Make no mistake, the progress is outstanding.

2011 in SS: Challenges lie ahead

Written by Editorial Staff

Friday, 31 December 2010 11:11

Now it is time to reach for even higher levels. North Lamar ISD had four campuses garner Exemplary status and two Recognized. Highland Park ISD had all seven campuses rank as Exemplary. Frisco ISD had 37 of 42 campuses rank as Exemplary. That is the target and the challenge.

With a new Middle School opening at some point in 2011 and a reconfiguration of the elementary campuses, we have the facilities in place. Now we need an urgency from teachers, parents and — most importantly — students to take the next step. Being good is great. Being great is what we should expect.

It is time to bring on a new year and new challenges. It is how we handle those challenges and the excitement and forward-thinking attitudes we carry throughout the year that will determine whether 2011 will be an even better year for us all.