

# State of the City Address



*Mayor Roy D. Buol*

*Wednesday, March 19, 2014*

## State of the City 2014

- **Good evening once again! For those who have not attended a State of the City address, I'll begin with a brief perspective...**
- **“The next five years will define the next 50 years for Dubuque.”**
- **That was my belief when I decided to run for this elected office in 2005. And as I campaigned, I learned thousands of citizens felt the same way.**
- **Like so many, Deb and I were just beginning to welcome grandchildren. I knew our community needed to come together to envision a path that would ensure that they, and their children, would have a chance at a quality of life better than ours. Our community did not have a plan to deal with some serious 21<sup>st</sup> century realities.**
- **With the confidence of the citizens who elected us, and the collaboration of an energized city council, the ground work was laid to transform our community. Those next five years did, indeed, see a clear blueprint for the future develop...with a diverse citizen task force taking on the daunting, yet exciting task of answering the complex question,**
- **“What does Dubuque need to do to sustain a future where our built environment and infrastructure provide safety, and quality, dependable services; where citizens and businesses are able to meet their economic needs; where natural resources are valued, protected and restored, and where social opportunities inspire and embrace cultural diversity.”**
- **After almost two years of work, their recommendations were adopted by the City Council and the “Sustainable Dubuque” initiative was born. From that time forward, the principles that guide that initiative have been the lens through which we make decisions at the city government level.**

- We have seen our community physically transform...people and businesses have become more aware of resource consumption and have made changes in their approach to daily living, and Dubuque rose up as a leader in forward-thinking sustainable initiatives, nationally and internationally.

### **WE WERE...pause**

### **“Building a Sense of Place – the Dubuque Promise”**

#### **• VIDEO PLAYS**

- The fact is, we are all in this together. And the most important asset in our City has always been found in the very nature of our citizens.
- Our ‘community’ is an extremely prevailing and positive force that is working together to build a distinctive, vibrant ‘sense of place’ for all who choose Dubuque as their home...
- To see Dubuque at work in 2013, we begin tonight with a look at the process undertaken for the City Council to establish goals and priorities that drive planning, ensure quality services, cultivate partnerships, and invite investment.
- Each year, as the Council enters into the budget process we ask, “What kind of community do we envision for our citizens to not just live in, but thrive in?” “What has been accomplished, and what are the next steps to support a collective, long term vision?”
- The City of Dubuque budget is a policy document that is developed, within its means, to respond to those questions.
- While the bulk of the decisions affecting the budget happen during a Goal Setting session each August, considerable time over many months has already been invested in reviewing data from City staff, evaluating current

issues, challenges or opportunities on the horizon, and soliciting input from citizens, businesses and partner organizations on how they would like to see our community grow and prosper.

- At the end of the Goal Setting Session, the Policy Budget is adopted by the Council which then becomes the strategic direction for implementation by our City Manager and Staff.
- The Council's role doesn't stop there. We continue to monitor and give policy direction throughout the year to ensure fiscal integrity...And, considering the impact of the historic Great Recession these past five years, I believe we have done just that.
- A significant revenue source for the City's general fund, which supports the operating budget, is property taxes. The property tax bill received by homeowners is a composite from several taxing bodies...of which the City is one. Let's take a look at how the property tax bill is apportioned...
- On this slide, you will see that less than one third of property taxes assessed on your bill are allocated for use by the City's annual operating budget.
- In dollars, it breaks down like this...for the average home owner whose property value is \$130,367, the composite property tax assessment is roughly \$2,158. Of that amount, \$705 goes to the City of Dubuque's operating budget.
- The remaining 67% of that property tax assessment is apportioned primarily to the Dubuque Community School District for its budget...then Dubuque County and other taxing bodies.
- On this slide you will see how the City's general fund is allocated to the various essential services provided to citizens throughout the year.
- Now, let's turn to the topic of debt. Critical to maintaining a community's infrastructure and essential services for citizens is the strategic use of debt.

**The City of Dubuque issues debt when there are major projects that must be undertaken.**

- **On a personal level, it compares to undertaking a home loan, which is very different from a family's weekly budget expenses. Strategic debt by the City is very different from its operating budget.**
- **Beginning in Fiscal Year 2016, the amount of outstanding debt will decrease. It is important to be clear that, unlike the federal government, the City uses debt for capital projects, not for annual operating expenses.**
- **I am pleased to share that the recently adopted budget maintains our City's Vision & Mission...our costs are being controlled and monitored...we have a debt repayment plan in place even as we build cash reserves.**
- **As we continue to plan, partner and make wise choices...we believe our City's operations and its services will continue to strengthen and sustain a strong quality of living in Dubuque.**
- **Now let's look at how our policy budget translates into action via the goals and priorities established by your elected officials.**

## **Sustainability**

- **Reaffirmed in 2013 was the Sustainable Dubuque model and Community Goals that balance economic prosperity with environmental integrity and social and cultural vibrancy.**
- **Health and Safety was added as the 12th Sustainability principle to help ensure that Dubuque remains a community that values systems, policies and opportunities for residents to access safe and healthy lifestyle choices.**
- **Last year every sustainability principle saw progress. For example, under smart energy use and resource management, the City implemented energy**

**savings measures and efficiencies, all of which provided positive economic and environmental impact.**

- **Of special note is the work that went into the design and construction of the water and resource recovery center. This facility uses the Effluent Water generated from the plant as the heat source for the administration building.**
- **This approach, along with having a super insulated facility, is estimated to cut heating and cooling usage by 25-30% compared to the former 40 year old plant. Investment in co-generation systems and improvements also lowered electrical energy demands from 950kw to 600kw, or 37%!**
- **Through the use of captured methane gas and three electrical turbines, we will generate the full 600 KW and realize a savings of \$250,000 per year. This is a perfect example of how we are designing smarter, efficient buildings now which will benefit the long term stability of our community.**
- **Finally, our history-making Smarter Sustainable Dubuque partnership with IBM Research continues to yield valuable information for residents and the city. In 2013 work on the Smarter Travel and Smarter Health pilot studies concluded and the Smarter Discards pilot program was initiated.**
- **I want to personally thank all our citizens who continue to volunteer for these pilot tests. Their involvement will give us data and crucial insights to assist in right-sizing systems and will give citizens the information about personal consumption patterns and ways to save money.**
- **The Smarter Water Pilot saw a 7% decrease in water usage. The Smarter Electricity Pilot saw a similar reduction and The Smarter Travel Pilot Study and the installation of new technology on the Jule's buses provided information that assisted Jule staff with the system redesign. This simplified route structure reduced most travel times by 50% with many trips being 30 minutes or less.**

- A 2012 Gallup Poll that predicted future livability of a community examined 13 forward looking metrics, including economic, workplace, and community factors as well as personal choices. Why is this important to Dubuque?
- Because Gallup reported the west north central region of the US, which includes IOWA, as being poised for the brightest future as one of the best places to live! Why?
- Because workers will likely be employed full-time in the type of good jobs associated with a high Gross Domestic Product; because our residents have the highest economic confidence ‘in the nation!'; and because citizens are most likely to report easy access to clean and safe water, one of the most critical resource challenges of the future. This is what it means to be a sustainable community.
- While time does not allow me to highlight all of the individual programs we offer that contribute to the community’s vision of sustainability on a number of levels, over the next few moments I want to share with you just some of the more recent and impactful programs designed to improve and change lives in Dubuque.

## **Housing**

- As the City Council sets goals and priorities for economic development, Dubuque’s ability to meet the housing needs of the entire population, from workforce to retirement and everything in between, is important long term.
- I want to begin by highlighting affordable housing and invite everyone to join me in no longer being confined by old paradigms about what “affordable” housing is NOT ...

- **It is NOT the narrow interpretation of “low income.” It IS housing that is well-designed, responsibly owned, professionally managed and connected to services and amenities.**
- **The Housing & Community Development Department developed a new flagship initiative called “Dubuque@Home” to utilize resources and services to provide the right opportunities for people to become self-sufficient.**
- **Sustainable Affordable Housing creates dignity and opportunity for working families, seniors, and those with disabilities or special needs.**
- **Our portfolio is focused on programs like this that provide citizens a “hand-up”...not a “hand-out!”**
- **As you’ve heard said, if it’s worth doing, it’s worth assessing. So let’s look at some outcomes...**
- **For participants in an 18 month initiative known as the “Circles Program,” 70% have met their employment goal, over 50% are enrolled in education and approximately 15% have earned a certificate or degree.**
- **And, on average, over 63 volunteer community members participate in the weekly Circles meetings, providing encouragement, mentoring and most of all, hope, to these participants.**
- **Today, 91% of our Family Self-Sufficiency Program graduates are no longer on city housing assistance!**
- **The City’s goal of having well planned and managed programs, in concert with private partners and volunteers... is to revitalize neighborhoods, assist families in buying and preserving their homes, and create safe, affordable rental housing.**

## **Public Safety**

- **It's no secret that for any community to be a place of choice, you need to have leadership who choose Public Safety as its Top Priority.**
- **Over the years in Dubuque, we have appropriately increased the size of our police force...we have supported extensive, annual training...and we have made investments in technology such as new public safety software for police, fire, and dispatch, as well as mobile data computers and in-car video recorders that allow officers to work more efficiently to provide a safe and secure environment for citizens and visitors.**
- **Public safety is also very much about community relationships and our officers partner to have a presence in Dubuque schools, at the monthly neighborhood association meetings, as well as through working with landlords to provide crime-free multi housing training and background checks of tenants.**
- **These efforts and investments are making a difference and I am pleased to report that, in 2013, our average response time to calls was just 3 minutes 22 seconds from the time the call is made to an officer arriving on scene.**
- **Additionally, I am pleased to report that Uniform Crime Report Part 1 Crimes, which are those crimes against persons and property that are measured nationally, are down 23.3% since the peak year of 2007.**
- **I am also proud to report that Dubuque is the first county in Iowa to use a new communication tool called Smart 911! This is a free and secure online tool that gives residents an opportunity to provide information to emergency responders online prior to an emergency to enable faster and more informed responses to emergency situations.**
- **This function also remains available to travel with you to any city where Smart 911 is available. It is this kind of state of the art investment in public safety that will help to increase citizen confidence in everyday living.**

- The Dubuque Fire Department is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year of proudly, efficiently and effectively providing emergency medical services (EMS) to the Dubuque community.
- The department recently expanded its services with Advanced Life Support engine companies, giving firefighters additional medical equipment to initiate advanced medical care.
- It is also worth noting that it was 1996 when paramedic certification became a hiring requirement for the Dubuque Fire Department and today, it is comprised of 89 highly trained members, 70 of whom are certified paramedics.
- When it comes to creating a place where people want to live, work, and enjoy life...the City Council continues its priority focus on ensuring a strong public safety network...and in 2013 Dubuque was ranked #10 on the Farmers Insurance list of the “Top 20 Most-Secure Small Cities.”

## **Neighborhoods**

- Safe communities and the ties that bind are found in the importance we place in our Neighborhoods.
- The City Council has made neighborhood revitalization a priority and has dedicated resources to creating quality, livable neighborhoods throughout our community.
- In Dubuque, we now have over 13 neighborhood associations actively engaged and participating in neighborhood clean-up events, block parties, music in the park events and public art projects...just countless examples of citizens giving time, treasure and talent to making our community ever better...one block at a time.

- These associations currently represent nearly 30% of our community population and demonstrate that the Council's attention, and the City's programming, is making a difference.
- By way of example, take a moment and look at the success being experienced in the Washington Neighborhood.
- Stabilizing neighborhoods benefits everyone and sends a message that we are serious about creating a viable, livable and equitable community.
- With investments in historic preservation, programs for landlord and tenant education, and community oriented policing, the City is strengthening our ability to sustain our neighborhoods.
- From reinvesting and expanding our parks and trail system; to neighborhood recreation programs throughout our community and in our schools; along with a diverse arts and cultural scene, we are encouraging people to engage in social opportunities, at all ages.
- And, investment in the establishment of our Multicultural Family Center has realized increasing participation, private partnerships, and celebration of our diverse culture from social, to educational and recreational activities for the more than 50 nationalities that call Dubuque home.
- With the recent overhaul of The Jule Transit's route system, 75% of all residential and commercial address points in Dubuque are within a five minute walk of a bus stop.
- In addition, the new 15-minute Express route and the service to west-end destinations have reduced the average trip time by over 50% across the entire system; and the Nightrider route, which started as a collaboration with our local institutions of higher learning, is also providing a valuable, safe alternative for weekend evening transportation to shopping and

**entertainment. The Nightrider route is averaging 1,800 rides per month this school year!**

- **Today in 2014, because of the City Council’s goal to improve connectivity, public transit is now a competitive option for citizens!**
- **And through a new venue launched in 2013 called “City Life,” we will be better able to connect citizens to the City and its services and programs, and ultimately provide a framework to nurture engaged residents and future leaders to serve throughout our community, from non-profits to local commissions to elected office.**

## **Community Infrastructure**

- **Let’s turn to infrastructure, a critical topic across the nation! When a community’s infrastructure works well, it is almost invisible and, frankly, it’s easy to take for granted. You turn on a faucet and clean, safe water comes out; the air you breathe is safe; the trash and recycling you generate is collected.**
- **The streets in our community are on a paving, repaving schedule, and are maintained in all types of weather.**
- **We’ve had some pretty trying times this winter, but people who have moved here from other cities continue to be impressed and join us in appreciation for the competent, and above board service our City street crews consistently provide.**
- **Our parks are safe, clean and available for family fun. Safe, accessible sidewalks and city owned street lights are also contributing to our livable neighborhoods.**
- **Related to the infrastructure “invisibility” factor is that in many cases, citizens do not connect payment for this infrastructure with its use.**

- We remain proud that the City of Dubuque has been able to deliver efficient services in a cost-competitive manner.
- Since 1994, the City's portion of property tax assessments as well as fees for sanitary sewer, water, refuse, and stormwater has increased less than \$35 annually for the average homeowner.
- Think about that for a moment...and consider how far our community has come in the past 18 years!
- Unique to Dubuque is our location on the Mississippi River which provides tremendous opportunity and beauty, but likewise is tempered with the challenges of managing a flood wall system.
- Recent capital and equipment investments have armed our public works crew with the tools needed to protect our community and commerce along the river from the threat of high waters.
- The Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project is a 12 phase strategy to address flooding in an area where over 50% of our community lives or works...That's a fact worth remembering.
- Phases one through three are now complete and Phase 4 is nearing completion. In 2013 Dubuque was able to apply for and receive a \$98.5 million State grant for this project.
- When completed, nearly 1400 homes and businesses, including 70 businesses that generate \$500 million annually in sales and employ over 1400 people will be removed from the threat of flooding.
- To create a resilient community, we will continue to plan and address our aging infrastructure to protect our citizens, businesses and local economy.

## Arts

- **Vital to sustaining a thriving community is the value citizens' place on its cultural infrastructure.**
- **Artists and art organizations are very important to our community, bolstering creativity and enhancing quality of life. But as we have learned, the cultural arts are much more...they are a sustainable, economic engine!**
- **A recent study found that the arts are a \$47 million industry for Dubuque, supporting 1,530 full-time equivalent jobs, generating over \$36 million in household income to local residents and an additional nearly \$30 million in event-related spending by their audiences. That's economic vitality!**
- **In 2013 the City Council's investment in the arts leveraged an additional nearly \$1 million in private sector support! That is a return on investment AND quality of life.**

## Economic Development

- **Also important to economic vitality are the results of another study completed in late 2013 called "Upward Mobility: The Equality of Opportunity!" Conducted by researchers at Harvard University and the University of California-Berkeley, it reported that children raised in Dubuque are among the most likely to move upwards into a higher income class.**
- **In fact, of the 741 metro community areas examined, Dubuque ranks in the top 8% and is 1st out of 58 similar sized metro areas for upward mobility!**
- **Why? Because Dubuque's strategy for economic development is first about retention of the hundreds of businesses that call Dubuque home and 2013 was another banner year for local business expansion.**

- It also is important to recognize that the ebb and flow of the nation's economy has resulted in job loss at Jeld-Wen through the company's consolidation efforts. Greater Dubuque Development Corporation staff have already mobilized resources to help these workers seek re-employment elsewhere in our community.
- Our strategy for economic development also includes working together to recruit new business to complement our current portfolio by leveraging private investment and expanding opportunities to locate.
- And, our City's collaborative relationship with our business and industry sectors is one of the reasons that, according to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Dubuque is the #1 fastest growing economy in Iowa AND Dubuque is in the Top 30 of all US cities. In fact, Dubuque's GDP growth rate of 5.1% is more than double the national average!
- This stature is the result of many efforts, beginning with the fact that each year our partners at GDDC meet one-on-one with over 250 local businesses to discuss prevailing issues.
- If we wish to maintain economic stability and continue our pace, we need to take seriously this fact...the number one issue that will continue to impact local business is "workforce retention and recruitment."
- This brings me to a significant initiative launched in 2013... the creation of a community-wide partnership known as "Inclusive Dubuque."
- Inclusive DBQ partners are focused on creating a vibrant and welcoming community to ensure the region's success into the future.
- What we already know is that the forecast for 2018 from the Center on Education and Workforce emphasizes that 30 million new and replacement jobs in the US will require at least some level of college education... or more.

- However, US colleges and universities are only expected to produce 20 million graduates by that time!
- From where will the needed workforce come? What happens if employers can't find workers because we are not a community that welcomes others?
- It is because of questions like these that the City of Dubuque has joined with over 25 local businesses and partners to initiate support for the goals of "Inclusive Dubuque" – and ensure that Dubuque is a place where people want to live... and work... and contribute.
- The fact is, communities that embrace diversity are and will continue to be... better able to compete for the necessary talent to sustain its economy.
- And, included in the vision of these successful, competitive communities is the value placed on social and cultural vibrancy and the leadership that recognizes that sometimes doing 'well' also means doing 'good.'
- It was certainly true for Dubuque in early 2006 after the City Council was sworn in and addressed its first significant agenda item.
- I am proud to say that the action taken that night, promoted Dubuque, Iowa to being among the first cities in the country to have its elected leadership unanimously approve adding the amendment to include sexual orientation in the existing Human Rights Ordinance.
- It was a very long time in coming in Dubuque ... and the Council clearly understood that engaging our citizens who found themselves on the fringe of society was important...both to their personal and professional lives and... overall, to Dubuque becoming that healthy, vibrant community.
- That is what it means to be inclusive...to be sustainable. Removing barriers...replacing old prejudices and paradigms with education...and respecting and valuing the richness that a diverse community offers.

- **That is why I encourage each of you to challenge one another...your friends, co-workers and employers...to become aware and get involved in creating an “Inclusive Dubuque.”**
- **Finally, in 2013, for the third time in six years, Dubuque was recognized by the National Civic League as an All-America City!**
- **Being an All-America City showcases outstanding civic impact and action planning. Selected communities demonstrate innovation, inclusiveness, civic engagement and cross sector collaboration to address pressing local challenges.**
- **I want to thank everyone who committed their time, talent AND resources to representing, on the national stage, the true meaning of what citizenship means in our Dubuque community!**
- **As we reflect on the successes of the past year and even the past five years, we must now ask ourselves, what more can we do?**
- **Consider first, what you can do as an individual. To the young professionals, think about a call to public service and even challenging others to take that same call. Choose the role you are most comfortable with ~ a future leader, a citizen activist, a volunteer – the options are endless.**
- **To the more experienced people among us, encourage these new leaders, mentor them, and be open to the richness of their new ideas.**
- **They are our next generation of leadership and it is our obligation AND, in fact, privilege... to welcome them and help them as they prepare to build on our work, and shape this community for future generations.**
- **Second – effect change . . . be the architects of our future. . . . dream big...continue to build our ‘sense of place’ that responds to a diverse**

**culture, and help us update our community's comprehensive plan. Get engaged with "Imagine Dubuque," the process to create a vision for our future.**

- **The comprehensive plan becomes our guide to achieving that long-term vision. This plan is your opportunity to impact your future. Over the next year, City staff will be creating opportunities for you to help plan the design of our city for the long term.**
- **In addition to public input sessions, we will have online opportunities using social media which will allow you to dialog with us, post your ideas, vote on topics and watch the progress as the plan unfolds.**
- **These new opportunities, Inclusive Dubuque, and Imagine Dubuque, challenge us to remember that we are always 'en via' or on the way.**
- **We can never be satisfied with 'good enough'. As author Jim Collins states "Good is the Enemy of Great"...so let us not ever make the mistake of settling for "good."**
- **Successful communities honor and nurture their civic infrastructure...that is what your City Council, City Staff, and all our community partners remain focused on...and we want Your Dreams, Your Vision... at the table!**
- **To borrow from Lupita Nee-yongo's recent acceptance speech at the Oscars... "No matter where you're from...your dreams are valid!"**
- **VIDEO**
- **Thank you. Now City Manager Mike Van Milligen will join me for the Q & A, after which I will do a brief wrap up.**