

# THE NORTH BERGEN REPORTER

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## Ribbons and renovations *Broadway street improvements make impact*

**By Evan Grossman**  
*Reporter staff writer*

**NORTH BERGEN**—Under the sprawling, green backdrop of North Hudson Park, Mayor Nicholas Sacco hosted a crowd of about 200 residents in what can only be called a celebration of the past, present, and future of the township.

Specifically, the township called Wednesday's gathering to cut the ribbons and formally launch the 1920's-style improvements to the residential and commercial streets of North Bergen. The area will be blanketed with 52.5 million worth of renovations to the township's busiest



**WELCOME**—Mayor Nicholas Sacco poses with one of the many new gateway signs that are part of the multi-million dollar renovation project for North Bergen streets.

streets. Included in the project are batteries of cast iron "loop" benches, trash receptacles, and parking meters. New Victorian street lamps, town banners, and gateway signs already tower over the streets of town, as the lights and signage were the first installments of the grand plan, already underway.

"While the 1920's look of the new streetlights, benches and trash receptacles acknowledge our rich heritage," said Sacco. "These highly visible amenities also provide the foundation upon which the township will build its future."

The township has raised the necessary funds through the use of approximately

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*Donald R. Smartt  
Principal, The Community Advocates*

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**MAKING IMPROVEMENTS**—Verona's Donald R. Smartt (second from left), president of Verona-based The Community Advocates, North Bergen Township Administrator Joseph Auriemma and North Bergen Mayor and NJ State Senator Nicholas J. Sacco cut the ribbon on North Bergen's \$2.2 million commercial district improvement project. Smartt's firm helped the township design the project and is helping manage the implementation of the improvements.

\$2.5 million of Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) money that is dedicated to these commercially zoned, mixed use area projects.

"Obtaining the funds to proceed with this improvement project without assessing an additional tax burden to property owners is a highlight of the projects," said Township Administrator Joseph Auriemma, "and should motivate residents, businesses and property owners to continue enhancements to the community with individual improvement efforts."

North Bergen has recruited John Fallon Architects, based in Verona, for the design work, while the Caldwell-based The Community Advocates strategic planning



firm will handle the marketing and consulting for the project.

Donald Smartt, president of The Community Advocates, was on hand for the ribbon cutting, with nothing but praise for the steps the project has already taken.

"I've been involved in projects like this for 16 years," he said. "And with the leadership of the mayor, this has been one of the fastest projects I've seen get off the ground."

#### **New look is familiar**

The renovations to the retail district on Bergenline Avenue and the residential areas strung along Broadway, are a flash back to the architecture that sprouted in North Hudson in the 1920's. During this period of North Bergen history, the township, as well as the rest of North Hudson, boomed with the dawn of the rise of industry. Most of the buildings still lining Bergenline and Broadway were built as the county's population skyrocketed with the influx of immigrants from Italy Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

"The 1920s was really the hey-day of the commercial building that went on here in North Bergen, and in North Hudson," said Auriemma. "Many of the buildings already have that type of look. Now, what we want to do is kind of allow the rest of the street to be aesthetically the same as how the buildings were built." Applause sang out from the crowd of Broadway residents when the mayor spoke of the new municipal parking lots, and the destruction of the old Salvation Army building. Elaine Nicolliello, a long-time resident of North Bergen, has worn the crown of "Miss Broadway," as she has remained determined in her efforts to restore the community to the place it was in years past.

"I have a vision for the town to be as beautiful as it once was," she beamed. "Though we have always remained a diverse community with different backgrounds, we all have the same desire for things to get better and better

Nicolliello, born and raised in North Bergen, was praised for her efforts to work

with the mayor's office in restoring her neighborhood of 70 years.

"If it wasn't for Elaine and Mayor Sacco," resident Margaret Appel cheered, "this wouldn't be possible."

At the heart of the mayor's address, was a call to arms for the residents and merchants of North Bergen to join in with the steps taken by the township, and begin taking care of their small part of the sidewalks and storefronts of town.

"I remember when I was a boy," the mayor said, "Everyone swept in front of their shops, and there was a pride people had in their property, a shared responsibility."

Work is slated to be complete by the end of the fall on Broadway, and by the spring of next year on Bergenline. Already ahead of schedule, this is a project that officials are very proud of, and anxious to see made a reality. If Wednesday's festivities are any indication, the residents and retailers of town are ready to do their part.

"We are not done," Sacco Said. "This is just the beginning."

