



Letter to the Editors

Re: The Record: Letters, Saturday, Aug 27th

Northjersey.com: <http://www.northjersey.com/news/paterson-press-letter-city-s-economic-development-director-responds-to-criticism-1.1654024>

When elected for a third term, in July of 2014, one of Mayor Torres' priorities was the establishment of the Department of Economic Development in order to leverage the City's assets to drive growth, create jobs and help improve our citizen's quality of life.

In a letter to the Editor from Councilman Sayegh dated August 27 he states, "The City Council should receive quarterly reports regarding our Economic Development Department's efforts." I would like to clarify this point. Per, the City of Paterson's Administrative Code Chapter 5, Article IV. Office of the Mayor, Ordinance No. 95-068 the Mayor is to, "Report annually to the Council and to the public on the state of the municipality and the work of the previous year."

Based on this requirement the Department of Economic Development has presented a detailed status report to the Mayor, outlining economic development initiatives, for two published State of the City reports 2015 and 2016, and which are available in the City Clerk's Office and city Public libraries.

Over the past two years, the department has worked diligently towards establishing a foundation for investments. In 2014 we updated our Master Plan, a comprehensive, holistic study that resulted in our city's economic development vision of the future. (see http://www.patersonnj.gov/egov/documents/1395155623_756225.pdf)

The Master Plan includes guidance and input from stakeholders and influencers who will make decisions for the city over the next decade. It identified Action Plans, with a timeline of, 1-5 years for short-term goals, from 5-10 years for medium term goals and long term projects from 10-20 years; how much they are likely to cost and where to look for funding. The community in general was also an intrinsic part in the development and in the discussion of potential strategies in this city wide action plan.

The issue of vacant and abandoned properties has been a major concern for Paterson. The economic difficulties of past decades and the changes in the housing market have left communities like ours, with numerous vacant abandoned homes and many on the verge of demolition.

With this in mind, the city's Division of Planning and Zoning's Boards is preparing new redevelopment plans throughout the City to turn vacant and underutilized properties into modern multi-family housing, new job creating retail businesses, and commercial, industrial and hi-tech buildings. It has specially focused attention in supporting plans for the renewal of the downtown redevelopment area and the expansion of commercial corridors.

The city's 'Boards-Off' program, a pilot program to rehabilitate abandoned properties, has culminated in the acquisition and receivership of our first project: 304 Sherwood Avenue, of which the city will be receiving bids for its acquisition.

Currently, the Division is reviewing a draft plan for the 4th Ward, which will be heard at the planning board public hearing in the fall. The 5th Ward expansion, Ward Street study area and Center City Phase II study will be heard on September 21, and lastly the River Main and Great Falls areas will be heard later this year.

All of this work, done thru the Division, has undertaken the study of 7 redevelopment areas citywide as well as the review over the past 2 years of 157 applications out of which 52% have been reviewed by the planning board.

The total investment to the city has been \$294 million dollars, over 1,500 permanent jobs and 1,036 dwellings.

The city is also in the last phase of a 3.2 million dollar environmental remediation and rehabilitation of Mary Ellen Kramer Park. Overlook Park's rehabilitation is also on its way and in conjunction with the funding from the National Park Service and Passaic County Open Space Fund construction will be underway this fall. An engineering study of the SUM Raceway system will begin this fall to identify its preservation and operational needs so that the water can be reintroduced.

The city also anticipates awarding in November a contract, to a pre-qualified bidder, for the construction of Hinchliffe Stadium Phase I, as well as awarding a redevelopment contract for the Armory site.

The city of Paterson is moving forward with the creation of a 'Food Incubator,' and in partnership with Rutgers University and private partners, will host the Multicultural Food Business Seminar on Sept 19, 2016. We anticipate the Food Incubator launch for February of 2017.

The Paterson of the past is not the Paterson of today. The Paterson of today is a sea of humanity that is a microcosm of the world and whose density has required us to move towards a new urbanism that includes urban planning, municipal land-use strategies and forming partnerships with all segments of the economic development society.

This administration believes that when we all work together, we progress and everyone benefits because ultimately, our work, our efforts are for and about the people...because serving the people is bigger than all of us. The City of Paterson has created a comprehensive, city-wide Master Plan that offers hope and promise and potential. We are poised in pursuing that objective.

Ruben Gomez
Economic Development Director
City of Paterson