

The costs of downtown marathons

The Cowtown executive director is optimistic that the event fee of \$75 per block that the city of Fort Worth could charge won't be levied on The Cowtown.

Cowtown Executive Director Heidi Swartz said the event will pay the current \$150 fee at least for the 2010 event. But what if the city decided to enact the \$75 per block fee? How would that stack up with other cities that host downtown marathons? As one might imagine, fees vary, sometimes quite considerably. Dallas charges different fees according to the event's size. For events with 20,000 or more, it's \$500, plus \$160 per police officer (four-hour minimum) that's needed.

Borden Uptown director Tom Short said he needed 71 officers (security always is one of the major expenses for downtown events) for the recent Uptown run. To give an idea of how the fees slide; a Dallas event with 801-1,000 would pay \$250. Cowtown hires off-duty police officers to monitor its event. Short said Plano is similar to Dallas. Houston charges its marathon event only \$50 for an application for street function. However, the marathon pays the city for many services, such as barricades, police, convention center rental, etc. Austin has an \$100 per block fee, but caps the fee at \$1,600. Some cities, including Dallas, charges for each parking meter that needs to be hooded to prevent parking. Austin doesn't, but marathon officials said that might change in 2010. Even though it might seem Cowtown has a good deal (and it does), it also should be highlighted that the downtown businesses benefit from the event that attracted about 18,000 (a record) at the 2009 edition. And that's not including thousands of spectators. The Cowtown has conducted a survey among downtown businesses and received "very positive" feedback, Swartz said. She said the event also has blocks of rooms at three hotels and might need another block of rooms. She said participants from 28 states and one foreign country already are registered for 2010. No doubt, Fort Worth is benefiting from having The Cowtown downtown, as most hosting cities do. Let's hope the city realizes that.