

Murphy: '88 good for economy, polls

By Tim Richard
staff writer

A good year for the economy. A good year at the polls.

That's the prognosis for Oakland County and Executive Daniel T. Murphy, who will seek a fifth term with no opposition in sight.

"We'll probably do 80 to 90 percent (of the new construction) we did in 1987," Murphy said, noting that the current year was the second best for construction in Oakland's history. That would put 1988 construction somewhere between \$1 billion and \$1.17 billion, making it the third best year ever.

DEMOCRATS, meanwhile, say they're recruiting candidates to challenge Murphy, a lifetime figure in Oakland government, and the Republican ticket.

For much of 1987, Lansing gossip had Doug Ross as a sure candidate, but in December county Democrats let it be known that he's definitely not running. A former state senator, Ross directs the Department of Commerce for Gov. James Blanchard.

"Who'd want to give up a sure job with Blanchard to run here?" asked one Democratic leader.

Before Ross dropped out, Murphy's forces commissioned a poll

that showed him leading Ross 2-1 among likely voters countywide. It was 53 percent for Murphy, 24 for Ross.

In the Observer & Eccentric circulation area, Murphy had a 40 percent lead, according to the executive's camp.

NAME RECOGNITION had been one of Murphy's soft spots, so much so that his 1980 opponent made an issue of it.

But the new poll showed Murphy with 80 percent name recognition, according to deputy executive Patrick Nowak. Murphy's performance approval rating was 61 percent.

The poll showed Republicans were generally running 45-27 percent ahead of Democrats, Nowak said. Leaders of both political parties, however, consider Oakland normally "marginally Republican" — meaning less than a 5 percent advantage.

"WE HAVE A lot of cares out there. We just don't get the publicity on them," Murphy said in his review of his 13th year as county executive.

He likens Oakland to a well-run company that doesn't make headlines the same way nearly-bankrupt firms do.

Murphy pointed to the high technology belt stretching from Roches-

ter Hills through Auburn Hills, down through Troy, Southfield, Farmington Hills and Novi.

"We're working on the Ferndales, Hazel Parks and Oak Parks, all along the I-696 corridor," he said, referring to the older, inner ring of suburbs.

Oakland has assigned an economic development staff member, Jack Draker, and is hiring an economic consultant to work with the southern tier of communities.

The job will be not only to help the southern tier adjust to the impact of the long-awaited "missing link" in the region's freeway system, but to find new business opportunities.

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Daniel T. Murphy
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