



Eddie A. Perez
Mayor

TO: Court of Common Council and the Residents of the City of Hartford
FROM: Eddie A. Perez, Mayor
DATE: January 7, 2008
RE: Inaugural Address

State, local elected and appointed officials and most importantly, family, friends and the residents of Hartford--- I am honored and humbled by your trust you have placed in me to serve as your Mayor for another four years.

We've come a long way in the last six years, but the journey is far from over. In order to frame a vision for the future, I look to the beautiful phrase that defines the city seal of our government: "After the Clouds... the Sun."

The sun is shining on Hartford. Together, we have ushered in a new era of hope, inclusiveness and progress. You can see and touch the accomplishments in every neighborhood. There's new housing, new retail, new schools and there's much more:

1. Crime is down to historic lows
2. Our school system is aggressively raising academic standards so that more of our kids go to college
3. And our neighborhoods display pride with new streetscapes and new businesses.

But we cannot afford to rest on those achievements alone. Tonight, I will share my vision for the next four years and I invite the help and cooperation of residents, businesses and elected officials to:

1. Bring our communities together,
2. Create more opportunities for our residents
3. Increase business development
4. And build a brighter future for our children.

Hartford must be a city where there is fair and equal access to affordable health care. As many as 34,000 uninsured people live in Hartford, that's almost one-third of our residents. To address this, I began the Mayor's Healthy Communities Initiative. This has helped the uninsured find a medical home. But without the government expanding funds

to Husky and similar programs, we cannot reach enough people and we cannot afford to wait.

That is why I am convening a health insurance task force made up of healthcare providers, insurers, and medical experts to report back in 180 days on how the city can partner with the private sector to provide affordable insurance for working families who are not eligible for federal and state programs.

This approach will not replace the need for more comprehensive reform at the national or state level. But, as a caring community, we must explore all options to provide much needed access to health services and give our residents the additional security and hope that they deserve.

Hartford's economic health is important too and I pledge to continue our positive momentum. All across the city, you can see new public and private development:

1. New retail on Albany Avenue and Park Street
2. A new school in Blue Hills
3. New Public Housing at Dutch Point
4. And a new senior center on Maple Avenue

No, we must make sure the progress continues.

This year, we will make our first investment from our Neighborhood Development Fund by targeting some of Hartford's most stubborn blight. With seed money from the city, we hope to leverage more than \$100 million in additional investment in our neighborhoods over the next few years.

The Hartford 2010 planning process identified a critical need to tie North Hartford to development Downtown. In the next six months, I will unveil a comprehensive redevelopment plan for this area stretching from the empty Clarion Hotel on Constitution Plaza to Myrtle Street on Asylum Hill. This plan will enable the city to condemn and acquire blighted commercial properties in the area and begin to prepare it for new investment.

Any discussion of Downtown needs to address the question of the future of the Civic Center, now known as the "XL Center." In 2013--- that's five years away--- the state turns the Civic Center over to the City of Hartford. At that point, the city, state, and region will have a clear choice: Invest in a world-class coliseum or let the current facility face the same fate as the now demolished New Haven Coliseum.

Over the past year, we conducted a study to determine the feasibility of making the Civic Center the home to a professional sports franchise. The good news is that with significant corporate support, a new NHL or NBA team--- as well as our UCONN Huskies--- could be playing in a new arena in Hartford. However, the price tag for a new world-class facility that would serve the people of our state could be as much as \$400 million. That, my friends, we simply cannot afford without significant participation from

the private sector, region and state. Any such investment should complement a larger community development strategy that takes Hartford to the next level, building on the “Six Pillars Project.”

Other competitive regions have done the same. We should learn from and follow their examples.

To address this significant challenge, in the coming weeks, I will assemble a task force that will explore the level of state, corporate, and regional support for building a new arena. Hartford’s corporate community and I will invite the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House to appoint representatives to serve on the task force. A Joint planning process will ensure that when a state of the art facility is built, it will meet the needs of Connecticut for decades to come.

Any new development in our city must include good jobs with good wages and healthcare for Hartford residents. Thanks to a strong partnership with unions and women and minority business owners, we have created hundreds of new jobs in the past six years. You have my pledge that we will continue to build on this solid foundation!

We must also continue to chart a bold new course in our school system. We are pursuing a reform plan that is based on generating real academic results which connects kids to college and the workplace of the 21st Century. There’s a sense of urgency here. That’s why we are going to take the reform effort to a new level by creating smaller class sizes, giving parents more choice, and holding our school system accountable for results.

My friends, I respect and honor the trust you have placed in me to lead our city for the next four years. I have always regarded public service as a vocation, not merely a job. I have always tried to conduct myself in a way that will inspire others to pursue this vocation in their lives: Service to others before self. Now, to encourage the highest standards of conduct in our governing process, I am proposing two reforms this evening for consideration by the City Council:

First, the appointment of an independent ethics counsel reporting to the city’s ethics commission that will assist the commission with its work and provide advice and education to city employees on adhering to Hartford’s code of ethics.

Second, I will ask the City Council to consider adopting public financing for the campaigns of Mayor, Council and Treasurer. The city should take potential conflict out of the way we finance political campaigns.

There are other important issues that my administration will concentrate on during the next four years:

1. Fighting to fix the broken property tax system in our state
2. Working with neighboring towns on a regional transportation system
3. Linking the Busway with the airport and rail service in a seamless fashion.

We must find ways to give us a competitive edge to promote smart growth and to encourage economic development.

We must create ways to showcase that Hartford is a diverse city that is:

1. One of the country's premiere cities for arts, culture, and history
2. The largest job center of the state
3. The Insurance Capital of the World
4. And a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family

My friends, the clouds over Hartford have lifted and the sun of progress is streaming in. Together we have accomplished so much, and together we will accomplish much more. We will not hide our light under a basket but place it on a stand so all may see. Yes We Can Hartford! Si Se Puede! God Bless our city and thank you!