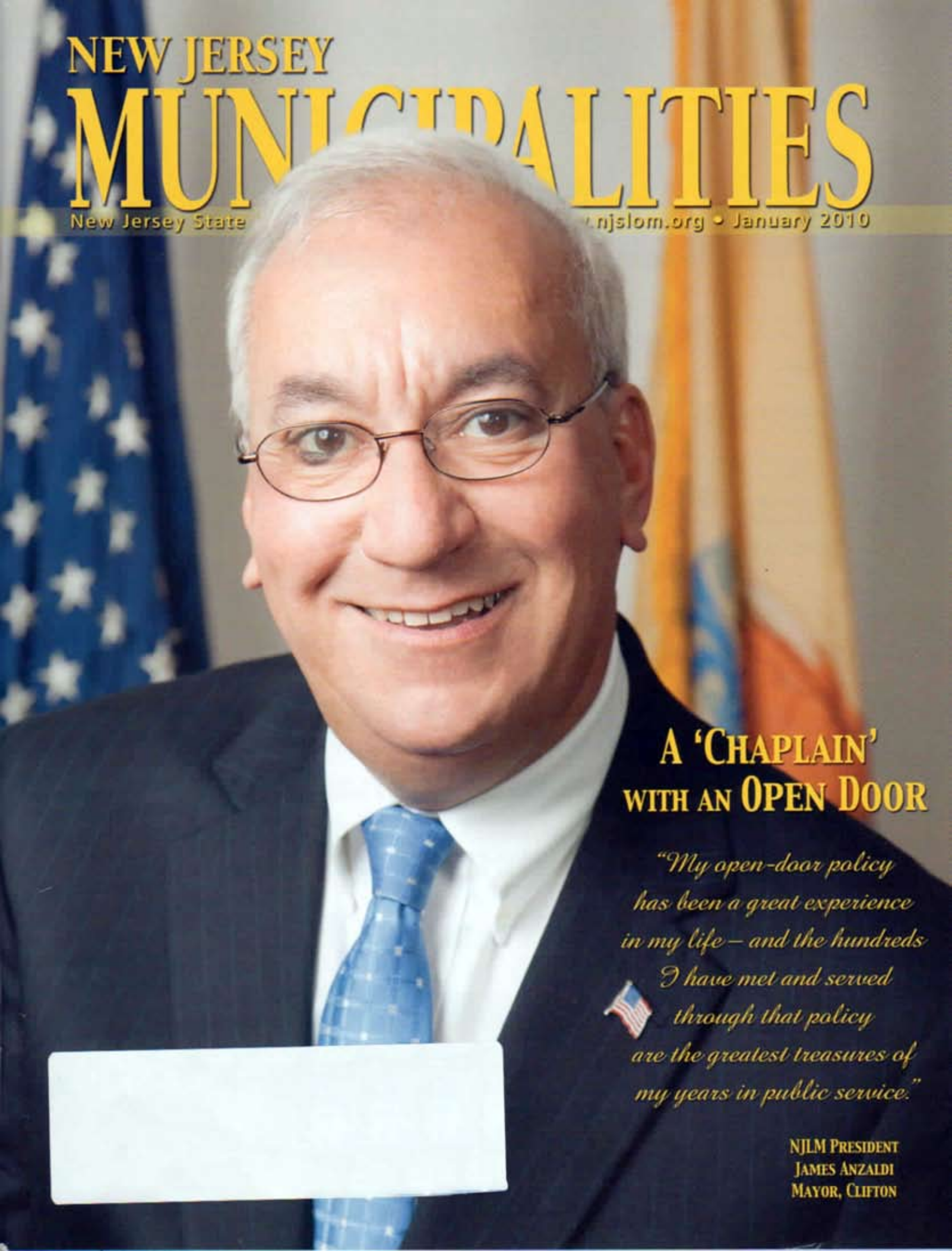


NEW JERSEY

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A 'CHAPLAIN' WITH AN OPEN DOOR

"My open-door policy has been a great experience in my life – and the hundreds I have met and served through that policy are the greatest treasures of my years in public service."

NJLM PRESIDENT
JAMES ANZALDI
MAYOR, CLIFTON



By Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr.,
Mayor, City of Orange

Attracting Shoppers & Keeping Businesses Downtown

Despite a dismal economy and unprecedented budget pressures, the City of Orange has initiated a bold plan to stimulate economic growth and development. At a time when other communities are struggling to simply not lose ground, we are implementing a plan to attract shoppers back into the business districts and to help local businesses not only weather the economic storm, but grow. That plan is part of a long-term economic development strategy that focuses on revitalizing our downtown commercial corridors.

When I first became Mayor in 2008, I had an ambitious agenda that included making our community safer, restoring integrity to our local government and jump-starting the city's stalled redevelopment plans. Unfortunately, I didn't realize that a global economic recession would leave many of our local businesses struggling to survive.

INCREASING THE CAPTURE-RATE OF LOCAL SPENDING IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE 44¢ OF EVERY RETAIL DOLLAR SPENT BY RESIDENTS OF OUR TRADE AREA WAS BEING SPENT AT STORES OUTSIDE OF OUR COMMUNITY.

We've made great strides in the areas of government accountability and the reduction of crime. Yet, as the economy worsened, we needed to turn our attention to economic development. We've developed a long-term strategy to support and revitalize our business district and help our local businesses weather the recession.



In order to help capture more spending for our local merchants and restaurants, we worked with the JGSC group to design a dynamic sweepstakes campaign called Home for the Holidays—to encourage shoppers to patronize local restaurants and stores. The orange signs indicate stores that participate in the sweepstakes.



Our initial downtown strategy revolved around ensuring that the Main Street commercial corridor would remain a vibrant and busy downtown. We planned to make the area more attractive and viable in the hopes that our local merchants would be able to capture a larger share of retail spending in the region.

We aggressively pursued becoming a Main Street New Jersey community in order to take advantage of the training, technical support and resources they offer. Valerie Jackson, our director of Planning and Economic Development, attended several programs sponsored by Main Street New Jersey. It was there that Jackson became aware of the JGSC Group, a New Jersey company that specializes in downtown revitalization.

The city retained JGSC to conduct its "Community Insights™" market and retail analysis of the commercial corridors, and to develop strategies for revitalization. Unfortunately, as the analysis was being conducted, the economy faltered and we had to expand our focus to ensure that our businesses would be able to ride out the recession.

In a collaborative effort between Valerie Jackson, her staff, the JGSC Group and others, we developed a comprehensive plan that included long-term strategies for evolving our commercial corridors into viable retail markets, as well as short-term strategies for supporting our retailers through the recession. We found that many of the strategies complement each other and help to create synergies for economic growth.

Using the findings of the market and retail analysis, our plan focused on five key areas: (1) helping existing businesses survive the recession; (2) making the downtown business corridors more safe, attractive and appealing to shoppers; (3) making it easier for visitors to find stores and parking; (4) enticing shoppers to visit downtown stores more often; and especially important, (5) actively recruiting sustainable new businesses into the corridor.



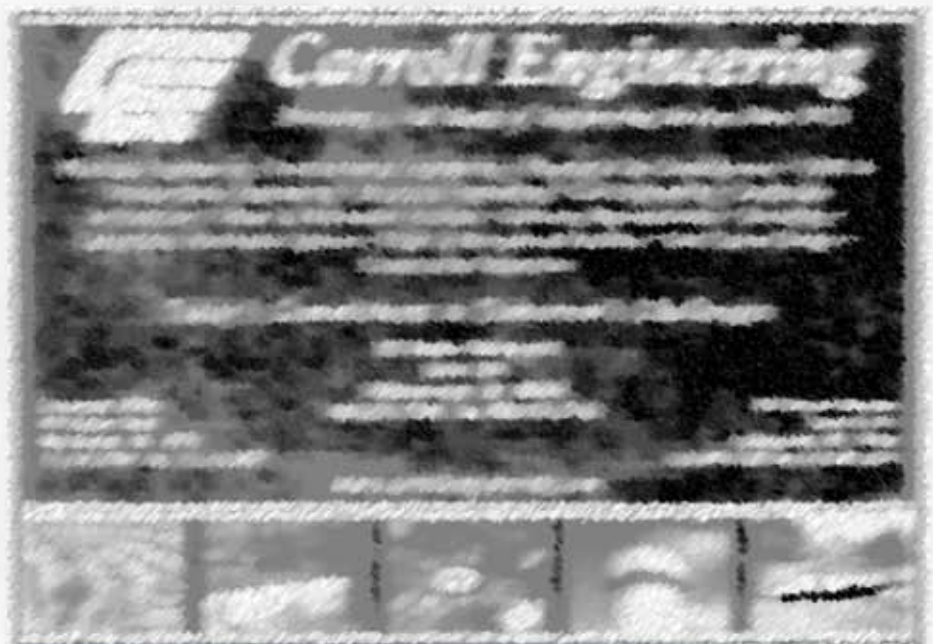
A new consumer-friendly website (www.ShopOrange.org) has been launched to provide details about shopping, events and sweepstakes.

As part of the overall plan, we are taking advantage of the many tools in our toolkit and using a myriad of programs to enhance our commercial corridors.

For example, City Council authorized five-year tax abatements for improvements to commercial properties to encourage investment. Also, we are currently working on revising our zoning code to make the town more shopping friendly. The proposed revisions would allow sidewalk café dining, permit once-prohibited projecting signs, establish a design standard for the

appearance of downtown establishments and define a set of permitted business uses.

We recently received our Transit Village designation, approved a \$1 million streetscape effort for Central Avenue and are continuing to work closely with the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth and Main Street New Jersey. Because we are a designated Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) community, we are drawing upon that resource to fund many of our efforts to stimulate economic activity and create new jobs.



As part of our effort to help businesses survive the recession, we're providing increased marketing and promotions support for our businesses to help them connect with shoppers at a time when many stores do not have funds for marketing. The campaign is designed to reintroduce shoppers to the local commercial corridor and to encourage them to shop locally. Increasing the capture-rate of local spending is important because the "Community Insights™" analysis found that 44¢ of every retail dollar spent by residents of our trade area was being spent at stores outside of our community.

In order to help capture more spending for our local merchants and restaurants, we worked with JGSC to design a dynamic sweepstakes campaign called Home for the Holidays—to encourage shoppers to patronize local restaurants and stores. The sweepstakes offers exciting prizes such as a home theater system, iPod players, a laptop computer and more to shoppers that enter at participating retailers. To help grow foot traffic in stores, the sweepstakes allows shoppers to enter multiple times, but just once at each participating store.

We're also helping local merchants to become better retailers by working with

them to make their stores, display windows and buildings more inviting to shoppers, and by enrolling them into the Orange Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) program. Because the program is funded through the UEZ, merchants that wish to participate in the sweepstakes program must be enrolled in that program.

Over the course of two months, our staff visited more than 160 local businesses to solicit their participation in the sweepstakes campaign and to learn how we can help their businesses. As a result, membership in the local UEZ program has grown by more than 35 percent over the past three months.

We are also working together with the Orange Main Street organization to support the campaign with a series of downtown events, festivities, lighting, decorations and more. A new consumer-friendly website (www.ShopOrange.org) has been launched to provide details about shopping, events and sweepstakes. We're also helping local merchants to use the Internet to communicate quickly and inexpensively with customers.

It is essential for our merchants to be e-marketing capable because 81 percent of all households in our trade area have access to the internet either at work or home. Since we know that e-marketing allows us to stretch our marketing budgets and reach consumers in a timely manner, the Home for the Holidays sweepstakes requires all entries to include a valid email address.

Moreover, our proactive approach to business retention helped us locate and provide support to six at-risk businesses with a wide range of services including marketing, financing, capital improvements, and others. While we may not be able to save all of these businesses, we are encouraged by the progress they have made.

Municipal government does have a role to assist local merchants in the management of their downtown as a shopping destination. Without our help, they may struggle as a random, unconnected collection of retail stores, restaurants and professional services. We believe our proactive, fact-based approach will continue to play an instrumental role in bringing commerce back to our downtown business districts, so that as the economy improves, our businesses and residents will be among the first to enjoy the benefits. ▲

