

Making 2007 the Year of the Manchester Neighborhood

LAST WEDNESDAY I declared that 2007 shall be known as the Year of the Manchester Neighborhood. This was no empty proclamation, but a collaboration of the city's efforts to make a demonstrated change in the economic growth, public safety and quality-of-life in the city's neighborhoods.

This declaration also flows up on my office's six-point plan to improve Manchester's neighborhoods, which I released in October. The ideas are a mix of best practices, enforcement of current laws and innovative collaborations with various governmental, nonprofit and private entities. These areas are public safety, housing, neighborhood enhancement, youth services, economic development and education.

◆ The following are some of the efforts my office has conducted since releasing the plan:

- **Crime:** The most pressing issue that needs to be addressed in our neighborhoods is public safety and I am happy to say real progress has been made. This

month, the Manchester Police Department in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office did a city sweep to nab those who committed gun crimes. I am happy to report that the sweep led to 16 arrests, which took 65 illegal guns off the street. This is an ongoing initiative and I can assure you that this effort is just getting started.

In addition, we announced at last Tuesday's Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting the opening of a police substation on the West Side. This facility, in partnership with Catholic Medical Center, will provide an increased police presence in an area more in need of it.

- **Housing:** This is one of the most important economic development issues facing our city. My office is working with the Manchester Housing and Redevelopment Authority, HUD and NeighborWorks Greater Manchester to help people establish home ownership and to revitalize blighted and distressed center city and West Side residences. In the near

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Frank Guinta

future, we will be announcing a task force to address ways to improve downtown housing options, which will involve some of the area's most knowledgeable housing and development experts. We also worked with the previous congressional delegation to secure funds for a lead paint mitigation grant, which is still a pressing issue in some center city residences.

- **Neighborhood Enhancement:** As noted earlier, the city has embarked upon the first wholesale neighborhood revitalization it its history, starting with Rimmon Heights on the West Side. Through improvements to the area's streetscapes and parks, targeted crime-prevention efforts and promoting quality of life, we hope to improve the neighborhood's business climate and ensure a secure environment for living and working in the area.

We will be closely tracking the

success of the Rimmon Heights initiative to see how we can apply this to other Manchester neighborhoods, which will see attention later this year.

- **Economic Development:** When a company invests in a neighborhood, the effects can be quite positive. An example of this is the selling of the former Ash Street School to Westin Associates. The firm is experiencing incredible growth, but needed to find a space that could accommodate its growth or else it would consider leaving Manchester.

Through the city's help, Westin was able to purchase the building from the Amoskeag Development Corporation. Not only does this mean a vacant building will be redeveloped and generating more in taxes, 80 jobs and economic development will be brought to a part of the city in need of attention. I salute Westin's decision and will highlight its example to other businesses.

Our office also saw the purchase of the former Jac-Pac fa-

NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2007

city, which will be turned into a mixed-use development in the next few years. This will help expand downtown's economic development to Queen City Avenue and make Manchester more of a destination location for potential residents and businesses.

- **Education:** In the past month, we had one of the most promising economic developments come to Manchester. Job Corps will be locating its first New Hampshire center off of Hackett Hill, which will help youth develop the skills they need to enter the workforce. With nearly 400 Manchester youth dropping out annually, this is an effective way to deter them from a dead-end future to one of personal and economic empowerment.

The Job Corps facility also

means that more businesses will commit to an undeveloped area of the city, meaning more high-paying jobs and more tax revenue from businesses.

In addition, I am committed to the expansion of the University of New Hampshire-Manchester, which would bring a science and technology hub to the city. This ongoing project is one that will also improve the city's quality of life and economic vitality.

I believe that Manchester's stakeholders — its residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations and government — have a vested interest in successful neighborhoods. As 2007 continues, my office will make the neighborhoods its top priority and will actively work with those who feel the same way.

◆ Frank Guinta is mayor of Manchester.