

# The Men WHO RULE

Looking at our region now, it is hard to believe the level of disparity we faced not even ten years ago. Escalating crime rates, cities on the verge of bankruptcy, streets filled with endless urban blight, massive unemployment and poverty rates...the prognosis was grim for the major cities of our region. Yet today, things are only looking up as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Erie are all becoming more progressive areas of growth, development, and (most important) prosperity. For our third annual Man Issue, we met with the four men who have their constituents' vote of confidence (all four were reelected this past November) as they lead our cities from rust belt to renaissance.



## **MAYOR BYRON BROWN (D)**

**BUFFALO, NEW YORK**

In 1989, *Ebony* magazine recognized Byron Brown as one of their "30 Leaders of the Future." Two decades later, Brown has built up his city to a level that most other major metropolises in the United States surely envy – at present the city of Buffalo has a \$140-million budget surplus. Since assuming office in 2006, Brown has reduced the crime rate by 12% and the homicide rate by 50%, largely in part to his commitment to redeveloping the inner city and the waterfront. In 2007, he started a \$100-million, five-year plan for the necessary demolishing or restructuring of more than 5,000 dilapidated properties. He has also declared 2010 the year of the "Extreme Makeover for the City of Buffalo," a makeover that will include the reform of the city's zoning code to initiate a place-based economic development strategy for the Buffalo neighborhoods. "No one wants to live in a community that is dying. The people have worked very hard to build, boost, and support Buffalo, and we have tried to build on that tremendous energy. The rezoning process will give us another tool in our arsenal in moving Buffalo forward."



## **MAYOR LUKE RAVENSTAHL (D)** PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

In less than three years, Luke Ravenstahl went from being the youngest city councilman in the city's history to being the youngest mayor in the city's history. In office since 2006, he has already seen great accomplishments. In 2003, the city was \$1 billion in debt and declared a distressed city on the brink of bankruptcy. But today, the city is garnering national attention for its ability to turn itself around. Last year saw the fourth consecutive year Pittsburgh had a year-end budget surplus. The city's unemployment rate remains two points below the national average, more than \$4 billion in economic development is underway, and indicators of investment are at an all-time high. The city even garnered accolades from *The Economist*, who named it "America's most livable city," and *Forbes* magazine, who declared it one of the 10 best cities for job growth. And then there was the international summit held last year. "We think that in many ways we have been a model city for the transformation from rust belt to renaissance. When the President chose us to host the G20 Summit, he said we were chosen because of our transformation from an old industrial city to one that is thriving today."



**MAYOR JOSEPH  
SINNOTT (D)**  
ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA

When Joseph Sinnott took the oath of mayor in 2006, the city of Erie was in distress and on the verge of municipal bankruptcy. Annual overspending was nearing \$9 million, and a financial reserve that once was nearly \$30 million was nearly exhausted. Having restored stability by taking the necessary measures to create an efficient local government on a budget, the city is now one of the few that has emerged from distress to become one with an innovative, cost-effective government. Sinnott has even helped keep two manufacturing employers, Accuride and Rexam, from leaving the city and has revealed that a third manufacturer is planning an expansion, guaranteeing additional jobs for the city. And now Mayor Sinnott is looking to welcome you back to downtown. A major initiative that began in his first term, the redevelopment of downtown Erie will continue to prosper in his second term. "We are continuing forward on the redevelopment. Looking at other cities, we can see that the market for downtown neighborhoods has come back."

A photograph of Mayor Frank Jackson, a middle-aged man with grey hair and a beard, wearing glasses, a white dress shirt, and a striped tie. He is seated at a dark wooden desk in a wood-paneled room, gesturing with his right hand while speaking. The background shows wood paneling and a window with blinds.

## MAYOR FRANK JACKSON (D)

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Mayor Frank Jackson gave himself 200 days to prove he was able to restore hope to an ailing Cleveland -- otherwise he would consider himself a failure. His successes were validated by his citizens this past November, when he was reelected by a 78% margin. During his tenure, Jackson has overseen the implementation of a five-year budget projection -- which anticipated a fiscally difficult 2010, saw a 15% drop in vacant and distressed properties in the city, and was instrumental in developing a joint tax-sharing venture between Cleveland and its suburbs. Citing 2010 as a pivotal year for the city, Jackson is creating a staff position to assist in regional development, and \$95 million was approved to assist the Department of Economic Development in creating new businesses -- something he believes will benefit from the city's rust-belt status. "Being a rust-belt city gives us character and personality and something to work with. We have the infrastructure and the ability to develop a strategic plan to move forward."