

# 2016 State of the City Address



*Mayor Roy D. Buol*

*Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016*

## **State of the City Address - 2016**

*(Please note that a multimedia presentation accompanied these remarks. To view a video of the event, please visit [www.cityofdubuque.org/SOTC](http://www.cityofdubuque.org/SOTC). To request a DVD copy, call the City of Dubuque Cable TV Division at 563-589-4181.)*

- Good evening and welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> annual State of the City Address! It is my honor to be here with you once again, speaking from the City Council's official Chambers.
- To the League of Women Voters, we thank you for your efforts to provide, in this venue and many others, nonpartisan information and education to the public at large on issues of importance to us all.
- I would like to begin tonight by thanking my City Council colleagues and City staff for their dedication to serving the citizens of Dubuque. We are privileged to work together to ensure the delivery of essential services our citizens depend on and deserve, AND to do so in a fiscally responsible manner.
- And I want to offer our collective appreciation to all of the citizen volunteers who are giving of their time, talent and expertise to serve on the City's many Boards and Commissions.
- The National League of Cities recently issued a report as part of its "City of the Future" initiative focusing on five factors that may have the greatest impact on cities: *technology, economics, climate, culture, and demographics*.
- The report began with the following statement, "Cities are the defining political entity of this century." I believe that statement underscores the critical importance of our local efforts over the years to respond to those very factors.
- Given this is the 10th annual State of the City, it seemed a good point in our journey together to reflect on the issues impacting Dubuque, our progress, and then to fast forward to what lies ahead.

- Like most cities across the nation, we experienced a myriad of economic, environmental, and social/cultural transformations during the last decade.
- To continue to evolve and advance our citizen-inspired vision and goals for Dubuque ... required innovation ... imagination ... resourcefulness... originality and, yes, even some risk ... characteristics that define an “enterprising” City.
- The foundation for any success Dubuque has realized has always been rooted in citizen engagement, in creating public/private partnerships, and in our ability to come together around a good idea and make it happen.
- A little over ten years ago, I shared with citizens my belief that “the next five years would define the next fifty years for Dubuque.”
- Citizens, I recall, were energized, forward-thinking, and ready to envision the next five years in ways that would help to ensure our competitive economic advantage and our community’s stability.
- Little did we know that a short two years later, in 2008, our nation would be thrust into the Greatest Recession since the Great Depression.
- Yet, in retrospect, it was then that our community’s strength and character emerged. On the economic front, our local companies did not waiver...they continued to invest in our community with expansion projects.
- Greater Dubuque Development Corporation maintained its sharp focus on, and was successful in, recruiting new businesses to Dubuque...
- With an eye to future generations, the City Council adopted Sustainability as a top priority. A citizen-led effort followed and a three-part model that balanced economic prosperity with environmental integrity and social/cultural vibrancy was developed, eventually becoming known as “Sustainable Dubuque.”

- The City's Annual "Growing Sustainable Communities Conference" was created and launched in 2007 in partnership with the Rockefeller Brothers Fund of New York with a whopping 600 participants attending from around the State of Iowa and beyond.
- In 2009, the City partnered with the IBM Watson Research Center to develop and pilot new technologies to give consumers and businesses the information they needed to make informed decisions about how they were consuming resources like water and electricity, which was ultimately expanded to include transportation, discard management, and health and wellness. This collaboration resulted in Dubuque becoming known as the "First Smart City in North America."
- During those first five years, and as a result of the City's significant partnership support, the local arts and culture scene underwent a renaissance.
- And by 2012, an external assessment showed the return on that investment, with "Arts in Dubuque" defined as an economic engine...a \$47 million a year industry that employs the equivalent of over 1,500 full-time jobs!
- Near the end of those first five years, Dubuque made national news when Dubuque was featured on the "PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer!"
- From coast to coast, public television networks featured that 10-minute segment! As Greater Dubuque Development Corporation CEO, Rick Dickinson, said at the time, "you can't pay for this type of exposure. It's simply invaluable."
- So what made Dubuque, a small city in the Midwest, special enough to garner this national attention in 2010?
- It came down to our collective choice to pursue a vision and a path to sustainability which has been our journey together... throughout our community.

- What Dubuque is achieving collectively today is the direct result of the knowledge of how sustainability practices represent a balanced approach to an enhanced quality of life, long term and serves as a model for other communities across the globe.
- And, it is an exceptional, yet rare approach, where no one is excluded...everyone who wants to do so, can participate and contribute. That's pretty special, and that is what is unique in Dubuque's ability to continue to innovate and transform.
- As PBS correspondent Miles O'Brien reported, "by turning over every stone looking for federal, state, and private money, and involving citizens in defining and then implementing sustainability projects, they have managed to take what could have been a *classic tale of rust-belt decline, and turned it into a modern green success story.*"
- Partnerships continue to be the catalyst to Dubuque's journey and so it was when local, state and federal partners came together to plan out the revitalization of our historic Millwork District ...with redesigned streets for alternative modes of transportation, a new intermodal transportation center, and a comprehensive, integrated, mixed-used development that today includes housing, retail, restaurants, and cultural venues...another sought after model of interest to many.
- Over the past several years, this community has pulled together to transform itself into an economically diverse center for business, manufacturing, and technology...for insurance and finance...for arts and entertainment...and for education and healthcare.
- So with ten of those fifty years I referred to in 2005 behind us, how has Dubuque been characterized?
- This slide represents not what WE say about ourselves...but rather how Dubuque has been studied, measured and evaluated by some of the brightest and best entities assessing communities across the nation today.

- As you can see, Dubuque has experienced healthy economic growth over the past decade, in spite of the Recession, with public/private investments creating thousands of new jobs.
- Some of the most recent investments in expansion projects have been made by Unity Point Health Finley Hospital and Mercy Medical Center, both of which promote Dubuque as a regional health care hub.
- According to the Iowa Hospital Association, Dubuque County's health care sector directly employs nearly 7,900 people and has an annual economic impact of almost \$610 million.
- The diversity of our economy continues to be evident in strong employment reports. Greater Dubuque Development recently reported total employment for Dubuque County exceeded 61,000.
- This kind of progress does not happen in a vacuum...it happens when relationships at the local, state, and national level are cultivated and maintained, something our citizens and partners are well known for, and the end result is that our City's profile is raised.
- Supporting this employment growth were the strategic investment decisions made by the City Council to prepare the way for local businesses to expand or for new companies to consider locating in Dubuque.
- New industrial parks were developed, along with roads and utilities, in addition to the reuse of historic buildings.
- Investments were made in technology. And, an expanded fiber optic network and technology upgrades also have enhanced the City's traffic control system and our public safety efforts.
- And more recently, the City has entered into a new partnership with CS Technologies for a nearly 16-mile fiber optic network which will expand to greatly benefit multiple companies in the City's West End industrial parks as well as city facilities and some schools.

- Important to positioning Dubuque for millennials is the support of new and innovative entrepreneurial efforts, in businesses like *Microgirl Organics*, *Captured on Canvas*, *Exploring Tea & More*, or *Gigantic Design*, and events like *Technori* and organizations like *StartUp Dubuque*, which create an environment for up-and-coming entrepreneurs to succeed.
- In downtown Dubuque, alone, we have seen the continual transformation of our central business district into a thriving commercial corridor that is alive with employment, an increasing variety of housing options, entertainment and dining venues, and special events.
- Let's take a look at statistics from our partners at Dubuque Main Street which show the contributions of downtown investment to our quality of life and community vitality.
- Along with City planning and public/private partnerships, citizen support for investment in public infrastructure is important. To foster stability, vitality, and growth... a city needs to demonstrate strategic investment in itself.
- This slide identifies the top ten projects occurring during the past several years and represents the City Council's strategic decision to take advantage of historically low interest rates to invest in infrastructure on which citizens depend.
- The City Council has adopted a debt-reduction strategy that, over the next five years, will reduce our percentage of statutory debt limit used from 90% in FY2015 to 53% by 2021.
- Our Water and Resource Recovery Center, one of the city's two largest projects, has addressed the seriously outdated infrastructure while providing an energy-efficient facility which runs on its own power, saving \$237,000 annually. This is in addition to a savings of \$300,000 no longer spent to incinerate waste. These two benefits alone have significantly contributed to our environmental goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030.
- The City's community-wide water meter replacement project which came in \$1.3 million below budget...involved replacing more than 22,000 meters with meters that featured "automated" meter

reading capabilities, eliminating the monthly manual readings and saving the City more than \$144,000 each year.

- The new meter system also features a free, online water management tool that notifies citizens of leaks to help them avoid waste and unplanned expenses.
- The \$219 million dollar Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation project includes over \$100 million in grant funding. This is the largest infrastructure project in Dubuque's history and while not yet complete, it IS already being recognized by our partners as good government at its best.
- This investment is first and foremost about public safety where a remarkable 50% of our community live or work.
- This project is about improving storm water management, improving water quality, stimulating investment and safeguarding our quality of life.
- This project will protect the investments of thousands of businesses, homeowners and employees by preventing a projected \$500 million in future damages due to floods.
- Next is the Southwest Arterial project which has been the number one transportation project for the greater Dubuque area for well over a decade. And, this month, the State of Iowa began the grading process!
- In reality, this project will be the future's most significant transportation, commercial and residential development for the Dubuque Region.
- As you can see from the graphic, the SW Arterial will be the growth area for our community and region for decades to come.

- And, when completed in 2019, area businesses will be able to more efficiently and safely transport their products throughout the United States and to other parts of the world, while taking thousands of trucks per day off of Highway 20, Central Avenue, White Street, Cedar Cross Road, and Kelly Lane.
- It is important to restate that all of this investment comes at low or record-low interest rates. Using tax dollars to leverage grant funding and competitive bond rates has helped us to ensure citizens and businesses are not exposed to failing infrastructure.
- Rather, we are investing in our community so businesses can grow and flourish and residents can live with confidence.
- The City Council and City Staff also have remained focused on areas for improvement that will assist our most vulnerable populations – the young... the elderly...those on limited income, as well as envisioning ways to keep our community affordable for young families while creating an environment for young professionals where careers attract, and culture retains.
- It is with these principles in mind, that over the past several years, the City has developed a range of programs that reach out to citizens.
- Whether it is helping low-income residents pay for new service lines...or assist with utility payments ...or assistance for the elderly or disabled who make up over 50% of our rental assistance housing program...or giving someone a hand-up in employment through job training programs – Dubuque is continually striving to take care of its residents.
- Dubuque's transformation over the past decade is manifested in real dollars and numbers realized in our tourism industry. Dubuque, as the tenth largest city in Iowa, is one of the top tourist destinations in the state with nearly 2 million visitors to our City every year...an impressive 700,000 more tourists than visited Dubuque in 2005.
- I believe this is the result of our collective spirit of entrepreneurship...and as an enterprising City, we need to continue thinking about how we can build on this kind of momentum.

- Also boosting our community's cultural vibrancy AND economic vitality are our higher education institutions. Dubuque has become a higher education nucleus in the State of Iowa, serving local, regional, national and international students and contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to our community on an annual basis.
- And top of mind is our human infrastructure. Healthy communities are those in which residents feel connected to their community.
- On the screen, you can see numerous examples of citizen-designed and led initiatives occurring over the past decade which, collectively, have defined Dubuque as an “enterprising” City.
- This slide offers just an example of the hundreds of resident-led projects which have helped us to leverage over \$516 million in public and private grant funds since 2007 towards creating a community that is viable, livable and equitable.
- Bringing the brightest minds to bear on our community's progress is also a workforce strategy and solution that is critical to the Dubuque Business community. Why?
- Because there are over 80 companies in the Greater Dubuque Area that have an international presence. It's actually over 100 if you include those companies whose customers, in turn, sell those products overseas.
- Every day we have people working in the global marketplace who choose to call Dubuque home. In addition, our institutions of higher learning have students from over 26 countries living and studying here.
- Creating a welcoming global community where everyone can pursue the American dream will separate healthy cities from failing cities. And it is proven that healthy, caring communities attract business investment, which in turn provides market rate jobs.

- A recent GDDC report revealed that within the next decade we will have a workforce skills gap of nearly 3,200 skilled workers!
- The facts are...EmployERS will go where there are skilled workers to fill their jobs. And EmployEES will choose to live in healthy cities where there is opportunity, stability, and vibrancy.
- The community support for the Inclusive Dubuque program recognizes that living in a welcoming, inclusive environment is critical to this formula for success.
- It requires us to continue working together into the future to implement meaningful ways to insure that our residents, or folks who are not yet residents, have the skills to fill the jobs that are here, and help us to keep, and importantly, attract employers to our midst.
- Every day, wherever I engage with residents, at their businesses, in the grocery store aisle, at local events, the Farmers Market, or in the schools, I hear about their pride in the transformation of Dubuque over this past decade.
- They tell me they want Dubuque to stay on the path, following the vision we have laid out together.
- Regardless of their age, folks simply want to live in a healthy, vibrant, safe community where they can thrive whether as retirees or young entrepreneurs starting out on their first adventure.
- The most important aspect essential to achieving that dream is Dubuque city government's first responsibility, Public Safety.
- The City of Dubuque Police and Fire Departments are committed to continuing education and training for their staff. They are utilizing new and innovative tools and approaches, and are implementing state of the art communication tools to enhance and promote public interaction and safety.

- But perhaps the most notable investment in public safety made by the city of Dubuque is the commitment to promoting neighborhood involvement and communication among residents.
- City staff attend neighborhood association meetings and meet monthly with representatives of the Dubuque Landlord Association.
- In addition, the City has invested in the installation of now nearly 900 cameras, in addition to leveraging grant dollars to provide Body Cameras for Police Officers. This kind of investment is about keeping our citizens AND our police officers safe.
- Since 2005, the City of Dubuque's footprint has grown by 13%, extending the City's policing strategies as well as increased staffing levels, going from 95 sworn officers to 109 over the last decade.
- With this growth comes renewed efforts by our Dubuque Police and Fire department staff to do extensive outreach in the community.
- This includes classroom safety presentations being offered on the college campuses, in schools, businesses, local service clubs, nonprofits, childcare facilities and more.
- In 2015 the Dubuque Police and Fire departments participated in over 500 speaking engagements and events, logging hundreds of outreach hours in the community educating residents on public safety.
- The Police are also at the table participating in monthly meetings with neighborhood associations as well as meeting with organizations such as Inclusive Dubuque and the NAACP, helping to build community dialogue among diverse groups to create better understanding among residents.
- The value of this outreach is summed up well by Police Chief Mark Dalsing who said, "We cannot arrest our way out of every problem." The solution is multifaceted.

- It not only includes a quality police force that is fully trained and has the resources and technology to do their job... but also is about developing strategies to deter crime, and insure that criminals are swiftly caught and face appropriate repercussions. But, of significant importance is that the solution **MUST** include breaking down barriers ~ and that starts with communication and outreach.
- As we all know, the flip side to violence is kindness. A culture of kindness is free...and we all have the ability to contribute.
- At the recent U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting, the Dalai Lama addressed us and stated... the time has come for the United States to promote kindness and love in order to achieve a compassionate world and I quote... “Our prime purpose in life is to help others. And if you can’t help them at least don’t hurt them.”
- There is a desperate need in our nation to improve the way we treat others and it starts with changing the culture in our cities. Like every successful business, developing a core value, especially one of kindness, begins with leadership.
- As we look to engage the next generation of leaders, we need to think about what kind of leaders they will become and how they will shape our community and nation.
- Today’s millennials share the same set of values as their grandparents, who are known as the Greatest Generation, and one which particularly valued working as a “team.”
- As Tom Brokaw cited in his book, *The Greatest Generation*, “at every stage of their lives, they were part of historic challenges and achievements of a magnitude the world had never before witnessed.”
- Our next generation of leaders also want to work in partnership and they want their Government to work for them...they see this as key to our future success and necessary in order for us to face the economic, social and environmental issues coming down the pike.
- The tools they have to use today are much different, but the Millennials do care...they are energetically facing today’s challenges with determination and trying to transform our world for the better.

- As we look ahead, the recently adopted City Council *Goals and Priorities* will serve as the guide to a successful future for Dubuque.
- This annual priority process by the City Council provides the framework for the next 5 years and supports our long-term vision and path toward becoming a resilient community of “choice.”
- As we look at the 2031 Vision statement that came out of this year’s process, it is no coincidence that the very first sentence of our vision is about sustainability, resiliency, inclusion and equity.
- These are the hallmarks of a strong and healthy community and have been our City’s focus for the past ten years.
- I am also very pleased that City Staff continue to think like entrepreneurs, and that this year’s goal setting process included exploring entrepreneurial ideas that can serve as future revenue streams for the city.
- The recent decision to sell excess methane gas from the Water & Resource Recovery Center to *Bio-Resource Development* will generate cost reductions and new revenues for the city.
- It also will create economic opportunity for local businesses and partners, create more renewable energy, and will NOT require any additional direct investment or risk by the City.
- Plans to construct the largest solar array in an Iowa city were recently announced and will happen right here in Dubuque through a partnership among the City of Dubuque, Alliant Energy, and AY McDonald Manufacturing.
- Opportunities like River Cruises for large vessels that will introduce international markets to our City, and the further development of Chaplain Schmitt Island, present incredible opportunities to strengthen our economic and tourism base.

- The blueprint to help achieve the City’s goals is also in your hands, Dubuque. Over the next 12 months citizens have a unique opportunity to engage in framing our City’s future through the process to create a new Comprehensive Plan for our community.
- The process is entitled, “Imagine Dubuque!” This is your individual opportunity to help envision what you want Dubuque to be like, to be known as, 20 years from now.
- To be clear, this is not just an update of our Comprehensive plan from the mid-1990s. This will be a brand new Comprehensive plan that builds upon our successes over the past decade; and one that will impact the future for *your children and theirs*.
- I sincerely invite and encourage every resident in Dubuque to get involved over the next year on some level and “Imagine Dubuque” – this can occur by participating in a public meeting or by sharing your thoughts through the mobile app and other channels being developed to encourage engagement. Again, this is your opportunity to share your ideas, your vision for Dubuque for the long term.
- We all need to remain cognizant of the fact that continued progress is not inevitable. We DO have a great community...however, to paraphrase Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*... "Greatness is an inherently dynamic process, not an end point. The moment you think of your community as great and STOP there, your slide toward mediocrity will have already begun."
- We also need to pause to remember that, despite a decade of success, there could be another disruption, be it another national economic recession or something else.
- The fact that Dubuque has a proven record on how to be innovative, inventive, imaginative, resourceful, creative, original, and bold . . . is our reason to be much more optimistic and hopeful about the future.
- Economic indicators have shown that Dubuque, with just 3.2% of the state’s population, created 8.2% of the net new jobs in Iowa over the last 12 months;

- There has been a 37.6% increase in hourly wage earnings between 2007 and 2015;
- And, there is decreasing unemployment and growing property values.
- In his book “Growing Jobs: Transforming the way we approach economic development”, Author Thomas Tuttle cites collaboration and community engagement as key aspects of economic development.
- He provides concrete examples and a guideline for addressing economic challenges facing US cities, citing two success stories... Austin, Texas and Dubuque, Iowa as models for today’s solutions to economic development.
- The City of Dubuque and its partners remain focused on creating a community where all people are respected, valued and engaged; we are working together to empower and connect citizens to resources; and in Dubuque, public safety remains top priority.
- We also know that the successes we have experienced don’t just happen. You can only experience our level of success when you have a strong, shared vision, with cooperative leadership, committed partners and engaged citizens.
- In 2005, I shared my belief that the next five years would define the next 50 for Dubuque. 2005 to 2015 have indeed resulted in a tremendously enterprising decade ... and I firmly believe both the successes and the lessons of the past 10 years are helping to define the next Century for Dubuque.
- Working together to identify and leverage opportunities that make lasting contributions to our community, and becoming more productively engaged in addressing societal challenges in ways that promote a viable, livable, and equitable community, will keep Dubuque on the path to resiliency.
- We have witnessed how during the last decade... innovation was enormously important. It cannot be overstated that innovation is the only strategy for out-performing a dismal economy. It helps to cultivate identity and inspire loyalty to community and one another.

- Dubuque residents, businesses, and all our partners have laid a strong foundation for the future...which now begs the question...how do citizens of Dubuque want your City to evolve from here?
- As the saying goes, the best way to *predict* the future is to *create* it. Let us continue to do what Dubuque citizens do best –bring our ideas, our lessons learned, our different perspectives together, once again, to continue on our path to an innovative, resourceful, creative future for Dubuque!
- May God continue to bless our citizens AND the State of our City. Good night!

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