



City of Rock Island State of the City Address – January, 2016

I would like to start by recognizing our two newly elected aldermen. In the Second Ward, we have Alderman Virgil Mayberry and in the Sixth Ward we have Alderman Joshua Schipp. They join a hard working team, including: Ivory Clark in the First Ward, PJ Foley in the Third Ward, Steve Tollenaer in the Fourth Ward, Kate Hotle in the Fifth Ward and Chuck Austin in the Seventh Ward. This team is charged with making the tough decisions on the needs of the city. Our City Manager, Thomas Thomas, continues to lead his team of dedicated directors as they come together to guide the city through the challenging day to day operations of the city. As we continue to face numerous financial obstacles, this management team is often charged with doing more with less.

As the State of Illinois continues to deal with budget issues, Rock Island starts 2016 with a balanced budget and continues to have a strong AA2 bond rating. We will fully fund our pension obligations again this year; maintain our financial reserves and we continue to evaluate each open staff position in an effort to reduce expenses. 2016 will be the fifth year in a row where the City of Rock Island has not increased the property tax rate.

2015 was another busy year for our Information Technology Department. Mobile operations continue to grow and the new patrol fleet will have 4G communications software and video recording. Our Fire Department will also have their ambulances and command vehicles outfitted with 4G communications and new software, thereby establishing a paperless reporting environment in our public service divisions. Additional video surveillance was installed along 15th Avenue and the IT Department personnel worked tirelessly to meet the opening date of the new police department.

Microsoft based systems continue to evolve and municipal efficiencies in technology have leveraged cloud computing. Growth of internet usage continues and public safety technologies are transforming at an astounding rate. A major project in 2015 was to continue to address systems that are no longer supported by Microsoft. A number of desktop computers, laptops and mobile data terminals have been either replaced or upgraded to eliminate Windows XP and several new software systems, such as Fleet Management and Marina Management, were implemented. Our Information Technology Department works diligently to insure all the systems in Rock Island are kept up to date.

The Rock Island Library continues to meet the goals and objectives set out in its strategic plan. In 2015, the library introduced new literacy and learning opportunities for adults, teens and children. The combined story time attendance at all locations is 6,090 higher

than last year and total circulation of library materials has increased by 2,091 above last year.

The Children's Department has introduced "Stemazing", an after school science, technology, engineering and math fun time for elementary school students; and "Play and Grow", an early literacy program that encourages children from birth to 5 years old to learn reading, playing and socializing skills. There is also a new "1000 Books Before Kindergarten" program to help boost a child's learning potential and they added Playaway Launchpads, tablet computers that offer interactive learning and literacy through age appropriate themed games that are extremely popular.

The young adult librarian is working to engage teens, visiting classes at every Junior High and High School in Rock Island. She has encouraged hundreds of our youth to seek out the books she talks about.

The library's adult services department has added new, small free libraries throughout the community. These mini libraries are located at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Botanical Center, Community Health Care Clinic, RIFAC and both township offices. The library also offers a variety of important services, such as free tax preparation Saturdays and several other programs to our residents.

As you can see, it has been a very busy year for the Library board and staff and 2016 looks to be just as busy. A fundraising feasibility study will begin in 2016 to determine if the one building concept is possible. Much has been said about the idea of expanding the main library. Studies prove that libraries remain a necessity for communities. We will see what the future holds.

In 2015, the Martin Luther King Jr. Center marked a major milestone by hosting a Gala Black Tie event to celebrate its 40 year anniversary. The agency completed a strategic plan entitled "Thriving in Our 4th Decade; A Three Year Plan". The plan has three pillars: sustainability, stewardship, and structure. In 2015, the center served 21,860 residents through a variety of programs and services. 160 students attended the six week summer day camp program emphasizing social skills building and education in an effort to prevent summer learning loss. The center continued its program of substance abuse prevention and pregnancy prevention programming for over 2,300 students.

The King Center Metropolitan Youth Program engaged a 54 event performance schedule throughout the year in community impacting events and they participated in the Chicago McDonalds Thanksgiving Day parade for the second consecutive year.

The annual Thanksgiving dinner at the center continues to be a huge success and this year they provided meals to over 1,224 people. Their annual Christmas party served a total of 581 attendees, 409 of which were children, providing families with the needed support for holiday gifts and family centered entertainment.

The King Center's Active Club mobilized 132 members last year, encouraging its members, 55 years of age and older, to remain active in their community. They hosted the

second year of the King Café, a senior citizen led initiative that promotes volunteerism, community building, dialog and food.

The King Center provides income tax return preparation and many other programs, they offer meeting space for the members of the community, and they hold several special events throughout the year to help build a stronger community through collaborations.

The Rock Island Parks and Recreation Department provides outstanding parks facilities and programs. In 2015, they developed a new youth scholarship program called "Try-Play". It was developed in conjunction with the Rock Island County Area Project, Rock Island Township, South Rock Island Township, the Rock Island Library, MetroLink and Rock Island Parks. The goal is to increase access for those with limited resources to participate in camps, sports, swimming lessons and the ability to attend White Water Junction, RIFAC and the golf courses at reduced rates.

Parks personnel are working to complete the web based registration to make it easier for people to sign up for classes, rentals, special events and other park and recreation activities.

They worked to expand programming and practice space by working with the YWCA. Offerings have included fitness classes, swimming classes, martial arts and practice space for youth baseball.

The Parks Department worked with a local pickle ball club to develop a fundraising committee, with the goal of adding more pickle ball courts. They added additional courts at Mel McKay Park this past year, adding more opportunities to play this quickly expanding sport.

With the help of Blackhawk College and a state grant, they completed significant upgrades to Douglas Park, including underground wiring for field #1 and the replacement of all the bleacher boards. The intent is to increase participation in youth baseball at Douglas Park.

Other Park accomplishments include:

- The installation of new playground equipment at Hasselroth Park in the southwest area
- Rebuilt pumps and motors at Highland Springs and Saukie golf courses to improve efficiency
- Completed reroofing the Rock Island Fitness and Activity Center and the Genesius Guild theatre at Lincoln Park
- Developed a number of new programs at the golf courses, including a 50 and over league, a women's golf tournament and the First Tee Youth program

The Rock Island Fire Department continues to excel and look towards the future as they enhance their services. In 2015, they improved their ISO rating from a 4 to a 3. The lower rating improves insurance premiums for residential and commercial properties and is a prime factor that can be used to attract new businesses to the community.

The new 800mhz communication system was approved and went online in April, 2015. This new system enhances communication capabilities with any fire agency in the metropolitan area, which is very vital in case of a large, multi-jurisdictional emergency or disaster incident.

A new rescue boat, a first for the Rock Island Fire Department, was put into use in July, 2015. This boat will provide emergency services on both the Mississippi and Rock Rivers and will be used at special events such as Red, White and Boom and Floatzilla. The boat will augment the departments rescue operations for individuals needing emergency assistance while boating or swimming on the rivers.

In response to a UnityPoint Health request, the fire department purchased new tablets and software for paperless medical report writing. UnityPoint assisted with the purchase of the software.

The Rock Island Fire Department promotes a positive and professional image for the City of Rock Island and will continue our cooperative efforts with our neighboring departments, regional special response teams and state training opportunities.

This past December, the Police Department began moving into their new facility between 12th and 13th Streets and 5th and 7th Avenues. This is a state of the art facility that improves the level of efficiency and the level of service to the public.

- The lobby is substantially larger with better access and a front desk that is combined with their records division for more efficient service to citizens
- Larger public parking lot
- Private interview rooms off the lobby
- Inside parking for squad cars
- State of the art crime lab
- All evidence housed under one roof

The department upgraded all in squad technologies, including radios, mobile data terminals and in car video recording systems. The Police department also upgraded to the 800mhz system, which is the standardized system for the entire Quad Cities.

The department merged several units into one unit, now designated as the Tactical Operations Unit. Police personnel are now cross trained to better address any issues throughout the city, allowing for better utilization of personnel and resources.

In 2015, for the first time in three years, the Mississippi River did not flood and Public Works did not have to expend resources to fight floods. This allowed the department to start earlier on a large number of maintenance programs, including patching streets, replacing sidewalks, replacing signs, grading alleys, repairing catch basins and monitoring a wide variety of other programs.

The Engineering Division was busy managing numerous maintenance projects. One of the two largest projects for the year was the full depth concrete patching, where bad sections of concrete are replaced all the way to the base material and numerous small

repairs were completed around the city using this method. With the Hot in Place program, 56 blocks were replaced at less than \$9,000 a block. This represents a significant cost savings over the traditional resurfacing, allowing us to do more streets for the dollar.

The Sidewalk Repair Program was expanded in 2015. Locations were identified by citizen requests. The program was very well received and crews have already replaced over 13,700 square feet of sidewalk (624 panels in 48 locations throughout the city).

Public Works personnel trialed two new test programs in 2015. The first was the enhancement of gravel alleys. 15 blocks of gravel alleys were either seal coated or treated with asphalt millings, then sprayed with a liquid asphalt product. All indications are that both processes offered significant improvement. The second was seal coating of asphalt streets that were beyond patching or recycling. The streets were ground smooth, seal coated and topped off with a sealer. That also appears to be a success. These streets and alleys will be evaluated in 2016 to see if the program should be expanded.

Over the past year, the City Council has had ongoing discussions regarding the special assessment program for street repairs. The council ultimately decided in September to discontinue the program as a way to fund street repairs. With a variety of new cost saving techniques like the New in Place Recycling Program, the city will be able to continue to improve streets without special assessment funds.

Work continues on our Long Term Control Plan. The largest project of the year was the 6th Avenue Relief Sewer and at \$10.6 million, this is probably the largest underground infrastructure project ever completed by the city. This project involves 20 blocks of large diameter storm sewer along 6th Avenue from 6th Street to 25th Street. Work on the rest of the control plan continues and all the work on the plan will be completed in 2017 long before the Federal government's completion date requirement of 2018.

The city's water treatment plant is over 100 years old and this past May, the City Council approved funding to move forward with design and engineering for a replacement plant.

The City of Rock Island had an exciting year in Economic Development in 2015. It started off in January with the opening of The Locks, a 36 unit apartment building, the opening of the MetroLink transit center on 20th Street and 2nd Avenue and the Rock Island Housing Authority opened the Linden Lane Project with 52 new living units. February was highlighted with the opening of Hill and Valley at their new, \$12 million facility. Their relocation retained approximately 140 jobs and will add an additional 25 more in the near future. In March, UnityPoint Health opened their new \$65 million Emergency Room and Heart Center. In August, FedEx opened its new 185,000 square foot distribution facility and Green Thumb Industries opened their new medical marijuana grow facility.

The city partnered with Habitat for Humanity this past year to build new homes in Rock Island and also partnered with ARC for additional group homes.

Hawk Technology, a leading designer and manufacturer of a wide number of industrial products, opened their new expansion in October. They currently have more than 50

employees and are still growing. Rock Island Animal Hospital completed its new state of the art facility in November.

Walmart signed a contract for a new superstore on 11th Street and 40th Avenue and CVS will be opening very soon at its new location on 18th Avenue.

The city is currently undertaking the creation of a Heritage Resource Plan to help formulate and identify specific strategies for the city's historic preservation program and recently began an 18 month process to update the zoning code and sign ordinance.

The city began a new Micro-CIRLF loan program this past year. This new program is designed to make loans to small businesses, who may not qualify for traditional loans. The maximum loan is \$10,000 and to date, six businesses have taken advantage of the program.

The City of Rock Island and Renaissance Rock Island have a very strong public / private partnership that has been in existence for over 30 years. The partnership continues to help build a better future for our community.

Developments around the city include:

Completion of the Villas at College Hill. In March, three new homes ranging from \$209,900 to \$234,900 were completed.

The two phased development downtown called Star Block continues. The historical redevelopment will have 22 residential units and first floor commercial space with Soi 2 Thai Street Food opening and El Patron relocating there and tripling their existing size in 2015.

The Garden District, 7 new single family homes broke ground in July, 2015 and they are currently under construction. These 2 and 3 bedroom homes will range from 1,400 to over 1,700 square feet in size and completion is expected in the spring of 2016.

Recently there was an announcement of the redevelopment of Zimmerman Lofts. The building will house 45 living units and 21,100 square feet of commercial space.

To date, Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation has assisted 677 homebuyers purchase homes in Rock Island since 1998. The Live-Work Rock Island program is unique to our city and it's an excellent opportunity for those who work in Rock Island to purchase a home here.

The Development Association of Rock Island is proud to have rolled out two editions of the downtown magazine. The latest edition focuses on our workforce downtown. This magazine is a great way to learn about all the things downtown has to offer.

Earlier in the spring, we completed our Downtown Strategic Plan. As a direct result of that plan, parking in the downtown area has become much more convenient. As of January 1,

2016, parking meters were removed and we went to 4 hour parking with a limited number of 30 minute spots. The parking deck and selected lots are free unlimited parking.

2015 saw many, new restaurant openings and expansions.

- Moe's Burgers and Brews – formerly At Your Service Catering expanded to a restaurant / bar and catering operation
- Soi 2 Thai Street Food – part of the Star Block development
- Gunchies Rock Island – they did extensive remodeling, both inside and out, to the former Hunter's Club
- Nana's Chicken and Fish – rejuvenated the old Maid Rite building on 5th Avenue when they expanded their business with their second restaurant in the Quad Cities
- El Patron – this successful downtown restaurant, relocated across the street to the Star Block building, tripling their size
- Mad Roots Juicery – reopened under new ownership
- Roosters – new owners brought a new flair and a new menu to the District
- Cabana's reopened under new ownership

With all the new, 2015 also saw the closing of a downtown restaurant that was the epitome of fine dining. I want to congratulate and thank Chef Rachid Bouchareb and his spouse, Therese, for bringing La Figero to Rock Island in 1982 and providing such a fine dining experience for all Quad Citians for the past 33 years. I wish them the very best in retirement.

Other new businesses in the downtown area include:

- Discounted Furniture – selling quality used furniture for living rooms, dining rooms, bedrooms and more
- J Wild Marketing – full service marketing consulting that is customized to fit all unique situations
- The C.O.O.L. Closet – a high end resale clothing store, where proceeds go towards faith based programs for kids
- Coleman Florist – an 86 year old Rock Island business relocated from their original location on 12th Street to downtown Rock Island
- Gentry Boutique – a new women's clothing store
- Spell Bound New Age and Gift Shop – a unique shop offering a wide variety of new age gifts
- Rocket Bottoms – a cloth baby diaper and baby clothing store
- Lavish Salon and Spa – a trendy new full service salon
- Cycle Therapy – bicycle sales and service on all brands of bikes, located just off the bike path

New businesses opening around the city include:

- Grand opening of Friendship Manor's Memory Care
- Taste Buds – a new owner reopened the former Oh Nuts in the College Hill area with an expanded product line

- Pressly Funeral Home – recently remodeled and reopened the former Larson Funeral Home facility
- GPX Electric – relocated and expanded their business
- Athletico – will be open soon in their new building on the corner of 39th Street and 18th Avenue
- 1103 Marketing – opened recently, providing marketing services for small and medium size businesses
- Shakespeare Chocolates – relocated to Rock Island and expanded their business
- Divvy Dose – a start up pharmacy that is reinventing medicine dispensing
- Pizano Electric – moved into Rock Island and expanded their business
- The expansion and addition of fuel pumps at Jesse Mart
- Statewide Tire – opened their latest warehouse and distribution center here in Rock Island
- Title Max – opened their business on 11th Street in August
- Blackhawk Therapy and Business Coaching opened this past year
- Spot On Target Marketing – opened their call center with 10 new jobs
- Rock Island High School INCubator Program began their yearlong entrepreneurial class that takes young entrepreneurs from the ideation phase of business, to creating a Minimum Viable Product, to being in Operation. The city's Economic Development Manager was selected to be a mentor

In Rock Island, we solidly support the efforts of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce. We continue to support regionalism as a way for the entire area to grow and prosper. We fully support the Rock Island Arsenal and will continue to support the programs initiated by Arsenal personnel. Hopefully everyone agrees that our best avenue to a stronger and better Quad City metropolitan area is for all of us to work together.

Thank you.



Mayor, City of Rock Island