



Office of the Mayor

LOCKPORT MUNICIPAL BUILDING
One Locks Plaza
Lockport, New York 14094
Phone (716) 439-6665
Fax (716) 439-6668

MICHAEL W. TUCKER
MAYOR

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

January 19, 2005
City of Lockport

A little over a year ago I stood before you at the Historic Palace Theatre and told you of my vision for the City of Lockport. Little did I know, at that time, what we would be facing as we first took office. There are five employee unions in the City of Lockport and none of them had contracts and morale was at an all time low. Some of them had been without contracts for two years. We sat down with them and bargained in good faith, as did they, contracts with four out of the five unions, and I have confidence that we will be reaching an agreement with that fifth union very soon. In those contracts we achieved something that almost every city and town around us have been trying to achieve but have been unable to do, a single health care provider for all of our employees. I must thank the unions for bringing that to us. They did all of the legwork and then we put it together. The result is a large savings to the taxpayers of the City of Lockport. But that was only the beginning. There were some under-funded projects, like street repair that will require the same creativity to accomplish them.

I assured you that in 2004 that Downtown Lockport would see brighter days ahead. And it has. The Richmond Avenue Projects remains my priority with a goal completion of 2006. The Hamilton House is on schedule and is slated to open on June 1st of this year. And as I promised – the empty block- is now the building block of our great downtown. After almost 30 years of inactivity and thanks to the hard work of John Ottaviano, the Common Council and myself, that project, I'm very proud to say is on schedule to be completed by the end of summer. I am also excited about the completion of our Main Street Streetscape Project. I promise you that by the end of this summer our Main Street will be second to none.

I promised to aggressively fight to retain and find new good paying jobs for the City of Lockport and we are working hard to get that done. The Ulrich City Centre, the Farmer's Market and the Richmond Avenue Project along with the renewed interest in the Dussault Foundary site and the old Jubilee store are projects that we believe will help us keep that promise.

In 2004 I talked about the historical significance of the Flight of Five. After meetings with Congressmen Reynolds and Senator Maziarz and several top state Officials in Albany, I have put together a committee to oversee the restoration of Locks 67-71. We have targeted 2007 as a completion date. When this project is done, the experts in Albany have told us that we can expect up to 450,000 tourists a year. Imagine if they are only half-right.

2005 will be a year of change. We can no longer conduct business as usual. We will and we must strive to find ways to streamline our operations and maintain the services that our residents have come to expect and deserve. We will talk to our Department Heads, our employees and the Citizens Advisory Committee for their input on how we can do things better and more efficiently. This process will not be easy, change never is, but we can no longer just raise taxes and operate in the status quo. The time has come for us to stop just talking about change. We must act, starting today, to achieve it. I have great confidence in this Council that they not only understand it, but also have the courage to do it. Let us always never forget that our first priority is to provide and protect the health and safety of all our residents. A study done a few years ago stated that of the top ten counties in the United States ranked by worst case disaster potential, Niagara County is ranked 8th out of 1800 plus counties that were analyzed and that the 14094 zip code is ranked 21st in the country out of over 5500 zip codes that were analyzed. That is why I support a paid professional fire department. I believe that it is an advantage that the City of Lockport has over several communities that surround us. But I also believe that we must find a way to be more efficient and cost effective. This week I will be appointing a management committee to meet with a committee from the fire union to help us find ways to get this done while maintaining the integrity of the fire department. And to the thugs and thieves that travel from Rochester, Niagara Falls and Buffalo to Lockport because they think that we might be an easy target, tonight I'm sending you a message, in 2005 those days will come to an end. In the next few weeks I will be meeting with Chief Merritt, Mark Sanders, the Police Board and the Common Council to start an initiative to attack crime and drug activity head on. We will be more aggressive than ever before and will work with the courts to take these criminals off our streets.

This year I will take a hard look at State and Federal programs, like Weed and Seed, that we can take into our neighborhoods that need it the most. These programs can revitalize homes and complete neighborhoods that will improve the quality of life for our residents. This process is already underway. Mark Sanders and I have already had some conversations and we have some information on programs that we are already looking at. We will work hard in 2005; the Council and myself, to put a plan forward to clean up our city in areas that need it the most. We have also taken advantage of a great resource to help us accomplish this. We have hired Ernie Rose to go out into our neighborhoods to enforce grass cutting, snow removal on sidewalks and garbage issues to make our city look cleaner and safer.

In 2004 I promised to place this City on a steady path of revitalization and prosperity, together with the Common Council, we have done that. We have established a great sense of momentum. We will work harder to keep it going. We have a lot to be proud of but a lot more to do. I have the confidence that we will continue to get it done.

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

Thank you.