

State of the City Address

Mayor Roy D. Buol

Monday, March 23, 2009



*City Council Chambers, Historic Federal Building
350 W. 6th Street, Dubuque, Iowa*

Good evening and welcome to the 3rd Annual State of the City Address in the City Council's official chambers located in our historic Federal Building in downtown Dubuque!

Tonight is our time to reflect on 2008, its successes, its challenges, and indeed, our community's preparation to take advantage of opportunities in the face of those challenges.

Certainly, on a national level, 2008 was a year that few of us will ever forget, and one that the nation's historians, economists, and others will be speaking and writing about for many generations to come.

2008 was an historic time as our nation elected its first African-American president. And later, we watched with pride as our Dubuque Colts participated in the Presidential Inaugural Parade, earning the Governor's designation as "Iowa's Ambassadors of Music!"

Locally, 2008 marked our City's 175th anniversary! Many citizen volunteers, businesses, and industries joined together to donate time, talents, and resources to executing a variety of community-wide events and publications to celebrate our City's rich history!

2008 was also a time of almost unimaginable lows.

In Iowa, it was a time of many natural disasters, bringing catastrophic tornado and flood damage to the cities of Parkersburg, Cedar Rapids, and many other Iowa communities including several in Dubuque County.

The City of Dubuque, with memories of its own devastating flood in 1965, responded to our neighboring communities and, along with private citizens and numerous local organizations provided human resources, drinking water, equipment, supplies, and relief funds for the long-term needs of Iowa victims and their families.

Nationally, 2008 was about a fiscal crisis that has become astounding in its scope--record home foreclosures, the collapse of Wall Street, record business failures, record job losses, and record government bailouts.

While 2008 is behind us, the problems it ushered in will not go quietly in this New Year. Clearly, the nation has realized there are no easy answers and the uncertainty is a weight upon all our shoulders.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The measure of a man is not where he stands in the moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Locally, the economic storms of our past remain a useful guide to our future.

During the last economic storm, some 25 years ago, Dubuque was used as a cautionary tale.

During this current test of our national economy, the tale that's being told about Dubuque is one of both "determination and amazement."

It is a tale about how we have burst out-of-the gates in 2009 with one of the single biggest projects in both our City's history and in the U.S. – landing IBM and 1,300 new jobs.

Dubuque's economic tests, both past and present, have given our community two things of tremendous value, a sense of what is possible, and the determination to achieve it!

That's why IBM selected Dubuque in 2009. It's why Hormel selected Dubuque just 12 months earlier for its \$89 million investment. And it's why we continue to see record investments in our local business community!

But here's the thing, and there's no way around it. Both companies selected Dubuque because of you.

Let me repeat that: both companies are here, in Dubuque, because of you. And it was the privilege of all involved to help sell the Dubuque that you, the citizens, build seven days a week, 365 days a year!

In fact, it is each one of you who stands as the measure of our community's character, yesterday, today, and always.

You see, one of the significant moments that stood out when our City was selected as an All America City in 2007, was when team member Rusty Knight told the judges in Anaheim, California –

“Part of the character of Dubuque is that we don't care who gets the credit for a good idea. We thrive on partnerships.

We thrive on the thought that a good idea can come from anywhere, from anybody, and it's not important who is identified with it.

What is important is that we see problems, we care about them, we get engaged, and we act.”

A year later, Nancy Van Milligen, President and CEO of the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, reported that during 2008, Dubuque ranked first in Iowa, ahead of Des Moines, in endowment giving per capita.

She said, “Dubuque is leading with both our heart and our hands. We are leading with our hands out to welcome IBM, a new partner doing business in Iowa, and we are leading with our hearts as we boldly set an example about serving the nonprofit community.”

Dubuque got where it is today by supporting its local businesses, industry, and our non-profits; by remaining alert to opportunities and by demonstrating the value of public/private partnerships to a sustainable future.

You will hear me speak about PARTNERSHIPS many times tonight because it is that ability that has, is, and will be the difference that brings our community through this recession even stronger!

During 2008, your City government continued to make decisions that have been providing a good return on taxpayers' investment and decisions that have been producing measurable results.

City government is honoring its commitment to be open and accessible to our citizens, and is demonstrating leadership that ALWAYS looks to the future.

And, if we are doing our jobs right, some of the best results we deliver to you won't be seen until "tomorrow!"

Within this context, it is now my honor to introduce my City Council colleagues and the City's management team who, whether in strong economic times, or in performing under pressure, have focused the city's resources, have measured the city's progress, and have grounded decisions on achieving results for Dubuque citizens.

Seated to my right:

- At Large Councilperson Ric Jones
- At Large Councilperson David Resnick
- First Ward Councilperson Kevin Lynch
- Second Ward Councilperson, Karla Braig
- Third Ward Councilperson, Joyce Connors
- And, Fourth Ward Councilperson, Dirk Voetberg.

Seated to my left:

- City Manager Mike Van Milligen
- Assistant City Manager, Cindy Steinhauer
- Assistant City Manager, Teri Goodmann
- and City Attorney Barry Lindahl
- City Clerk Jeanne Schneider is unable to be with us tonight.

Whether individually or as a team, they have been providing unparalleled quality service to our citizens, and have been tireless and purposeful in helping to create the partnerships and make the decisions that continue to guide our community's progress!

Also performing efficient and effective service for Dubuque residents are the City's Department and Division Managers, and their capable and talented employees.

And our appreciation goes out to those volunteers whose call to service on the City's Boards and Commissions enhances the City's ability to be proactive in response to the expectations of our citizens.

Our city's partners at the county, state, and federal levels remain significant to our stability and progress.

This includes County Supervisors Wayne Demmer, Eric Manternach, and Donna Smith, along with each of the County's hard-working elected officials.

At the state level, our partners include Governor Chet Culver; State Senator Pam Jochum; State Representative and Speaker of the Iowa House Pat Murphy; State Representative Chuck Isenhart, as well as area legislators including State Senators Roger Stewart and Tom Hancock, and State Representatives Steve Lukan, Tom Schueller, and Ray Zirkelbach.

Our "champions" in Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Charles Grassley, U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, and U.S. Congressman Bruce Braley, as well as their hardworking staff both in D.C. and here at home, continue to serve Dubuque remarkably well!

In fact, I want to take this opportunity to again express our community's gratitude for the extraordinary partnership of all elected officials as they worked alongside us in welcoming IBM to Dubuque, and for their continuing efforts to address our local priorities.

And, we will continue to seek their advice, and count on their support, as we address both our challenges and opportunities during this "uncommon time" in our nation's history.

In the past several years, strategic and historic investments have been made in our City, building upon past accomplishments, and taking advantage of a strong economy to invest in ways that are paving the City's path toward its vision of becoming a "progressive sustainable community."

Cities that are best able to weather economic downturns and take advantage of economic turnarounds are those where partnerships, policies and performance are focused on the three pillars of a sustainable future: the community's economic prosperity, its environmental integrity, and its social and cultural vibrancy!

Shaping our Dubuque community since 2006, when the City Council unanimously chose it as a top priority is our "Sustainable Dubuque" initiative.

Our model is the "blueprint" that serves to bring our community together in ways and, perhaps, at levels never before experienced in order to create a community that is viable, livable and equitable!

There is no doubt that our community is supremely honored by IBM's decision to locate its first stateside project in 10 years in Dubuque!

And we are honored, but not surprised, that Dubuque is being noticed by other cities around the country as they seek to implement the pillars of sustainability to improve their own economic opportunities in the future.

Recently, Dr. Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in D.C. stated, "It is obvious that Dubuque's direction has been carefully planned, it is evident in Dubuque's current successes, its growing partnerships and its shared vision with its citizens."

Tonight, the State of the City will be shared through the lens of our Sustainable Dubuque model beginning with the pillar of Economic Prosperity.

Economic prosperity has many “drivers” and in 2008, one of these was Dubuque’s selection by the US Conference of Mayors as the #1 Most Livable Small City in the nation, raising Dubuque’s national profile to businesses and industries like IBM and to individuals seeking to locate in a community with a quality of life that stands out in some way, from the rest.

And these “living standards” are today, more than ever, about healthy, natural and environmentally friendly alternatives in a city rich with educational, social and cultural opportunities for every age group.

As with the All-America City selection a year earlier, both recognitions honor the strategic partnerships and sustainable investment that have created America’s River in what is known as the “Port of Dubuque.”

And, it is fitting that these national recognitions focus on our downtown and riverfront, because that is where our City began.

The Port of Dubuque businesses and attractions are employers to approximately 1,400 people, creating an economic impact in our community of \$49 million annually.

Beyond that, our Port partners have had a tremendous impact on the development of our downtown businesses.

Today there are more than 7,000 people working in downtown Dubuque with another 1,300 on the way.

Private businesses and owners have invested millions of dollars in building improvements and technology, and this has been matched by the City’s major investment in infrastructure to support a healthy downtown--the heart of every vibrant community!

And just recently we welcomed the unveiling of the Pfohl family’s \$28 million renovation of the historic “Hotel Julien Dubuque!”

Tourism is a wonderful way to boost our local economy because it takes dollars that were generated somewhere else and deposits them in our community!

Tourism employs over 2,700 people in the Dubuque area, and in 2008, we welcomed over 1.6 million visitors!

During that recession year, Dubuque area tourism spending hit 253 million dollars--up from 236 million dollars in 2007!

Significant to our community's economic prosperity is the impact derived from our local higher education institutions which, combined, are one of the City's largest employers in addition to providing the educated workforce that remains key to our ability to retain and attract new industry!

As in many cities across America, our institutions are becoming the economic engines that big corporations used to be. More recently and of untold value is that our higher ed institutions were major partners in IBM's decision to locate here!

Economic prosperity has many forms.

Helping our City become a true "Destination for Opportunity" is our Greater Dubuque Development Corporation led by Rick Dickinson, Mike Blouin, Dan McDonald and an amazing staff.

Supported by the City and many private partners and investors, is GDDC's aggressive, five year plan to address economic growth by providing resources to assist in business retention, recruitment, and expansion, workforce retention and recruitment, and retail development.

As recently reported, while Dubuque's economy slowed in 2008, it continues to remain stronger than most U.S. markets, not only in terms of our lower un-employment rate, but because of our highly-diverse mix of businesses, and our solid housing market.

All that being said, it does not diminish our sensitivity to the economic pain of friends and family that have lost jobs, or those who will face lay-offs in the months ahead related to depressed market conditions.

As a City, we are more aware than ever of the need to develop alternate revenue streams, expand our tax base, grow and support our local businesses and be a leader in the "new economy" that will emerge from this downturn.

As we in Dubuque have learned, in a time of economic uncertainty, it is even more crucial to maintain a focus on advancing public/private partnerships that will build economic opportunity and a sustainable community.

Last November, GDDC polled over 200 local CEOs to gauge the street-level impact of the job losses among the global financial markets and economies.

Among the findings, Dubuque's CEOs seem both confident and willing to seize opportunities, with 62% believing they will gain market share or new opportunities as a result of the current economic crisis.

Led by the IBM project and ongoing expansions at Hormel, Morrison Brothers, Dubuque Stamp, Medline and others, Dubuque is slated to gain a minimum of 1,600 new jobs over the next 12 to 14 months.

The direct payroll impact of that new projected growth, without benefits, is estimated to be 1.1 million dollars PER WEEK circulating in Dubuque's economy, bolstering our housing market, restaurants, retail and cultural venues!

Growth of our existing businesses and industry is key to this projected growth, and Greater Dubuque Development is a tremendous resource for doing so. Just last week, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, and the leadership of Vice President of Existing Business Dan McDonald, received a #1 ranking for service to existing businesses, in the mid-sized community category, from Business Retention and Expansion International, a world-wide trade association!"

The City is a partner in GDDC's new program called Dubuque Works, which is designed to fill workforce gaps; provide a one-stop concierge service for newcomers to Dubuque; engage with local schools to promote skilled careers; and nurture student-to-business relationships at all of our higher ed institutions.

Along with the City, partners in this critical endeavor are Project Hope, NICC, Iowa Workforce Development, Dubuque Area Labor Management, the Chamber and the Telegraph Herald.

Projects from Dubuque's existing businesses through last summer included a dozen expansions. These same projects represented a minimum of 52.6 million dollars in capital investment and 326 new jobs.

In addition, during that same time period, the Dubuque area colleges and university, medical facilities, and gaming operators spent at least 125 million dollars on new construction and projects, including the ten million dollar overhaul of the Dubuque Greyhound Park and Casino, renamed the "Mystique," which joins the \$84 million new Diamond Jo Casino in offering new restaurants and live entertainment venues.

And in January of 2009, construction continued on three new facilities in the Dubuque Industrial Center West.

All these projects put people to work!

GDDC reports that its project standing list for existing business expansions and new recruits remains very strong.

And notably, in the fall of 2008, the City was acknowledged for its public-private partnerships by the International Economic Development Council.

The Chair of IEDC stated, "as the nation continues to tackle longstanding challenges in the midst of an inhospitable financial climate, public/private partnerships have taken on an even greater significance.

With this award, we laud the trendsetting organizations and municipalities like the City of Dubuque for leading the charge!"

As the City's Economic Development Director David Heiar reported during his recent budget presentation, in the past 25 years in Dubuque, there have been a total of 48 Development Agreements.

Twenty-six of those 48 occurred in just the past three years!

Development in Dubuque has been healthy and in 2008 included eight agreements retaining 385 jobs, creating 388 new jobs, and \$131 million in capital investment, even before the IBM announcement.

Finished projects included the German Bank Building, Kendall/Hunt Distribution Center, Cottingham & Butler, Entegee Engineering, the Port Public Parking Ramp, Durrant Group and the Diamond Jo Casino and Entertainment Complex.

Future initiatives include the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan including expanded downtown parking; regional economic development and marketing initiatives; and development of additional industrial lots owned by the City which are needed to prepare for future business opportunities.

In Dubuque, we are creating a diverse economy by making sustained, long term investments, not just quick fixes, rather, quality investments in quality people to produce quality results.

Continuing with the pillar of economic prosperity and its many forms, it is important to recognize the role of the arts in Dubuque!

City grants totaling over \$960,000 have been awarded to Dubuque's arts and culture organizations for operating and project support over the past several years, returning an annual economic impact of more than \$22 million dollars, and reaching more than 640,000 people annually!

As Robert Lynch, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts shared, "If you cultivate the arts and culture in your community and schools now, you will position yourself as a creative employment zone that will help to attract other industries."

Partnerships involving business, social services, education, and government sectors are working with the City to address issues and create environments of hope for the underemployed and unemployed in our community.

One such leading effort is called PROJECT HOPE, Helping Our People Excel, which is providing skills training to help persons find meaningful and livable wage employment while responding to the needs of local business and industry.

These citizens are creating a better life for themselves and their families, and they are worthy of our respect.

Creating opportunities for a workforce is the City's HISTORIC MILLWORK DISTRICT MASTER PLAN which identifies a strategic course for the 28-building district adjacent to the downtown.

The preservation and restoration of these large structures, through public/private investment, will provide many diverse opportunities for large-space, mixed-use development.

The first phase will involve the revitalization of several buildings with a focus on sustainable infrastructure, and will include 200 housing units and 100,000 square feet of retail and commercial space.

Economic prosperity is also reflected in the activities and partnerships represented by our Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, led by President & CEO Molly Grover.

During 2008, there were approximately 130 ribbon cuttings held throughout our community for a combination of new businesses, new members to the Chamber, and for businesses that have moved, remodeled or expanded.

As a partner in GDDCs "Dubuque Works" program, the Chamber's Workforce Development Division is hosting a series of events to connect our college students with businesses and promoting internships to audiences throughout the community.

The Young Professionals of Dubuque is a Chamber organization that represents the next generation of Dubuque leaders. YP offers professional development, networking and community service activities, and will be launching a College Chapter this spring.

During his visit to Dubuque in January, Mike Daniels, Senior VP of IBM's Global Technology Services drew marked attention to Dubuque's economic successes when he stated "We selected the City of Dubuque based on several criteria, including its strong, public-private partnerships and the fact that IBM's and the City of Dubuque's approach to sustainability support one another!"

As IBM recognized, our city's Economic Prosperity is supported by a second pillar in our Sustainable Dubuque model, Environmental Integrity.

At the City level, our approach is that the best way to have the greatest impact on our environment is to have as "little" impact as possible!

Dubuque is a community that values the built environment of the past, present, and future which significantly contributes to its identity, heritage and sense of place.

In Dubuque, citizens also value fresh air and minimized health risks. They value the benefits of wholesome food from local producers, distributors, farms, and gardens.

In late December 2008, a Des Moines Register article gave a “rose” to the City of Dubuque for “doing more than just talk about being ‘sustainable.’”

The article went on to say, “the city has hired a Sustainability Coordinator. Most cities worry about economic development. Dubuque deserves credit for thinking about the impact of development on future generations.”

Throughout our community, we are partnering to conserve and achieve environmental integrity.

From our Green Vision pre-school, elementary and middle schools, to our churches, higher ed institutions, banks, hospitals, businesses and industry, and importantly, our private citizens—many of whom have joined our Green Pledge program—we are rethinking our approach to daily living to increasingly reduce, reuse, and recycle!

During last month’s Growing Sustainable Communities Conference in Dubuque, Dr. Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Director Roya Stanley, of Iowa’s Office of Energy Independence, talked to over 350 participants about historic preservation as part of the climate solution.

During the conference, Richard Moe announced that, in addition to Seattle and San Francisco, Dubuque and its historic Millwork/Warehouse District had been chosen to participate in the National Trust’s “Green Lab” program!

I must repeat that. Dubuque is now in league with Seattle and San Francisco in its progress to become a green, sustainable City!

The Millwork/Warehouse District will be a pilot project for a comprehensive Energy Efficient zone, marrying historic preservation standards with smart energy systems for adaptive building reuse.

The City has also joined with Climate Communities to leverage federal policy and funding for local initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emission and promoting sustainable, self-reliant communities.

And Dubuque was the only Midwest city invited by Climate Communities to participate in writing the Climate Action Blueprint!

Notably, in 2008, Country Home Magazine ranked Dubuque 53rd among its 370 “Best Green Cities in America,” which was a climb of 109 spots from 2007!

Among 92 cities in the Midwest, Dubuque was the 12th highest ranked community!

The third of the three pillars of a sustainable community is its “Social and Cultural Vibrancy.”

In Dubuque, our neighborhoods are the fundamental building blocks on which a thriving, sustainable community is built.

One of our City's success stories, the Crescent Community Health Center, is located in the Washington Neighborhood.

The Center exists to improve and maintain the health and well being of our community by treating citizens who are uninsured or underinsured through affordable and comprehensive healthcare services, in collaboration with several community organizations.

Between the fall of 2007 and the fall of 2008, there were almost 5,000 individual clients of the health center, and over ten thousand visits for dental and medical care.

Fashioned after the America's Promise Alliance for Youth, is the program Every Child, Every Promise which brought national recognition to Dubuque for a second time in 2008 as one of the "100 Best Communities for Young People."

This program reflects Dubuque's county-wide partnership and community engagement process with a mission to improve outcomes for our community's youth by concentrating on the fulfillment of the Five Promises which are: Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, An Effective Education, and the Opportunity to Help Others.

All our partners are striving to ensure Dubuque area youth have opportunities to realize their God-given potential.

One of these partners is the City's Arts and Cultural Advisory Commission which is committed to finding ways to increase access to the arts for these young people because history shows young lives are being profoundly touched by the arts.

I recently learned about a very young girl who wanted to participate in the Bell Tower Theatre's adapted production of the Wizard of Oz.

After learning she would have to first read the script and then the parts would be chosen, she approached the theater's Executive Director Sue Riedel and timidly shared, "I want to be the Tin Man, but I can't read very well."

Sue Riedel's past experience with children in theater is that reading comes hard for many kids and as a result, they may not want to try.

But, with the possibility to have a part in a play, kids are inspired to work at reading and, important to their individual learning process, it makes reading fun!

Sue told the little girl that she would be able to read the script with practice, and after four weeks of reading her part over and over, the little girl could read every word with expression and confidence.

As Sue later shared, reading a play script is the only thing she has found that kids will willingly read more than once!

As Senator Harkin and Congressman Braley have attested, the arts are a stabilizing part of a sustainable economy.

The arts create jobs; impart knowledge; impact and enrich lives, including the life of a little girl who wanted to be the “Tin Man.”

STEP BY STEP is a recent City partnership project that has resulted in accessible housing for citizens with disabilities, and which encompasses sustainability measures for the adaptive reuse of an historic downtown building.

The citizens who participated in making this project a reality, including Jamie Koppes of Dubuque, are bright, motivated, creative individuals who have much to contribute to a sustainable Dubuque!

Also contributing in meaningful ways to the social and cultural vibrancy of our community are the Envision 2010 top ten ideas which are either completed or are in various stages of completion such as America’s River Phase II; the Crescent Community Health Center; an integrated walking/hiking/biking trail system, a passenger train service, the Historic Millwork Warehouse revitalization district, and community-wide wireless capability.

And, in 2008, the anchor project for America’s River, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, was selected by Trip Advisor, the world’s largest travel community, as the seventh most popular museum and aquarium in the United States!

In Dubuque, we have become a generation that no longer “dreams” about what we could do, but rather, a generation that “does.”

And in our community of character, we understand and embrace the responsibility to help those in need.

This will become even more important as we move forward in the new year. To that end, I am inviting every adult in the community who is able, to join with me in pledging to volunteer “5 hours a month” to a cause of your choice.

It has been said, “Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections perhaps once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

Important to our community’s social vibrancy is the City’s continued focus on Public Safety. The City is in the third year of a five-year plan to add a total of fifteen officers.

And, in the recently adopted budget for 2010, there are three major service enhancements that will contribute to the social and cultural vibrancy of Dubuque. These include:

Free trolley services on the fixed route that connects the Port of Dubuque and Downtown from Memorial Day through October;

A parking ramp shuttle service for the downtown area from existing parking facilities within the Port and Downtown to places of employment;

And, the creation of a service to connect the Dubuque Industrial Center West to our downtown and Northend neighborhoods.

Sue Balsamo, Director of DuRide which is the new senior transportation service that began as a conservative operation in November, reported that by the end of 2008, they had recruited over 50 volunteers, signed up 28 seniors, and supplied over 60 rides!

The City also has undertaken an operational analysis for the KeyLine Transit system to correct deficiencies and make the entire system more efficient, flexible, and customer-oriented.

Finally, just this month, the Council approved a new location for the Burlington Trailways intercity bus service and contributed funding for the lease agreement through operational efficiencies in City departments.

Tonight, you have heard about some of the progress achieved in 2008 through the City's Sustainable Dubuque model, and how this progress has been preparing us to deal with future challenges.

The final and stabilizing part of this model is the City's fiscal management.

Over the past several weeks, your City Council has heard budget presentations by each of the City's departments.

During his presentation of the recently adopted 2010 fiscal year budget, City Manager Mike Van Milligen shared his belief that Dubuque's positive atmosphere has allowed the relationships that exist between the local non-profits and the public and private sectors to bring the resources of our community to bear on dealing with problems and taking advantage of opportunities.

The 2010 budget was developed to support the City Council's priorities for Dubuque and the Council's budget guidelines to not increase the property tax burden on the average homeowner and to decrease property taxes for commercial and industrial property taxpayers.

The 2010 budget also reflected the City Council's guideline to increase the City's cash reserves by one million dollars to be better prepared should the national economic downturn begin to have a greater impact on our local economy.

The City of Dubuque continues to be the only city in Iowa, with a population over 50,000 of which there are 10 cities, to have reduced the City portion of the property tax rate over the past eight years.

In fact, in 1987, citizens paid property taxes that were 32% higher than the rate budgeted for 2010.

With a 5% increase in water rates, Dubuque will still remain the lowest water rate in the State among the largest Iowa cities.

With a 5% increase in the sanitary sewer rate, Dubuque will still maintain the position of the third lowest sewer rate among these same cities.

As we all know, Dubuque's topography makes it a beautiful and unique place to live.

But, with its close proximity to the Mississippi River, it also provides unique storm water management issues that are more expensive to deal with than in other communities.

However, the 2010 budget calls for no increase over the 2009 stormwater fee.

In total, in fiscal year 2010, the average homeowner will pay just \$23.75 more for all City services than we paid fifteen years ago in 1995.

That IS fiscal management citizens can believe in!

As we look to the future, there are projects whose time is here and which must be addressed.

These include treatment of waste at the City's water pollution control plant; additional staffing and services to address the City's expansion through annexation; and the need for an additional fire station along the Northwest Arterial.

In total, "Sustainable Dubuque" is about building a strong economy that works for everyone; it is about ensuring Dubuque is a safe, nurturing and interesting place to call home; and it is about making investments in people and an environment where opportunity and innovation are fostered.

And, notably, our Sustainable Dubuque accomplishments have helped the State of Iowa to become recognized in 2008 as a great place for Business, being ranked by CNBC as #2 in the nation in the Cost of Doing Business and 11th in Business Friendliness!

As mayor, city council and city staff, we have been blessed to serve the citizens of Dubuque, and have been blessed by the prevailing "can do" spirit of Dubuque!

We understand that the national recession has landed hard on the doorsteps of many of our citizens and they are depending on our community's ability to continue working together to help bring our City through this recession even stronger.

That is why we, as a council and city staff, approach our responsibilities with the belief, in the words of John Calvin, that "the care of a community is a sacred obligation."

We believe that this time of great challenge is also a time of great opportunity.

We have worked together to position ourselves to deal with today's uncertainties by diversifying our economy, and we will do whatever it takes to not only weather the storm, but to plant seeds for a thriving future.

To my friends and colleagues on the City Council and City Staff, I thank you for your leadership in 2008, and I look forward to all we will accomplish together going forward!

In 2005, I stated my belief that "the next five years would define the next 50 years for Dubuque."

NOW is the time for which we have been preparing and together we will protect this special place along the Mississippi River and build a proud tomorrow for Dubuque.

On behalf of your City Council, City staff, and all our organizations, agencies and volunteers who love their City and who are personally and professionally vested in its sustainable future, I am privileged to report that the State of our City remains focused and prepared to address the future challenges of this "uncommon time" and that 2008, the "third of the next five years," has indeed served to better define the next 50 for our Sustainable Dubuque!

May God continue to bless our citizens and the State of our City! Good night.