

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL SPEECH DELIVERY**  
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### **Bramson Delivers 2009 State of the City Address** ***Speech Focuses on Economy, Planning, Environment***

NEW ROCHELLE, NY - New Rochelle Mayor Noam Bramson's fourth State of the City Address, delivered before a standing-room-only audience of residents, business owners, and public officials, focused primarily on the City's strategy for confronting the weak economy.

Declaring that "the mission of building a healthy, vital community continues in good times and bad," Bramson proposed a course of action intended to "shelter our community from the worst of the economic storm" and to position New Rochelle for a "resurgence of progress" when the economic climate is more favorable.

Citing recent spending cuts and operational changes intended to "address the impact of the slowing economy on City revenues and control the burden of taxes imposed on property owners," Bramson asserted that "hard choices" had placed the City "for the moment, on a sound financial footing," but noted that "if the recession deepens or lasts beyond this calendar year, then our actions to-date will prove insufficient."

To achieve additional "efficiencies and savings, and to bolster our financial reserves as a hedge against further economic stress," Bramson proposed reducing energy and resource use, tapping alternative revenue sources, including hotel occupancy and utility gross receipts taxes, and deferring contractual salary increases for municipal employees, a step that would require agreement from municipal labor unions. Bramson also supported further study of changes in public works services, including a shift from garbage to recycling pick-up and mandatory bagging of leaves, but cautioned against rushing "into a new policy without thorough public consultation and broad public support."

Bramson extolled the City's "forward-looking policy of transit-oriented smart growth," noting that it has succeeded in "attracting investment to our central core," while "limiting and controlling growth in our neighborhoods." But Bramson also acknowledged that "in this current environment, with a soft housing market and with investment capital in short supply, the next steps forward will not come as swiftly or as easily as we would like."

"To maintain our positive momentum," Bramson suggested that the City continue "pursuit of the projects with the greatest positive potential," including Lecount Square, the major mixed-use

development proposed for downtown New Rochelle, and the restoration of the Echo Bay shoreline “that can unlock the vast potential of our waterfront.”

Saying that “risk-takers and entrepreneurs deserve our support, now more than ever,” Bramson urged help for local businesses. He cited initiatives aimed at promoting restaurants, attracting artists to New Rochelle’s downtown, and improving facades and awnings as examples of successful public-private partnerships.

Bramson also encouraged listeners to “look beyond the present crisis and plan for the next phase of the City’s growth and evolution.” Pointing to ongoing analyses of Garden Street, the North Avenue corridor, and the Church-Division and Prospect parking areas, Bramson argued that “this is exactly the right time to craft and pursue our own vision of the City’s future, so that we are fully prepared to hit the ground running when the economy recovers,” and that “the worst thing we could possibly do is sit on our hands.”

Advocating for a “strong commitment to environmental sustainability,” Bramson highlighted actions related to open space preservation, water quality improvements, energy conservation, and green building standards that have positioned “New Rochelle as an environmental leader.”

Bramson announced that New Rochelle was one of just three cities nation-wide selected by ICLEI, the premier international umbrella organization for sustainable communities, to craft local versions of New York City’s PlaNYC, “widely regarded as the best long-term municipal planning document in America.” Bramson expressed his hope that “a year from today, I will be able to tout not only a list of achievements related to environmental protection, but also to share a comprehensive blueprint, based on national-caliber knowledge and local community input, for meeting the economic, environmental and planning challenges of this century.”

Asking listeners to take personal action to strengthen the community, Bramson offered examples of neighbors helping neighbors, and introduced representatives of HOPE Community Services, a New Rochelle-based social service provider that enlisted 300 volunteers last year to serve more than 300,000 meals to families in need.

Concluding on an upbeat note, Bramson reminded his audience of New Rochelle’s great strengths and of its talented, diverse citizenry. “Let us together affirm our confidence in New Rochelle and all it represents,” said Bramson, “and our determination to confront and emerge from crisis, filled with faith in our future.”

The annual State of the City Address is sponsored by the New Rochelle Chamber of Commerce.

*(Full Text of the State of the City Address is Attached)*

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