

State of City Address

January 4, 2006

City of Lockport

When I stood before you almost a year ago and expressed to you my vision for 2005, as it turned out, I underestimated things a bit. 2005 was a great year for the City of Lockport. The year will be known as the year that the City of Lockport turned the corner, the year renaissance began.

After a lot ups and downs and a lot of conversation, the Main Street Streetscape project is complete. I told you in 2005 that when it was done that our main street would be second to none and believe that it is.

The Ulrich City Centre project was started and is now well underway with an anticipated completion date of sometime this summer. The first store, Wilhelm and Ashe opened on November 25th, with more stores to follow shortly. This project, I believe, is the single biggest project that has happened in our City in the last 50 years, and when completed there will be 13 new businesses in our Downtown Business District. It has been a long time coming and I eagerly await its completion.

The Canal Street Project, formerly know as the Richmond Avenue Project, is now underway with an anticipated completion date of late 2006/early 2007. When done, this parcel of land with the beautiful buildings and landscaping will be a great addition to our city.

In 2005 we spent a lot of time on tourism related issues. Tourism, I believe is a sleeping giant for our community. On June 1st, we opened the Erie Canal Discovery Center and Visitors Center in the old Hamilton House Building. The Center is a huge asset to our city, one that we will need as we move forward.

In my Inaugural address in January of 2004, I expressed my desire and commitment to restore Locks 67-71, the Flight of Five. I knew that it was an ambitious goal to be achieved. This was something that had been discussed, but never done because of the magnitude of the project. I was then and remain so today, determined to get this project done.

After many trips to Albany to talk to Governor Patacki and the Canal Corporation and through the outstanding work of the Flight of Five Committee under the leadership of Pete Welsby, and now by David Kinyon, and with the help and support of Congressman Tom Reynolds, Senator George Maziarz and the Grigg-Lewis Foundation, I am very happy and proud to report to you tonight that the Flight of Five Project is now well underway with an anticipated completion date of 2007.

I will tell you that the most exciting part of this project, when we finish the restoration of Locks 67-71 and they are up and running next to our newer locks 34

and 35, the only place in the world that someone can see old locks and new locks operating side by side will be right here in the City of Lockport. For those people who enjoy heritage tourism, the City of Lockport will become a destination. This project is not only significant to the City of Lockport and the State of New York but to the Country as well. This will put the City of Lockport on the map and we, the residents of the City of Lockport, will prosper from it.

Also, in 2005, we decided that the Veterans Monument after several years of neglect, should be refurbished and not only would we refurbish it but we would add a Veterans Memorial Walkway around the base to honor our Veterans. Through the help and support of Senator Maziarz, the United Auto Workers and others and also by the selling of bricks we managed to pay the entire \$80,000.00 cost of the restoration without a penny of taxpayer dollars. We have also set up a trust fund to help maintain the monument in future.

We also enjoyed a couple of great events in 2005. We celebrated the 180th anniversary of the opening of the Erie Canal with several hundred dignitaries, guests and students and just a few days ago we welcomed in the New Year with our second annual Ball Drop. A few hundred brave souls endured the chilly night and enjoyed the festivities. These events were overseen by the Events and Celebration Committee co-chaired by Richard Hoose and Craig Bacon. They did a great job and more events are planned for the future.

Also, in 2005, I had the first of what will be come a series of Breakfast with the Mayor. These are meetings where I can meet with the residents in a relaxed and casual atmosphere. Sometimes these are the places where we can get the most done. Being on WLVL and LCTV once a month, I am living up to a promise that I made to you about being accessible. My goal is to be the most accessible Mayor that this City has ever seen, after all this is the peoples government, elected to do the peoples business.

Last year I talked about getting into our neighborhoods and trying to make a difference and to improve the quality of life. Thanks to people like Dan Wilson, Roger Spurback and others, we now have the Lockport Block Club Council, a group made of three Block Clubs that have formed in our city with more to follow.

These Block Clubs are making a big difference in their neighborhoods. They have a great relationship with the Police Department, they are their eyes and ears, and they are having a big impact on crime in our city. I support them and am working with them to make our City a better place to live. I hope that next year I can report to you that there are several more block clubs in the City of Lockport. I believe in them and will continue to support them.

Also, in 2006, thanks to the work of Legislature Glen Aronow we will continue to work on the creation of a task force to address the high crime areas in the City of Lockport. This task force will be made of the Mayor's Office, Lockport City Court, Lockport Police Department, Niagara County Sheriff's Department, the Drug Task

Force, the District Attorneys Office and many more agencies. This Task Force will be created with the purpose of addressing and finding solutions to illegal activities that have perpetrated certain pockets in the City. We are serious in addressing crime and this will help us.

Last Year I told you that 2005 would be a year of change and it was. We made needed changes as the Youth Department, Highways and Parks Department, and the engineering Department. Change is never easy and I commend the Council for having the courage to make them. It would have been easy for them to sit back and do nothing and to not leave themselves open to criticism, but they didn't do that. We will continue to make the necessary changes as we move forward. We can no longer operate in the status quo and we won't.

In 2006 I will ask the Council to help me make our Widewaters Marina a gateway marina. I plan to bring in an urban planner to look at the marina and to lay out a 5-year plan to make it a much better, more beautiful place. The marina is a very nice place today, but I envision it to be much nicer, a gateway from the east as people enter our City. I will also ask this planner to take a look at our biggest park, Outwater Park, and give us a long-range plan to make it better. Today, as we try to do the right thing, I'm afraid that we're doing the wrong thing because we have no plan or vision. It's a beautiful park and we can make it into better one.

We will continue, in 2006, to make repairing our streets a priority. After several years of neglect we are starting to chip away at the problem. It will take a few years to catch up but we will continue to work at it and I will bring to the Council a sidewalk plan as I try to improve the look of our city. Some sidewalks in the City are in disrepair and need to be fixed. I will find a way to solve this problem and to make our City a better place.

We will extend the Streetscape project to Market Street and possibly Pine Street as well. I look forward to the construction of the new 12-month a year farmers market set to begin this summer.

In 2006 I will spend time on developing the Chestnut Street Corridor. I will work to help the redevelopment of the old Jubilee building, Union Station and the Dussault Foundry property. These sites give great promise to continue the momentum of our Business District.

This year I will explore the possibility of a Boys & Girls Club for our City. I have already have had discussions with the organization and some residents. We will continue to investigate this in 2006. Again this year I extend my hand to the Town of Lockport and new supervisor Mark Smith. After two frustrating years of being able to do nothing, I hope with the new leadership change we will be able to accomplish things that will benefit both communities.

2005 was a truly great year in our City. We have established great momentum and have a lot to be proud of but there is a lot more to do. I am looking forward to working with the Common Council and to do some great things. I also want to

congratulate Flora McKenzie and the residents of the Third Ward for electing the First African American Council Person in the history of the City of Lockport. It's about time. I am very proud and honored that it happened during my administration. Lockport is truly moving forward in more ways than one.

As I have been saying for sometime now, this is a great time to be a Lockportian. We are making history in more ways than one and I must tell you that I am very proud to be your Mayor. Thank you for giving the honor to lead this City. I will continue to work very hard not to let you down.

Thank you all for coming, May God bless you and may God bless the City of Lockport and the United States of America.

Michael W. Tucker, Mayor