

spurred a wave of new economic development, especially in the four other boroughs besides Manhattan, so often ignored by his predecessors; taken control of the city's ailing schools and instituted a uniform math and reading curriculum, although the jury is still out on how much that will actually enhance students' educations; and improved the city's quality of life by banning smoking from all restaurants and bars, cracking down on noise and creating a one-stop complaint-and-question line, 311.

Perhaps most impressively, Bloom-

berg has managed to do that while being "the first mayor in a long time who has not been a polarizing figure," as Mitchell Moss, professor of urban planning at New York University, puts it. That is not to say his constituents necessarily appreciate the Republican mayor. In a city where Democrats outnumber Republicans 5 to 1, recent polls show that only about 40% of registered voters approve of his job performance. The majority of New Yorkers have also told pollsters they don't want to build a football stadium for the New York

Jets on Manhattan's West Side, but Bloomberg is pushing hard for one anyway. In his mind, the stadium, which will double as a massive convention center and could also be the center of the 2012 Summer Olympics, for which New York is making a bid, is the kind of long-term economic bet that great cities, like great companies, have to make. "It is investing for the future," Bloomberg declares, sounding suspiciously like a politician, before adding a key, most impolitic warning, "with no guaranteed return." —By Daniel Eisenberg

THE WORST MAYORS IN AMERICA

■ KWAME KILPATRICK / Detroit

Equally at home in senior centers and hip-hop concerts, Kwame Kilpatrick, 34, inspired Detroit voters with his energy and determination when he rode into office three years ago. But a cherry red Lincoln Navigator has put a big dent in his reputation. After weeks of denying it, the mayor admitted in January that the city paid \$24,995 to lease just such a car for his wife.

That outlay showed what Alan Ehrenhalt, executive editor of *Governing Magazine*, calls "a tin ear for symbolism," given that Detroit's \$230 million



ART LEANG/AP

budget deficit has prompted the mayor to eliminate 3,000 city positions and end 24-hour bus service. It has not helped that Kilpatrick left undiminished his 21-person security detail (the mayor of Chicago, a city with three times the population, has 15 guards). When Gary Brown, the deputy chief of police internal affairs, opened an investigation into misconduct by the security team, Kilpatrick fired him, ostensibly because Brown did not get his chief's approval for the probe. —By Jyoti Thottam. Reported by Amanda Bower/New York, Joseph R. Szczytny/Detroit and David Thigpen/Chicago

■ DICK MURPHY / San Diego

When he was elected mayor in 2000, Dick Murphy thought he had his hands full dealing with a troubled ballpark project and sewer spills that were shutting down San Diego's beaches. But then Murphy, 62, a state superior court judge, became embroiled in an even bigger mess: a \$1.35 billion deficit at the city's public-employee pension fund. The crisis has so discredited him, he almost lost his job last November to Donna Frye, a last-minute write-in candidate who runs a surf shop. She actually won more votes,



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but some 5,500 people who wrote in her name failed to shade in an oval box, and the courts ruled the ballots invalid.

It was Murphy's predecessor who first approved underfunding the pension fund. But when a balloon payment became due in 2002, Murphy dodged it by fashioning another underfunding plan, winning the pension board's acceptance with a promise to hike pension payouts and give special benefits to the union presidents. Now the FBI, the U.S. Attorney and the SEC are investigating the deal. —By Terry McCarthy. With reporting by Jill Underwood/San Diego

■ JOHN STREET / Philadelphia

John Street came into office in 2000 with an ambitious agenda to improve Philadelphia's worst neighborhoods, and even his critics agree he has made considerable progress. But, says Otis White, of the public-policy consulting firm Civic Strategies, "whatever his grand visions have been, he will not be remembered for them. He will be remembered for the corruption [around him]."

There has been no evidence that Street, 61, himself is corrupt, but federal prosecutors say the mayor's close friend and fund raiser, Ron White, partially



DAVID MALALETI—PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

took control of city contracting and turned the process into a naked shake-down for donations to Street's 2003 re-election campaign. White died before going to trial, but former city treasurer Cory Kemp, a member of Street's administration, and four other defendants await a jury's verdict. The scandals have turned Street into a lame duck a year early. "The city is in a kind of suspended animation as long as the trials go on," says former Philadelphia *Daily News* editor Zack Stalberg. —By Sean Scully/Philadelphia. With reporting by Amanda Bower/New York