

# The Star-Ledger

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

## Newark is taking change to the streets

Project will bring new lighting, curbs, signs and other improvements to downtown

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The drab and barren streets in downtown Newark will be transformed with new lighting, signs, plantings and other improvements as part of a \$17.5 million project designed to make the city more inviting to pedestrians.

The three-year project, which began yesterday, calls for benches, graffiti-proof trash cans, old-fashioned street-lamps, poles with hanging baskets and

four different groups of trees to be planted on narrow side streets, and larger, wider varieties gracing boulevards like Broad Street. Every corner will have granite curb cuts, allowing for smooth access to crosswalks for all pedestrians.

The first phase of the project focuses on the streets between Newark Penn Station and the new Prudential Center arena, which is expected to attract thousands of new visitors to Newark when it opens in October.

The streetscape project is the largest to be financed by a Special Improvement District in New Jersey, said Anthony McMillan, executive director of Newark Downtown District.

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority has approved \$10 million in bonds to be issued on behalf of the NDD for the project, and the remainder of the funds will be supplied by the city, the Newark Urban Enterprise Zone and PSE&G, McMillan said.

"This is an enormous step forward,

using private money to improve public streets," McMillan said.

Mayor Cory Booker said the plan will forever change the way Newark is viewed and positively affect city residents.

"Jobs, jobs, jobs," Booker said. "It will create an environment more attractive to employers like retail."

The Downtown District itself will provide more jobs to Newarkers through the project, he said.

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"It adds to the economic vitality of Newark, to the joy, hope and prosperity of our city," he said. "In the journey for complete urban transformation, this is one giant step."

The first phase, which is expected to be completed by September, will focus on portions of Market Street, Edison Place, Alling Street and Mulberry Street. The area was planned to be improved first, since it is the neighborhood surrounding the new arena.

"We moved our phases with the opening of the arena," McMillan said. "We want people who are going to travel into our city to come to, say, a Bon Jovi concert, and we want their experiences and perceptions of Newark to be a good one."

Dan Biederman, president of BRV Corp., a New York-based consulting firm specializing in self-financing neighborhood redevelopment programs, said this project is modeled after a streetscape project he led on 34th Street in New York City.

The New York project was funded by private money, as were three other projects he led in New York and Philadelphia. The Newark project is also unusual because it falls into that category, he said.

"This is an extremely sensible and sophisticated city government working with hardworking private-sector people," Biederman said.

As part of the project, new graffiti-resistant trash receptacles will have a 36-gallon capacity and a decorative shell enclosure. Durable newspaper boxes will be installed in later phases of the project, helping to reduce clutter on sidewalks and improve pedestrian access.

Signs will also be improved and color-coded with directional signs for motorists, signs marking street names, and pedestrian-oriented signs that will provide directions and distances to destinations, retailers and historic landmarks.

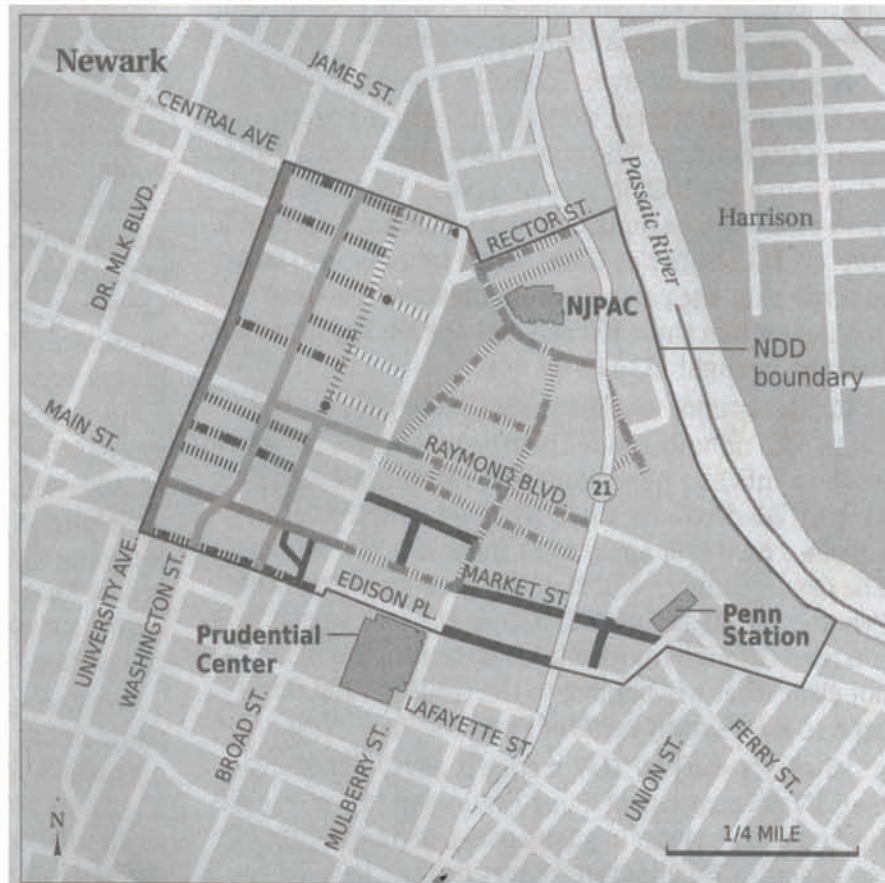
Doug Sarini, chairman of the Newark Downtown District, said the changes will improve the city's economic viability.

"It's the ultimate public/private partnership," Sarini said.

"It's super exciting, emblematic of the progress that's possible in Newark," said Deputy Mayor Stefan Pryor.

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## Newark Downtown District Streetscape Improvement Project

The \$17.5 million Capital Streetscape Improvement Project will remake 56 blocks of downtown Newark in five phases over a three-year period. Phase one, which began yesterday, will focus on the area immediately surrounding the new Prudential Center, including portions of Market Street, Edison Place, Alling Street and Mulberry Street.

— **Phase 1:** Market Street and Edison Place, from Mulberry Street to Penn Station, as well as Alling Street (will be completed by September 2007).

||||| **Phase 2A:** All signals and intersections in the entire district will be completed with roadway and pedestrian lighting, and that includes from 600 to 700 lights. Also, mid-blocks between Central Avenue and Branford Place, between Halsey Street and University Avenue, and between Market Street and Raymond Boulevard (beginning fall 2007, to be completed spring 2008).

— **Phase 2B:** Washington Street, University Avenue, Market Street and Raymond Boulevard in their entirety, Halsey Street from Raymond Boulevard to Branford Place (beginning spring 2008, to be completed winter 2008).

||||| **Phase 3:** Commerce and Park streets and Park Place, Mulberry, Center and Rector streets (beginning winter 2008, ending summer 2009).

||||| **Phase 4:** Halsey Street, Central Avenue to Raymond Boulevard and Cedar Street, West Park and New streets, and from Central Avenue and Broad Street to Halsey Street (beginning fall 2009, ending winter/spring 2010).