

Bringing city's Jefferson Avenue in from the pouring rain of decay

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (NY) - December 17, 2007

Author: Los Angeles Times Syndicate, Louise Slaughter, Robert Duffy, Willie Lightfoot, Adam McFadden

REP. LOUISE SLAUGHTER

MAYOR ROBERT DUFFY

COUNTY LEGISLATOR WILLIE LIGHTFOOT

CITY COUNCILMAN ADAM MCFADDEN

GUEST ESSAYISTS

Those of us who remember Jefferson Avenue as the strong backbone of southwest Rochester are saddened by its present-day deterioration. The Star Market, Fleischer's Bagels Inc., the People's Club and many other vital businesses are gone. There are many vacant lots and a deep concern that the neighborhood needs public safety intervention.

We believe, however, that Jefferson Avenue has the potential to recapture its former role as a healthy commercial center of neighborhood life. Jefferson Avenue's revitalization will depend upon the creative vision and hard work of everyday citizens.

Thankfully, there are many dedicated community leaders such as Pat Jackson, James Mohammed and Frances Johnson, as well as dedicated business owners Avis Hill, Dr. William Bayer, Mohammed Chiapas and Millage Griffin who also believe in the avenue's future. Now, thanks to our combined efforts, the community revitalization dialogue has begun.

Through the efforts of Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-Fairport, we have secured \$100,000 in the pending federal budget allowing the Urban League's Business Assistance Center to counsel and support existing Jefferson Avenue businesses to build a foundation for growth.

Monroe County Legislator Willie Lightfoot owns a barber shop on Jefferson Avenue and has made a bricks-and-mortar commitment to improve the neighborhood his father, the late Monroe County Legislator Willie Walker Lightfoot, loved and dedicated 20 years of his life to. Through the efforts of City Councilman Adam McFadden, in his capacity as executive director of Quad A for Kids, we are beginning to address the educational needs of the neighborhood through funds he secured for a five-day-a-week after-school program at School 4 on Dr. Samuel McCree Way.

New anchor developments now encircle Jefferson Avenue, ranging from Providence Housing's Olean/Kennedy development on Plymouth Avenue to an improved Genesee Street and Brooks Landing hotel and office complex in the south, to a \$25 million student apartment complex across the river from the University of Rochester. This has created ripples of excitement in southwest Rochester.

The time now has come for the community to take control. We see great potential for a Jefferson Avenue that offers more opportunity for peace and community than for crime and neglect. Earlier this year, Slaughter engaged neighborhood leaders, city administration, ministers, the Urban League, the University of Rochester and community organizations including South West Area Neighborhood Association and Sector 4 Community Development Corporation to begin the community dialogue to create a vision for Jefferson Avenue.

With leadership from Mayor Robert Duffy, city staff is assessing improvements to the area's infrastructure, and UR expects that the Simon School can contribute its business talents to this process. In the coming months, we look to formalize our efforts through a public community visioning process whereby residents and business owners are empowered to reshape the Jefferson Avenue community.

A community's unique needs are best met when government leaders, business people and community members engage in an active, open conversation together. In this spirit, we encourage all members of the Jefferson Avenue neighborhood to get involved and actively advance improvement.

We invite all southwest-area stakeholders to come to the visioning table as we move forward to rebuild and revitalize Jefferson Avenue.

Please call one of our offices to register interest in helping to restore this once great neighborhood.

Slaughter, D-Fairport, represents the 28th District in the U.S. House; Duffy is Rochester's mayor; Lightfoot, D-Rochester, is a Monroe County legislator; McFadden, a Democrat, is a member, City Council.

Section: *Speaking out*

Page: 11A

Record Number: roc43629463

Copyright (c) Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.