

IN OUR OPINION

Expand Cobo; celebrate Woodward

■ Area leaders, public need to get their acts together and hands joined

Southeast Michigan needs to move forward as a region. There is no disputing that the fortunes of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties are linked to the City of Detroit and that the city's future is bound up in that of its surrounding counties.

The year ahead offers two fronts where the region can make progress, one political, the other largely symbolic — but both important for a better future. The first is Cobo Hall, the second the 200th birthday of historic Woodward Avenue.

Get Cobo together already

In 2007, Detroit and its surrounding counties need to solve the Cobo conundrum — as the North American International Auto Show will demonstrate again when it kicks off Friday. How to make the downtown convention center better has been lingering too long. While it will surely have an auto show as its signature annual event as



J. KYLE KEENER/Detroit Free Press

long as Ford, GM and Chrysler Group remain in the region, there is a real risk that it may become a second-tier show, that the manufacturers will in the near future opt for the larger space at Chicago's McCormick Place for their really big show. There's no telling what other events or development a larger, more efficient and more modern Cobo may be able to attract until it exists.

Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano has laid out a reasonable framework for a Cobo expansion that includes creating a regional authority to take charge of the facility and extending hotel-room and liquor taxes to finance it. The state needs to authorize the tax aspects, which won't happen unless regional leadership goes to Lansing united around it. Early this year is not too soon for regional leaders to hash out the details, sell it to their constituents, and take it to the Capitol.

ON GUARD FOR 175 YEARS

Detroit Free Press

50 CENTS WWW.FREEP.COM MONDAY JAN. 8, 2007 METRO FINAL ♦

David L. Hinkle, Publisher
Paul Snow, Vice President/Editor
Dana Andrews, Executive Editor
Tom Frenkel, Editorial Page Editor
Randy Andrews, Deputy Managing Editor
Dana Robinson, Deputy Managing Editor
Jeffrey S. Taylor, Deputy Managing Editor
Julie Green Topping, Deputy Managing Editor
Betsy Klotzsch, Deputy Editorial Page Editor

EDITORIAL

Monday, Jan. 8, 2007 Editorial dept.: 313-222-6583, letters@freepress.com

www.freep.com Detroit Free Press

7A

Hands across Woodward

Woodward Avenue has for too long been seen as one of metro Detroit's major dividing lines. This summer, it will be a place where people can come together for a variety of events to mark the bicentennial of the region's "main drag," named for the territorial judge who laid out a new wheel-and-spokes design for Detroit after the fire that



RASHAUN RUCKER/Detroit Free Press

destroyed the city in 1805. Woodward, or MI, has been designated one of "America's Byways" by the U.S. Department of Transportation for its historic significance.

Plans include a "blessing of the byway" by the leaders of the many faith-based institutions along or near Woodward, followed by a 27-mile human chain stretching from downtown Detroit to Pontiac. That's supposed to happen on the first Sunday in September, and planners say it could be a Guinness Book event. It won't work unless thousands of people from across the region are willing to join hands.

Could be cool. The theme for the yearlong celebration is "Highlighting history, promoting pride and rallying the region." All are important. Find out more at 866-MIBYWAY (866-612-9929) or www.woodwardavenue.org.

Make the stretch

The Woodward celebration is going to happen. Progress on Cobo is not a sure thing. Both can be signature achievements for a region that is going to need some uplifting amid the economic uncertainty of the next 12 months. One requires a lot of people coming together. The other, the right people. A willingness to work together across traditional boundaries will make all the difference for each.

P.S. UNDER A LAW that took effect Jan. 1 in the state of Kansas, gift cards must be good for at least five years. Wonder how many times the average card will change hands thanks to "regifting" before it expires.