

**State of the City Address – 2010**  
**January 4, 2010**  
**Mayor Ardele F. Brede**

Happy New Year! Well, here we are, having completed 10 years of this millennium. It seems like only yesterday that we were concerned about Y2K and now we are in the double digit 2000's. 2-0-1-0, how do we say it? A recent news article stated if we didn't say "twenty-ten," not two thousand ten but twenty-ten we better start practicing. So if all we need to be concerned with is to say twenty-ten things look good.

However, as we move into 2010 we have concerns, not the least is the economy and budgets, State and local. The forecast and the numbers are not encouraging. And while those numbers are of concern I would like to highlight some other numbers,

First of all, it's the 2010 Census. The 2010 Census will affect not only our nation, but also our State and, indeed, Rochester for 10 years and beyond. Three hundred billion dollars (\$300B) per year is distributed by the Federal Government, based, in part, on census numbers. Additionally these numbers will affect local, state and federal political representation.

In March 2010 a 10 question questionnaire will be mailed or delivered to every household. This is one of the shortest questionnaires in history and it's estimated that it will take about 10 minutes to complete. All residents must be counted – people of all races and ethnic groups, both citizens and non-citizens. Census Day in the United States is April 1, 2010. Questionnaire responses should represent the household as it exists that day. Everyone is urged to complete the questionnaire, as failure to complete it will result in someone coming to your door later, a costly process. So, as the bag says "It's in our hands" and we want to be sure everyone is counted, because in our inclusive community everyone counts.

So, the 2010 Census will be a "Big Deal". But we have another "Big Deal" that will occur in 2010. Mayo Clinic and our Rochester Public Library are partnering with the community of Rochester to bring the nationally touring exhibit, RACE, to Rochester, Minnesota. I am very excited about this opportunity, not only personally, but also for our City, region and visitors.

The exhibit provides individuals of all ages with information on the origins and manifestations of race and racism in everyday life by investigating race and human variation through the framework of science. Through a special arrangement with the American Anthropological Association and the Science Museum of Minnesota, the exhibit, commonly seen in museums in major metropolitan areas, will provide a unique learning opportunity for the greater Rochester area community to understand, grow and embrace diversity while respecting our differences.

Bringing the RACE exhibit to Rochester has been in the planning at Mayo Clinic for nearly 3 years as part of employee education on diversity. Through the partnerships established with the Library providing space and Mayo Clinic funding the exhibit, admission will be free of charge.

The exhibit will be on display at the Rochester Public Library from May 17 – September 4, 2010. The arts community, service organizations, city, county and many other groups have come together with programming that really makes this effort a community project.

Since 1790, the U.S. Government has collected racial data in a biennial census. Racial categories, rules and regulations resulting from the Census have huge effects on law, policy, medicine, employment and many other critical realms of American life. Visitors will find an overview of the Census' influential role in American race policy on a panel that describes "Why We Have Race on the Census, Anyway."

I was able to go to the exhibit when it was at the Science Museum of Minnesota and I can guarantee you that the exhibit will provide a personal experience that allows you to explore and understand the scientific basis for race and racism to inform thinking. I encourage everyone to attend and bring their family and friends....and it's free!

But after these two important events in Rochester, 2010 Census and RACE Exhibit there are other numbers to be reported. Much has been said and reported about gangs and crime in Rochester this past year. The citizens have spoken, the council has listened and administration has suggested financing alternatives in an effort to add four replacement sworn officers and four additional officers. It is our hope that this aspect of public safety will be improved with strategies being intelligence driven.

The number of violent crimes committed has gone down 6.7% in 2009 and I know that the perception may be a bit like an operation done on someone else is minor but on you the same operation is major. We also understand the complexity of the gang/crime issue, addressing one side of the problem adds additional pressures to the entire legal system.

I want to underscore my complete support for Chief Peterson and the Police Department. The increased incident of gangs and crime are a nationwide issue and was discussed at one of the classes Council Member Nowicki and I attended at the National League of Cities we were at in November. The phrase (perhaps inappropriately) "There's no silver bullet" was stated regarding the problem. We hope to build a safer community and again the additional officers will assist in that effort and in no way is a reflection of inadequate performance. We have the best!

And the other half of the Police/Fire equation for public safety-Fire while receiving less publicity this year is also among the best. Certainly fire is what the public generally thinks about, however, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a critical component. I recently received a call from a lady who wanted me to know how our fire department performed when her husband had a heart attack; they were first on the scene (within 5 minutes). He was saved and in her thanks she tearfully said 'At age 55 I'm too young to be a widow.' For her and many others in our community the outcome was "Priceless!"

In addition to responses to fire, EMS and hazardous materials our fire department will be the "home" for the city's Emergency Operations. There was considerable discussion during 2009 about a change in the Joint Emergency Operations arrangement between the City and

County. From my perspective as a past Chair (every other year) of the Joint Emergency Management Commission, this discussion should be, and is, less about the dollar and cents cost issue and is focused on how we can best provide these critical services for our citizens. I am personally convinced that we will be better able to provide quality emergency service to our citizens with the decision made by the City by establishing a City Emergency Service staff. Our prior arrangement with Olmsted County worked well for many years but our world has changed. And, we will coordinate some efforts with the County as needs dictate as we would with the State and Federal units. I firmly believe we can do a better job protecting our citizens by this change.

Rochester has established a Downtown Master Planning Steering Committee that will provide strategic direction to guide the production of a draft master plan that will direct the downtown master planning and development over the next 20 years. The master plan will be aligned with the strategic plans of the City of Rochester, Mayo Clinic, University of Minnesota Rochester and other key stakeholders. This will also include the city Mobility Study as well as Destination Medial Community planning. This unprecedented effort will utilize separate expertise of consultants who have previous experience working with Mayo Clinic, UMR and the City of Rochester.

With our Master Planning there is potential for new buildings and landscaping. I would like to point out that we should not, however, throw away our past. Our Heritage Preservation Committee is creating an inventory of significant historical buildings and venues. Not all old buildings can or should be saved but awareness and their story can be. I wish them well in remembering our past to better prepare us for the future.

In 2010 we will be seeking \$34 million in State bonding funds to construct an expansion of the Mayo Civic Center. This is a very important project to the area and State economy with an estimated annual increase in economic activity of \$44 million. Much of this is new dollars for the State of Minnesota. The expansion would create over 400 construction jobs over 2 years and 500 to 800 additional jobs in our local hospitality industry. The State in 2008 provided design funding and this project will make this one of the State's most "bid ready" job creation projects in Minnesota. We appreciate the strong support we have received for this project from our legislative delegation; particularly we thank our lead authors, Senator Ann Lynch and Representative Tina Liebling. Plans for construction will be completed in May.

In addition Rochester has authorized or supported other bonding projects including the Southern Rail Corridor, the National Volleyball Center and our Multi-Modal Corridor project.

Of course, Rochester, like virtually every city in the state (and indeed the United States) including the State of Minnesota are experiencing serious budget issues. Our city council and staff recently completed the 2010 budget for our city. Budget planning started in June as we faced a \$3.9 million loss of State Local Government Aid (LGA) and in addition most of our City employee bargaining groups had contracts in place for a wage increase in 2010. It took a combination of a reasonable property tax increase, significant budget reductions, by our various departments, and finally and I want to underscore this, finally, assistance from our city employee bargaining groups to close the large budget gap for 2010. Out of our 19

employee bargaining groups, 15 groups to date have agreed, voluntarily, to give up already contracted and agreed upon wage increases for 2010. Most did so to avoid layoffs in addition to taking furlough days while continuing to provide quality city services without an increase in costs.

I cannot express how proud I am of those employee groups who have assisted your local elected officials in addressing this difficult 2010 budget situation for our citizens.

In June last summer I was privileged and honored to be elected as president of the League of Minnesota Cities an organization that represents all 854 cities in Minnesota from Minneapolis 387,970 population to Tenney, population 6. As president my presidential focus has been on the Arts and their value, not only culturally but economically. For me to distribute over 500 CD's of Christmas/Holiday music, the fact that the cost was on my MasterCard it therefore was "priceless". But what really made it special was not only highlighting wonderful Rochester musical groups but also the "thank you's" I received, one who emailed me that a particular song was one she hadn't thought about since she had sung it in college and it brought tears of joy to her. And there were others.

Our own Rochester Civic Music had a wonderful, successful year with record attendance especially with the Kansas concert. Thanks to the public for their support and the various sponsors specifically the "title" sponsor THINK Mutual Bank. The arts are alive and well in Rochester and we are all better for it.

More and more people are using our library, partially attributed to the economy.

- Over 556,000 at the library
- 5000 students using the homework assistance program
- Over 1½ million items checked out from the Library and Bookmobile

The value of our library and ability to read cannot be overstated. Students who are not able to read beyond 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level are destined for a life of problems. It is said that the average reading level for those in prison is 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. But I like best what my then 5 year-old granddaughter Jordyn said when her grandma asked her when she was ready to start school if she was excited because she would be able to meet new friends and play games. Her answer was "No, I will learn to read so I will then be able to read to my little sister". Priceless. We must continue to support these valuable assets in our community.

Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) indicates realized moderate growth in 2009 compared to the last decade

- Over 300 new water customers and 400 new electric customers added to the RPU system
- Converting the metering and billing function to new technology for increased efficiency:
  - 37,000 water customers – over 95% automatically read by computer
  - of the 46,000 electric customers, all residential customers read automatically

RPU's environmental report for 2009 is outstanding. The Silver Lake Plant Emissions Reduction Project was dedicated in June 2009.

- Sulfur dioxide emissions will be reduced by 85%
- Nitrogen oxide by 60%

- Particulates by 99%, and
- Mercury 90%

RPU's conservation efforts resulted in saving 15 million KWH's and a reduction potential of 16,000 tons of carbon dioxide.

With over 80,000 ash trees in Rochester and 25,000 of them on public property you can see the potential devastation that could occur with the possible invasion of the Emerald Ash Borer. Our Forestry Department is monitoring the situation and has plans for systematic replanting. Arbor Day April 30, 2010 is always a big day in Rochester, thanks to RPU. And, again, we will have our Make Rochester a Litter Bit Better campaign, April 17–24, 2010. This past year 3,200 volunteers picked up 40,000 pounds of trash.

Two Rochester venues that receive significant visitors are the Peace Plaza and the Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial. Thanks to Sandy Keith and the Rochester Downtown Alliance and especially Heidi Mestad for the myriad of activities that occur on the Peace Plaza. It is a destination that is enjoyed by locals and out of town visitors and guests. And our wonderful Veterans Memorial will celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, June 25, 2010. It's hard to believe we've enjoyed it and its made an impact for a decade. Thanks to Wayne Stillman and many others it continues to grow and be used for various events and recognitions while reminding us that Freedom is never Free. 2009 found us establishing an Energy Commission, adopting a Complete Streets program and continuing to become one of the healthiest cities in America with an Active Living Rochester group.

Rochester continues to be not only recognized as a most livable city nationally but internationally as well. As a member of the United States Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities, I am honored to represent us at those meetings. But internationally a distinct honor and privilege was given to me by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Saudi Arabian Embassy who invited, and paid for, our visit to Saudi Arabia. Later in the year a visit to one of our Partner Cities, Xianyang, China was beneficial for our city, Mayo Clinic and University of Minnesota Rochester. The cultural exchanges and friendships again were "priceless."

Here at home I continue to be amazed and proud of the generosity of this community. To name just a few of the local organizations that have exceeded their fund raising goals: The Red Kettle Salvation Army, Ronald McDonald House, Gift of Life and Hope Lodge ~ Thank you to Rochester! In December, at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Mayor's Medal of Honor luncheon we recognized sixteen individuals who are quietly volunteering their services to various programs/areas to make Rochester a better community.

I'm looking forward to mentoring a bright senior student, Carly Tremain, from Mayo High School, February thru May 2010. She's also a post-secondary education student at RCTC. The experience will be about 2 or 3 days – 4-6 hours a week. I hope this will be a great experience for us both.

Thanks again to my associate Donna Bussell, who continues to perform all the "regular" duties of being the front door to the Mayor's Office. In addition, this year with my duties as

President of the League of Minnesota Cities there are additional “requests” for her time on my behalf. I continue to appreciate the great, dedicated efforts of our administrative staff and indeed all staff. I also value the dedication of our City Council. We are not always unanimous in our thinking but they do their homework.

My wife Judy has again been a great support. On March 24 we will celebrate our 49<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. She’s been my love and friend for over 50 years. It was special that she was able to accompany me to both Saudi Arabia and China. She represents us extremely well as First Lady of Rochester.

The challenges will continue to be before us as we hope to get back to “normal” although the phrase I keep hearing is “the new normal.” Not yet defined but for sure not the normal of the past.

As your mayor I subscribe to the *Practice of Servant Leadership*. Some would say it’s an ego that values humility. Thomas Jefferson said, “Our critics are our friends because they show us our faults”, and a U.S. Army General with whom I had the privilege of attending a Customer Service conference with many years ago said, “Blessed are the flexible for they shall not get bent out of shape.”

So as we start the second decade of this millennium may we be humble, willing to accept criticism, be flexible and be a servant leader.

And to wrap up the numbers, “the count.” This year there were 1,397 events on my calendar, now totaling 8,992 for the 7 years I’ve been your Mayor I continue to say it’s not a full-time job but a full-time joy. Thank you for the honor of serving as your Mayor.

When in China last fall, we learned that Shanghai will be the host to the 2010 World Exposition. The theme, “Better City, Better Life” is the first time in the history of the World Expos that the theme “City” has been chosen. Certainly with all that has happened and is happening in our city – that continues to be our goal.

May God make us all strong and new in twenty-ten (2010). May his face smile upon us and his kindness cover all of Rochester.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rudell F. Breda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.