

State of the City Address

March 24, 2008



Good evening... and welcome to the 2nd Annual State of the City Address sponsored by the Dubuque League of Women Voters and the Telegraph Herald!

I thank all of you for joining us this evening...elected officials, city staff, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens...as well as those who are watching this broadcast on Dubuque's City Channel 8 and listening to this broadcast live on KDTH.

And welcome to the City Council's official chambers located in our historic Federal Building.

This building, adjacent to Washington Park in Downtown Dubuque, was constructed in 1934.

It was acquired as an historic surplus property from the federal government as part of the City's commitment to its downtown and historic preservation.

We believe that the restoration and renovation of this Federal Building, which includes several green components, not only lives up to the expectations of its original designers and architects, but importantly, will provide citizens and visitors alike with enhanced services for decades to come.

Tonight we are gathered to celebrate our community... our people, our progress, and our preparation for the future!

First, and one of the distinct reasons we are able to celebrate the City's progress, is the energy and commitment of your elected officials whom I would like to introduce at this time.

Seated to my right, are:

- Newly-elected At Large Councilperson David Resnick;
- First Ward Councilperson Kevin Lynch, now in his third year of service;
- Recently re-elected Second Ward Councilperson, Karla Braig, also in her third year of service;
- Third Ward Councilperson, Joyce Connors, in her seventh year of service;
- And newly-elected Fourth Ward Councilperson, Dirk Voetberg, who also has the distinction of having previously served twelve years on the council.
- Not able to be with us this evening is At Large Councilperson, Ric Jones, in his third year of service.

I want to publicly recognize the commitment, vigilance, and devotion of each of your elected officials in their service to you, and to the continuing vitality of our City.

We each realize that no "great" City will rest on its past successes, and your elected officials remain focused on and committed to achieving the City's Vision which...in its very essence...is to become a "Progressive, Sustainable City with a Strong Balanced Economy and Connections to the World."

Dubuque continues to be recognized regionally and nationally as a model city on many fronts.

For its management ... for its successful public-private partnerships...our remarkable volunteerism...our “green” approach to a sustainable future...and, so importantly, our focus on youth!

In City government, progress demands a hard-working, dedicated team.

City Manager Mike Van Milligen, in addition to the numerous recognitions of his past fifteen years in Dubuque, was named the 2007 Manager of the Year by the Iowa City Manager’s Association!

He is a proven leader who has established a standard of excellence and built an exceptional team, including Assistant City Managers Cindy Steinhauser and Teri Goodmann, which continues to serve the people of Dubuque well.

The City Council is likewise grateful for the exceptional service received from our City Attorney Barry Lindahl and City Clerk Jeanne Schneider.

Dubuque’s good fortune continues through the exemplary service of the City’s Department and Division Managers, along with our capable, talented, and very hard-working City employees.

All these individuals characterize the Proverb, “Those who say it cannot be done, should not interrupt the persons doing it!”

I want to extend the Council’s collective appreciation to the City’s volunteer Boards and Commissions.

Your call to volunteerism and the expertise you bring to the work at hand consistently allows our City to be proactive in its response to the expectations of our citizens.

Delivering democracy to our citizens comes through many venues, and it is with deep appreciation that we acknowledge our City’s partnerships at the county, state, and federal levels.

The City of Dubuque continues to have a strong partnership with our Dubuque County elected officials, including Supervisors Wayne Demmer, Eric Manternach, and Donna Smith.

Dubuque has been exceptionally well-represented in Des Moines by State Senator Mike Connolly; State Representative and Speaker of the Iowa House Pat Murphy; and State Representative Pam Jochum.

Dubuque likewise benefits from the leadership and collaboration of area legislators including State Senators Roger Stewart and Tom Hancock, and State Representatives Steve Lukan, Tom Schueller and Ray Zirkelbach.

The City of Dubuque values the vision shared by Governor Chet Culver for a sustainable Iowa, and we also thank him for his appointment of Greater Dubuque Development Corporation President Mike Blouin as an Iowa Department of Transportation Commissioner.

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

Each of our elected officials is a partner in our successes and we will continue to count on their support as we address both our challenges and opportunities.

In fact, I want to take this opportunity to express our community’s deep gratitude for the extraordinary joint support of Senators Grassley and Harkin and Congressman Braley as they work alongside us to address local transportation issues...specifically, the completion of the Iowa Highway 32/Southwest Arterial and the return of Northwest Airlines to the Dubuque Regional Airport.

Iowa Highway 32/the Southwest Arterial, is Dubuque’s #1 surface transportation priority and, combined with increased air connectivity, is essential to our growing economy.

The addition of Northwest Airlines to the important service provided by American Airlines is really great news for Dubuque!

Important to our ability to attract multiple carriers is the fact that our Dubuque Regional Airport, for the 17th consecutive year, earned the Perfect Part 13.9 Safety Compliance, giving our airport the best record in the nation!

2007 represented another milestone year for our community, underscoring the vision shared in 2005 that “the next five years would define the next 50 for Dubuque.”

During this past year, Dubuque has been acknowledged as a community that is “on the move.”

Evidence of this is in the many economic development projects and job creation numbers, the ongoing renovation and restoration of our neighborhoods and downtown; as well as the increased investment in the Port of Dubuque...which began at \$200 million and has grown to nearly one-half billion!

Many of the successes achieved and recognitions received throughout 2007 have demonstrated that our City’s vision is on track and that we have the fortitude as a community to continue our progress in the coming year.

One of the highlights in 2007 was the first-time selection of Dubuque as an *All-America City* by the National Civic League!

This unique award recognizes the top ten communities -- in the nation -- for the ability of their citizens to tackle challenges and opportunities with a meaningful spirit of collaboration.

All-America City team member and Mercy Hospital CEO Rusty Knight summed it up for the judges in Anaheim, California when he said -- “Part of the character of Dubuque is that we don’t care who gets the credit for a good idea. We thrive on partnerships. We thrive on the thought that a good idea can come from anywhere, from anybody, and it’s not important who’s identified with it. What’s important is that we see problems, we care about them, we get engaged, and we act.”

Also in 2007 and now in 2008, the City of Dubuque was proud to be named as one of the *100 Best Communities for Young People* – in the nation -- by the America’s Promise Alliance.

This year’s application featured our “*Every Child/ Every Promise*” initiative, also a City Council top priority, which focuses on fulfilling five promises to our youth aged 0 to 20. Those promises are: Caring Adults...Safe Places...a Healthy Start...Effective Education...and Opportunities to Help Others!

Under the local leadership of the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque and the Mississippi Valley Promise, *Every Child/Every Promise* affirms the work of our local agencies, organizations, and enthusiastic volunteers who are making important differences in the lives of our young people.

But, as we have learned through our research, and as communicated to the community through Dubuque’s “first ever” Community Growth Chart, gaps remain in the way we do and should serve all our children...There is much to be done.

As poet, historian and educator Dr. Maya Angelou shares, “We each are living art, created to “hang on”... “stand up”... “forebear”... “continue”... and encourage others.”

Through the *Every Child/Every Promise* initiative, area citizens, churches, schools, and organizations will have the opportunity to become involved in helping to create environments where children and families can have boundless opportunities to lead healthy, productive lives!

Throughout 2007, community partners, business and industry supported the City’s vision for a “viable, livable, equitable and sustainable future!”

The City has strong partnerships with Greater Dubuque Development Corporation and the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce to both recruit new business and industry to our midst, and to help existing businesses to strengthen and grow.

Always tuning our economic engine, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation officials kicked off the *Greater Dubuque: Destination for Opportunity* five-year campaign with goals to create 5,000 net new jobs in Dubuque County; create \$300 million in new commercial construction and grow the area’s projected population by six percent.

2007 was another record year of economic progress, bolstering our local economy in the midst of an otherwise slowing national economy:

- In the Port of Dubuque, Durrant is creating world-class office space; the Diamond Jo broke ground on its new casino and entertainment complex and the City broke ground on its new parking facility, together representing over \$100 million in new construction.
- Also in the Port, renovations at the former Dubuque Star Brewery resulted in the addition of Stonecliff Winery and the Star Restaurant & Ultra Lounge, enhancing riverfront experiences for citizens and tourists alike.
- And finally, McGraw-Hill dedicated its \$32 million state-of-the-art “green building” at the Port of Dubuque, an energy-efficient facility constructed with recycled materials.
- In Dubuque’s Industrial Center West, Kendall Hunt Publishing Company is constructing a state-of-the-art distribution center and office building; the Hodge Company constructed two new buildings; Medline Industries announced a new office complex; and, as further proof of the momentum our economic partners have created, Hormel Foods announced its intention to make Dubuque its “flagship” site with an \$89 million facility and 180 new jobs!
- On the heels of that welcome announcement, we learned that Dubuque’s Industrial Center West was chosen by International Transmission as the site for its \$3 million dollar facility.
- In Dubuque’s Technology Park, Sedgwick CMS and Straka Johnson completed construction of their shared facility, and Kunkel Bounds has completed construction of its new building.
- And, the economic progress continued in Downtown Dubuque as the community welcomed the addition of residential, business, retail and entertainment venues including--
 - Genuine Genius Solutions;
 - River Lights Second Edition Bookstore;
 - L. May Restaurant
 - 180 Main;
 - the renovation and reopening of The Silver Dollar;
 - the long-anticipated renovation and refurbishing of an historical landmark, The Julien Inn;
 - the renovation of the Steele Center; and
 - the Cottingham & Butler project at the Security Building.

I am especially pleased to report tonight that there are now over seven thousand citizens working in downtown Dubuque!!

Adding to the numerous economic investments being made in a sustainable Dubuque,

- John Deere Dubuque Works is undertaking its third expansion in five years;
- Bodine Electric Company has announced a major expansion;
- Dick Hartig and Marty McNamer continue development adjacent to the Hampton Inn on Highway 20;
- the Cafaro Company is remodeling the Kennedy Mall;

- and the Midway Hotel has undergone a complete renovation and added the nationally renowned Champps Restaurant.

Crucial to the stability of every community is its small business sector. I am pleased to report tonight that since last summer, the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce has held 99 ribbon-cuttings for new or expanded businesses in Dubuque!

And, as we look to the future, the America's River Phase II expansion in the Port of Dubuque will include the construction of a "RiverMax Theater" along with a second museum complex to be known as the "Great Rivers Center" featuring display galleries, a National Rivers Center, and a Rivers Research Center.

The progress experienced by Dubuque has garnered significant publicity and recognitions which bolster our area's reputation with businesses and industry seeking to locate in a stable, vital community. In 2007, some of these recognitions included:

- The 2007 Iowa Tourism County of the Year Award.
- Being named a Five-Star "Quality of Life" Metro by *Expansion Management* magazine.
- For the second consecutive year, Dubuque was ranked 15th in the nation in *Forbes* magazine's "Best Small Places for Business" 2007 listing.
- *Inc.* magazine ranked Dubuque twenty-second among the "Top Twenty-five Boomtowns" in the nation out of the 393 largest metro areas, and the number one "Biggest Mover!"
- MSN Real Estate ranked Dubuque number six among its top ten most affordable job powerhouses, places where the cost of living and unemployment are low and the number of jobs is growing steadily.
- A 2007 study by the prestigious Milken Institute reported that Dubuque outperformed 386 other cities for job growth, ranking eighth nationally, and eleventh among all U.S. metros.
- And, a *Wall Street Journal* article used Dubuque as PROOF that manufacturing and related industries are "alive and well" in the United States, noting John Deere as a prime example, as well as referencing Giese Manufacturing.

As I said recently when Hormel chose Dubuque, our workforce offers a "home court advantage" when competing against other cities and states, and is the heart and soul of our economic team.

You help us sell this region every day with your strong work ethic and can-do attitude!

Even as we enjoy this growth and investment, the City has not lost sight of the natural ebb and flow of every economy...and that we need to remain flexible in adapting to changing circumstances such as that announced by McKesson, a long-time Dubuque presence, about workforce reductions.

Employees affected are our friends and family members who call Dubuque home.

That is why the City remains committed to working with our economic development partners and area business partners to stimulate cooperation among key players and help replace losses with meaningful employment opportunities.

As long-time economic development official Rick Dickinson has said, the beauty of Dubuque is its focus on business expansion. More than any other time in the history of our city, we are developing a more diverse economy!

Growing in vision and membership is our Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce led by President & CEO Molly Grover.

Recently, hundreds of business persons attended the Chamber's Annual Forecast Luncheon to hear reports on our community's progress and vitality.

Among the good news was that unemployment has been at record lows.

The reality check came with an assessment of local business and industry which summed up the clear message... "Workforce development needs to be established as the number one priority of our community!"

As we look to our economic future, we need to retain and attract the skilled and educated workforce necessary in the long term for Dubuque's business and industry.

With no less than eight institutions of higher learning within a 20-mile radius of our City, accelerated collaboration between the business community and these institutions becomes absolutely vital to solving our impending workforce challenge.

Along with the City's economic progress, I am pleased to highlight some of our quality of life programs helping Dubuque achieve its goals of becoming a "viable, livable and equitable" community.

Envision 2010, which was initiated in late 2005 by the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce and the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque with funding by the Dubuque Racing Association, continues to move forward with over 150 volunteers serving on the ten project committees.

One of those ten projects, the Crescent Community Health Center, is complete.

This federally-qualified health center was one of the three projects featured in our *All-America City* award-winning application and just last summer, Senator Harkin announced it will receive \$733,000 annually for critical health care services for our most fragile citizens!

Another 2007 top priority of the City Council was compliance with the "Americans with Disabilities Act."

I am honored to report that a new organization, Proudly Accessible Dubuque, was formed last year, with its purpose to build awareness and educate the public regarding accessibility.

Through the volunteer leadership of executive director Katrina Wilberding, the way is being paved to ensure a welcoming community throughout Dubuque County which is home to 7,000 working-age adults with a disability.

During the summer, Dubuque's rich history and magnificent historical architecture was again recognized through numerous historic preservation and sustainability awards presented for restoration and rehabilitation projects throughout the historic district.

The Thousand Friends of Iowa also presented their 2007 Best Development Award for a Mixed-Use Development to Dubuque's Washington Court Building Project which included the Crescent Community Health Center, Project Concern and the Washington Court Apartments. Congratulations to Gronen Properties on this wonderful project in the Washington Neighborhood.

This past summer, Dubuque's Housing, Education and Rehabilitation Training Program known as HEART, received the Program of the Year Award from the Iowa City/County Management Association.

This program is a collaborative effort between the City of Dubuque, Four Mounds Foundation, Four Oaks, and the Dubuque Community School District.

It has served to build an increasing sense of neighborhood pride in the Washington Neighborhood where high school youth are given the opportunity to rehabilitate derelict housing through on-site job training experiences.

But, this project is much larger than property rehabilitation. It is providing hope for youth who were challenged in a traditional high school setting.

These youth, who earlier might have considered themselves on the fringe of society, are now enrolled in community college.

They are some of the faces of *Every Child/Every Promise*.

During the spring and fall of 2007, the City became the recipient of significant State and Federal funding including:

- A \$3 million grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Visiting Boat Docks...located near the Star Brewery in the main channel of the Mississippi River.

The City committed over \$1 million dollars as a local match for this grant, and construction is expected to begin next spring. A similar, but much smaller facility, is nearly complete in the Ice Harbor.

Transient boaters will now have access to a marina AND the natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural amenities of the Dubuque area.

- Last fall, the City of Dubuque's Americorps Program had its funding renewed.

Through tutoring and role modeling, this quality of life program helps our students to increase their aptitude in math and reading and is positively influencing their social skills.

The children and families impacted by this program are some of the faces of *Every Child/Every Promise*.

- Also last fall, Senator Tom Harkin announced that Dubuque would receive two point seven million dollars for lead-based paint hazard control.

This funding will enable the City to continue its efforts to prevent and reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning through education and lead hazard removal, and provide the *Every Child/Every Promise* of "Safe Places and a Healthy Start!"

Environmental integrity is one of three main components that comprise a sustainable community.

Along those lines, the construction of the Trolley Line Trail project at Eagle Point Park was awarded two hundred thousand dollars from the Iowa Natural Resources Commission last year.

The paved off-road bike/hike trail will follow the old trolley roadbed from Shiras Avenue north of the Ham House Museum...to the turnaround with the eagle statue at the main entrance of Eagle Point Park.

In 2006, our City's public art initiative called Art on the River was launched, affording citizens and tourists alike the opportunity to enjoy the amazing talents of sculptors whose works were installed for display and purchase in the Port of Dubuque.

The program's inaugural year concluded with a celebration and auction last summer, and this year, sculptures installed in the Port feature artists from throughout the Midwest.

Enriching our life quality each and every day, area artists, sculptors, musicians, actors, dancers, singers, poets and authors serve to remarkably enhance our community's image and vitality.

Important to community image is one of the City's highest priorities, safety.

We all have the right to go about our daily lives safely.

We believe that keeping our community safe involves more than just preventing crime and disorder -- we must also create social and economic change.

And to make our community safer, we must all work together.

Recently, the City Council unanimously approved the City Manager's recommendation to add five new positions to the Dubuque Police Department, as well as an additional housing inspector to the Housing and Community Development Department.

These new positions are part of Police Chief Kim Wadding's overall recommendation to add 15 sworn positions over the next five years.

The Police Department has also upgraded its Community Oriented Policing, or C.O.P. program and is offering local criminal history checks on tenants at no charge to landlords, as well as providing landlords with a reimbursement program for the costs of criminal history inquiries made out of state.

These initiatives will help to address identified and future issues related to public safety, housing transience, economic opportunities and public infrastructure.

As our community struggled through several tragedies and violent acts this past year, some people questioned, "How can these things happen in an *All-America City*?"

I reminded them then, and reiterate tonight -- Dubuque was not named an *All-America City* because we are a "perfect" community.

In fact, we earned this distinction as an *All-America City* for how we choose to respond to challenges -- by coming together as a community, identifying crucial issues, and working together to overcome them.

The City Council and Staff understand there is a long-term benefit to assisting our less advantaged citizens to access the ladder of economic opportunity that leads out of poverty.

This is at the very heart of creating a sustainable community that is viable, livable and equitable!

A new initiative called "Project HOPE," an acronym for Helping Our People Excel, is designed to respond to unemployment or underemployment of the residents who are traditionally cut off from opportunities for advancement due to social, cultural or educational barriers.

Shaping the context for this initiative was a visit by our City Manager to a job training facility in Pittsburgh called the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and Bidwell Training Center.

The CEO of this center, Bill Strickland, grew up in the Pittsburgh ghetto...four blocks from where he came to build one of the foremost job training centers in the world.

Through lessons from his own life experiences, and those of countless others who have overcome their circumstances and turned their lives around, he explains how all of us can build on our passions and strengths, dream bigger and set the bar higher, achieve meaningful success and, most importantly, help mentor and inspire the lives of others.

This is an issue many communities choose to ignore. But not Dubuque!

It is both our challenge to respond to the adverse behaviors of some of the residents through enforcement...and our responsibility to provide economic opportunity to the many families who have moved here in search of a better quality of life.

Among CEO and author Bill Strickland's beliefs is this...“People are born into this world as assets, not liabilities. It is all in the way we treat people (and ourselves) that determines a person's outcome.”

And, as our City Manager has said, “people denied opportunity cannot contribute to a society.”

Your City intends to once again demonstrate its ability to lead and its commitment to improving the quality of life for all its residents.

As we each consider ways in which we can become involved in helping to fulfill the community's commitment to *Every Child/Every Promise*, let us reflect upon this quote:

“You will never stand taller... than when you stoop to help a child.”

That, we believe, is a community of character...one that is viable, livable and equitable!

Another quality of life issue that remains a Council top priority is Public Transit.

Last year, the Dubuque minibus operations served almost 9,500 seniors.

Two changes in transit have been and are being made to positively impact life quality for both our senior citizens and our youth.

A Dubuque resident, Ms. Sue Balsamo, is establishing a Dubuque branch of the “Independent Transportation Network America.”

ITN is an innovative service that will provide transportation twenty four hours a day, seven days a week to our senior citizens in and around Dubuque.

This service allows its members to pay for just half of the true cost of their rides, and the service has been designed to be self-sufficient in four years.

Also, beginning this past August, Keyline Transit and the Dubuque Community School District partnered to provide school-age youth free rides on the established Keyline bus routes throughout the city.

This commitment to deliver on the *Every Child/Every Promise* initiative is helping to relieve the physical and financial barriers of transportation for our youth and their families. To date, youth ridership on Keyline is up 50%.

But, even as we implement programs that improve transit for some, it is clear we are not where we need to be as a City in serving the transportation needs of citizens with disabilities and our elderly.

As a result, the City will be working over this next year to solicit feedback and suggestions for further improvements and enhancements, and we sincerely thank those most closely impacted for their patience and perseverance.

A continuing City Council top priority is a focus on Green City Initiatives.

As Dubuque continues its progress toward a sustainable future which brings together the social, economic and environmental factors, we are beginning to realize the impact we are having beyond our borders as well.

Dr. Donovan Rypkema, Principal of Place Economics in Washington D.C., recently notified Dubuque that as a result of our City's focus on sustainability, he modified the speech he is delivering across the country.

Rypkema says, "Today cities around the country are racing each other to see who can adopt green building ordinances the fastest, with such centers as Portland, San Francisco, and Santa Fe, of course, leading the way.

But, they are missing the larger picture...historic preservation.

Meanwhile, Dubuque, Iowa is far ahead of any of those places!

Dubuque is in the process of designating its twenty-eight square block Warehouse District as a pilot project for a comprehensive Energy Efficient zone.

And what does Dubuque have as a basic principle? That the adaptive reuse of those warehouse structures is key for energy conservation for Iowa's future.

The model for REAL sustainable development, Rypkema says, is not going to be San Francisco, Santa Fe, or Berkley...but Dubuque, Iowa!"

Becoming sustainable is a holistic approach -- it involves Environmental and Ecological Integrity, Economic Prosperity, and Social and Cultural Vibrancy.

Rypkema's reference to Dubuque's progress is another high profile example of how our community partnerships and the City's focus on sustainable initiatives, is propelling Dubuque into a leadership role in the region and across the nation!

As recently reported by the Association of Business and Industry...the voice of Iowa business...the government's new carbon footprinting regulations are not only good for the environment, they can also benefit the bottom line and local companies are starting to make changes.

In fact, John Deere facilities throughout Iowa are making changes. Deere & Company believes its commitment to the responsible management of natural resources is contributing to its sustainable growth globally.

Alliant Energy offers specialized assistance to companies who want to reduce their energy consumption, and recently reported the company's plan to retire two older coal-fired power plants and switch Dubuque's fuel source to natural gas within five years!

In 2007, Dubuque was chosen as the first city in Iowa and one of six cities in the nation, to receive a grant under the Sustainable Design Assessment Team Program, or SDAT, of the American Institute of Architects.

The SDAT professionals have completed their site visit to Dubuque and are working with a community task force to help develop a framework and a road map to achieving a balance between cultural, environmental and economic systems.

And, in April, our annual City Expo will feature information on energy conservation. There will be brochures and children's activity books available to further educate the public about sustainability measures the City is taking and that we each can take in our own lives.

The City of Dubuque's focus is on helping to move our community toward a future that is viable, livable and equitable.

Last fall, the City of Dubuque, in conjunction with the Rockefeller Brothers Fund of New York, hosted a "Growing Sustainable Communities" event, featuring nationally renowned speakers who addressed over 600 participants including elected officials from around the state, regional community leaders, area citizens and college students.

This particular opportunity was designed to educate participants about best practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as how planning, building, and zoning codes can be integrated into green design initiatives through architecture and public spaces.

Following this local event, Iowa's State Environmental Protection Office contacted The Center for Climate Strategies to facilitate a comprehensive climate planning process for the State of Iowa.

That's progress and Dubuque led the way!

In 2007, the City launched its "Green Pledge" program, inviting and encouraging all citizens to do their part for the environment with several examples of simple measures that can make a difference.

Simply put, climate change is the most visible symptom of a lifestyle that is not sustainable. If we continued as usual, our demands on nature would be twice its reproductive capacity.

We continue to be inspired by the number of businesses, schools, churches, organizations and private citizens, including over forty residents of Ecumenical Tower in Dubuque, who have signed up to “go green!”

A major player in our efforts to ensure a more a sustainable future is the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency.

Through the efforts of Communication and Education Coordinator Bev Wagner, a number of our Dubuque schools are becoming “Green Vision” Schools where classroom practices, buildings and grounds maintenance, and curriculum are all evaluated, and suggestions are then made by a Green Vision team for advancing environmental stewardship.

Current Green Vision schools are Marshall Elementary, Washington Middle School, Resurrection Catholic School and Table Mound Elementary School.

Working toward Green Vision status are Lincoln Elementary, the Dubuque Montessori School, Prescott Elementary, and St. Columbkille’s.

Our congratulations go to the hundreds of students, teachers and administrators for their efforts to help Dubuque become a sustainable community!

Mapping our path to sustainable living is a process that involves continuous improvement and innovative management of our resources.

To remind ourselves of the simple things we each can do every day, like turning off the faucet while we brush our teeth, is to reflect upon the Native American proverb... *“We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors... we borrow it from our Children.”*

Over the past several weeks, your City Council has heard budget presentations by each of the City’s departments that provide the quality services our citizens want, deserve, and continue to receive at a much higher level, yet lower cost, than comparably-sized cities in the State of Iowa.

As City Manager Mike VanMilligen shared in his presentation of the recently adopted 2009 fiscal year budget, meeting some of the City’s priorities will be challenging because of some of the economic realities facing the City.

Even though our local economy appears to be better positioned than many cities around the country, there are decreases in revenues or increases in costs that are affecting our City.

While substantial, your management team continues its work to mitigate the impact of revenue shortfalls and increased expenses for the upcoming fiscal year.

As recently reported, the average homeowner will pay just \$69.21 more in 2009 for City services, including property taxes, sanitary sewer, water, refuse and stormwater, than we paid 14 years ago.

While no one ever wants to see an increase in taxes or fees, it is important that we acknowledge the high level of service being provided to citizens even as the rates in Dubuque continue to be the lowest or second lowest among the ten major cities in Iowa.

That is good management!

Another reality is that the City must identify additional revenue opportunities.

One highly under-utilized asset the City has is its land, especially on the riverfront, which is leased out for private use.

The City will be revisiting the leases negotiated by the City Dock Commission 50 years ago at a fraction of their market value.

Should the City start receiving the true market value of these properties, it will result in approximately \$2 million of annual operating income to the benefit of our citizens.

As we look to the future, there are projects on the horizon that will involve major focus and decisions by the City Council.

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

The City Council and City Staff are focused on providing vision and fiscal prudence, as well as working to enhance transparency and collaboration in the City's planning process into the future.

This is important to us...to the citizens we serve...and to the community in which we all have a vested interest.

As Mayor, I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve.

My fellow council members have been similarly blessed.

Our outstanding City staff is organized to serve and be responsive to the people.

Our collective vision is to become a Dubuque that is sustainable, where our citizens are prosperous and enjoy a great quality of life, and where we have done everything humanly possible to provide our children the opportunities they need to be successful.

Every day, they are living reminders to us of the importance of our work as public servants.

They are the reason we must create a community that is viable, livable and equitable!

Tonight, we stand on the shoulders of many great women and men who dedicated themselves over the past 175 years to making Dubuque the City we love today.

We must continue to do our part because someday...the youth of today will climb upon our shoulders and take their positions of leadership.

The City we create ...will be the City they inherit.

On behalf of your City Council, City staff, and all our organizations, agencies and volunteers who love their City... and who are personally and professionally vested in its success...

I am privileged to report that the State of our City is well focused and collectively prepared to address future challenges...

And the “second of the next five years” has indeed served to better define the next 50 years for Dubuque!

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