

## Glenn Carberry: Norwich needs to focus its energy on small successes

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Norwich's recent election provides an opportunity for the community to reflect upon the past and consider ways to create a better climate for future economic success.

There are four strategic objectives that Mayor-elect Peter Nystrom and City Council members should pursue in the coming year.

First

Focus attention during this period of economic difficulty on promoting the city's basic strengths, which include institutions and attractions like Norwich Free Academy, The William W. Backus Hospital, Mohegan Park, American Wharf, Dodd Stadium, the Ice Arena, Three Rivers Community College, modern schools and public buildings, and reasonably priced housing for young families. These core assets can serve as the foundation for future economic development opportunities.

Second

Concentrate on completing some small projects successfully. Communities do not improve overnight because of one idea or a single project. Change comes through consistent government actions and small initiatives creating positive momentum for private investment in key locations. Recent examples: The privately funded development of former state property by Simon Ford with council assistance, and the rehabilitation of the derelict Fairlawn Nursing Home into two residences and the beautification of the surrounding area with the help of a city committee. More efforts like those require city attention.

Third

Restoring civility in public affairs. The mayor and council need to balance their obligations to provide openness and public accountability with their responsibilities of "getting things done" and acting professionally. We live in an era of confrontation, where a congressman feels comfortable yelling out during a presidential address, and some residents behave at council meetings like guests on Jerry Springer's show. Our leaders should restore dignity to community discussions of issues by prohibiting personal attacks and encouraging informed debate.

Fourth

Encourage positive suggestions and volunteerism. Abraham Lincoln once said, "He has the right to criticize, who has the heart to help." Successful cities convince key individuals in business, nonprofit organizations and other institutions to volunteer their personal time to make the city better. With budget cutbacks likely to continue, we must tap into that knowledge, resources and ideas to generate economic growth.

To answer these four challenges, we must first resolve a fundamental question: Do we want to build a community of complainers, or a community of dreamers and doers?

It's the dreamers and doers who have made important things happen throughout Norwich's history. We need a new generation of them today.

By demonstrating respect for Norwich's past, working to improve civility in the present, and focusing on creating positive economic opportunities for the future, I'm confident that community leaders and others will respond to the call.

Attorney Glenn Carberry of Norwich writes frequently on economic issues.

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