

# The Star-Ledger

3EX004

FINAL EDITION

TODAY'S FORECAST: Partly sunny and warm, with an afternoon T-storm in spots.



at 7 A.M. 71°

at 2 P.M. 85°

at 7 P.M. 84°

DETAILS, PAGE 31

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2007

50 CENTS

WWW.NJ.COM

THE NEWSPAPER FOR NEW JERSEY

## Newark leaders hail plan for unified funding of city's future

BY JEFFERY C. MAYS  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

The recommendation to create a community foundation for Newark is tucked away on page 60 of last year's OpportunityNewark report, a strategic plan designed to help the state's largest city reach its full potential.

"Properly structured, the Community Foundation will provide a permanent source of funding to the City of Newark in perpetuity and provide seed money for maintaining the city's overall economic viability," the report read.

Yesterday, leaders from every sector of the city gathered at the Newark Museum to announce that the foundation had finally stepped into the limelight with a goal of propelling the next generation of growth in Newark.

Despite similar false starts in the past, this project could stimulate "a season of modern awakening," said the Rev. Dr. M. William Howard Jr., pastor of Bethany Baptist Church and a board member for the foundation.

A confluence of factors, including a new city administration, a sense that the city must now take advantage of a winnowing opportunity to build on its strengths and a renewed sense of cooperation amongst the city's stakeholders make this the perfect environment for a project of this magnitude to succeed, city leaders said.

"The Newark Community Foundation has the potential for being a beacon of light in all our dark places," Howard said. "We

aim to focus on priorities that will show early signs of elevating the quality of life in our community."

The foundation will be the first citywide group that will manage donations from individuals and philanthropic groups and fund grants to the art, nonprofit groups, scholarships and economic development. The foundation will manage and grow the endowment and also provide the expertise of choosing projects to invest in and help groups develop ideas. There is already an \$8 million endowment from the Community Foundation of New Jersey, the Amelior Foundation and the Prudential Foundation. Community foundations nationwide have \$44 billion in assets.

Last year, when more than 400 community partners gathered to participate in the OpportunityNewark report, the idea for a community foundation was brought up by The Star-Ledger publisher and foundation board member George A. Arwady, said Al Koepp, president and chief executive of the Newark Alliance.

Initially, there was some resistance to the idea, said Koepp. The philanthropic groups dedicated to Newark were used to doing their own thing.

"George convinced other members of the Alliance that it was worth a shot. He was insistent and knowledgeable," said Koepp. Arwady, who served as publisher of the Kalamazoo Gazette in Michigan before coming to The Star-Ledger three years ago, said the idea of a community foundation in

Newark just made sense. Kalamazoo, with less than 80,000 residents, has a healthy community foundation, said Arwady.

"This can really be the first day of Newark's next 40 years," Arwady told the crowd gathered at the museum. "Newark has been missing some of the essential building blocks of a healthy community," Arwady added later.

Rick Thigpen, vice president of state governmental affairs at PSEG Services Corp., said the foundation is a sign that Newark's reputation is changing.

Last year, when former Mayor Sharpe James set out to fund two nonprofit development trusts with \$80 million in city money, there were concerns about transparency, especially since James was listed as a trustee of both funds. The state froze the city's use of the money.

James was indicted earlier this month in connection with taking lavish vacations with credit cards issued by the city and selling discounted city land to a female companion who then flipped the properties.

"Corporate leaders and people outside of Newark haven't had this much confidence in a mayor of Newark in a long time," said Thigpen.

The city also recently launched a nonprofit Police Foundation.

"There is a growing trust that money invested in Newark will be used wisely and that is the key," said Mayor Cory Booker.

Booker said he'd like to see the foundation focus on youth, recreation, jobs and

increasing the city's home ownership rate, projects that will dramatically boost quality of life in the city.

The Rev. Edwin Leahy, headmaster at St. Benedict's Preparatory School said one project he may approach the foundation about is help with building more dormitories for the school's students. "There are a lot of kids that need to be pulled out of debilitating environments," said Leahy.

Hans Dekker, director of Community Foundation of New Jersey, of which the Newark foundation will be an offshoot, said Shanelle High, an 18-year-old graduate of Science Park High School will be one of the foundation's early beneficiaries. She was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship to help her attend Howard University in the fall.

High, who was raised by a single parent, said she plans to study to be a teacher and social worker and would like to return to her alma mater as an instructor before going on to get a master's degree.

"When I come back to Newark, I'd like to see more Newark students taking advantage of this scholarship," High said. "A lot of kids in Newark say they don't go to college because of their finances.

There is a lot of need and now the money is there."

*Jeffery C. Mays covers Newark City Hall. He can be reached at [jmays@starledger.com](mailto:jmays@starledger.com) or (973)*