

State of the City Address

Mayor Roy D. Buol

Monday, March 14, 2011



Good evening! Along with Wayne Demmer, and Mike Brannon, I welcome all of you to this new Chamber event showcasing the “State of Our Community!”

I thank our Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Molly Grover, for proposing this enhanced opportunity to both celebrate our community’s past accomplishments and to consider the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

One of the distinct reasons we have had so much to celebrate in our City’s progress these past five years, is the dedication of my colleagues and your elected officials who serve with me as Dubuque’s City Council. They are:

- At Large Council Representatives Ric Jones;
- At Large Council Representative David Resnick;
- First Ward Council representative, Kevin Lynch;
- Second Ward Council representative, Karla Braig; and
- Third Ward Council representative, Joyce Connors.

It also was our honor to serve with Councilman Dirk Voetberg. As you are aware, Dirk lost his valiant battle against acute leukemia on February 8. Each of us... whether as family, council members, personal friends, business associates, higher-ed colleagues, church family, or sister city friends...we all have our own special memories that serve as a testament to Dirk.

Tonight I want to pay tribute by saying that this community was indeed honored by and benefited from the intellect, insights, compassion, good humor, and wise counsel Dirk provided in many ways over many years. He was a unique and faithful public servant and we trust that his service will inspire others.

I also take this opportunity to publicly recognize our City Staff...beginning with City Manager, Mike Van Milligen who, this past November was named a National Academy of Public Administration Fellow by the academy’s board of directors. Congratulations, Mike!

Likewise serving the citizens of this community with distinction are Assistant City Manager Cindy Steinhauser; Assistant City Manager Teri Goodmann; City Clerk Jeanne Schneider; and City Attorney Barry Lindahl. Congratulations to Barry who was recently awarded the highest possible rating in both legal ability and ethical standards by the LexisNexis and Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review!

I thank each member of the City Council and City Staff for your dedication to service, to working so collaboratively in strategically planning the City’s path to sustainability, and for the level of excellence you bring to your roles on behalf of our citizens every single day!

There is no doubt that the services provided to our citizens happen at the level of excellence they do because of the City’s Department and Division Managers and their hard working and dedicated City employees. And, we remain immensely grateful to the volunteer sector of our community serving on the City’s Boards and Commissions, who have helped to not just meet the expectations of our citizens, but to exceed them!

Elected officials and public servants have taken on a special task...the task of delivering democracy to our citizens. And critical to this are partnerships at the county, state, and federal levels which have continued to contribute to Dubuque's opportunities and ongoing successes! As you may have heard a time or two before, during my mayoral campaign in 2005, I shared my belief that "the next five years would define the next 50 years for Dubuque!" And, in 2006, the City Council joined me in support of that vision.

Tonight I'm going to change my usual format for the annual State of the City, and use the same amount of time to highlight the past five years – a period where, by so many measures and given all we have faced as a community and a nation, have been full of remarkable progress.

Throughout Dubuque, we can witness the signs of progress with unending displays of hard work, investment, and uncommon acts of devotion.

Beginning in 2006, the City Council chose creating a path to a sustainable future, "generational planning" if you will, as a top priority, ...planning for a future that would ensure Dubuque children not yet born would be able to experience a quality of life at least as good as ours.

We implemented a broad-based, citizen-driven process to define sustainability for our community. The work of our volunteer task force resulted in a model that became known as "Sustainable Dubuque" --- one that equally balances a commitment to economic prosperity, environmental integrity, and social and cultural vibrancy. These three pillars are the foundation for 11 principles that guide our strategic approach to the future. Sustainable Dubuque has remained a City Council top priority each year and is now being adapted by communities around the region.

Economically, 2006 was a record-setting year with 14 development agreements totaling over 130 million dollars along with the creation of over 300 new jobs, and the retention of approximately 1,000 jobs.

Expansion of existing businesses took place in our Dubuque Industrial Center West and new businesses, including Sedgwick Management Claims Services and John Deere's Forestry Division, moved to Dubuque.

Unfortunately, 2006 also brought the loss of 137 jobs when Regency Thermographers closed, as well as employee reductions at Flexsteel Industries. Yet, from November 2005 through November 2006, Dubuque continued to create one out of every 10 jobs in the entire state of Iowa!

A social and cultural vibrancy was added to downtown Dubuque with the transformation of six buildings on Upper Main by Gronen Restoration into 14 beautiful storefronts and 30 apartments. Wi-fi hotspots became operational in downtown Dubuque.

Our Dubuque Community School District was ranked 7th out of 2,200 districts nationwide by Expansion Management magazine. Prescott Elementary was reopened as a Magnate Art School; Mazzuchelli Catholic Middle School was completed, and renovations continued at Wahlert Catholic High School.

The Revitalize Dubuque: Washington Neighborhood initiative continued to promote investment in home ownership and housing renovation. The neighborhood also became home to the rehabilitated apartment complex, Washington Court Building, as well as the Crescent Community Health Center and Orange Park.

“Art on the River” was introduced to the Port of Dubuque, showcasing the work of sculptors by offering a temporary public art exhibit and the benefit of “arts by osmosis” to residents and tourists alike.

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2007 represented another milestone year for our community with more economic development projects and job creation numbers, the ongoing renovation and restoration of our neighborhoods and downtown; as well as increased investment in the Port of Dubuque, the total of which grew to nearly one-half billion dollars!

Highlighting 2007 was Dubuque’s first-time selection by the National Civic League as an *All America City!* ... a recognition awarded to only 10 cities in the nation for the ability of their citizens to tackle challenges and opportunities with a meaningful spirit of collaboration!

Also on the national front, Dubuque was selected as one of the “100 Best Communities for Young People”... in the nation... by America’s Promise Alliance.

America’s River Phase II welcomed a 200 million dollar-plus investment to the Port of Dubuque which included McGraw Hill Higher Education; the Diamond Jo Entertainment Complex expansion and large capacity City parking ramp; the renovation of the Dubuque Star Brewery and addition of the Stone Cliff Winery, the Star Restaurant and commercial office space; and the Durrant Group’s renovation of the former Adams Company building.

In Dubuque’s Industrial Center West, Kendall Hunt Publishing constructed a state of the art distribution center; the Hodge Company constructed two new buildings; Medline Industries announced a new office complex; and International Transmission chose the site for its \$3 million facility.

In Dubuque’s Technology Park, Sedgwick CMS and Straka Johnson constructed their shared facility, and Kunkle Bounds constructed its new building. And downtown Dubuque welcomed the addition of residential, business, retail and entertainment venues including Genuine Genius Solutions; River Lights Second Edition Bookstore; LMay Restaurant; 180 Main (now Vinny Vanucchi’s); the renovated Steele Center; and the Cottingham and Butler project at the Security Building.

Also in 2007, John Deere undertook its third expansion in five years; Bodine Electric expanded; development continued next to the Hampton Inn; the Cafaro company began remodeling Kennedy Mall; and the Midway Hotel underwent a complete renovation and added the national Champps Restaurant.

2007 saw Dubuque being recognized across the spectrum, including The Iowa Tourism County of the Year Award; Five Star Quality of Life Metro by Expansion Management Magazine; 15th in the nation by Forbes Magazine in the “Best Small Places for Business” category; 22nd among the top 25 “Boomtowns” in the nation by Inc. Magazine; number six among its top 10 most affordable job powerhouses by MSN Real Estate; and the prestigious Milken Institute reported

Dubuque outperformed 386 other cities of our size in 2007 for job growth, ranking 8th nationally.

A priority for the City that year was a commitment to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. “Proudly Accessible Dubuque,” with volunteer leadership by Executive Director Katrina Wilberding, was formed to help ensure that Dubuque is a welcoming community for our 7,000 working-age adults with a disability.

During the spring and fall of 2007, our City received significant State and Federal grant funding for several projects including the Port of Dubuque transient boat dock project; lead-based paint hazard control; and the construction of the Trolley Line Trail project at Eagle Point Park.

That year, the Council approved the addition of five new positions to the Dubuque Police Department which was part of our commitment to add 15 sworn positions over the next five years.

Also in 2007, the City launched a Green Pledge program, inviting and encouraging all citizens to conserve, reuse, reduce and recycle. Dubuque Schools became involved in the Solid Waste Agency’s Green Vision Education program where classroom operations and facilities are evaluated and suggestions are made by a Green Vision team for advancing environmental stewardship.

Finally, in 2007, with the City’s unemployment at record lows, whispers of a national recession were getting louder.

2008 ushered in the City’s celebration of its rich history as citizens came together to honor Dubuque’s 175th anniversary!

2008 was also a time of almost unimaginable lows with many natural disasters, bringing a catastrophic tornado and flood damage to the cities of Parkersburg, Cedar Rapids, and many other communities including several in Dubuque County!

Nationally, 2008 resulted in a fiscal crisis astounding in its scope --- the collapse of Wall Street, record home foreclosures, business failures, job losses, and government bailouts!

In Dubuque, we had learned that cities 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: economic prosperity...environmental integrity...and social and cultural vibrancy!

In DC, our progress was noticed by the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation who said, “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 citizens!”

In 2008, the Des Moines Register gave a “rose” to the City of Dubuque for, “doing more than just talk about being sustainable.” The article went on to say, “most cities worry about economic development. Dubuque deserves credit for thinking about the impact of development on future generations!”

Notably, the City was acknowledged in the fall of 2008 for its partnerships by the chair of the International Economic Development Council, who said, “As the nation continues to tackle longstanding challenges in the midst of an inhospitable financial climate, public/private partnerships have taken on even greater significance. We laud the trendsetting organizations and municipalities like the City of Dubuque for leading the charge!”

Confidence in the city’s direction continued in 2008 with eight development agreements totaling \$131 million in capital investment, the retention of 385 jobs, and creation of 388 new jobs. Significant to Dubuque’s stability have been the colleges and universities which continue to serve as economic engines and fuel our City’s prosperity on many levels.

Economic prosperity has many “drivers” and in 2008, one of these was Dubuque’s selection by the U.S. Conference of Mayors as the #1 Most Livable Small City in the nation, raising Dubuque’s profile to future industries like Hormel which chose our city for its \$89 million facility and 180 new jobs!

Vibrancy continued in downtown Dubuque with the Pfohl family’s commitment to an over \$30 million renovation of this magnificent venue, the historic Hotel Julien Dubuque!

Even as the recession deepened in 2008, Dubuque was fortunate to realize tourism spending of two hundred and fifty million dollars, up from two hundred and thirty six million the prior year! And, while our economy slowed in 2008, it continued to remain stronger than most U.S. markets, attributable to our highly diverse mix of businesses.

In 2008, the City’s Arts and Cultural Advisory Commission assessed the economic impact of the City’s \$960,000 in grant support for arts and culture over several years. The report showed that over \$640,000 people had participated in arts and cultural opportunities, returning an ANNUAL economic impact of more than \$22 million to our community!

Dubuque continued to be recognized on a number of fronts, including Country Home magazine which ranked Dubuque 53rd among the 370 “Best Green Cities in America” in 2008, a climb of 109 spots from 2007!

Dubuque’s Every Child, Every Promise program was again recognized by America’s Promise Alliance for Youth as one of the “100 Best Communities for Young People;” and “Step by Step” was created as a City partnership project that resulted in accessible housing for citizens with disabilities.

And, in 2008, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium was ranked 7th in the nation by Trip Advisor, the world’s largest travel community.

2009 was a year that I believe will be defined by history as one of great collaborative spirit and innovation, even in the face of the worst recession since the 1980s, and a year that prominently featured Dubuque in a global narrative for solutions, ideas, and partnerships.

Significant to Dubuque’s stability by 2009 was the fact of the 48 development agreements that had occurred in the prior 25 years, 26 had occurred in just the past three years!

It is no secret that the headline of 2009 was IBM's decision to locate its first stateside project in 10 years in Dubuque and with it, 1,300 jobs!

Mike Daniels, Senior vice president 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 and the City of Dubuque's approach to sustainability support one another."

This project along with ongoing expansions at Hormel, Morrison Brothers, Dubuque Stamp, Medline and others, garnered a minimum of 1,600 new jobs in Dubuque.

Through public/private partnerships involving local business, social services, education, and government, an effort called "Project Hope, Helping our People Excel," worked to address issues and create environments of hope for the underemployed and unemployed in our community.

Remarkably, during our second "Growing Sustainable Communities" conference, we learned that Dubuque had been selected, along with Seattle to participate in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Green Lab program as the first Green Lab communities in the country. The City and partners involved in the Millwork District continue to work with the National Trust to revitalize neighborhoods and historic buildings while taking advantage of new energy efficient technology and adaptive reuse best practices.

Spring of 2009 also saw the completion of the \$10 million expansion and renovation at the Dubuque Greyhound Park and Casino and the renaming of the facility to the Mystique Casino.

Fall 2009 also brought a stunning announcement from ThermoFisher Scientific that, along with the closing of a plant in New Hampshire, it would close its Dubuque operations in 2010, cutting 350 jobs, and reminding us that in spite of the City's momentum, we were not immune to the impact of the national recession.

At its peak, this recession has impacted the livelihood of almost 3,200 citizens through business closures, layoffs, and consolidations. As true today as stated then, none of us will rest until each and every one of those citizens once again have the dignity of work and a job that makes life better for their families.

By 2009, over 80% of cities in the U.S. continued to face financial difficulties, the highest percentage since 1985. It was during this year, when Dubuque was singled out once again by the U.S. Commerce Secretary speaking at a national meeting about ways government, academia, business and non-profits can work together, or cluster, to make our country's ecosystem more focused and efficient.

He stated that Silicon Valley has been a striking example of a cluster done right, and added, "innovation hotbeds are not confined to any one part of the country. They are located in Rochester, New York and Dubuque, Iowa!"

Also in 2009, U. S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson visited Dubuque where we were able to highlight efforts to promote sustainable practices during a tour of the Historic Millwork District and the Caradco Building, which is being renovated to provide for mixed income

residential units near employment centers, along with multiple transportation options, and minimized environmental impact.

Notably, in 2009, our Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce received the coveted Five Star Accreditation, the only Chamber in the State of Iowa to do so, and one of just 59 out of the 7,000 Chambers nationwide!

As we consider milestone moments in our City's history, arguably the most defining took place in the fall of 2009 when IBM chose Dubuque to participate in a collaborative initiative to become the first "smarter Sustainable City in the U.S.!"

This partnership is literally about how the world works...about the world's infrastructure becoming intelligent...about citizens having the ability to use that intelligence to save money and for communities to create jobs.

Sustainability is the cornerstone of this transformation, and this unique collaboration offers an opportunity to both serve the citizens of Dubuque, and to establish a national, replicable model...one that integrates economic, environmental, and social sustainability principles.

2010 was a momentous year for Sustainable Dubuque as we fully launched its newest element, the Smarter Sustainable Dubuque Research Component!

In a nutshell, the plan for this research component is simple. Give citizens what they need, reliable information specific to them, to do what they want, which is to save money, conserve resources and support the local economy and environment.

In 2010 over 1,200 Dubuque volunteer households have stepped up to participate and over \$10 million in outside public and private investment was pledged to support the community's Sustainable Dubuque research efforts.

We have seen our Smarter Water Pilot complete its initial work and prove that improved access to information for citizens helps them save money and conserve water...whether it was the 100 plus homes that found and fixed leaks they didn't know they had...or the homes actively using the new advanced IBM information portal to reduce their overall water consumption by more than 10%.

We have laid the path for the launch of the Smarter Electricity Pilot with Alliant Energy. Nearly 1,000 advanced electric meters have been deployed, historical baselines have been established, and unique analysis capacity for individual home utilization of electricity is being developed. As we engage these households in 2011, we expect to see results similar to the water research.

We have also developed an agreement with Black Hills Energy to launch a Smarter Natural Gas Pilot Study, with infrastructure now being developed to engage another 250 volunteer homes this year.

With investments from the Federal Government and IBM, we began the development of Smarter Travel, a research pilot to increase citizens knowledge about their travel needs, habits and options to allow them to save money and time, while reducing environmental impact and allowing the City to optimize its transit system.

With investments from the public and private sectors, we began the planning for the Smarter Health Pilot Study, a collaboration to use new information to help households take actions to improve not just the energy but the health outcomes of their homes.

We also witnessed the development of exciting new elements of Sustainable Dubuque, like the Sustainability Innovation Consortium. This is a private sector-led initiative of local companies to pursue the competitive advantages that exist in sustainability products, markets and practices. These efforts are resulting in new opportunities, new revenues and new jobs for Dubuque.

Our research progress in 2010 could not have happened without the efforts and support of our primary research partner, IBM. Nor could it have happened without the support of our many state, federal and private partners.

Perhaps most importantly, it could not have happened without the twelve hundred plus volunteer households in Dubuque who believe in the concept of using integrated information...to take individual action...to improve economic and environmental outcomes in Dubuque.

The key to long-term sustainability is to give you, the consumers and businesses, the information you need to make informed decisions about how you consume resources like electricity, water, natural gas, and oil.

Dubuque is becoming a model “smarter” community for the nation as a result of its efficient use of resources, increased savings, expanded markets, job opportunities, and strong workforce, all of which have contributed to making Dubuque a “hub for innovation!”

A program of the Chamber and the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque called Dubuque 2.0 was developed as an interactive tool to engage businesses, schools, non-profits, and neighborhoods in a comprehensive process that supports the principles of our strategic Sustainable Dubuque model.

And, another local newcomer to the national sustainability scene in 2010 was the web launch of “Sustainable City Network” by President and CEO, Tom Woodward, with its mission “to make U.S. cities more sustainable through quality, timely, and well-organized information about sustainability products, services and best practices.”

And remember that visit in 2009 by U.S. cabinet officials that I mentioned earlier? In February of 2010, Dubuque was awarded a \$5.6 million U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER grant for Dubuque’s Historic Millwork District Revitalization program.

In July, the city began construction on Phase I of the Bee Branch Creek Restoration project, a \$49 million multi-phased project to protect North End residents from storm water flooding during major rain events.

In the fall of 2010, we initiated the largest capital improvement project in Dubuque’s history, the \$64 million renovation of the Water Pollution Control Plant, featuring anaerobic digestion which has the highest initial capital costs, but the lowest annual operating and maintenance.

This option was the most sustainable when weighing construction and operating costs as well as the long term benefits and environmental impact. It is being funded by a low-interest state revolving loan fund which will be repaid with sanitary sewer user fees. Although future fuel costs are difficult to predict, this plant is designed to stabilize operating costs and therefore, taxpayer support, for the long term.

Additionally, an adaptive reuse project was completed in 2010 in the Port of Dubuque as the Dubuque County Historical Society completed their expansion of the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium campus with the \$25 million transformation of the former Diamond Jo Portside Building into the National River Center.

A major renovation of the Carnegie-Stout Public Library, a downtown treasure and critical component to Dubuque's quality of life, was also completed in 2010. This project is yet another example of a successful public/private partnership. Our community's support for this project is evidenced by the fact that 50% of its funding came from the private sector.

Another gem was added to our list of riverfront attractions in September 2010 when the ribbon-cutting for the Mystique Community Ice Center was held. This dream became a reality because individuals and groups volunteered their time, talent, and treasures. This is another example of how public/private partnerships are improving the quality of life for Dubuque residents today and in the future. The City owns this arena but looks forward to a long partnership with Dubuque Community Ice and Recreation Center to lease and manage the amazing facility.

Additionally significant to 2010...construction finally began on our number one transportation priority, the Southwest Arterial...the \$125 million, six mile, four-lane, divided freeway that will provide an alternative route for traffic through southwestern Dubuque.

2010 also represented a year where Dubuque was recognized by Iowa's League of Cities as one of five cities, out of 947 cities in the State, to be named an All Star Community specifically for our community's sustainability initiatives!

The City's Arts and Cultural Advisory Commission reported that Dubuque is one of 200 study partners from all 50 states participating in an economic impact study conducted with the non-profit sector in Dubuque entitled "The Arts and Economic Prosperity" and is one of only 100 communities across the country to be involved in the first ever study for Americans for the Arts to gauge the Local Arts Index with both the non-profit and for profit sectors throughout Dubuque County.

Both of these studies will measure and give credence to what you have heard, and experienced, about the ways all of us living here are transformed by arts and culture - each and every day.

To quote Art Commission Chair Geri Shafer, "arts and culture are part of that 'social/cultural vibrancy' piece of sustainability that we weave into every presentation about what makes Dubuque a 'first' or a 'best' place to live, work, and play.

The reality is that the arts represent tangible assets for us. What if, for example, we didn't have the Grand; the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra; the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium; the Dubuque Museum of Art; the Bell Tower Theatre; Voices from the Warehouse District (in its 7th year); the Colts; the Ballet; the Dubuque Art Center; Art on the River; arts

education programs before, during, and after school; universities and colleges with fine arts curriculum; film festivals; more outdoor festivals than you can count; the important Dubuque 365 Impact Awards which recognize citizens and organizations making a social-cultural difference throughout our community; and now the promise of redevelopment of the Historic Millwork District into a thriving place for creative souls?"

If we didn't have these, who could we recruit and attract to our community? All of these organizations and programs feed and nourish our souls and teach us about new ways of thinking and experiencing our lives. And, they stimulate our economy!"

The Knight Foundation just completed a three year study of 26 communities designed to find out what emotionally attaches people to a community. First, the study found a positive correlation between community attachment and local Gross Domestic Product Growth. In other words, the community must first have economic success.

And, the people interviewed in the study consistently gave higher ratings for elements that related directly to their daily quality of life including an area's physical beauty, opportunities for socializing, and a community's openness to all people.

Forbes apparently agrees, recognizing Dubuque in 2010 as the "Best Small City to Raise a Family;" as #1 in the nation among mid-sized cities for projected job growth; and as #15 in the nation among "Best Small Places for Business and Careers!"

A report issued by Iowa Workforce Development just last week indicates Dubuque is #1 for job growth in Iowa. Dubuque's job growth for 2010 was 1,800, which represents nearly 18% of all net jobs in Iowa. In other words, Dubuque's economy created almost one of every five net jobs in the state. This is all thanks to private sector growth. There was no net growth in the government sector in Dubuque.

In 2010, Dubuque was honored by MSN as #3 in the nation for job growth; Dubuque was the highest ranking American City in receiving the Gold Standard Community Award and 3rd Place Honors by the International Awards for Livable Communities; Dubuque was acknowledged as one of the Top 10 Smartest Cities on the Planet and the only one in the U.S. by Fast Company; and as one of the seven Most Connected Cities in the World by Connected World Magazine.

In 2010, our Dubuque Regional Airport received its 20th consecutive year of perfect Federal Aviation Regulation compliance.

In December, we launched a public support campaign for America's River III: the Bee Branch Creek Restoration and Gateway project which will support the amenities portion of the project and turn the area into a community attraction with hike/bike trails, gazebos, overlooks, an amphitheater, benches, lighting and 1,000 new trees.

And in 2010, the City of Dubuque was featured in a 10 minute story on "Blueprint America" a PBS Newshour series on infrastructure which chronicles Dubuque's progress as a "quintessential city of the future!"

As we approached the fiscal year 2012 budget process in early 2011, we were reminded of a quote from Coach Vince Lombardi, who said, "Success is like anything worthwhile. It has a

price. You have to pay a price to win and you have to pay the price to get to the point where success is possible. Most important, you have to pay the price to stay there.”

As the Council delved into the budget details, several things stood out:

First, in fiscal year 1987, the City of Dubuque property tax rate was \$14.58 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation. The property tax rate for fiscal year 2012 is \$10.45, representing a 28% decrease from the 1987 tax rate...how many things can be pointed to today as costing 28% less than what we paid for them 24 years ago?

Since 1989 the average homeowner has averaged an annual increase in the City portion of their property taxes of less than 1% or about \$4.68 per year. Had the State fully funded the Homestead Property Tax Credit, it would have dropped to an annual increase of only \$1.26. *Fully funding the Homestead Property Tax Credit remains one of the City's Legislative Priorities to the State.*

I want citizens to understand that the significant portion of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 property tax increase, or 3.69% of the 4.88% percent increase, is mandated by the State of Iowa, meaning there is...absolutely...no local control. What CAN be controlled locally is the cost of city services which the City Manager has continued to minimize in spite of the fact that lease revenues from the gaming industries have decreased 32%.

The fact that the City of Dubuque and the East Central Intergovernmental Association, more commonly referred to as ECIA, have received two federal grants totaling \$3.8 million to replace the entire City transit bus fleet will be of great assistance to the annual operating budget. The reduced fuel and maintenance costs in FY 2012 alone are estimated at \$325,000 which avoids an additional property tax impact of 1.6%.

Let's review fiscal benchmarks comparing Dubuque among Iowa's 10 largest cities in the cost of services to citizens today.

Dubuque's property tax rate is ranked as the lowest of the 10 cities; Dubuque's water rate is ranked as the lowest; our refuse collection rate is the lowest; Dubuque's sanitary sewer rate is the 5th lowest of the 10 cities even WITH the planned renovation of our 40 year old Water Pollution Control Plant; and, finally, with the implementation of our massive stormwater management project to save over 1,150 homes from flooding, the City's stormwater rate is ranked as the 2nd highest.

Another notable benchmark, in fiscal year 1981, the City had 588 full time employees; 30 years later, 549.

Looking ahead, the City anticipates continued growth from our existing businesses as reported by Greater Dubuque Development Vice President Dan McDonald. Approximately 47% of area businesses intend to expand or invest in their business in 2011. With that in mind, the City is pursuing plans to prepare more of our available 900 acres of industrial park property.

In 2009, Dubuque was experiencing a national challenge...a lack of apartments. Nationally, there were three million more people looking to rent apartments than in 2006. As we look to the future, the development of the Historic Millwork District along with smaller local projects

occurring from Main Street to 5th Street to Bluff Street, and larger private projects on Pennsylvania Avenue, University Avenue, Radford Road, and Wingate Drive will help our community address this issue.

Over the past year, Dubuque's Safe Community Task Force made a series of recommendations to address crime and safety issues in Dubuque. With the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies crime and poverty study completed, more steps are being taken accordingly.

Two things that immediately stood out in that survey were, first, that Dubuque ranks third LOWEST in the State for serious crimes, and is 17% below the average of the State's 10 largest cities. However, it IS disturbing to note that out of the 502 citizens randomly surveyed by telephone, approximately 350 said they were afraid to come downtown at night. That is unacceptable. Being a safe community is a council top priority.

As City Manager Mike Van Milligen so aptly stated in his budget message, addressing crime is about more than just adding more police officers, although, as mentioned earlier, the Police Department will, by FY 2012, have increased by 16%.

It is not just investing in arts and cultural organizations and activities, although the budget maintains the City's commitments in these areas.

It is not just appropriately managing the federal Section 8 Housing program, however, major changes were implemented in this program.

It is not just about calling for better property management, however a centralized background check for tenants, better communication to landlords about problems occurring at a property, and tougher enforcement of property maintenance are being implemented.

It is not just neighborhood beautification and removal of blighted conditions, or investment in neighborhoods, people, programs, job creation, infrastructure, or partnerships to lower costs and create jobs through Sustainable Dubuque and its partners.

It is not just about ANY of these things, because it is about ALL of these things that your City IS doing because they are the right things to do for a sustainable quality of life in our community.

We've made much progress, but we must recommit ourselves to bringing our community truly together, citizen by citizen, neighborhood by neighborhood. An honest look at our progress shows that, while we are better than the divisions of decades past, we still have some distance to go. I think we all feel that sometimes we share ZIP codes and sports teams more than a deep sense of shared experience.

And, as articulated well by Safe Community Task Force member Doug Stillings, "These recommendations are not going to be implemented by the City. They are recommendations from the community and they will have to be implemented by the community. This was a citizen-driven process and, really, textbook grassroots government." Engaging citizens as partners has been our success story and it is more important than ever to our future.

While Dubuque, like cities around the country, has been impacted during this national economic recession, I believe we all agree that Dubuque is far stronger, far more resilient, and more intuitive than when it emerged from the last deep recession of the late 80s. As private citizens, city leaders and community partners, we can be upbeat about our prospects, confident in our neighborhoods, and energized for the coming days.

Our community has focused on projects to inform and engage citizens which are leading to transformational change. Transformation takes time and commitment, and perhaps even an element of risk. Continued progress is not inevitable. It remains up to all of us to create it.

The City's focus is not just on 2011 but rather to 2030 and beyond. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships; we will continue to engage our citizens and volunteers; and we will continue to drive progress...every single day!

We are coming out of this recession with deeper knowledge and experience...and Dubuque will have a voice not only in the future direction of the State of Iowa, but, indeed, in the future of our Nation.

On behalf of my Council colleagues and City Staff,...I am honored to report that the progress of these past five years...including our ability to weather the worst recession since the 1980s, have demonstrated that the State of our City, indeed our "Smarter Sustainable Dubuque" is more diverse, more dynamic, AND a more durable engine of growth for the next 50 years!

May God protect and safely return home those in military uniform who are bravely serving our community, State and Nation in Iraq and Afghanistan. May God continue to bless their families, all the citizens of Dubuque, and the State of our City. Good night!