



## **MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

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### **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

Tonight as I deliver my State of the City Address, I reflect back over this past year as Mayor, and realize the City has had a progressive year. I would like to take this opportunity to review some of our highlights.

Last year the City of Willmar saw its tax base increase by adding 37 single-family homes as our Housing Task Force Study has shown, the City of Willmar has deficit in every level of housing units.

The City saw an increase of \$60 million in total construction valuation; some of our larger projects are our school system expansions, Dooley's Petroleum, Mattress Firm and Hobby Lobby to name a few. The construction at the wastewater treatment site for Willmar Poultry's new hatchery shows public private partnership to the benefit of both the City and the industry.

The City also completed the land release at the former airport property which will enhance our industrial park making it ready for development. This includes achieving shovel-ready certification and we anticipate strong interest in our industrial park for 2017.

Our adopted Master Park Plan calls for improvements at Rice Park. The planning for that project has been completed and we are waiting for additional funding and direction from the Council as to how this project will be completed. The gem of our community, Robbins Island, saw significant use this year over previous years. This included the Rockin' Robbins events hosted by our local rotary clubs and the beginning construction of our Destination Playground. Receiving notification for our grant application for Legacy Funds at Robbins Island will allow for substantial construction in 2017 along with completion of our Destination Playground. These projects will provide additional public access to Robbins Island and use should increase substantially in future years.

Our public safety agencies were again kept busy. Of particular note was our flood event that happened in August where 8-10 inches of rain fell within a 24-hour period of time. Our staff should be commended for a job well done and our recovery efforts are still underway working with community outreach groups from the Willmar Area Community Foundation. Our Police Department started a Coffee with a Cop program and a Pop with a Cop event which were well attended and allowed our police officers to interact with the public in a more casual atmosphere.

The position of City Administrator remains unstable within the City with Larry Kruse resigning as our City Administrator and hiring Mike McGuire as our Interim. We also saw some staffing reorganization hiring Bridget Buckingham as our Human Resource Director and Kevin Halliday, our long-seated City Clerk retiring. Our Assessing office was transferred to Kandiyohi County on July 1<sup>st</sup> and that saw a transfer of clerical staff within City Hall. These adjustments have been difficult for staff and continued support from Council and citizens has been appreciated as we move through this process.

A final item I would like to address is Vision 2040 and the progress we have made over the last year with their involvement. Blue Cross/Blue Shield has committed to invest approximately \$2 million to be used within the City of Willmar for healthy living initiatives and the positive impacts will serve Willmar well into the future. The fundraising for our Destination Playground is currently underway with groundbreaking planned for 2017. This will allow families in our area to use the 19,000 SF playground and enjoy Robbins Island.

The November election saw new faces being elected to the City Council with the retirement of Council Member Ahmann, Anderson and Johnson. Our newly elected Council Members are Alvarado, Asmus and Schwantes.

Having just completed our Retreat, I am looking forward to a number of positive actions the Council took including establishing a clear change of command when communicating between Council and staff so good City governance can happen. 2017 looks to be a promising year with development and I look forward to working on projects jointly with our intergovernmental partners as well.

In closing Willmar has many positive things happening and I urge each of you citizens to get on board and get involved to make it a true regional center for Central Minnesota. Thank you and May God bless our City.



Marv Calvin  
Mayor for the City of Willmar