

Rudy: City is on move, let's keep it that way

■ Mayor outlines Big Apple's resurgence over last decade and offers a host of initiatives to stay on track

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ADVANCE CITY HALL BUREAU

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, an all-but-declared candidate for the U.S. Senate, delivered what was likely his last State of the City address yesterday, striking a delicate balance between summing up his legacy and laying out a range of police, education and economic development initiatives he hopes to be able to move forward before stepping down to seek higher office.

In this, his seventh annual address, Giuliani — who spoke for an hour and half without benefit of prepared notes — stood before a huge blow-up of the recent Time magazine cover featuring a picture of the Big Apple's Y2K bash in midtown, an event that showcased the city to the world. In his hand the mayor held a 1990 copy of Time offering a far different portrait of New York City, a place described as a "rotting apple" marred by soaring crime and a ballooning welfare roll.

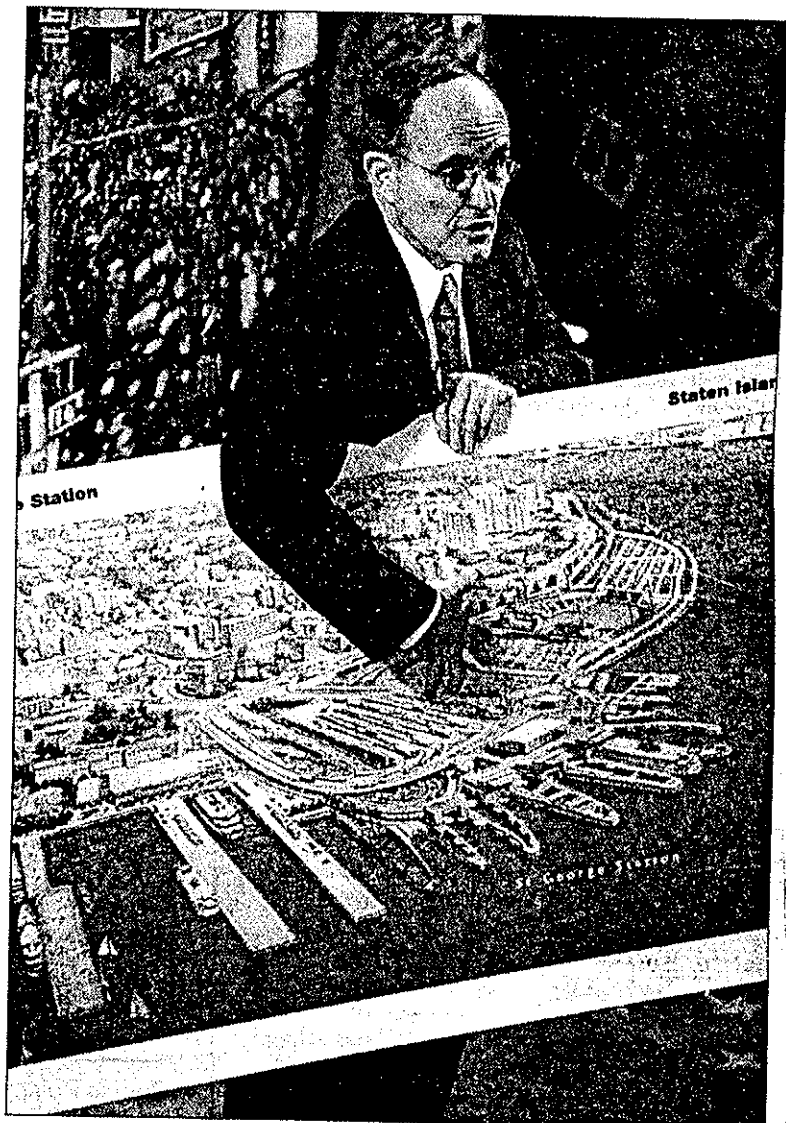
"This was once a city where you had more than 2,000 murders a year and over 500,000 serious crimes," the mayor told the stand-

ing-room-only crowd in the City Council chamber. "Well, now we've got that down to under 700 murders a year and there's been a 55 percent reduction in serious crime. And we've slashed the welfare rolls and put people to work. Ten years ago this was a city that was thought of as the crime and welfare capital of the world. A city with no prospects. Ten years later Time magazine has a very different cover, a lot better cover."

With an eye to further slashing the crime rate, Giuliani proposed the construction of a state-of-the-art DNA laboratory to make it possible for police to use DNA samples to better monitor the activities of career criminals. City Hall will be working closely with the Pataki administration for the passage of a state law allowing the city to take DNA samples from people arrested in the city.

Other anti-crime initiatives included an expansion of the number of school safety officers by 600 to a total of 4,000; the creation of more gang-free school zones and safe corridors for senior citizens; and a new program, mirroring the city DWI car-seizure project, in which the city will confiscate the cars of aggressive and reckless drivers.

In a move aimed at making schools safer and more student-friendly, a program is planned to turn truants picked up by police over to parents or guardians and the number of schools with stu-



ADVANCE PHOTO ■ MONIKA GRAFF

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani points out a plan for a new ferry terminal in St. George.

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dents involved in safety patrol will be hiked from the current 260 to about 1,000. School safety monitors assist younger students in such activities as crossing the street and getting to class.

For the past 60 years the Automobile Club of New York has sponsored student safety patrols in city schools. Five safety patrol students — including Staten Island youngsters Michael Avelin and Michael Vuolo, 10-year-olds at PS 3 in Prince's Bay — attended yesterday's State of the City address as guests of City Hall.

"This is going to be a day I remember," said Avelin, sporting his orange safety patrol belt.

Said Vuolo: "At first I was shocked to think I would be here. But it feels great to meet the mayor." The two students were surprised to learn Giuliani was a safety patrol student when he was in school, an activity the mayor admitted "made me feel like a big shot."

Other initiatives included:

■ The purchase of some 200 infrared, heat-detecting cameras to assist firefighters. Every ladder company in the city would get a camera, which helps detect hidden flames behind walls, floors and ceilings. "I love them [firefighters] and you should too," Giuliani said. "They're entitled to the best equipment."

■ An aggressive push to get the previously proposed freight tunnel between Staten Island and Brooklyn built. In May, Giuliani said, a major investment study spelling out the feasibility of the plan will be completed. City Hall has suggested that the proposal could be linked up with a city Department of Environmental Protection plan to construct another water tunnel connecting Staten Island to Brooklyn. "We could marry the two projects," Giuliani suggested. "We've got to work together to find funds."

■ Continued work on the so-called St. George Station, a project that includes a proposed 6,500-waterfront ballpark, a refurbished St. George ferry terminal and a lighthouse museum. "This is a wonderful development," the mayor said. Giuliani said he was particularly impressed by the prospect of a minor league ballpark facing out toward the harbor. "If you pull a ball you could hit it out toward the Statue of Liberty," Giuliani mused. "Imagine a 19-year-old trying to pull a ball toward the Statue of Liberty. Ah, I wish I was 19 again."

■ Continued efforts to get homeless people off the streets and into shelters or other facilities where they can receive services and get their lives back together. Giuliani said "left"-leaning ideologues have tried to portray the program as a mean-spirited assault on the destitute. "Some advocates say people have a right to sleep on the streets," Giuliani said. "Where does that right come from?"

■ A four-year, \$2 billion cut in business taxes ranging from the commercial rent levy to the unincorporated business tax, as a way of spurring the economy and creating jobs.

■ Construction of an all-purpose

stadium on the West Side near the Javits Center which could serve as a venue for the 2012 Olympics. Giuliani has called for the stadium in the past, saying it would spark hotel and restaurant development in the area, but yesterday was the first time he suggested the city should go after the 2012 Olympics.

■ A proposed special office to assist small businesses in helping their employees get health insurance. This could be done through a so-called "health path program" in which a number of small firms throw in together to purchase health coverage. The city will also assist eligible New Yorkers to get on Medicaid. Some 1.8 million New Yorkers, including workers, have no medical coverage.

■ Continued efforts to eliminate the central Board of Education, for which he reserved some of his most vitriolic language. He called the board little more than a "job protection program" that considers kids "an afterthought." He proposed selling 110 Livingston St. — something the Council said he has no right to do — and housing the board in a building suited for 75 fewer workers. He also called for more competition in the school system, including charter schools and vouchers, and said teachers who don't perform up to par should not get a pay raise.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Giuliani said he had "never had a better job" than running the city. "I love it tremendously," he confessed. He went on to urge his audience, made up of commissioners, elected officials and friends, not to allow the city to return to what it once was after he leaves. "You've got to keep growing in optimism," he said. "We should never turn back to the way we were."

The speech got generally high marks.

"The mayor has once more demonstrated his thorough knowledge and understanding of the issues that are important to New Yorkers," said Assemblyman Robert Stranieri (R-South Shore). "It was a strong, positive speech."

Councilman James Oddo (R-Mid-Island) called the address "a tour de force that can be summed up in the word — leadership."

Borough President Guy V. Molinari, who is in his last term in office, called the speech "masterful," and said he could identify with Giuliani's wanting to leave his legacy intact. "You don't want to see what you've done over the years lost," the borough president said. Molinari said he was too busy to attend the speech personally, sending aides Ed Burke and Dan Donovan.

Board of Education member Jerry Cammarata, the Island's representative to the board, said Giuliani's proposal to sell 110 Livingston St. and reduce the size of the central board's operating quarters is an "excellent way of allowing real estate to control bureaucracy at the board."

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to leave the city, what he's saying is the 21st century can be a miracle as well. He's saying don't turn the clock back."

Staten Islander Martin Osterreich, commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services, praised Giuliani for his clear-sighted explanation of the city's homeless policy.

"The mayor laid out what we've been saying for some time," he said. "We have an extremely compassionate homeless policy."

Meanwhile, Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, said: "I'm disappointed to see that Mayor Giuliani has decided there's more political capital to be gained by dodging the problems in our schools than by coming up with systemic solutions."

She said: "While the mayor likes to invoke the myth of job protection, the fact is the Board of Education will need to hire 54,000 new teachers in the next five years."

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