

Orange poised to attract new business, residents

By John Zucal

Officials in Orange are pushing a list of reasons they believe commercial entities should consider moving into the city. They express optimism that businesses will agree, and establish a new home within the borders.

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. said while projects would occur, before he was elected in 2008, “it was troubling to tell where the city began by the condition of the streets and buildings.” From that, he said, came a focus on the key entrances to the city: Main Street and Central Avenue from East Orange and West Orange, and Scotland Road from South Orange. Future projects would be based within those areas.

The projects have included streetscape improvements along each roadway, as well as redevelopment projects, such as Valley Arts District near the South Orange border and approximately 140 senior and mixed-income townhouses which are about to open on the site of the former crime-stricken Walter G. Alexander apartment complex next to Interstate 280.

“We are removing blighted properties and creating tax ratables from them,” said Hawkins, who noted that additional ratables spread the local tax burden among more property owners.

Valerie Jackson, Orange’s planning director, said businesses which come to Orange with their employees will find a vast range of housing styles.

“We go from apartments to single-family and multi-family homes, from suburban to urban footprints,” said Jackson. “If you have an eclectic taste, we have a growing arts’ district; if you want something traditional suburban, come to the South Ward. If you need mass transportation, you might want to locate in the urban area.”

The city also has the website, www.DiscoverOrangeNJ.com, which Jackson said provides information about the city to residents and businesses who might want to come into Orange.