

Iorio rolls to second term

The mayor rounds up 80 percent of the vote to win re-election, but turnout is just 15 percent.

By JANET ZINK
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TAMPA - Mayor Pam Iorio easily won re-election to a second term as mayor, capturing 80 percent of the vote.

At her victory party at Valencia Garden, Iorio said voters gave her four more years because they like the direction in which she's taking Tampa.

"They appreciated the fact that we're investing in neighborhoods," she said. "Tonight is a reflection of that."

Mayoral candidate Marion Lewis received 12 percent of the vote, and Aria Green received 8 percent. Lewis said he was disappointed in the low voter turnout city wide.

Only 15 percent of Tampa's registered voters cast ballots Tuesday. That's the lowest of the last four elections; turnout was 33 percent in 2003.

"So many people are just so disenchanted with the political process, and they don't come out to vote," Lewis said. "It's terrible. Having that small number of people determining your next leader is just a sad state of affairs."

In her second term, Iorio plans to make mass transit a priority. She hopes to find funding for a regional rail system and set a timetable for getting it built.

"We truly owe it to the next generation," she said.

Iorio supporter Jerry Green said he believes Iorio will follow through on that promise, because she made good on her 2003 campaign pledges to focus on neighborhoods.

"That's all you can ask for in someone you elect," he said.

Cynthia Baluja of West Tampa described her vote for Iorio as a girl thing.

"She's a woman. Hel-lo.... " she said.

Baluja also applauded Iorio's interest in beautifying the city, her concern for the struggling East Tampa neighborhood and the revitalization of downtown.

Greg Iglehart said he supported Iorio because of the work she has done in neighborhoods. He defended her decision

to downsize a proposed new art museum, which brought the biggest controversy to Iorio's first term.

Inglehart said he believes Iorio inherited a money pit from former Mayor Dick Greco. Inglehart respected her willingness to dump the project despite pressure from its backers.

"It took a lot of courage," he said. "She did the right thing by stepping back."

Maureen Murley, who moved to Tampa 18 months ago from Sarasota, picked Iorio because, "She's very bright, very sincere. She really cares about Tampa."

Murley saw Iorio speak at a Leadership Tampa lunch and was impressed that Iorio used no notes.

The newcomer was less impressed with the city's low voter turnout.

"We need to vote," Murley said. "Especially women. I've always been able to vote since I was old enough. But my mother couldn't."

Murley said she always makes her granddaughters vote.

Despite turnout disappointment, election day went smoothly, though some voters in West Tampa were confused when they turned up at a polling site and found it closed.

Four polling sites were changed in late February, either because operators no longer wanted to participate or because of scheduling conflicts.

Supervisor of Elections Buddy Johnson said he did his best to inform voters, sending out press releases and putting advertisements in the newspaper.

Lewis, a 26-year veteran of the Tampa police force, campaigned hard in his first run for public office, criticizing Iorio for not doing more to help the poor and middle class.

On election day, his workers stood outside polling sites throughout Tampa, wearing Lewis T-shirts and waving his signs. They talked about a need for change.

"We ran a good campaign and I believe that we got our message out to the people," Lewis said.

Lewis said he might take another shot at politics again in four years, "if this city is not where it needs to be."

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