



CITY HALL MONTHLY

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FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK:

As we begin a new term of office, it is a time to not only reflect on our accomplishments but, also, and, more importantly, a time to look forward. The first four years had many hardships which required drastic solutions. It was a difficult period for me personally as well as each of the members of my administration. As we formulated and implemented the many corrective measures that have made Erie one of the few cities that has been able to successfully deal with its problems and emerge from financial distress. I am proud of the innovative, efficient, cost effective government that we have created to best serve all of the members of our community. But as I told you when we first began, that is only one facet of Erie's future.

As we look ahead, we must continue to be good stewards of the city. At the same time, we must also continue to create the opportunities that will serve as the foundation for Erie's future. As I have often said, it is my vision to have people move back into the inner city and ultimately return Erie to Pennsylvania's third largest city. In order to do so, we must continue our aggressive economic development efforts. This includes both business and residential development.

In order to bring people back into our city, we must continue our revitalization efforts in all of the aging neighborhoods. We've begun a transformational development project right in the center of our downtown which will create condominium and townhouse living opportunities surrounding the newly revitalized Griswold Park and anchored by the restored Mercantile Building. This will create an inner city residential neighborhood geared towards people who want to live in the downtown area, near where they work and play. This development, as it becomes successful, will spread throughout downtown and offer similar opportunities as we progress both north and south from that initial development site.

Similarly we must continue to revitalize our older neighborhoods and offer home ownership opportunities to all economic classes of citizens. Promoting owner occupied housing will help to restore various areas of the city to the family friendly neighborhoods that we

once had and most of us remember. These are the keys to bringing people back to living in a community and we will continue in our efforts in all of the blighted and aging areas of our city.

At the same time, we will continue our efforts to help our existing businesses to thrive in this area and to bring new businesses to our community. All of the regional economic development engines are pooling their resources to maximize our effectiveness in bringing jobs to our city. Because of the effort of these very talented people, we have shown our community that we can reverse the trend of business flight from our region. With the successes of Accuride and Rexam, we were able to retain two companies that were considering relocation, thereby keeping family sustaining jobs within our community. We were also able to establish Erie as a consolidation site for these companies as they look at the future of their business. These are very important successes. They show that Erie can compete for business due to the quality and character of our community and its attractiveness to companies, their employees and families. Along with these successes there is also the necessity of bringing new business to our area. Once again, the pooled resources of the Regional Economic Development Groups, lead by the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, are targeting those industries that have businesses that would be most viable within our community. By identifying those opportunities and turning them into economic realities, we are working together to find our niche in the ever changing global economy. Gone are the days when we as a community could sit back and wait for an opportunity to knock on our door. We must be proactive and aggressive in seeking businesses. This will continue to be a major priority of my administration over the next four years.

I begin this term in a much different posture than I did four years ago. I am no longer troubled by the prospect of a city in perpetual turmoil. I am now excited about the future of a community that has overcome its difficulties, remained optimistic and hopeful, forged new cohesiveness, and made strides in preparing itself to be successful for decades to come. None of this would have been possible without the support and understanding of all of you. We will all share in the benefits as we continue to make Erie great.

Department of Community and Economic Development Set Priorities

The City of Erie, Department of Economic and Community Development is beginning the process of preparing our Five-Year Consolidated Plan for submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Consolidated Plan will serve as a blueprint for the expenditures of federal funds in the City of Erie from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2015. In order to strategically implement federal programs that fund housing and community and economic development activities within the City, a collaborative planning process involving a broad spectrum of public and private agencies is necessary.

The Department plans to take a bottom-up, participatory planning approach to develop goals for housing and community development that address the needs of low-to-moderate income persons and households, as well as persons with special needs such as disabilities, substance abuse, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, and the elderly. It is our goal to strengthen partnerships with other jurisdictions and to extend and strengthen partnerships among all levels of government and private sectors. This includes for-profit and nonprofit organizations that provide decent housing, establish and maintain a suitable living environment and expand economic opportunities for every resident.

While a Public Needs Hearing is planned for January 19, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. in City Council Chambers, a public survey has been developed to give residents an opportunity to comment on the needs of the community. Residents can participate in the survey by logging onto the City's Website at www.erie.pa.us and clicking on "Housing and Community Development Needs Survey." The results of this survey will be incorporated into the City's Five Year Consolidated Plan and presented to HUD.

The Department of Community and Economic Development has already met with many community groups including the Mayor's Roundtable on Disabilities, neighborhood non-profits and organizations serving the homeless. Further meetings will include the Housing Authority, Health and Human Service providers, the Redevelopment Authority, Members of Erie Weed and Seed, Envision Erie, and Erie Together, the group that has formed to comprehensively address issues of poverty in the Erie Region. The Economic Development Lead Team of Erie County will provide input on Economic Development issues and various housing organizations will provide input regarding housing needs in the City of Erie.

The City plans to use the results of these meetings and the survey to help direct funds to the most critical needs in the City. The information will enable City officials to establish budget and program priorities for the next several years, specifically how to allocate federal funds received for housing and community development activities. Community members are encouraged to become involved in the planning process, as public feedback is essential to ensure that the City's most critical needs are identified and met.

Erie Together

The 2008 census statistics indicate 24.2 percent, or one in four Erie residents are getting by on less than the federal poverty level of \$10,400 and nearly one in five Erie families, or 19.6 per cent, live below the poverty line of \$22,025 for a four-member family. We know that poverty prevents many individuals and families from reaching their fullest potential and leads to a detrimental overall impact on the community's quality of life and economic growth.

The Erie community is addressing the issues related to poverty in a unique way. *Erie Together* is a joint venture of Mercyhurst College, The Erie Community Foundation and United Way focused on creating real change in Erie County. Erie Together (ET) believes the best way to tackle poverty in Erie County is to develop a comprehensive community-wide response inclusive of all sectors, including those living in poverty. Informed by "best practice" research ET utilizes a bottom up and top down, assets based approach building on the strengths of the entire community. The multi layering of strategies within the community promotes a solution focused approach to address poverty at the individual, community and systemic levels.

Within this framework ET provides: 1) a unified approach with all sectors working together; 2) an opportunity for increased community engagement and neighborhood leadership development and; 3) an opportunity for the voices of low-income families and individuals to be heard along with providing them with the tools and supports needed to move out of poverty.

To find out more, contact:

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CITY HALL will be closed for the Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday January 18