

ROSEMOUNT STATE OF CITY, Rosemount Mayor Bill Droste, March 16, 2016

Welcome to *your* Steeple Center. I am so pleased to be able to speak with you here, after all the renovations that we've made. I believe we've achieved the goal of creating a space where we can come together for community and cultural events. We cut the ribbon last month on the expansion of the Center. It brings our senior programs into a more pleasant and spacious atmosphere. And it provides space for arts activities. This is a City owned property, which means we all have a share in it. I hope you will take a look at the expansion before you leave here this morning, and bear in mind: it's available for rent.

As I look back on 2015, what I see – and what I believe most residents would agree – is that it was a year when our main street began to change significantly. Whether it was the expansion here at the Steeple Center ... or the completion of The Rosemount senior living facility that attaches directly to this expansion ... or the major redevelopment of the Fluegel's building ... or the work on the Cambrian senior housing development ... residents continually have seen changes on South Robert Trail, our "Main Street." When I represent the City around the metropolitan area, I have often been told by people who have passed through our town: "Wow, you have a lot going on in Rosemount." It's so true that new buildings create interest and excitement as the landscape changes.

What's especially satisfying is to know that what we see now is a payoff of a long effort. These projects take a long time, and in some cases several years – and, yes, some starts and stops and failures and restarts -- before a successful project comes to life. I always feel how fortunate we are to have business owners, developers, and investors who are willing to take the risks of investing their money and time in our future.

So what do these projects bring to our community? The senior housing units are meeting a growing need we see through demographic changes. State Senator Greg Clausen recently shared some analyses by the State Demographer. They show that, true to their name, the Baby Boomers are providing a boom in our senior population. It will grow substantially in Minnesota for the next 20 years. Around 2020, seniors will exceed the number of 5-to-17-year-olds – even though that youth group will also continue to grow.

So it's a wonderful asset that next door, we have The Rosemount to provide several housing options for our older residents, including an important element of assisted living that was not available before in the community. We also see continued growth in single family homes to meet the needs of new families that often include children, a good sign for continued growth. Diverse housing stocks are an important element of any city, so that people can stay in one hometown through all stages of life. We will be analyzing this issue over the next couple years, making sure we have the land and zoning in place to meet market demands.

We have had such success with public-private partnerships. When we cut the ribbon on the expansion of this facility, we honored SKB Environmental for its timely donation. At the ceremony next door, we thanked the private developer, The Makado Group, led by Mark Appelbaum, for bringing in such a quality project. We also had the support of grants from the Metropolitan Council and the Dakota County Community Development Agency. All those actors came together to fulfill a vision of the City Council going back to 2004, when we bought this land for a library and to preserve a landmark building. That vision was carried out by successive members of the Council and City staff, along with the advice of the Rosemount Planning Commission. And yes, that's a lot of moving parts – and no one knows better than I, it's a lot of paperwork and meetings. But I believe it all contributed to a stronger outcome that will serve Rosemount well for decades to come.

Of course, buildings like these are not the only place where people in our community can interact. In our community surveys, we know that residents highly value our park system. With the growth of new neighborhoods and with concerns in America about lack of physical activity, especially for our youth, we take this issue seriously. We want to make sure Rosemount is supporting our health. When building parks, we look for ways to make each park unique and exciting. We want to capture children's interest – to compete with their video games -- and encourage more outdoor time.

We added our 28th park, Ailesbury Park near Connemara and Akron, this past year, and are working on three more parks in new housing developments around our community. Greystone will be 29th ... Horseshoe Lake will be 30th ... and Dunmore will be 31st. We've also improved Jaycee Park. Another new element we hope to add in 2016 is a dog park connecting to our trails. It will encourage outdoor activity on two feet and four. Beyond the parks the City is responsible for, we should also see activity on the Mississippi River Trail system. When the Rosemount segment is complete, people will be able to walk or bike through the scenic vistas from Saint Paul to Hastings. In all of this the City Council depends on the analysis of our Parks and Recreation Commission.

To enjoy our neighborhoods and homes we depend on the service of the City's public safety personnel. Last year Rosemount Police responded to 8% more calls than the year before.

Here's an example of what's behind the numbers. Thefts from motor vehicles have become a problem affecting many communities. They are an easy way for perpetrators to get cash and items to pawn and supply money for their own addictions ... ranging from illegal drugs to gambling. They are particularly invasive to the victims, who lose personal information and property. They can be quite financially draining when wallets, purses, computers, or phones are stolen. It also consumes resources for Police, who take significant measures to prevent these crimes only to be burdened by writing reports and then trying to solve and deter the problem. The overall strain on a community by seemingly "petty crimes" can be substantial.

From the end of April into early May, Rosemount had a rash of these thefts. Officers took a total of 23 reports of vehicle break-ins over a four-day period. The Police Department's Investigations Unit began mapping where the crimes occurred. The unit discovered that 18 of the 23 thefts had occurred in a small area. They quickly developed suspects. On May 12, the Investigations Unit executed a search warrant at the suspects' residence. Many pieces of property from the thefts were located as well as illegal drugs. Both suspects gave confessions that resolved many of the thefts ... along with some residential burglaries in Rosemount and Apple Valley.

We've also seen an upswing in other types of theft and of fraud cases. Much of it strikes us from the other side of the country, or even of the world, through our computers. Identity theft is a growing problem in almost every community. I am pleased that we have entered into an agreement with nine other agencies in Dakota County to investigate these crimes. We can draw on expertise that was hard to obtain before. And our Department continues to offer presentations on how to protect yourself from cyber-crime, especially for our oldest and youngest residents who may be most vulnerable.

And through it all, Rosemount Police handle the life-and-death cases. In July and August, Rosemount Police Officers responded to medical calls where they provided lifesaving CPR to two different individuals.

Not everything our Officers do is an emergency call. Our department reaches out to help members of the community who need a boost. For the first time, Rosemount Police held a "Shop with a Cop" event one evening in December. It brought Officers together with disadvantaged families. Money was raised by Officers bagging groceries for citizens at Cub Foods. Funds also came from local businesses, as well as meals for all involved. The Police helped 18 children buy and wrap gifts to give to someone else. The event was a huge success ... bringing together many different people from the community alongside law-enforcement in a non-traditional way.

Rosemount's Fire Department responded to 710 calls last year, five fewer than the year before. Only 16 of those calls were actual fires. Medical calls totaled 438, up from the year before. One number that's especially important is the average response time, which was cut by 25 seconds last year. The Department also saw workforce change with the hiring of its first female firefighter in quite some time.

Our Fire Department clearly stayed busy in 2015. Firefighters once again started the spring battling natural forces with several lightning strikes that resulted in structure fires. One of the more challenging fires as a result of lightning was when two townhomes within a hundred feet of each other reported fires. The Department had to tap into the mutual aid system and was assisted by the Apple Valley and Farmington Fire Departments.

A bright spot for the year was that Rosemount Fire only had to extinguish one serious kitchen fire. An unusual call came when a fire broke out in ten rail cars that were used for storage of antique farm equipment on the east side. On arrival Firefighters saw that all ten cars were fully engulfed. Extinguishing it once again took a multi-city response from area fire departments.

Rosemount Fire closed out the year with a large chlorine leak that occurred at a business on the east side of town. Several employees were injured and had to be decontaminated and transported to the hospital. The Dakota County Special Operations Team had to be called in for assistance to contain the leak and conduct air monitoring to ensure public safety.

In 2015, we completed our in-depth work with faculty and grad students at the University of Minnesota, through the school's Resilient Communities Project. We received more than three dozen excellent reports drawing on the expertise of the University and the energy and inquisitiveness of the next generation. Already we've incorporated some of the ideas into our park planning. We've gained new perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for economic development. And we got some great ideas for public engagement to draw on the opinions and the wisdom of our own citizens.

Earlier this month, we completed interviews with residents who want to assist us on the Council. They want to join our Commissions that advise the Council on policies and projects. I am so pleased to see the breadth of experience in our community ... the number of people who are volunteering to help us guide Rosemount.

We will also draw on the wisdom of our community in the next year as we work on the revision of Rosemount's Comprehensive Plan that's required every ten years. That's a lengthy document required by state law. We use it to plan for future needs in a way that is sustainable. We will be reaching out to residents and the business community throughout the year to make sure we have the best data available for this project.

We've enjoyed great growth and investment in many parts of the community the past year. Many small businesses have found growth potential in Rosemount. I think of the ribbon cutting ceremony at Crystal's Cuddle Bugs Childcare in Rosemount Crossing. That's a business that started small at home and now serves dozens of families.

Several businesses have expanded or moved to Rosemount. The Fluegel's project I mentioned earlier came to completion. Sweet Harvest Foods completed the move of its headquarters into the Business

Park. There were major investments at CF Industries. An expansion of Marcus Theaters is underway. We look forward to welcoming Culvers, Arby's, and Chipotle.

Flint Hills recently completed more than 400 million dollars in projects that improved reliability and reduced key emissions. The refinery also recently proposed plans to invest another \$750 million that would result in decreases in nitrous oxide emissions by 500 tons a year. The projects are expected to create up to 4 million hours of new craft labor work at the facility. It currently averages 1,500 contract workers each day on top of its regular full-time workforce of about 1,300 people.

And our interest in the work of the University at UMore Park continues, with opportunities to provide industrial sites on the Highway 52 end of the property. The University also continues to address environmental concerns at UMore in advance of beginning residential development.

Beyond the growth of physical projects, we continue to be fortunate to have so many residents willing to make significant investments of their time. Rosemount continues to see strong involvement from members of volunteer organizations like the Rosemount Area Arts Council, and the committees that stage Leprechaun Days and the Haunted Woods Trail. We support them, and our Beyond the Yellow Ribbon volunteers who help military families. And we admire the dedication of our groups providing youth athletics: the Rosemount Area Athletic Association, the Rosemount Area Hockey Association, and the Dakota REV soccer program.

I can see the success of our community when I'm invited to classrooms in my role as Mayor. I spoke with kindergartners recently. And they sent me lovely thank-you notes. It's always good to know how the younger generation sees you!

More importantly, parent involvement in the classroom is an important element in our schools' success. In the past year, voters joined in by supporting improvements in our school district. We also see strong involvement in youth programs outside of school. How well those programs work depends on the willingness of parents to organize and be involved in youth activities. Sometimes if you don't have a child directly involved, it can be overlooked. But when you go through our community and you see soccer fields, ice rinks, and playgrounds being heavily used, it's strong evidence that we made the right investments.

Now it's time to consider more investments. This past year we worked with the leaders of youth recreation programs. They told us that they are running short of space and that it has become difficult to serve all the young people who want to take part. So earlier this month, the City Council decided to put it before the voters of Rosemount. We will hold a bond referendum on May 17, when the voters will

decide whether to authorize up to \$15 million in borrowing. It would add another indoor sheet of ice for hockey and skating. It would also add more outdoor playing fields for other sports.

By law, the City cannot advocate for a position on the referendum. But we will be supplying more information before the vote about the purposes of the proposal and what its impact would be on property taxes. The groups involved can be heard. And the voters will decide.

We are close to results on another major project that has been a goal of this and previous City Councils for the past decade. Federal, state, county, and City funding are coming together to improve the flow and safety of the traffic at Highway 52 and County Road 42. The solution should be built by the end of next year.

It will be easier to move around other parts of Rosemount, once we get some construction out of the way. The county is working this year to design a widening of McAndrews Road, including the addition of turn lanes. That may be complete in 2018. We're working with the county and Inver Grove Heights to find solutions for better routes in the northern part of the community. Our only street project for the year is to rebuild Danbury Way in the northwest corner of the City. And we continue to improve our pedestrian options, some of it in the Safe Routes to School program that makes it easier for our children to walk to class. A project along 144th Street should improve the paths to Rosemount Elementary and Middle schools and another path will improve access to Shannon Park Elementary. It's one of the ways we try to connect neighbors and friends through our sidewalks and trails.

Transit is another piece of our transportation system. While we look for ways to add jobs in Rosemount, we also have to serve our residents who go beyond the City limits for employment. And we've succeeded with our partnering cities in the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority. MVTA's ridership last year increased 5.5% to 2.9 million rides. Route 478 between Rosemount and downtown Minneapolis has shown significant increases since it began. And last month we added Route 484-R between our park-and-ride and downtown St. Paul. I have been elected as Vice Chair of the MVTA for this year. And I look forward to continued improvements in this service.

Some of our critical work goes on underground. Our infrastructure must sustain the existing population and plan for growth. Water Well #16 is being completed near the new Bella Vista subdivision. And we're studying cost-effective ways to extend utilities to the east side of the community, where more commercial growth may occur. The efforts we make to control storm water are ongoing.

One emerging issue is the need to protect the source of our drinking water: the aquifer 500-feet down. The Met Council is studying the impact of development in Twin Cities. The worry is that depleting the water source could limit growth. The Met Council has determined that if we can hold water

consumption below 75 gallons per person, we can preserve the aquifer. Rosemount's households are close to that level already. But we must work with all users, including industrial and agricultural customers, to find new ways to conserve water.

The City of Rosemount continues to maintain financial stability. This year the increase in our property tax levy was the lowest among 11 cities in Dakota County. In October we issued 6.4-million dollars in bonds. The purpose was to pay for utility improvements and to save money by paying off older, more expensive borrowing. Moody's reaffirmed the City's healthy AA2 credit rating.

Those are a lot of areas for the City to monitor and carry out. Our City Council remains committed to both long-term and short-term measures to improve efficiencies in our government.

How do we tie this together to represent where we stand as a city? Here's one way. Last year, Money magazine updated its feature on the Best Places to Live in the United States. That always makes me a little nervous because several years ago they put Rosemount on one of their less-known lists: the "Best Cold Places to Live."

Well, this time, the editors looked at 3,625 communities with populations between 10- and 50-thousand. And when it was all added up, they placed Rosemount as the 12th Best Place to Live in America. And just in case you missed it, here's what they told the rest of the country about us on the Money website.

"About 30 minutes outside of the Twin Cities, Rosemount boasts affordable homes and a small-town vibe. The volunteer-driven Leprechaun Days is an annual 10-day summertime festival with events ranging from outdoor concerts to the more eclectic bathtub races. Community gardens in five of the town's 27 parks are highlights, as is the year-old sports field complex that draws crowds for kids' matches. Rosemount's downtown sprang up around a 19th century grain elevator, still operational today. A handful of local shops and restaurants call downtown home, including Morning Glory's Bakery Café. And the town's library, recreation center, and popular splash pad, which opened just last year, are right nearby. The Robert Trail Library offers a spacious place for community events and programs."

That sounds pretty good. But it wasn't all. Money did a separate ranking of the Best Places to be a Kid. And Rosemount placed even better: 4th in the nation. The editors wrote:

"Rosemount ... shines as a kid favorite. ... It's close to all the amenities of the big city – including almost 100 libraries – in a small-town setting noted as one of the safest in the state. Winter

season brings no shortage of fun on the town's multiple ice rinks and expansive parks along the Mississippi River, and in the summertime kids flock to the newly built sports field, playground complex, and 3,700-square-foot splash pad. When class is in session, parents have another reason to smile: access to a nationally recognized public school district of choice."

That's a pretty persuasive judgement. It's evidence that the state of our city is strong. But it's not the most important one. The most important judgement about the success of our City comes from each one of you: the ever-growing number of people who move or stay here to live their lives and raise a family ... the businesspeople who invest in the community and provide services and jobs the rest of us need. We on the City Council and staff are dedicated to supporting your quality of life. We ask your continued support to keep Rosemount a success story for everyone.

Thank you.