



December 26, 2009

New decade, good momentum

By Nick Vehr

It is exciting to be headed into the next decade with such momentum, opportunity and hope even in the midst of such challenging economic times.

Looking ahead is a much richer experience if you take a moment to look back.

It was 2001. I went to the police line on Central Parkway just to see it - CPD's finest in vests and helmets holding clear plastic shields. Not far away, mostly young men with skin much darker than mine, clearly on the other side.

In the decade before and since, I worked with others to make Cincinnati better - on task forces, commissions, committees, in public office and on nonprofit boards.

Before, such work was fulfilling and, upon reflection, ploddingly purposeful.

Since, such work has been more focused, energized and challenging. And, yes, it has been many times more frustrating and markedly more fulfilling.

The difference for most, I think, was the seriousness of it all; we wanted to never again see a police line on Central Parkway!

As we head into our next decade, we are witness to the reshaping of Cincinnati's skyline as our tallest building takes form. For me, this reach for the sky symbolizes opportunity and hope built upon substantial and real progress.

The Banks, the Ascent in Covington, a renovated Duke Energy Center, a new Fountain Square, Over-the-Rhine's Gateway Quarter and more are transforming center city experiences.

This past summer we hosted the NAACP Annual Convention. Every contemporary civil rights leader was here and they gave Cincinnati's Police Department a standing ovation.

We hosted Major League Baseball's Civil Rights Game. Bill Cosby, Hank Aaron and Muhammad Ali were honored. Cincinnati was awarded the 2012 World Choir Games, a global choral competition that expects 20,000 competitors from 90 nations and as many as 250,000 visitors. No American city has ever hosted this event and none is better suited. Generous patrons (like Louise Nippert and her \$85 million gift) and musical giants (like Erich Kunzel) are reasons why.

The University of Cincinnati's campus has been rebuilt in a fascinating, eclectic and appealing way; and, it is working. Student academic achievement is rising along with real interest in UC as a first-choice destination college.

And, UC's football team is undefeated and, if only for the briefest of seconds, was a contender for the

national championship.

There's much more to write about than this space allows.

Importantly, we can no more deny the real progress of the past decade than we can dare to think our job is done.

There are real challenges. Resources are tight. Tolerance and understanding are inconsistent. Equity is elusive.

We are taking more steps together in our city than we ever have in our past.

That's the strong foundation we've built for our next decade.

Additional Facts

Nick Vehr is president of Vehr Communications, board chair of the Cincinnati USA Convention and Visitors Bureau and a former member of Cincinnati City Council. He lives with his family in Westwood.