

It doesn't seem possible that another year has almost past and we are closing in on 2009! Much has happened in 2008, and I want to pause and express my gratitude for what we have accomplished together.

Since the 2007 approval of the three community venues, we continue to make progress on each one. The new events center, the home of the Orlando Magic and countless other concerts and events, has broken ground. As I write this article, the building is coming out of the ground and they expect it to be "shelled out" by the end of 2009. Then, the interior will be completed in time for the start of the 2010-2011 NBA season.

The Dr. Philips Performing Arts Center has unveiled their plans for another unique addition to Downtown Orlando and expects to be open in 2012 with three major concert and performing halls, as well as a new outdoor plaza. The Florida Citrus Bowl will begin its renovation in phases, so as to not disrupt our current commitments to area bowl games, and expects to be completed by 2011. These are great new amenities to our community and we are excited to be a part of it. If you want to know more, or want to keep up to date on the progress of each of these new projects, just go to www.cityoforlando.net/venues.

While you are there, look over the City's Blueprint for Success, our way of leveraging the building and operations of these new venues to have a direct economic impact on the residents and businesses in our community. We have opened up our Blueprint Office for job placement, training and referral in the Parramore District. And we have continued to work closely with our contractors and vendors to assure that we meet or succeed our minority participation goals.

We also saw some other major projects make significant progress in 2008! The Burnham Institute committed to opening their East Coast Headquarters in 2007. In anticipation of the opening next year, they opened their temporary headquarters and research lab in South Orlando and broke ground on the new facility at our new "Medical City" in Lake Nona. The Federal Government finally completed the financing package for the new Veterans Administration Hospital at Lake Nona and a few weeks ago, we broke ground for the new, state-of-the-art facility. In other health news, Florida Hospital and Orlando Health continue to grow, with both recently being awarded Certificates of Need by Florida's Agency for Healthcare Administration to allow them to establish a heart transplant program at Orlando Health as well as a heart and lung transplant program at Florida Hospital.

Also in November, the City of Orlando played host to the National League of Cities' 85th Congress of Cities and Exposition. More than 7,000 City officials and their families from across the country visited our City Beautiful for this worthwhile event. Almost all of the conference's "mobile workshops," guided tours of different aspects and areas of our City, were filled to capacity. Conferees learned about and visited Baldwin Park, Leu Gardens, our newly built Green/ LEED-certified Fire Stations, our Main Street and Historic Neighborhood Districts, our revitalized Downtown and many other destinations

throughout Orlando. It was evident by the enthusiasm of the attendees that our City has many initiatives and projects that are truly innovative and worth emulating.

In addition, we have seen a decrease in violent crime in our community and have secured some additional funding from the Federal Government for a few more officers and more equipment while also laying the foundation for a public surveillance video camera system (IRIS) that will help our city become safer than ever.

In District 3, we have organized more and more Neighborhood Watch Groups helping to reduce crime in your neighborhood. While the job is never done, we have made significant progress with some areas seeing a decrease in crime of more than 25%. Neighborhood Watch is successful...because of you! Keep up the great work.

Speaking of crime, don't forget that the Holiday Season also brings out some who choose to prey on law-abiding citizens. Lock your car doors, move packages from inside the car to the trunk, ask for assistance walking back to your vehicle at night, don't open your door to strangers, and the list goes on and on. For a special brochure on Crime Prevention during the Holidays, please check out the Neighborhood Watch link on my webpage, www.cityoforlando.net/district3.

Let me also express my thanks to our District 3 Aide, Jessica Stead, and our District 3 Police Liaison Officer, Officer Kevlon Kirkpatrick. Both have exhibited the professionalism that I've seen in so many of our City staff and are committed to serving you with the care that you deserve.

Last, but certainly not least, I'm grateful for your support as we serve the citizens of the City of Orlando and especially District 3. I am truly humbled by your decision to elect me to serve you and am thankful for that opportunity.