

State of the City Address

Mayor Roy D. Buol

Monday, March 26, 2012



Good evening! It is my honor to be here with you once again, delivering the 6th Annual State of the City address from the City Council's official Chambers located in our beautiful historic federal building in downtown Dubuque!

On behalf of the City Council, I want to thank a number of partners who make this traditional community outreach possible.

To the League of Women Voters, we thank you for your efforts to provide, in this venue and many others, nonpartisan information and education to the public at large on issues of importance to us all.

To the Telegraph Herald, we thank you for your commitment to enhance community information and awareness both in print and online, and we take this opportunity to congratulate you as you celebrate a milestone in your history...the newspaper's 175th anniversary!

To Radio Dubuque, we thank you for keeping our citizens "tuned in" and informed, and for providing the KDTH 1370 listening audience with a live, uninterrupted broadcast of tonight's address. We also take this opportunity to congratulate Radio Dubuque General Manager Tom Parsley on his selection as an inaugural member of the Marine Corps League, Dubuque Detachment.

And, finally, we thank our City staff for organizing and coordinating the behind-the-scene details as host of tonight's event... and for broadcasting it on Dubuque's CityChannel 8 and 97.2 on the Mediacom cable system and for streaming it live and in print on the City's website!

On behalf of my City Council colleagues, City Staff and the Dubuque community, I would like to offer a special acknowledgement to our Veterans and active members of our Military, and their families, in our area and throughout the nation and the world.

The United States of America has remained strong, and free, because of your service and your sacrifice. We honor you and remain indebted to you.

This evening, we have come together to focus on the "State of our City," our challenges, our opportunities, and our "capacity to prosper."

History teaches us that working together provides positive results!

In this context, it is my honor to introduce my City Council colleagues and City Staff who have focused the city's resources, have measured the city's progress, and have grounded decisions on achieving long-term results for our citizens.

First, I would like to introduce the City Council.

At Large Council Member Ric Jones. Ric is retired from a distinguished 31 year career with the Dubuque Fire Department as its first Emergency Medical Services Supervisor. He is the leader and drummer of the Upper Main Street Jazz Band; he serves as a program manager at NICC and is involved in community organizations such as the Kiwanis Club, Hills and Dales, the Colts, Shriners, Special Olympics and community theater groups.

At Large Council Member David Resnick. David is a music educator, a composer, and a member of many professional and musical performance organizations. He, too, is a member of the Upper Main Street Jazz Band,

performing clarinet, saxophone, and vocals and is involved in community organizations such as the Heartland Ballet and the Grand Opera House.

First Ward Council Member Kevin Lynch was unable to join us tonight. Kevin is a founder and the President of Net Smart, Inc. He is involved in numerous community organizations including serving as chair of the Finley Hospital Board, and member of the Dubuque Rotary Club.

Second Ward Council Member Karla Braig. Karla recently retired after 32 years as an adjunct professor of English and as Director of the Publications Center at Loras College. She has been involved for over 30 years with the Dubuque Catholic Worker House, as well as nine years with the Dubuque Human Rights Commission, and most recently, Karla became a member of the board for the new Dubuque Food Co-Op.

Third Ward Council Member Joyce Connors. Joyce retired in 2007 from her career in the domestic violence prevention field, the adoption field, and finally as Director of the Office for Protection of Children at the Archdiocese of Dubuque. She remains highly involved in the community's arts and tourism sectors, and serves as a member of the boards of the Riverview Center and Hills and Dales.

Fourth Ward Council Member Lynn Sutton. Lynn is a Licensed Practical Nurse as well as a rental property manager. She has been involved in many of the City's Boards and Commissions over the years, and serves as president of the Hilltop Ivy League Neighborhood Association and the local NAACP.

I thank each of you for your hard work on behalf of our citizens, your collaborative spirit, and the educated insights you share on a consistent basis to keep our city moving forward!

Next, our City Staff. As a Council, we enjoy working every day with these dedicated professionals. They are exceptionally competent, professional and caring. They deserve much of the credit for making our community such a well-rounded place to call "home."

Seated to my left and representing all our dedicated city employees are, City Manager Mike Van Milligen, Assistant City Manager Cindy Steinhauser, Assistant City Manager Teri Goodmann, who was unable to attend this evening, City Attorney Barry Lindahl, and City Clerk Kevin Firnstahl.

Without exception, the expertise, skills, and quality of service provided day in and out by the exemplary department personnel you have hired and mentored, continue to give our citizens the best City, bar none, in which to live, work, and enjoy life!

Finally, it is my privilege to extend our collective gratitude to our many partners at the county, region, state, and federal levels, AND their hardworking staff, whose interest and support remain absolutely integral to our community's stability, vitality and continued progress!

As we have witnessed over the years, Dubuque is a city where "the line between the impossible and the possible is routinely erased."

Dubuque is a city where our destiny continues to be shaped by fortitude, originality, and most of all, hard work.

Dubuque is a community where our citizens and our business, industry, education, cultural, non-profit, and religious sectors, understand, that "planning is about bringing the future, into the present, so that we can do something about it now."

Dubuque, in the cumulative sense, is a city focused on "creating the capacity to prosper."

To help reach that capacity, everything we plan for at the City government level is focused on ways to provide Dubuque citizens with the smartest long-term investments and most efficient delivery of services at the lowest cost.

It is no secret that the nation's cities rarely have enough money to fund all requests, so city budgets require an appropriate mix or balance between costs and services to citizens.

The City Council is responsible for establishing policy goals and major performance objectives; for approving the guidelines for budget preparation; for establishing what services will be provided, at what level, and how they will be financed.

Our City's management philosophy has remained consistent for approximately two decades. It is one in which all department managers and staff work to become creative problem solvers and where they are encouraged to form partnerships with other departments, as well as outside organizations, in order to provide the best services for all citizens.

Prior to the recommended budget reaching the City Council each year, the expenditure projections go through an intensive internal process to project both the current year, and the next four year's revenues, in order to make informed decisions on expenditure trends and economic conditions.

The budget becomes a policy document which represents the City's commitment to a specific standard of service and the criteria for evaluating and controlling expenditures, revenue collections and performance.

Finally, the budget is a legal requirement. State law requires the City Council to adopt the annual budget and certify it to the County Auditor by March 15th of each year. State law also requires a balanced budget.

Funding of the operating budget comes through shared state and federal revenues, property taxes, fees, licenses, permits, user charges and cash balances.

The budget process for 2013 involved some new expenditures, but also capital projects that were already contracted through a lengthy and deliberative public process.

Top of mind in this year's "\$214 million" budget were several major projects, including:

Construction of the 125-acre Dubuque Industrial Center South at a cost of approximately \$5.6 million dollars.

Like industrial parks developed previously, this investment is directly tied to preparing a place for existing businesses to expand and new businesses to locate, creating jobs.

Construction of the \$28.6 million Phase II of the Bee Branch Creek Restoration Project which has an estimated total cost of \$59 million.

This project is helping to save more than 1,150 homes and businesses from flooding. The City has received \$12 million in federal and state grants so far towards its construction.

The City is completing Phase I of the reconstruction of all underground infrastructure and streets, sidewalks, parking and lighting in the Historic Millwork District, and is beginning the next phase at an estimated cost of \$21 million.

This phase includes such things as an intermodal transportation facility, a street connection to the Port of Dubuque, hundreds of parking spaces, and the change of streets from one-way to two-way. The project is funded primarily with federal and state grants.

The City is also halfway through one of its largest projects: the \$65 million Water & Resource Recovery Center to replace the more than 40 year old Water Pollution Control Plant.

When completed, the facility will have the ability to generate 600 kilowatts of electricity -- nearly enough electricity to power the new plant and will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in electrical costs each year!

The City continues work on its number one transportation priority, the \$99 million Southwest Arterial project, funded primarily through federal and state grants.

The City has begun construction of a new airport terminal at a cost of \$35 million dollars, funded primarily through federal grants, along with extension of City water and sewer infrastructure to the airport.

The City is in the process of completing the \$4 million Port of Dubuque transient boat docks, with \$3 million dollars of that cost funded with federal grants.

And, finally, the City will be reconstructing Cedar Cross Road at a cost of \$2.1 million dollars, and the North Cascade Road at a cost of nearly \$974,000.

As in the past, City staff, with support from community leaders and our partners in D.C., continues to apply for grants and other funding sources to assist with these important projects and minimize the local financial impact.

In fact, in the last three years, the City of Dubuque has applied for and has been selected to receive \$100.5 million in grants, mostly from federal programs, to assist with projects.

Let me repeat that... City Staff with support from community leaders and our partners in D.C. have been able to secure more than \$100 million dollars for Dubuque.

This is important because it is your tax dollars going to the state and federal governments. California, for example, with more than 32 million people and 55+ members of Congress has a huge advantage in securing federal funds over states like Iowa, with our three million people and seven members of the House and Senate.

Dubuque, with thanks to our local, state and federal partners, has done incredibly well in bringing your tax dollars back into your community!

As has been reported, within the recently adopted budget for fiscal year 2013, we will see an approximate 3 percent increase in our property taxes which, for the average homeowner, will represent an annual increase of approximately \$31 dollars.

A portion of the increase is tied to state mandates that impact local budgets every year. These include: an increase to the City portion of the Municipal Fire and Police Retirement System; and the required City contribution to Iowa Public Employees Retirement System.

A portion of the increase is attributed to decisions made by the City Council. For example..

The increase to the City portion of employees' health insurance and approval of a 2.5 percent employee wage increase in fiscal year 2013 which follows on the heels of city employees taking a voluntary wage freeze last year – the same employees who ensure quality city services every day, in fair weather or in storms, and whose expertise and sound management continues to bring millions of citizen state and federal tax dollars back into the City;

A portion of the tax increase also supports safe community task force and sustainability programs to improve our life quality long term and services such as the Jule Transit System which has been enhanced in response to citizen needs and which I will talk about in more detail later.

Finally, with the replacement of the over 40-year old Water Pollution Control Plant and the EPA Consent Decree, plus the continued implementation of the Drainage Basin Master Plan to relieve more than 1150 homes and businesses from flooding, we will see a combined increase in our utility fees in fiscal year 2013 of approximately \$9 a month per household.

As Council Member Jones shared in a recent meeting with federal representatives held in D.C., “because federal dollars help rebuild after floods, we would like to think that they could take a slightly larger role in helping us to prevent floods in the first place!”

You see, there isn't a member of the City Council or City staff who doesn't understand or empathize that an increase to property tax and utilities -- which in 2013 will be a combined total of approximately \$136 dollars for the year to the average homeowner -- is burdensome to some members of our community.

As much as we were able to hold the line for years and years, we could no longer kick the can down the road on programs and projects important to our security and life quality. That is precisely why we work with our partners to obtain federal, state and private funding to assist in financing operating and capital budgets.

As explained during the 2013 budget presentation, improvements and progress do come with a cost. They always have.

Without investment, communities face a sluggishness, with some of the results of that being economic—like decreases in property values; less ability to attract private investment; low to no growth in retail sales; no business expansion or relocation; and fewer job opportunities for parents, their children or grandchildren, causing them to leave the area to seek work.

In turn, that would mean City services become an increasing burden on fewer and fewer residents, OR the quality of the services we have come to expect would deteriorate.

Dubuque's investments continue to be the result of long-term planning focused on securing a solid future for our citizens.

Our tax dollars are hard at work and one of the most significant factors that drives our quality of life in Dubuque are the dedicated City employees.

I know you will recall the historic rain event this past July 27 and 28. In just over 12 hours, Dubuque was inundated with approximately 14 inches of rain, shattering the record of about 9 inches in August of 2002.

Our city's Public Works, Fire, and Police Department Staff were busy throughout the evening responding to stormwater flooding, debris in the streets, displaced manhole covers, structure fires, lightning strikes, and downed power lines.

The City's Emergency Operations Center was activated as the scope and impact of the storm began to become evident. The Public Works, Water Pollution Control Plant and Engineering Staff worked throughout the night to monitor and respond to infrastructure issues.

The 911 Emergency Communications Staff received over 2300 calls in twelve hours. The Fire Department called in its entire staff to battle fires and assist residents with basement pump-outs. The Leisure Services tree crew responded to numerous reports of downed trees.

By Thursday morning, in partnership with the American Red Cross, a plan was in place to open information and assistance centers for displaced residents and to provide cleaning kits.

The City offered free curbside collection of damaged items and through the following week, the Public Works crew collected 294 TONS of stormwater damaged materials from approximately 3,400 households.

This storm deluge caused extensive damage to public infrastructure and property, and impacted thousands of private properties. Bridges, streets, sewer lines and pumping stations received over a half million dollars in damages.

While the damage from this storm was tremendous, it could have been far worse if we had not already made the strategic decision to invest in our infrastructure if the components of the Drainage Basin Master Plan had not been implemented and if the Bee Branch Creek Restoration project was not yet underway.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our city staff and partner agencies who displayed remarkable teamwork in responding to this disaster beyond measure.

Staff who helped us to keep the community informed; staff who put themselves in harm's way to respond; staff who put in the necessary EXTRA time to work with numerous private contractors and vendors to get critical services back online for citizens.

This response was a true measure of our collective community spirit, and a significant reason why Dubuque was recently recognized as one of the most resilient cities in the nation!

Clearly, a significant investment producing quality service to citizens is our Police Department. While 32 percent of property taxes are allocated to the Police Department, as Police Chief Dalsing reported last month, the budget process isn't all about spending.

For example, just some of the department's achievements recommended by the Safe Community Task Force and adopted by the council last year included providing "free" background checks of prospective tenants for landlords, as well as traffic and noise enforcement based on citizen requests—ALL of which contribute to an enhanced quality of life throughout our neighborhoods.

As rental property owner Mr. Lynn Lampe recently told the Telegraph Herald, the free service to landlords is "one of the best assets to come along for landlords to protect their investments. This is about being a safe community. This is about partnerships. It's about the good of our community and that's the big picture."

As I mentioned earlier, another improved service to citizens is The Jule, Dubuque's public transit division. Many changes occurred over this past year in response to listening to citizen needs including a new bus fleet, new routes, expanded service areas and reduced travel times.

The Jule also provides free rides for students to school and summer activities, saving their parents time and money.

To help citizens easily move throughout the city, a new “Shopping Circulator” route was added to The Jule’s services in November 2011 and offers increased fixed route service to West End residential and business areas.

The northern section of the Shopping Circulator route includes Sam’s Club, Asbury Plaza, and the Goodwill Store; the southern section of the route includes Wal-Mart, Lowes, the Warren Plaza area and Kennedy Mall.

In December 2010, The Jule added a Medical Loop route with hourly fixed route service between Finley and Mercy Hospitals, Medical Associates Clinic East, all three of our higher education institutions, and the South Locust Street Hy-Vee, South Grandview and KeyWest areas.

With new buses and expanded services, The Jule’s fares have not increased, and importantly, the fee for Senior citizens has remained the same for more than a decade.

Finally, The Jule’s mini-bus service is an on-demand public transit option that promotes independence for our citizens with disabilities

Tax dollars supported the completion of many road and street construction projects last year, and this past summer the Public Works Department paved over ten miles of city streets.

The English Mill and Military Road reconstruction projects began this fall and will include the construction of new bridges to allow the future SW Arterial to cross under each of the side roads.

Tax dollars support our Dubuque Fire & EMS with six stations located throughout the city staffed with highly skilled EMT Paramedics trained to the highest standards. With several Advance Life Support paramedic response ambulances and approximately 60 paramedic personnel, emergency medical response in the service area is a clear City priority.

Let’s turn now to the economy. Beginning more than four years ago, in late 2007, the nation entered into the worst national economic recession it has faced since the dark days of the Great Depression. We know there still are citizens in our midst who are struggling, still looking for meaningful employment.

As the City Council and all our private partners continue to demonstrate through collective efforts including business expansions, we will not rest until all of our citizens have the dignity of work they value.

History shows that, since the late 80s, Dubuque has been working to lay the foundation to develop a diverse economy—having learned from our own problems when, as a primarily manufacturing-based economy, Dubuque made national headlines for having the highest unemployment in the country.

The City continues to work closely with private community partners in preparation for diverse types of development—a combination of commercial, industrial, mixed-use and educational new construction, redevelopment, and infill.

It is precisely this type of diverse development that illustrates a healthy business climate, jobs, and continued investment in our community.

To “create the capacity to prosper,” our community must remain competitive and “at the ready” to identify strategies that stimulate private investment, create employment opportunities, and strengthen our tax base.

Our city’s businesses and industry and our higher education institutions are innovative and cutting-edge because they all understand that making investments, even in tough times, brings long-term gain.

As reported by Dan McDonald, Vice President of Existing Business at Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, “Today, Dubuque has one of the fastest growing economies in the U.S. and our existing businesses continue to drive those gains.”

As reported by the U. S. Conference of Mayors in January 2012, Dubuque is one of just 26 cities in the nation, less than 10 percent, to have seen the job market recover to pre-recession levels.

According to the latest numbers, Dubuque continues to be the #1 job-creating engine for the State of Iowa.

As recorded, between January 2011 and this past January, Dubuque added more jobs than any of the other large metros in Iowa. Dubuque’s 1,100 jobs added in the past year represents 12 percent of all new jobs in the entire State of Iowa, even though we represent only 3 percent of the State’s population!

Moreover, during the exact same period, our unemployment rate dropped from 7.1 percent to 5.8 percent. Results such as these are why Moody’s reports on the nation’s Top 10 cities for Job Growth, and yes, we are fortunate to have Dubuque recognized in the Top 10!

Even Forbes Magazine has weighed in and reported nationally that Dubuque, Iowa is #1 for projected job growth. And the list goes on.

Since our deepest drop in employment levels during this national recession, which occurred in August 2009, we had already added a total of 2,800 jobs by August 2011.

Based on Greater Dubuque Development’s discussions with 250 businesses in our community this past year, manufacturing is making a big comeback, and a significant majority of businesses reported sales increases outpacing the rest of Iowa and the US in 2011.

This is important, going forward, 42 percent of our businesses are planning to expand and re-invest with jobs, new machinery & equipment, and additional space. In fact, since my State of the City address last March, new projects alone represent \$33 million in capital investment and 337,000 square feet of new construction!

This investment is happening across our City—from Klauer Manufacturing, to A. Y. McDonald, to Theisens, to Flexsteel, to Green Industrial, IWI Motor Parts, Sedgwick CMS, HK Financial Services and more.

And how can we forget that on Christmas morning 2011, we awoke to read the TH headline, “Deere sees dramatic turnaround.” After cutting over 200 jobs in 2009, Deere had added more than 400 positions.

All of these well-managed EXISTING businesses are “creating the capacity for Dubuque to prosper.”

This past year, Greater Dubuque Development was fortunate to land Mark Seckman as its new Vice President of National Marketing.

Mark served as president of Priority One, the economic development division of the Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, where he created and implemented an industry cluster program.

Under Mark's approach, existing and new business developments resulted in the creation of over 14,000 new jobs, and \$2.1 billion in new capital investment in the Cedar Rapids area!

Today, Mark is "on the road," using information and target segments to sell Dubuque! He is talking about the Dubuque area's vibrant economy, strong educational systems, superb health care, the abundance of arts and culture, unique residential options, and diverse recreational opportunities.

In addition, Mark has developed a database of 255 companies that meet the parameters of our target industries, primarily focusing on capital-intensive manufacturing companies utilizing a highly skilled workforce.

Greater Dubuque Development is also concentrating on the tech-based service sector companies to take advantage of our well-educated workforce.

Importantly within that framework, is Dubuque Works and AccessDubuqueJobs.com.

Both programs, led by Sarah Harris, have been recognized with top honors by the Mid-America Economic Development Council for continued success in addressing workforce challenges ... for developing solutions to help overcome them and for assisting job seekers while enhancing the ability of our local employers to attract qualified talent.

And most recently, Greater Dubuque Development Corp announced its newest campaign: a multi-million dollar effort to boost the Dubuque-area economy.

The initiative is aptly named "NEXT" and its goals are to create 3,300 jobs, securing \$700 million in new construction, increasing the average wage to more than \$18 per hour and growing the Dubuque county population from 93,653 to 96,500!

I want to take this opportunity to recognize Greater Dubuque Development President and CEO Rick Dickinson for his long-term and consistent leadership as well as the remarkable staff he has hired and mentored who continue to be recognized nationally and internationally for innovative and effective practices that are creating positive change in our community.

Greater Dubuque Development is helping "create the capacity to prosper."

This prosperity, from jobs to our housing market, translates into a direct and significant benefit for all residents of Dubuque. Just recently, Dubuque was again noted as one of the absolute best housing markets in the entire U.S.

About two weeks ago, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) published their quarterly House Price Index report and Dubuque stands strong above the relative ruins of the national real estate market.

As reported by this agency, seasonally adjusted prices fell 2.4 percent from the fourth quarter of 2010 to the fourth quarter of 2011.

Meanwhile, in Dubuque, things are almost the exact opposite! Dubuque's housing price index gained 1.92 percent over the previous year.

Of the 306 major market communities that the FHFA monitors, Dubuque ranks as the 4th best performing market in the USA. Over the last year, only 10 percent of all communities ranked by the FHFA either gained or maintained price values...the remaining 90 percent fell.

In fact, over the last two and one half years, Dubuque has ranked outside of the top 30 of the 300+ communities just once. More importantly, our housing market ranked #4 or higher in five of those last ten quarters.

Dubuque's remarkable performance, over the long term, is one of continuing confidence for the long term.

Also in 2011, Dubuque was the only U.S. city identified as one of the 10 Smartest Cities on the Planet by Fast Company Magazine, an acclaimed business magazine which focuses on technology, business, and design.

To emphasize how that translates on a global level, Dubuque was the only city, in the Americas, to be invited, at no cost to taxpayers, to present at the Global Eco-Summit hosted in Tainan, Taiwan this past December.

This is the kind of rare opportunity, and free advertising that not only brings a bold awareness to our community's sustainability efforts and accomplishments, but also important visibility to our local companies who are serving Asian markets!

Beginning with the Sustainable Dubuque vision and the evolution of that vision through the grassroots engagement of our citizens and community partners, I was privileged to share with an international audience our collaboration with IBM Research to create a "Smarter" Sustainable Dubuque.

Joining Dubuque and the host city of Tainan, Taiwan, were Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and India. Our cities have joined in a "Memorandum of Understanding" to continue sharing Best Practices.

While Dubuque is not the only City to take a proactive and technologically-innovative approach to resource consumption and sustainability, Dubuque IS the only American community that is integrating all the individual resources or silos of energy, water, electricity, natural gas, travel, and health and wellness into a replicable model for other communities!

Of special note, just recently the Roshek Building was awarded Platinum LEED certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. This achievement requires high performance in five categories including sustainability, energy efficiency, water savings, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

Only a handful of projects in the country – and none previously in Iowa – have received Platinum certification for historic rehabilitation.

Today, green collar jobs are found in every facet of the business community, including construction, manufacturing, agriculture, maintenance and technology.

When we talk about sharing Best Practices, I want to recognize the outreach by Sustainable City Network, Inc., a business-to-government media and publishing company based in Dubuque.

The company is led by Tom Woodward who launched SustainableCityNetwork.com in 2010 which continues to provide municipal professionals and others with quality and timely information on sustainability products, services and best practices from around the nation.

Sustainable City Network Inc. also was a co-host for the City of Dubuque's signature "Growing Sustainable Communities" annual conference last fall, and has now taken Dubuque's program to the western U.S. where a

“Growing Sustainable Communities – Western Region” conference will be held this spring in Sonoma Valley, California!

Today Dubuque is on the global map and we believe, that by keeping our focus, Dubuque will continue to rise as a place of choice for business and industry. Best practices are helping Dubuque “create the capacity to prosper!”

Another significant distinction throughout our Dubuque community is found in the increasing number of Green Vision Education Schools. The local program recognizes schools that practice pollution prevention, recycling, energy efficiency and waste reduction.

Today’s youth are demonstrating their appreciation for the importance of stewardship to their world, and are working to earn patches in conservation, watershed awareness, energy, a litter-free environment, eco-literacy, and sustainable nutrition. We have 12 Green Vision Education Schools in Dubuque!

Our elementary schools include Marshall, Resurrection, Table Mound, Lincoln, St. Columbkille’s, Prescott, St. Anthony/Our Lady of Guadalupe, Holy Ghost, and Sageville, as well as Dubuque’s Montessori School.

Joining them are Mazzuchelli Middle School and Wahlert Catholic High School!

The Green Vision Education program is managed by the Dubuque Area Solid Waste Agency, and the program is supported by a multitude of public and private partners.

They are the Dubuque Community School District, Holy Family Catholic School System, the City of Dubuque, the Dubuque County Conservation Board, Mines of Spain, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Dubuque Soil & Water Conservation District, Catfish Creek Watershed Project, Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, Seventh Power Sustainable Inc., Keep Dubuque County Clean & Green, and Green Dubuque!

I invite everyone to take a little time and visit the websites for these schools. You will be able to read, and in some cases view videos, about the stewardship efforts of our youth!

We also want to acknowledge George Washington Middle School for its new, comprehensive composting program.

As shared by Ms. Elaine Klein, the school’s Learning Resource Center Paraprofessional, this effort began with a student suggesting to Principal Mark Burns that they adopt Gandhi’s statement, “be the change you wish to see in the world” as the school’s theme this year!

To put their theme into action, the students started a composting program at all seven lunch periods and the school has been able to divert an estimated 300 gallons of waste from our landfill each week! We are honored to have representatives of this Washington Middle School project in the audience this evening.

At the higher education level, we want to acknowledge Loras College, which just this past December celebrated becoming the second Dubuque business to be certified through the East Central Intergovernmental Association’s “Petal Project” - a green business program. Finley Hospital was the first.

This certification requires improvement in five areas: energy conservation, pollution prevention, waste reduction, staff education and water conservation.

Loras added energy efficient lighting to the Graber Center which has reduced lighting costs by 50 percent. The Loras College cafe went tray-less and reduced water, energy and food waste.

Recycling containers are now in every residence hall room. Aramark Food Service renovated the cafeteria with new carpet made of recycled material, and the list goes on...

Through education, planning and conservation, our schools, from elementary to college, are helping Dubuque “create the capacity to prosper!”

This awareness, attitude, and aptitude continues in our community with the momentum, growth and visibility of arts and culture which has been nothing short of phenomenal!

Citizens will recall that not so many years ago, people of all ages, but particularly our young professionals were vocal in lamenting, “There is nothing to do in Dubuque!”

Community leaders were, in turn, lamenting the loss of these young professionals and college graduates to other communities, negatively impacting our ability to fill workforce needs.

It was in late 2005 that the City took a leadership role to affect a change that spurred private investment and has resulted in today’s vibrant, creative culture. With majority approval, the City’s budget for the arts was increased and an Arts & Cultural Advisory Commission established.

This decision, this investment, provided opportunity for a new attitude—one that literally changed the face and substance of our community.

The growth of our creative industries is what helps to keep people here—what makes the Dubuque area a destination for visitors—and has become an important reason for businesses and organizations from around the country to schedule events and conferences here.

It’s that “social/cultural vibrancy” piece of sustainability that was limping along, and has now become a “calling card” for Dubuque.

Just this past year we enjoyed the 7th year of Voices from the Warehouse District where the original production “If Only” by Dubuque Ballet’s Marina O’Rourke was performed during opening night in the gallery space, capturing the hearts and souls of all in attendance.

We have been blessed with the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra’s celebrated concerts; the breadth and depth of the Grand Opera House productions; the Dubuque Museum of Art’s “Seward Johnson sculpture” bringing thousands to the area; Fly By Night’s cutting-edge and poignant offerings; and Bell Tower Theatre’s brilliant plays.

The City’s public art program in the Port of Dubuque – *Art on the River* – continues to gain the national and international attention of artists and art lovers.

Popular cultural events at our higher education institutions entertain residents and visitors throughout the year.

Events like the Elisha Darlin Awards, the 365 Impact Awards, and the Dubuque Main Street Awards are recognizing people and organizations who contribute by way of talent and treasure to making an “impact” in our community!

Then pick a day or night in Dubuque – any day or night, and you will find it daunting to try and select from a play, a festival, an exhibition, a reading, a performance—it’s all happening, all the time, here in Dubuque!

And new on the scene, we have the creative culture exploding with energy through the Julien International Film Festival in Dubuque, also known as JIFFD! We applaud them for the dimension, diversity and energy they are bringing to our community!

On the horizon, is the University of Dubuque’s new Fine and Performing Arts Center, now under construction and dubbed as “The Wave” by students and a “beacon of light” by its architect—which promises to bring new visibility and enhanced opportunities for arts and culture to our region beginning in 2013!

Many of our wonderful arts organizations have been around for years, however many are new. At this point in our history, it’s not necessarily the longevity that is capturing the attention, it’s the collective energy, passion, and drive of the people who inspire us with their vision and creativity—so much so that Dubuque was recently dubbed “the poster child of creative place-making” by National Endowment for the Arts Chair Rocco Landesman who visited Dubuque in November.

As one of only 51 grant recipients in the country, and the only one in the State of Iowa to receive the NEA Our Town Grant, Dubuque is certainly attracting attention.

Rocco’s visit was followed by Sarah Brown of the Educational Foundation of America who observed that it is RARE to see City government, the non-profit arts sector, and artists all working collaboratively and collectively to make the community a dynamic place to live, work and create art.

The impact of this type of visioning has received the celebrated support of the local community and beyond, and can be quantified in the 1.8 million visitors to the Dubuque area annually!

The Convention and Visitors Bureau reports over \$275 million in travel-related income in 2011, up from \$254 million in 2010!

And, notably, the State of Iowa benefitted from Dubuque’s attractions with state sales tax receipts of over \$13 million.

The CVB, in partnership with the Dubuque Art Center, started Art Market, a summer program modeled after Farmers Market that is drawing artists and audiences from throughout the Midwest.

This year, the Mystique and Diamond Jo Entertainment industries are joining forces and once again investing to help attract even more visitors to Dubuque to compete with other cities in our region for visitor spending.

Their partnership and programming helps to bolster the bottom line to area hotels, cultural attractions, restaurants, and retail outlets.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau brought over 8,000 conference delegates to Dubuque in 2011 with an economic impact of \$1.5 million dollars to our community.

And, casting the net of appeal a bit wider, the CVB brought Heritage Clubs International to our community, introducing the Dubuque area to delegates from 29 states and 2 provinces in Canada.

The hard work didn't stop there though as the CVB secured the conference for the Iowa Grocery Industry Association and its 350 delegates...this is the first time this organization has left Okobojo in 30 years!

In 2012, the Dubuque Regional Sports Commission will sponsor 18 sporting events, with a projected combined economic impact to our community of \$5.5 million dollars!

And most recently, Dock Dogs and the Dubuque Convention & Visitors Bureau announced a three-year agreement to host the world championships at Five Flags Center! They expect between 400 and 500 competitors this year for the four-day event in November!

Along with our education sector, and our cultural and entertainment sectors, our tourism industry is helping Dubuque "create the capacity to prosper!"

Important on our journey, and as we heard during this year's Chamber Business Forecast Luncheon, will be our community's collective effort to develop programs that raise the bar in welcoming to Dubuque persons whose cultural traditions will serve to enrich our lives.

We live in a global society, and if we truly expect our job market to grow and flourish—and we do—we all must take responsibility to ensure it is so.

The City recently released a five-year report on its Intercultural Competency initiative, the mission of which is to work with employees to acknowledge the cultures that exist within each individual:

To help employees to understand that culture influences how each of us views the world.

And to share skills that help people mutually adapt to cultural differences in order to more effectively serve the public and meet workplace goals.

It is also part of the initiative's mission to serve as a resource to build intercultural skills in the larger community. This vital work is truly a "marathon," not a sprint and I encourage and invite all to come along.

As we move forward, the City will continue to be respectful of the recovering economic climate.

We will work to meet our financial obligations in a way that stimulates economic growth and encourages the creation and retention of jobs.

As I shared at the outset tonight, the future is not just some place we are going to rather, our work, our planning is about bringing the future into the present so that we can do something about it now.

As has been said, "Some communities make things happen, some communities watch what happens and some communities say, 'what happened?'"

Here's the difference: communities that make things happen don't stop for a victory lap. Rather, communities that make things happen always look to the future. They envision—they say, ok, what's NEXT?

Dubuque is already at work on what's NEXT. Across business and workforce development, across sustainable programs, projects and education, across tourism, arts and culture—our community is focused on "creating the capacity to prosper!"

Thank you for all that each and every one of you do and for the guidance you give!

May God bless the citizens of Dubuque, the State of Iowa, and our troops serving this great Nation!

Goodnight!