

Mayor says Lynn friendlier to developers and residents

LYNN

By DAVID LISCIO

THE DAILY ITEM

Lynn is a changed place, friendlier than ever to real estate developers, businesses and residents, Mayor Edward J. Clancy Jr. told an attentive audience Thursday at a Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce breakfast.

Clancy delivered an upbeat message at the Porthole Pub that reviewed the city's accomplishments during 2004 and highlighted the challenges that lay ahead. He cited the municipal tax-rate for the past two fiscal years, which



ITEM PHOTO / OWEN O'ROURKE

Mayor Edward J. Clancy Thursday at the Porthole Restaurant, has remained stable compared to many other Massachusetts communities.

"In fiscal 2004, we were one of 11 communities able to keep taxes under control. In fiscal 2005, we were one of 18. And we were able to do that

without any override or debt exclusion or any other form of financial chicanery," he said.

The infusion of new restaurants and residential condominium dwellers in the downtown business district is adding a vitality not matched in decades, said Clancy, adding that while private investment provides the driving force, the city is doing its part to fuel the momentum.

"We're putting out new trash receptacles and installing decorative antique

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lighting," he said. "Our community development people are working on a charette to ensure that what happens downtown isn't done hodge-podge."

Clancy said some ongoing development activity downtown was sparked by the city's sale of \$1.8 million of surplus municipal property last year. The effort brought in immediate revenue and promised growth of the city's tax rolls.

As part of a strategy to make City Hall more accessible and user-friendly, the city's official Web site will be expanded, and new programs will introduce local government to those it serves, Clancy said. For exam-

ple, a free showing of the movie "Harry Potter" on Sunday is expected to attract hundreds of young Lynn residents to the City Hall auditorium. According to the mayor, the local government must embrace its children and not simply represent a cluster of cold buildings where MCAS scores are distributed.

A \$200,000 grant will help pay to renovate the auditorium, Clancy said, explaining that the free showing "sets a tone" that all are welcome.

"Lynn should be a place where families can enjoy wholesome and affordable activities, which is why the North Shore Spirit is so important," he said, referring to the city's professional baseball team. He also recommended

residents visit High Rock Tower, where a telescope offers a glimpse of the stars.

"Lynn should also be a place where the government is helpful," he said.

The mayor cited numerous changes in the structural organization of City Hall, particularly the creation of an Inspectional Services Department to oversee plumbing, building, wiring and other permits, and the upcoming introduction of electronic permitting.

"The old rule that you had to wait 30 days to get a permit is gone and like the hair on my head it won't be returning," he said, eliciting a chuckle.

Looking into his "crystal ball," the mayor said Lynn faces several challenges,

including the construction of a new \$6-million Manning Bowl into a 21st century athletics center. As he put it, 50 years ago most students played football or baseball, but today an athletic facility must accommodate lacrosse, soccer, track and several football leagues.

The city will soon hire more police and firefighters with available funds. It will also preserve the former water pumping station on Walnut Street. "We're not in the business of preservation, but that building is structurally solid. You couldn't knock it down with an atomic bomb," Clancy said. "It will be converted to condominiums."

The troublesome intersection of O'Callahan Way and Holyoke Street will be

redesigned when the city begins redeveloping the former Joseph P. Devlin nursing home property into housing. According to Clancy, a slice of that land will be used to enhance the intersection and improve the flow of rush-hour traffic in West Lynn.

"There's a lot going on in West Lynn," he said, crediting Charles Gaeta, executive director of the Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development, with shepherding housing projects like the Devlin and the single-family home construction now under way by developer Patrick McGrath on Tower Hill, site of the former Lynn Convalescent Home.

Other challenges faced by the city include making repairs at

Classical High School, where problems arose after the building was constructed atop a former municipal dump.

"We have commissioned an engineer to take a look at it," said Clancy. "We'll get a full report in April. It might not be as bad as we originally envisioned."



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