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## **BINGHAMTON MAYORAL CANDIDATE RICH DAVID URGES CITY TO ELIMINATE ROUNDABOUT FROM COURT STREET GATEWAY PROJECT**

**-DAVID HIGHLIGHTS SCHENECTADY, NY WHO LAST WEEK ABANDONED PLANNED ROUNDABOUT AT COMMUNITY'S REQUEST-**

**(CITY OF BINGHAMTON, NY)** Binghamton Mayoral Candidate Rich David today hosted a news conference to urge City leaders to eliminate the \$1.2 million dollar roundabout from the Court Street Gateway project. The roundabout is planned to be constructed at the intersection of Court and Exchange Street in downtown Binghamton.

“The roundabout is part of the Court Street Gateway project, an initiative whose primary purpose is to beautify the City, enhance a primary entranceway downtown and build enthusiasm in the urban core,” said David. “If you have a significant segment of the downtown business and residential community opposed to the roundabout then it defeats the entire purpose of the project. Since I announced my candidacy, a number of residents, merchants and concerned citizens have expressed their concern and asked me to review the situation, which is why I’m speaking today.”

David expressed the following concerns: (1) there’s no statistical data on record with the City of Binghamton Police Department, New York State Department of Transportation or the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) that shows the intersection is a hazard to motorists or pedestrians. (2) Construction of the roundabout could require a small portion of the lawn of the historic Broome County Courthouse. (3) A roundabout would be disproportionate to the Court and Exchange Street intersections. (4) A roundabout is unsightly and unnecessary. (5) The majority of residents is opposed to a roundabout and voiced their opinions, which are being ignored. (6) The plan does not include input from merchants and residents.

David recommended that the City could (1) abandon the roundabout altogether, leave the intersection as it is and reallocate the money towards other areas of the Court Street Gateway Project that were supported by local residents and business or (2) go back to the drawing board to develop an alternative plan for the intersection that the community supports.

“That’s exactly what happened in Schenectady, New York last week when business owners were successful with working with City Hall to eliminate a roundabout from a \$14 million dollar Erie Boulevard project,” continued David. “The City of Schenectady ended up implementing a plan that was nearly identical to a proposal that was repeatedly advocated by the business community over the course of the last year. It happened in Schenectady without losing state or federal funds or compromising the overall project and it can happen in Binghamton. Schenectady is an example of a City that faced the same scenario that exists in Binghamton. Today I’m advocating for a similar outcome in Binghamton. There is still time.”

##MORE##

In an April 22, 2009 issue of The Daily Gazette in Schenectady, AFLAC sales Manager Sabrina Heilmann says; “The design looks great. There’s stills some questions but what’s really important is the Mayor, the City Council listened. It’s a great design.”

“The same themes and concerns about the roundabout that have been voiced in Schenectady are also being voiced by residents and businesses in Binghamton,” said David. “The only difference is in Schenectady the City acted on the input they received and changed the design. That is the kind of cooperation that needs to occur in Binghamton.”

Due to the fact that the City currently plans to fast track this project, with work beginning after the July Fest, David felt that it was important to voice his concerns and outline alternatives before it was too late.

“I don’t fault the designers because they are using a concept that was being pushed in other communities across New York and the country,” continued David. “It has been my experience during my six years at City Hall that the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) will support the wishes of local governments when it comes to infrastructure projects, especially if they feel a project doesn't have the public support and could give the project a negative perception. While BMTS is an advocate of the roundabout concept, the organization is also an advocate for obtaining public input and making changes based on the input. The latter is what needs to happen here.”

“When dealing with projects that are funded with tax dollars it is vital that you not only solicit community input, but make sure that input is reflected in the final design of the project,” added David. “In some communities a roundabout is more viable and in some communities one is even accepted. But it is not viable in Binghamton and it is not accepted in Binghamton. The roundabout is a proposal only. The next step in any proposal is for it to be analyzed and reviewed, and if it’s not accepted by the community, as is the case with this roundabout, then you go back to the drawing board to find an alternative that all parties can agree upon. That’s what I am calling for today.”

David concluded by saying he did not believe delaying the project to factor in community input would increase the price-tag. However, if that were *proven* to be the case, David said it would be better not to move forward at all and leave the intersection as it is rather than spending \$1.2 million dollars on a public project the community is against.

“The existing configuration is much better than the proposed remedy,” said David.

At the news conference David provided copies of the Schenectady newspaper article. In addition David is mailing a letter and copy of the newspaper article to approximately 400 residents and business owner’s downtown to illustrate how another community has handled the issue.

##END##