

STATE OF THE CITY 2007

My Fellow Lockport Citizens.

It takes action to force a reaction.

(Ladies and Gentlemen)- My old science teachers must be smiling today!

This has been my philosophy since first setting foot in the Mayor's office over three years ago. Everyday I remind myself that it is my role as mayor to help start this chain reaction, even if wrong, because I knew that the time had come for our City to state making decisive decisions and that any action would be better than no action at all.

With this in mind, I am so please to report – that due to the strong spirit and positive actions of partners in both private and public sectors- the State of the City of Lockport is strong, stronger than it has been in decades and we are truly on a new path of revitalization and growth.

I am honored to have been asked to give this address before members of the Lockport Rotary Club. This club is a splendid example of what can happen when action is taken. A few years ago, you had identified a problem that our City was facing and approached me about undertaking the daunting task of fixing it. The Lockport Community Pool in Outwater Park was in dire need of major repairs and it was only a matter of time before the City would be forced to close the pool once and for all. However, thanks to the will and the spirit of Rotary Club members- you successfully raised \$200,000 and coordinated the reconstruction of this tremendous recreational resource for Lockport. On behalf of the Common Council and all the Citizens of Lockport, we thank you for the outstanding service you provide for this Community.

Taking risks is never easy and one never knows how things will turn out. As a little boy, I remember walking down the streets of downtown Lockport and seeing the hustle and bustle of activity. Then, like many of you, I watched in horror how the adverse effects of Urban Renewal

crippled our downtown. Now I walk the streets of our downtown-as your Mayor- and take such pride in the revitalization, which is taking place.

Of course, I believe the City has done its part recently due to the persistence of Corporation Counsel John Ottaviano and the Common Council, but at the same time, none of this would be possible without the commitment from the private sector and the business community. Developer David Ulrich has successfully performed major heart surgery in our downtown with the development of the Ulrich City Centre which has opened up arteries of commercial and economic growth for other entrepreneurs such as Wittlin, Cain & Dry Accounting firm, Hunt Real Estate, Wilhelm & Ashe and so many others to do business in downtown Lockport. This year we will look at the possibilities of a façade improvement program to create a nice, more uniform look for the business district. We will look into the creation of Business Improvement District to help keep our downtown looking fresh.

I would also like to thank Delphi for staying here in Niagara County and Lockport, New York. Out of the 29 plants that Delphi operates, only 8 remained open. Thanks to our state and federal leaders, including Congressman Reynolds and Senator Maziarz, Lockport was one of them. As a former employee of Delphi, I had a unique perspective of the whole situation, but truly understood how devastating the effects would have been if Delphi would have closed the Lockport plant. The City of Lockport worked very closely with Delphi and fought to provide as much economic relief in reasonable reductions in water and sewer fees as possible and I traveled with Senator Maziarz to White Plains and successfully urged the New York Power Authority to provide Delphi low cost power for the Lockport and Rochester plants. Despite some criticism last year, I took a chance and allowed the Mayor's office to serve as a distribution hub for Delphi job applications for temporary jobs, with results being that over 900 of those temporary jobs became permanent over the Thanksgiving weekend last year. Lets hope and pray that Delphi will re-shape itself in the years to come and remain a vibrant and economic force in our community.

I am grateful to the entrepreneurs at Rubberform Recycled Products and Candlelight Cabinetry for choosing to create 30 new jobs and do business right here in Lockport. I would also

like to point out that the Greater Lockport Development Corporation has assisted many other businesses in retaining jobs for our community.

Over the last 3 years we have spent a lot of time and effort on tourism, and more specifically, Heritage Tourism. I understand that tourism will not cure all of our ills, but it is the medicine, I believe, that will help us get better. I currently sit on several statewide boards, some of them Canal and Tourism related and I hear and see the success stories that are happening around our State and it has inspired me to do more here. I remain optimistic that 50 years from now as technology continues to overtake our lives people will want to step back in time and experience how our City and Country once operated. That is why I am so persistent in restoring the area around our Locks and renovating the Flight of Five. I encourage you to take a walk in our new Lockport Locks Heritage District, which includes Canal Street, the Erie Canal Discovery Center and the Flight of Five. You too, will rediscover the gem sitting in our own backyard. People from all over the World are coming to our City every year and I am pleased to report that over 25,000 people are taking cruises each year. Last year during peak tourism season, over 125 people a day were visiting the Erie Canal Discovery Center and rode the trolley through our beautiful city and there will be more this year.

Rest assured that the Flight of Five project remains on track. I continue to meet with leaders and engineers in Albany and Washington and they fully understand how critically important this project is to Lockport and Niagara County. When this project is completed in 2009, it will be the only place in the world where the new locks (Locks 34 & 35) and Historic Locks (Locks 67-71) will be operating side by side. It is predicted that over a quarter million people would visit such an attraction. I would like to acknowledge former Flight of Five Committee Chairman Peter Wesley, Current Flight of Five Chairman David Kenyon, Canal Director Carmella Mantello, Congressman Tom Reynolds and State Senator George Maziarz for the relentless effort in trying to make this project a reality. Ladies and Gentlemen, the time has come for action on this project and I assure you that the reaction will pay dividends beyond our imagination for years to come. This remains a top priority of my administration and I will continue to fight for it everyday until it is functional. Tourism will lead to economic development, economic development will lead to jobs and that it is formula that we will for success.

I have just returned from the statewide Mayor's conference held in Albany, I heard horror stories from Mayor after Mayor about how their cities are facing double digit tax hikes and how at the same time critical services are being slashed from their budgets. Fortunately, I am excited to say that this is a far cry from what's taking place in Lockport today.

I also listened intently to the address given by our new Governor Elliot Spitzer and how he is trying to radically reform how government operates in New York State. With the right will, I hope that the Governor can succeed because I know first hand how action causes reaction.

When I first became Mayor in 2004, I immediately insisted on real accountability at City Hall. Every penny that is spent is your money (the taxpayer), not the Mayor's or the Common Council's money. When preparing budgets and deciding expenditures, we always keep this in mind. The Common Council and our Department Heads have made the difficult decisions to keep tax increase to a bare minimum while maintaining necessary services for our residents. It is a hard, but critical balancing act and that is why I am so proud to announce that the 2006 budget saw the largest surplus in funds (almost \$400,000.00) in the last 5 years, also our water and sewer funds are beginning to stabilize. I strongly believe that these results are a product of tough decision-making by, which certain departments such as Highways and Parks and Youth and Recreation have gone through a necessary restructuring, and all other Departments have had a sharp focus placed on them to keep their spending in check as well.

Over the last 3 years, Town of Lockport Supervisor Marc Smith and I have fostered a great relationship with one another. We understand the importance of the City and Town working together as one, to benefit all. We will continue to work and explore ideas that will enable us to provide the services that our residents have come to expect and enjoy at the lowest possible cost. I look forward to continuing this strong accountability on behalf of every taxpayer in the City of Lockport and pledge to continue to work with members of this

Common Council, Department Head and all employees to do our part in providing the most effective and efficient government possible.

As one looks around our City, things are certainly improving in our downtown and tourism district. We will continue to study how to best deal with the Parking Ramp and Commerce Square issues and will work to find solutions. We will fight to rejuvenate Widewaters Marine and other parks in our community. This year, we will be turning our attention to preserving and restoring our neighborhoods.

There is not doubt that our neighborhoods are the very fabric of our community and citizens want a safe and sound place to reside. In 2007 I will begin the process of creating Historic Preservation Districts. Historic preservation leads to increased investment in neighborhoods. A multitude of research studies points to increased property values and other positive social and economic indicators for neighborhoods officially designated as historic districts. Investment is attracted to historic districts for a variety of reasons. One factor is the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which is available for the certified rehabilitation of certified commercial buildings within historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Similarly, New York State also recently approved a state historic rehabilitation tax credit, adding additional incentives for rehabilitation of both commercial and residential buildings in historic districts. Neighborhood development is key to keeping citizens in Lockport and remains a high priority of my administration.

In closing, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address you today, please know that I am truly honored to serve as your Mayor, also know that my door remains open to all of you. It is working together as a team that real action can cause positive results for our wonderful city. This is our City. We have accomplished a lot, but have even more to do. I commit to you that we will continue to work hard to make the City of Lockport the best that it can be. Thank you for coming and listening. May God bless you and may God bless our City.