

2017 State of the City Address



Mayor Roy D. Buol

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2017

State of the City Address - 2017

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

- Good evening and thank you for joining me, my Council Colleagues, and City Staff for the 2017 State of the City Address.
- I want to first acknowledge that today, 9-11, is Patriot Day in the United States, observed as a “National Day of Service and Remembrance,” an annual and forward-looking tribute to the 9/11 victims, survivors, and those who rose up in service in response to the attacks.
- As we reflect on that day in 2001, we are reminded of our shared American experiences and our connections to one another and the world.
- Tonight, I am pleased to share with you a high-level view of our City’s progress over the past year, as well as the challenges and opportunities on our path forward.
- I also want to illustrate how our work at the local level is intertwined with cities not only in Iowa, but across our nation.
- All communities face varying degrees of the same pertinent issues. This fact became quite clear through the work of the US Conference of Mayors this past June.
- The USCM is a non-partisan organization representing over 1,400 communities throughout America...ranging in size of 30,000 to cities with millions of residents.
- Our journey with other communities is guided by four pillars: safety and security of our neighborhoods; fixing crumbling infrastructure; modernizing and expanding our workforce; and creating an equitable community for our citizens.
- The new president of the Conference of Mayors, Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans, captured the essence of our communities in this way:

“It is in our cities where energy meets opportunity and where grit and determination produce incredible results....new jobs, innovation, and entrepreneurship. It is in our cities where values like faith, family and country still ring true today. And it is in our cities, where hope hits the streets.”

- During this past year, with principle credit to City Manager Mike Van Milligen and City Staff, we have been moving steadily toward the goals set forth in the City’s Mission, Vision and Action Plan.
- As public servants, the definitive role of the City Council is to set the policies, not manage the processes, that provide for safety, security, and progress.
- It is the full-time City Manager and City Staff that do the hard implementation work, day in and day out.
- Credit also goes to the many volunteers who serve on the City’s 30 Boards and Commissions. Without their broad engagement and expertise, we would be a lackluster city today.
- And finally, the proverbial “glue” that represents the “unity” in community... that includes our partners in the business and industry sectors...our non-profits in service to those less fortunate...our higher education and religious institutions...and our community leaders and private citizens....all those who believe in and support the transformative journey that has been moving Dubuque toward a resilient economy.
- With that introduction, let us consider our path over the past twelve months...
- Last fall featured the long, long awaited groundbreaking ceremony for the Southwest Arterial. Vehicles will be driving on this arterial by the end of 2019, and hundreds of trucks... per day... will come off of Highway 20, Central Avenue, and White Street, reducing congestion, creating travel efficiencies and increasing public safety.
- This transformation will create reinvestment opportunities for our Central Avenue Corridor... and investment and growth opportunities in the Southwest Arterial project corridor.

- Also tied to the development of the Southwest Arterial was the purchase agreement with Central Iowa Water Association, at a cost less than the City would have paid to install this infrastructure, which will enable the City to meet future needs of residential, commercial, and industrial water customers in the Southwest Arterial and Highway 20 corridors.
- Over the past year, millions of dollars were invested in construction and the addition of jobs by Cottingham & Butler...Rite-Hite.....Roasting Solutions ... Wave Reaction and more.
- In July, our City celebrated the completion of a project to install rooftop solar arrays on five of Dubuque's six fire stations. With a minimal up-front investment, we expect an electrical cost savings of approximately 30 percent.
- The City partnered with Eagle Point Solar of Dubuque on this project, as we did for the solar arrays on the Municipal Services Center.
- With a focus on the future, Alliant Energy is nearing completion of two major solar array projects, one off Humke Road and the other on 12th Street.
- The City of Dubuque and AY McDonald Manufacturing partnered with Alliant on these projects which, combined, will generate six megawatts of energy, enough to power over 850 homes per year! This is the largest solar array project in the state of Iowa and we are proud to have it in Dubuque.
- IMAGINE DUBUQUE, our City's public engagement process to develop a comprehensive 20-year community plan... was launched last year and a public hearing will be held next week, on Monday, September 18th.
- It is our City's mission to ensure that this plan reflects and celebrates the collective "voice" of our community...Why? Because it will be a key tool to developing policy, informing the City budget, and prioritizing community initiatives.

- IMAGINE DUBUQUE is not just a plan, it is a “call to action.” The only way to have a viable, livable, equitable community for our children, your grandchildren, and beyond, is to make it so. It will not happen on its own.
- The plan must be about your ideas and vision for Dubuque. Over 6,000 residents and stakeholders have participated in this process and we are very appreciative of their time and efforts on behalf of our community. We hope even more will participate in making this vision a reality.
- The City’s state of the art Intermodal Transportation Center was completed last year, providing improved access to The Jule’s public transit services.
- The Jule has experienced a remarkable 39% increase in ridership over the last five years, providing over one half million rides in 2016.
- The Jule’s recent extension of service hours to 9 p.m. on weekdays sets Dubuque’s public transit system ahead of most of the larger cities in Iowa.
- Of the 11 cities in Iowa with populations over 50,000, Dubuque is one of just five providing weeknight evening service until 9 p.m. or later.
- Dubuque has joined the ranks of our state capital in Des Moines; Iowa City – home to the University of Iowa; Ames – home to Iowa State University; and the Quad Cities in offering the weeknight service.
- Infrastructure matters, and that facility will soon be complimented by a new Jule Operations and Training Center being constructed nearby on Kerper Blvd.
- It will replace the century-old facility on Central Avenue and provide numerous operating efficiencies. The \$6.8 million project will be completed this fall and is supplemented with nearly \$5.3 million in state and federal funds.

- Dubuque's first Roundabout has significantly improved safety and traffic flow at the Grandview Avenue/Delhi Street/Grace Street intersections, AND with a half million dollar grant by the Iowa DOT, construction of another roundabout at the Grandview/University Avenue intersection will take place in 2018.
- In 2016, more than seven miles of city streets were paved through the City's annual asphalt overlay program.
- Over the last three years, more than 70 green alley conversions, of the 240 planned through the Bee Branch Project, have been completed.
- The Bee Branch Watershed Flood Mitigation Project is the City's most historic and largest investment project, focused on protecting an area of our community where over 50% of our citizens either live or work....
- We recently held a ribbon cutting for the completed Upper Bee Branch Greenway portion.
- The entire \$219 million project was supplemented with \$160 million in state and federal grants!
- As exemplified recently in an article by Dr. Liang Chee Wee, President of our Northeast Iowa Community College, this historic project is “an important part of the infrastructure to control flooding by channeling stormwater safely through the area without flooding streets, homes, and businesses. What a relief it is, when leadership has the courage to invest in the long-term well-being of the residents,” he said.
- Supporting the Bee Branch project were nearly \$18 million in bond series 2015A. These bonds have been upgraded from A3 to A2 representing the improved strength of the City's fiscal health.
- Budgets are balanced. Our debt capacity is now at 63.9%, moving toward 24% over the next nine years, and importantly, funds are being set aside annually to position the City to respond, if needed, to unforeseen events.

- And, notably, Dubuque has maintained the 2nd lowest property tax rate of the 11 largest cities in Iowa. The average property tax rate of those other cities is 41% higher than in Dubuque.
- Property taxes are a combination of distributions. Let's understand how the 2017/2018 property tax dollars were distributed:
 - 44.11% of your property taxes are designated for the Dubuque Community School District;
 - 32.11% goes to the City of Dubuque;
 - Dubuque County receives 18.70%;
 - Northeast Iowa Community College receives 3.24%; and independent authorities 1.84%.
- Note that, of the 32% designated to the City, almost 44% is focused on public safety.
- In an ongoing effort to increase transparency for our citizens' interest and knowledge, web sites have been launched for access to the City's expenses as well as the ability to access general information at the Police department.
- Increased investment and growth continues in the Historic Millwork District with the start of the Marriott Town Place Suites, an extended stay hotel...the expansion of DIY Manuals.... the addition of 7 Hills Brewing Co, and Backpocket Brewing Taproom, along with offices and retail space.
- Our state of the art Dubuque Regional Airport continues to see steadily increasing usage and value by travelers. The Airport Commission and the Dubuque Chamber's new Air Service Task Force are working together to build a strategy to increase local air service options.
- The City's fire suppression capabilities, based on the fire department, emergency communications, water supply and infrastructure, and community risk reduction earned Dubuque a Class II rating last year, which places us among the top three percent in the nation!

- More recently, of the 931 emergency medical service providers in Iowa, the Dubuque Fire Department is one of only four to receive a Gold EMS rating for treatment of patients who experience severe heart attacks!
- Police Department safety features include an expanded city network of security and traffic cameras; enhanced street lighting, and body-worn cameras for all of our police officers.
- Dubuque's "Comprehensive Housing Activities for Neighborhood Growth and Enrichment," otherwise known as the "CHANGE" program, is a combination of pre-existing programs and new initiatives added to improve about 740 downtown housing units.
- \$19 million in grants and tax increment financing money will leverage tens of millions of dollars in private investments toward fixing up properties and creating jobs.
- The City of Dubuque continues to make strides in advancing renewable energy and broadband connectivity to support new and existing business by working with Greater Dubuque Development Corporation and their Sustainable Innovations initiative.
- Through our strong public/private partnerships, we continue to collaborate on projects to streamline regulations, increase access, and reduce costs.
- Dubuque has many exceptional partners. Yet, when it comes to our economy, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation and the City of Dubuque have one of the two best models in the USA.
- Dubuque and Austin, Texas, are the two cities highlighted in a new book by Thomas C. Tuttle called, "Growing Jobs: Transforming the Way We Approach Economic Development."
- Cited in both case studies are the keys to growing jobs ... leadership, vision, best management practices, and a set of core community values that tend to drive the transformation to a highly effective system for community building and job growth.

- In Dubuque, as noted, it is the robust community engagement that ensures the personal values of citizens are aligned with the economic development strategies, creating an environment that fosters investment in financial and human capital.
- This year also marked the close of the GDDC 2012-2017 “NEXT” campaign which achieved and exceeded aggressive goals for job creation, increased wages, residential and commercial construction, and population growth.
- GDDC’s new, five year campaign launched in July...“Greater Dubuque 2022” sets new goals to work with partners in the private and public sectors that will continue to strengthen our community.
- GDDC’s collaborative partnerships are fueling economic growth in every corner of our community and will bring new energy to the North End of Dubuque.
- The fostering of single family home ownership and brownfield redevelopment for new businesses are goals for what GDDC calls “Dubuque’s True North.” With investment of time, talent, and resources, this vital part of the community can look forward to achieving its full potential for success.
- Attributing to that success will be Northeast Iowa Community College’s “Startup Dubuque” which was established to create and foster an entrepreneurial environment within the Greater Dubuque area by providing services to encourage, cultivate, and promote the growth and success of startups.
- On Friday, August 18th, NICC was awarded a \$160,000 grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority to enhance these entrepreneurial activities. The grant will bolster Dubuque’s “True North” initiative, including efforts to connect with minorities, women, and college-aged entrepreneurs in some of Dubuque’s neighborhoods with untapped potential.
- The fact still remains, the global economy and market forces can change in a matter of seconds. That is why the City of Dubuque will continue to be proactive and resilient with a recent prime example of that being how private and public entities came together to ensure Flexsteel Industries

remained a Dubuque icon...with both a talented and stable workforce located in a new world class location.

- Dubuque's Five Star Chamber of Commerce had a very busy year growing sponsorship revenue to a record level.
- The Chamber's Young Professionals organization is developing a "YP Connect" program to engage our local higher education institutions. It is being designed to serve as a "buddy system" that will cultivate relationships and encourage students to remain in Dubuque following graduation.
- Dubuque's Chamber joined with City leaders to educate State legislators regarding the inherent value of State Historic Tax Credits to our past and future economic stability and progress.
- Travel Dubuque, formerly known as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, reported an outstanding year with 329 million in travel related expenditures in Dubuque County...and traffic of over 1.9 million visitors attending events such as the Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, the star-studded Team of Dreams, the Iowa Winter Games, and the popular America's River Festival... which just this past June welcomed over 15,000 attendees from 24 states and one foreign country.
- Earlier this month, a new cruise ship made its inaugural stop in the Port of Dubuque. The American Duchess, a ship owned by Memphis, Tenn.-based American Queen Steamboat Co., made its first stop in Dubuque on September 1st and will continue to make regular stops hereafter. Just launched in August, the American Duchess can carry up to 166 guests. As Travel Dubuque President and CEO Keith Rahe said, "these ships bring a lot of people here who wouldn't normally be stopping in Dubuque."
- And just around the corner, "Fireball Run" is coming to Dubuque September 25! Dubuque is one of seven communities selected for this live-action competition and 26-episode adventure television series distributed by Amazon Prime Instant Video.

- Filmed in real time over a span of eight days and 2,000 miles, this series is a live-action adventure competition and story of 40 teams on an epic quest to America's under-discovered places. This series features a trivia pursuit road rally competition uncovering America's historic artifacts.
- Notably, every driving team is assigned a child missing from their home of origin, and they are provided 1000 missing child flyers to distribute along the 2000-mile journey. This campaign has aided in the recovery of 44 missing children!
- National conferences, arts and entertainment, recreation and sports events all continue to showcase Dubuque as a premier tourism location in the Midwest.
- Altogether, the economic impact of travel to Dubuque has increased employment as well as hotel/motel, local and state tax receipts.
- The economic impact of our arts and culture to our quality of life and tourism remains a beacon in our community's transformation.
- At an estimated \$47 million economic impact annually and the addition of over 1,500 full-time equivalent positions, the City's increased investment in the arts -- beginning in 2006 -- has proven a wise and strategic decision.
- The comprehensive Arts and Culture Master Plan developed in 2016 was an opportunity to guide and reflect the citizens' desire on ways to utilize arts and culture to further enrich our community.
- The plan is intended to help our talented artists and dedicated organizations to flourish, expand, and be financially successful.
- Its goals are to enhance the sense of community, improve economic vitality, help the City adequately direct resources, and further enhance the aesthetic beauty of the city.
- As we have learned, the vitality of a city is what will attract and retain young people and creative entrepreneurs.

- Individuals and families, residents and visitors, all benefit from the variety of fine and performing arts offerings and annual cultural events that enrich our quality of life.
- When we consider amenities that enrich Dubuque’s quality of life and culture, we draw attention to our thriving dining scene...which is seeing both increased daily dining sites as well as options for festival goers and special occasions. These new restaurants and specialty food trucks represent continued growth and new entrepreneurship in the industry.
- These highlights represent a high-level view of our community’s progress this past year. Let us turn our attention to what opportunities and challenges will guide our work in the years ahead.
- First, it is clear from the news reports we hear every day that, across America, infrastructure is crumbling.
- Dubuque’s answer has been to make public investment in infrastructure a priority with a focus on safer neighborhoods, job creation, small business expansion, and growth of our economy.
- On a human scale nationally, ways to honor diversity, to bring people together and restore faith in public service for those who have been left behind, continues to need our collective focus.
- In the City of Dubuque, our “Inclusive Dubuque” initiative is comprised of 60 partner organizations representing a network of leaders from faith, labor, education, business, nonprofit and government dedicated to advancing justice and social equity in our community.
- One of Dubuque’s signature global events, the Multicultural Family Center’s “Taste of the World,” was held this past spring with cuisine introduced from more than 30 countries.
- Over 1,300 citizens turned out for this event. Executive Director Farris Muhammad shared, “We’re bringing together different cultures representing all types of different nationalities. It’s all about community engagement, really representing, highlighting, and celebrating the diversity that exists here in Dubuque.”

- And, this summer, the University of Dubuque Teacher Education Department staff and students partnered with the Dream Center to provide downtown students with hands-on learning they might not otherwise have received...engaging them in fun and motivational science, technology, engineering and mathematics activities that challenged students' thinking!
- Another of our City's annual events is the "National Night Out in Comiskey Park," where the Dubuque Police Department interacts with kids and families to build relationships. As Chief Dalsing shared, "Getting to know the officers matters...if they ever have a situation...things are going to be resolved more easily. Because they're not going to be dealing with an officer, but with a person they know."
- In August 2016, the Fountain of Youth Program was founded in Dubuque with the goal of changing the mindsets that contribute to generational poverty.
- People ages 16-24 are welcomed into the Pioneer program for 1-3 years to work on a variety of life skills that will aid them in reaching their own personal goals.
- People ages 18+ are able to join the "Real Talk" program for 14 weeks with the goal of reducing recidivism rates. The men and women enrolled in these programs are committed to changing not only their own lives, but making changes that will positively impact our community for generations to come.
- For all of our cities, and our nation to thrive, we need to continue to find more opportunities like these to demonstrate our value for the fabric of our community, and to lift up neighborhoods and residents.
- Our schools, likewise, can be beacons to promote historical education about cultural differences and our nation's progress, the importance of tolerance, and behavior that is respectful.
- As we look into the future and the dire prediction of workforce shortage, we need to consider how targeted investment and training will help to modernize and expand our workforce...and prepare

citizens to compete for tomorrow's emerging jobs, the growth of new industries and the success of our economy.

- And to provide an environment of health and well-being, we need to be diligent in our communications with our State Legislators about their responsibility to promote access to high quality health care...substance abuse prevention and intervention...treatment and recovery services...and mental health services that support diverse populations, including our Veterans and the homeless.
- The work is comprehensive and that is why it is important at every level...local, state and federal, that the word "compromise" enter back into the conversation.
- On a national level, Senator John McCain's speech to the Senate in late July articulated this well, "Our responsibilities are important, vitally important, to the continued success of our Republic," he said. "And our arcane rules and customs are deliberately intended to require broad cooperation to function well at all. The most revered members of this institution accepted the necessity of compromise in order to make incremental progress on solving America's problems and to defend her from her adversaries."
- To be resilient communities in America, we must address, head-on, that which seeks to divide us. As University of Dubuque President Jeffrey Bullock recently stated in addressing the University community about the horrific events in Charlottesville, Virginia, "Debate and the free exchange of ideas matter. So does listening, respect, restraint and tolerance. The moral authority upon which we make that claim is that we are all human, and in the words of our Dean, we are also all '...image bearers of God.' And image bearers of God don't throw stones...or swing clubs...spray chemicals, light flares or parade around in white hooded robes."
- Citizens and community leaders in Dubuque, and across America, have a responsibility to continue a heightened focus on addressing our challenges and embracing our opportunities to create a future that is resilient.

- Dubuque's collective efforts were once again recognized by the National Civic League with its designation as an All-America City for the 4th time in the past 10 years. This was followed by Dubuque being selected by the US Conference of Mayors this past June as one of the Most Livable Cities in the nation. Congratulations to all the citizens and partners in our community who continue to raise the bar for excellence and resiliency.
- Yet, as we know very well, this is no time to rest on our laurels.
- The real results, collectively produced, will continue only as long as we continue to cultivate and maintain partnerships...as long as we work across sectors to find new solutions...to remove barriers... and to develop innovative responses to the challenges of the day.
- Just last month, the City Council met in its annual goal setting sessions during which we reaffirmed the City's 15-year Mission Statement, identified goals and priorities, as well as a policy agenda and a management agenda for projects and initiatives.
- Transformative vision occurs when we balance short term needs and long term plans; where we mesh innovation and entrepreneurship; where we build strong consensus and establish mutual trust.
- Resilience is rooted in a tenacity of spirit—when we have a clear sense of identity and purpose, we can hold fast to our City's vision of a better future for all.
- May God continue to bless our citizens, and the State of our City! Good Night.