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President
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President's Message

As this year comes to a close, we look forward to the launch of two important residential developments scheduled for construction in early spring 2001. Both projects will bring New Center closer to our vision of a 24-hour community.

Woodward Lofts, to be developed by Crosswinds Communities, will eventually add 168 new "loft town homes" on three blocks on Woodward just north of the Boulevard. The New Amsterdam project (Phase One) will see The Farbman Group renovate two historic commercial buildings near Amsterdam and Second Avenue into 100 rental lofts in the heart of what promises to be one of Detroit's most vibrant neighborhoods.

As we move forward with exciting new projects like these, the more I believe we should look to the past for our 21st Century image. New Center was once one of the most elegant districts in the City and throughout the State. This was evident in landmark commercial architecture, high quality single and multifamily homes, theatres, restaurants, nightclubs, and retail. Fortunately,

many of the building blocks (e.g., Fisher, Albert Kahn, and former General Motors Buildings) necessary to regain this richness remain.

What's missing is the high numbers of residents living in and around New Center compared to its noble past. We believe the challenge now is to deliver market rate housing for those buyers and renters wanting to stay or move into Detroit, while maintaining good rules of urban design which "tie" the existing strengths together. We also believe that success in the retail and office segment will respond quickly and affirmatively to new residents. The New Center Council has endeavored to lay the groundwork for recapturing the beauty and quality of our history in New Center.

On these pages you will find highlights of recent conversations I've had with Bernie Glieberman and David Farbman about their views on New Center and the budding market for urban housing. I hope you enjoy reading their unique perspectives and on behalf of our Board, Members, and Staff, I wish you a happy holiday season.

Bernie Glieberman's Vision for New Center



Uptown Row

New Center Council (NCC): Bernie, based on your experience throughout Michigan and especially in Detroit, how do you see the market and product for the Woodward Lofts at New Center?

Bernie Glieberman (BG): I like to compare Detroit with Chicago. Chicago seems to always be 10 years ahead and has, in fact, converted most of the old buildings in the best areas. In Detroit, we have a limited supply of older buildings suitable for conversion in the right places. In a way, it benefits us because we can build new for the market. The key is to introduce older style materials and architecture while building in better creature comforts and especially better parking. The market in Detroit is smaller than Chicago, but incredibly strong.

NCC: You're in the process of finishing the Woodward frontages at Brush Park, and now you're ready to begin loft town homes on Woodward in New Center. What importance does the Woodward address hold for these and other projects?

BG: I think Woodward will rebuild itself the same way it originally built itself over 75 years ago. The Woodward frontage will help define what is built behind it, east and west. It would be nice to maintain the older aesthetic without losing the modern buyer though. Some folks just don't want to live all the way downtown, so they would be logical buyers in New Center. Just like the original migration from Downtown!

Bernard Glieberman President, Crosswinds Communities, Inc.

NCC: What's your current thinking on the image of New Center?

BG: I think the image of the New Center is improving along with the image of the City, but I do believe the influx of State of Michigan employees and visitors is going to drive the neighborhood in the future. We should all try to maximize the impact of that tenancy.

NCC: City of Detroit Residential Market – are you bullish or bearish compared to five years ago?

BG: I still believe that Generation X or whatever you call the younger market "gets it" and wants it. They want to live in an urban environment and I don't think that will ever go away if we continue to improve the City. I should make a distinction between the for sale and for rent product because its easier to think outside the box when you are developing for renters. When you're selling, the product has to be absorbed right away so you lose some of that future value that you've helped create. I still think there are enough buyers actively shopping in Detroit who understand that they're getting good value because they're coming in at the ground floor.



Front Elevation of Woodward Lofts at New Center. Construction begins in Spring of 2001.