

Over the past five years, we've tried to find better ways to do business in city government. From large scale restructuring of the city finances to small operational details, we've tried to encourage a culture of reform and continuous improvement.

Of course, change doesn't come easily in government where the comfort of tradition too often impedes reform and the desire for a modern, nimble organization. Yet, progress has been made, and continuous improvement has become a core value of our employees. Our residents have recognized the change—the percentage of citizens that believe Duluth is headed in the right direction has risen by 23% since 2008.

As I began to write the 2013 State of the City (SOC) address, I was exploring the themes of reform when the obvious struck. We should take a new look at how we present the SOC. When done well, a SOC message can be a common touchstone for a community – a chance to reflect on the past year and take a moment to inspire residents to make Duluth an even better city in the coming year.

Our goals for the 2013 SOC are pretty simple; to deliver a video message that entertains and informs, to use modern communication tools, and to make it interactive – we want to give folks a chance to share their ideas and feedback after viewing the message.

You can find the SOC video address and a place to submit your feedback at [www.duluth2013.com](http://www.duluth2013.com). In addition to being online, you'll also find the text of the address in this issue of the Duluth Quarterly and copies will be available at the library for individuals, classrooms, and civic groups to facilitate discussion about Duluth's future.

If you've read this far, you're probably the sort of person who's interested in helping out and would even go as far as to share the SOC video on your Facebook page or bring it to a civic group for viewing and discussion. Of course, that's a big generalization and I could be completely wrong. But clearly, this new format would benefit greatly if folks like you helped distribute the video to your friends.

If there was ever a year that required a more visual treatment for the SOC, it's this year. In 2012, our community went through what might have been the single most traumatic event in our city's history. We all lived through it and know that written or spoken words are likely inadequate to describe the hurt, pain, and uncertainty felt by so many. Words alone also fail to capture the inspiring sense of hope and resiliency we witnessed as neighbors supported one another and as our entire community united together.

The flood obviously dominated our consciousness in 2012, and recovery will remain a priority in 2013 as we undertake the heavy lifting of our rebuilding process. Stories of the contributions of city staff and our community working together have and will continue to define Duluth's spirit.

In this issue and in the SOC video address we try to highlight as many of these stories as we can. Unfortunately, we know that there is much that we were not able to address. While the headlines capture our attention and our praise, the real strength of our community comes from the efforts of thousands in Duluth who work hard, support their families, volunteer their time, and contribute their efforts to make ours a better community.

In the SOC video address, I've described 2013 as a year where we roll up our sleeves and really buckle down on what we have in front of us: flood recovery, massive building projects, and supporting the economic development we announced this past year. 2012 filled our plate with huge challenges and new opportunities – this is the year that we have to make sure that we address both with equal amount of focus, energy, and commitment.

These are exciting times in Duluth. We are making the transition from a city satisfied with the status quo to a city that is ready to grow and embraces change. Whether rebuilding from the flood, creating new jobs, or reaching a population of 90,000 by 2020, I'm confident that Duluth will succeed in the coming years in large part due to the increased sense of confidence and optimism in our community. I'm convinced that we are poised to finally realize our full potential.

As always, I value your thoughts and feedback and encourage you to share your input. There are many ways you can do that—submit your feedback at [duluth2013.com](http://duluth2013.com), email me at [dness@duluthmn.gov](mailto:dness@duluthmn.gov), or stop by my office during the open office hour on Mondays at noon or Mayor's Night on the Tuesday every month at 5:00 p.m.

I know there are some of you who will not agree with the changes we have made this year, I want to hear from you. Also realize that this is our first attempt at this new format; please share your thoughts and ideas on how we might make it an even more effective effort next year.

Don Ness