

jobs. But Menino also showed a broad vision that belied his reputation as a simple man of limited reach, Bostonians said.

From homelessness to English-language courses, park improvements to gun control, the mayor built a legacy, residents said, that extends beyond the countless miles he spent roaming the neighborhoods of what had long been regarded as a fiercely tribal city.

"I think Boston is one of the most welcoming cities now, and I think the mayor has made a big difference on that," said John Willshire Carrera, a Jamaica Plain resident and board president of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition. "He's been very, very clear that the city is a city of immigrants."

Willshire Carrera cited Menino's decision to create the Mayor's Office of New Bostonians in 1998 as an important statement. The office helps fund English-language programs that serve about 1,100 immigrants a year, he said.

The mayor's commitment to inclusiveness is also demonstrated by his longtime support for the gay community, said Dr. Stephen Boswell, president of Fenway Health, which reaches out to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender residents.

"In my view, he's been one of the most important mayors this city has ever seen, especially from the standpoint of the LGBT community," Boswell said. "From his first term, he demonstrated in concrete ways that he was supportive of everyone who lives here."

Menino has attended nearly every major fund-raising event held by Fenway Health during the past 20 years, he added, and was instrumental in helping the capital campaign to build its Boylston Street headquarters.

Perhaps the mayor's singular accomplishment, however, is his press-the-flesh familiarity. A Globe poll released Monday showed that 49 percent of respondents said they had personally met Menino. One of them is Igor Kharitonov, 25, of Jamaica Plain.

PHOTOS

Bostonians reflect on Menino's announcement

- An outpouring of affection at City Hall
- Aides reminisce on the past, let emotions flow

Brian Ballou of the Globe staff and correspondents Matt Rocheleau, Patrick D. Rosso, and Johanna Kaiser contributed to this report. Brian MacQuarrie can be reached at macquarrie@globe.com.

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