

Councilor's State of the City view: Optimism, openness drive city's growth

By: **Patrick Boyle**, Duluth News Tribune

June 20, 2012, will be a date remembered by Duluthians for generations to come. The largest flood in our city's recorded history will not be etched in my mind for its devastation but for the resiliency of our residents.

Due to the quick response by the police, fire and public works departments, there was not a single casualty. Then Mayor Don Ness and his administration did a superb job, successfully lobbying the state and federal governments for much-needed flood relief money. Last but not least, the thousands of volunteers who helped with the clean-up effort from Gary New Duluth to the Lester River were remarkable. This group effort truly saved one of our most important economic resources: the summer tourist season. Despite this flood, we actually had more revenue from tourism in 2013 than the previous year.

The City Council will continue to support economic growth. Last year the city attracted \$135 million in new investment, including 556 permanent jobs. Businesses including Involta, Moline, Old City Hall, Amber Wing, Kuettel, A&L Properties, AAR and Geacom decided to invest in our community. Through rezoning, tax-increment financing and approved economic-development money, this council will keep Duluth competitive in the world market.

Infrastructure will be the main focus in 2013. The City Council created the Public Utilities Commission in 2010. This was vital to creating a sustainable and dedicated source of money to replace aging water pipes. No longer will we be passing this burden to the next generation. Similarly, this council is spending a considerable amount of time developing a plan to allocate money for street repair. It is my hope that by the end of the year we will have a framework for improving our streets for years to come.

Over my past three years on the council, I have witnessed a rebirth of optimism in our town, and I have seen much more growth than decline. I am proud that the council over the past few years has increased its transparency and civility. I will strive to continue to move in this positive direction.

It has been an honor to serve the public, and I am looking forward to the challenges that will arise in 2013.