
Rochester, MN : State of the City

Happy New Year! It's been an honor to serve as your Mayor, now beginning my fourteenth year. As the State of Minnesota's 3rd largest city we are approaching a population of 115,000. Our growth continues without any real impact from Destination Medical Center (DMC) which projects 35,000 plus new jobs in the 20-year plan. For sure this growth creates challenges for our staff and of course the budget. I hasten to say these are challenges I believe 95% of the cities in America would love to have.

2016 is the Year of the Monkey on the Chinese New Year lunar calendar. Love and romance are qualities that embrace this year's celebration, qualities we could all benefit from and deliver. Compassion and civility are also qualities we could all benefit from and deliver, and I ask that we all can embrace, not only during this recent Christmas and Holiday Season; as a City, in our policies and to our citizens, as a council to each other and to staff. As we continue to build an inclusive community, compassion will go a long way towards making Rochester not only the healthiest but also the most compassionate city. A recent fad, perhaps, is a small company that has created simplistic jewelry, "What's your Word?" and then the word, could Rochester's word be "compassion"?

KROC Radio has been commemorating their 80th anniversary with recordings from years gone by. On September 14, 1938 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was in Rochester, by train, to visit his son James who was receiving medical care at the Mayo Clinic. FDR referred to his "friends" in

Rochester as "I came not as president but as a father". You treated me as such and he acknowledged "the full realization of the splendid care James received". He added "friend" best described the people of Rochester "having an understanding heart". COMPASSION!

And certainly I can't leave this subject without referencing the honor I and Rochester received when I received an invitation from the White House to attend the historic presidential welcome of Pope Francis to the United State on the South Lawn of the White House on September 23rd.

15,000 people were in attendance and heard the Pope. He began by saying, "Mr. President, I am deeply grateful for your welcome in the name of Americans, with their fellow citizens we are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive to safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities, and to rejecting every form of unjust discrimination." "Mr. President, I find it encouraging that you are proposing an initiative for reducing air pollution. Accepting the urgency, it seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to our future generation". "We still have time to make the change needed to bring about a sustainable and integral development for we know that things can change."

On October 12, 2015 I signed a proclamation proclaiming that Rochester should apply for funding to develop a comprehensive energy plan that includes all three sectors: electric, transport and heating/cooling. This plan should be done by a consulting firm with a proven record and experience in developing 100% renewable energy plans.

The Center for Energy and Environment presented a Coordinated Energy Plan recommendations for advancing DMC energy and climate goals, coordinating infrastructure investments and operating principles and identify metrics by which benefits can be measured. This is an opportunity for Rochester, Mayo Clinic and the DMC to be recognized for sustainability worldwide.

Public Safety continues to be a priority for our city and citizens. The growth of the City and related increases in call load have made the last year challenging. The staff of the Police Department have responded to the challenge by aggressively investigating reported crimes and holding prolific and serious offenders accountable. Clearance rates for serious crimes increased by 3% last year. The Rochester Police Department clearance rates for violent crimes are 9% above the national average, while clearance rates for property crimes are 13% above the national average. The department will be hiring 4 officers, bringing their authorized sworn strength to 135.5. Additional investigation and public safety dispatches and a radio communications specialist all will come on board April 1st, 2016. As we all know there have been tragic incidents across the United States alleging police brutality or worse. I am proud of our police department and its officers.

This past year we created our Police Policy Oversight Commission. They have been active reviewing policy and assisting in the Police Body Camera process. I believe we're one of the first in the State to utilize this technology.

Since 1866 the Rochester Fire Department has evolved into a full service department and one of the finest, not only in the state but the nation, in 2015 they responded almost 10,000 times, 5% more than in 2014. They respond to not only fire but medical calls which partnering with our Police Department and Gold Cross

has made Rochester the national leader in cardiac arrest survival. Rochester Fire Department's mission reflects this philosophy "compassionately solve problems that affect life and property".

Recently on a fire call, the first truck handled the situation while the fire fighters in a second truck noticed a neighbor struggling to remove snow from his sidewalk. They came to his assistance by grabbing shovels and helped him. Compassion in action!

Sometime in March there will be a kick-off to raise money for bringing the original fire station clock back to Station 1 where it sat from 1889-1930 and later at Mayo Civic Center. An anonymous donor put up \$100,000 and we'll be partnering with the Rochester Area Foundation to raise the additional funds for the \$300,000 project.

The Fire Department will be adding two firefighters in July this year.

As with our police our firefighters too experience danger every time they leave the station. We've become a safer community thanks to the dedication of these brave men and women. I can't say thank you strongly enough.

The new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Station 2 improves disaster communications for our citizens by creating multiple partnerships between SE Minnesota Healthcare Coalition, Mayo Clinic and the City of Rochester. A unique partnership with Rochester International Airport will be documented in a research study to be released in 2016.

An area of concern nationally, Minnesota, and yes, here in Rochester is the issue of "human trafficking" or as is said "modern day slavery". The Sisters of Saint Francis have "shed light on this issue" and again are hosting a workshop, Saturday, January 16, 2016 at Assisi Heights. In their workshop announcement they quote recent statistics from the Rochester Police Department, since May 2014:

- 13 "Johns" arrested for soliciting persons between the ages of 15-17.
- 20 "Johns" arrested for soliciting persons 18 years or older.
- 11 individuals arrested for trafficking others.

This is just here in Rochester and we can make a difference. Thanks to our Police Department's work in this area.

I and individual council members are approached frequently about the possibility of creating additional Partner Cities. We currently have three:

- Moosburg, Germany – our most active with student exchanges every other year.
- Xian Yang, China
- Siheung City, South Korea, newest but not very active. I have visited all three.

Mazatlán, Mexico; Kenya, Sudan, and Mogadishu, Somalia have expressed strong interest.

Mazatlán has been most persistent. There are reasons to do this – pros and cons. I think the Council has to review these requests and develop criteria for deciding what are the benefits and costs.

A great opportunity we have is to become the 1st Intercultural City in the United States. The Intercultural City Initiative would align the collective knowledge, power, creativity, expertise and energy of our city toward a future of exclusive growth. We would be joining more than 60 cities in Europe, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico and Canada providing measureable progress toward a vision of a more inclusive, cohesive and equitable city supporting a strong and diverse economy. I would like to present this to our Council and act upon the positive possibility.

Construction has occurred outside DMC. This year we opened a new Fire Station 2 in NE Rochester, this will improve service in that area in addition to being a major upgrade from our oldest station at Silver Lake. Station 2 will also be adding a future 911 Center. We've added seating, concessions and lockers to the Rochester Regional Stadium at RCTC and the new Senior Center, 125 Live and Recreation Center expansion are progressing.

It's obvious the great progress that's been made at the Mayo Civic Center expansion. Major completion of the Center will occur in 2016 with total completion in 2017. We will be seeking State bonding money for improvements to Rochester International Airport to upgrade our U.S. Customs facilities to facilitate entry of our international visitors.

As a community, builders are addressing various housing needs. At our recent 32nd Mayor's Medal of Honor Joe Weis was recognized for creating 465 affordable

housing units since 1999 with more than 100 in the queue. Since 2000 the City has provided assistance to facilitate the construction of over 1400 affordable housing units within the City.

Through November 2015, the City has issued building permits for the construction of 1156 multifamily units and 322 single family dwellings.

In 2015 the City provided assistance to facilitate the construction of 2 multi-family rental workforce housing projects with a total of 103 units; additionally, in October housing tax credits were awarded for a proposed 68 unit multi-family rental housing project in downtown Rochester.

And, while not new construction the City's purchase, with Mayo Clinic assistance, of the Historic

Chateau Theatre has created much excitement regarding its re-use. The taskforce will be visiting other theater restorations in the next couple of months and continue discussing the possible re-use and a management structure. Personally, I look forward to the Chateau returning to a theater and reception facility. It's a gem that will be center of the DMC's "Heart of the City:

The Arts are a valuable asset in Rochester and for the most part are thriving. Dancing for the Arts, the Ardee Awards, Civic Theatre (sold out performances), Rochester Arts Center (new Executive Director, Megan Johnston) and the various high schools music and theater ("Chicago" comes to mind at Mayo High School) and marching bands.

Our own Civic Music Department will be producing the 25th Summer of Down By the Riverside, an event that is accessible and appeals to all ages and economic and social status. The Rochester Symphony Orchestra and Chorale has Maestro Jere Lantz taking the reins as president and CEO in addition to the 35 years he's been music director of the orchestra. Presentation Hall will be enhanced to provide a better facility for the orchestra and others.

Others have had difficulties including the Words Players looking for performance space and Southeastern Minnesota Visual Artists (SEMVA) who are looking for gallery space that is accessible to locals and visitors. I wish them well. For some, in or near the restored Chateau Theatre may be an option.

Another DMC district that I'm expecting to see activity this year is "Discovery Square", where entrepreneurs will start creating the jobs DMC is projecting. We have the opportunity for people working close together with startups creating "collisions" which stimulate creativity and growth. The excitement is building. It is critical that we simultaneously address our parking and transit needs as it relates to DMC and the growth, and this is occurring.

I thank the work of our staff who I have the greatest respect for. I especially appreciate our administration staff and Donna Bussell, Mayor's Associate. And to the love of my life, my wife Judy who this March we will have been married 55 years – thank you and God Bless. She has some medical challenges and hopeful for resolution this year.

This year is an election year, for three City Council members, Council Member-at-Large, and all of our State of Minnesota legislators. Of course, how could we not know that there will be a presidential election this year as well?

Will Rogers once said, "I honestly believe there are people so excited over this election that they must think that the President has something to do with running this country."

The past year has been extra busy with multiple scheduled and unscheduled DMC related meetings. While my own numbers don't fully support it I continue to "average" over 1300 "events" per year. Phone calls and ad hoc meetings do not get counted.

With regards to Moosburg, Germany our oldest Partner City, 1982, I'm working on a trip to

Moosburg this September. It's been 10 years since we visited Moosburg. Our trip will leave September 14, 2016. We will visit Moosburg, Munich and Oktoberfest, Vienna, Salzburg, Prague and Berlin, coming home September 28. I hope to have final plans and a brochure in the next few weeks.

Pope Francis said in his Christmas message, "Make Peace Grow" and for this year's Happy New Year "We'll take a cup of kindness yet, for Auld Lang Syne". And in closing, from Rochester's Poet Laureate, Jane Belau:

Rochester was
And is
And always will be
An innovative center
Of healthcare
Education
Sciences of research and treatment
Financial and Human resources
Employment preparation and training
Technology advancement

And most importantly,
The people of Rochester and surrounding communities are
Heart-based
Diverse
Welcoming
Helpful
Faith centered Thoughtful and Caring.
This drives everything else.
And for that we are continually grateful.

Thank you.
Ardell F. Brede
Mayor