

Bringing the Light of Christ's Presence to our Neighborhood



D&L Tropical Groceries store owner Linford Hamilton (left) talks with **John DeMott (center)** and Donald Hanks (right), street managers for Genesee Street and Thurston Road. PHOTO BY MATT DETURCK.

City Newspaper 2/25- 3/3, 2009

2/2009

NEIGHBORHOODS | BY TIM LOUIS MACALUSO

The man (or woman) on the street

Large companies get a disproportionate amount of the city's time and attention, says City Council member Dana Miller. And that's why he's brought a street managers program to Rochester.

"As I looked at our economic development strategy, the focus is clearly on the big hits," Miller says. "If you want to bring ESL or Paetec downtown, you're going to get a lot of attention. But if you want to start the neighborhood hardware store that employs one to three people, good luck. You just weren't getting the same level of attention."

Business owners in the malls can turn to the mall manager for support. Street managers, Miller says, is a pilot program using a similar concept, starting with Thurston Road and Genesee Street.

Street manager is a paid, part-time position through the city's Sector 4 Community Development Corporation. Salary was unavailable.

The primary goal is to help businesses on Thurston and Genesee prosper. That entails everything from working with building owners to find the right tenants, discouraging competing businesses from settling next door to each other, and acquainting tenants with city grants and services.

"We're really about building relationships," says John DeMott, the manager for Genesee Street. "A business owner may not know that



D&L Tropical Groceries store owner Linford Hamilton (left) talks with John DeMott (center) and Donald Hanks (right), street managers for Genesee Street and Thurston Road. PHOTO BY MATT DETURCK

the city has small grants available to help with the costs of decorating, signs, advertising, security, lighting, and computers."

Funding is also available to improve the street's curb appeal.

"We did the planters with the flowers last summer up and down the street," DeMott says.

DeMott attends merchant association meetings, so he says that he understands the problems that are hurting store owners, such as crime and graffiti.

The biggest pitfall, Miller says, has been finding ways to encourage business owners and building owners, who are generally not one in the same, to work toward common goals.

"It's hard to convince a landlord who has had a store vacant for a while to wait another month for a better tenant," Miller says.

He says that he hopes the pilot program, in its second year, will grow.