

Looking Forward to 2009 and Beyond

I would be absolutely remiss not to acknowledge the historic events of yesterday. No matter what the color of your skin, your ethnicity, your religious background or your political affiliation yesterday illustrated what makes this country so great. It truly is the land of opportunity.

As your Mayor I firmly believe that in 2009 Redwood City can be “the city of opportunity” where the glass is half full and our challenges become our opportunities. It is through the adversity that we faced in 2008 on multiple fronts that we together, as a community, became stronger.

Last year in my State of the City remarks I referred to it as more of a “state of the mind/state of city address” and went on to ask WHO is Redwood City? I spoke of us as a divided community on issues ranging from development to immigration and a community ambivalent to change. In hindsight my remarks weren’t too far off and yet I believe that going into 2009 we are stronger, more open to change and more connected than we were a year ago. This connectedness offers a unique opportunity for us as leaders to build on this and make Redwood City a place to be proud of.....Redwood City Pride...one step at a time.

Looking back all I can say is what a year!!! I stand before you today having faced the harsh realities of a political world ...how quickly plans can change, good intentions that fall by the wayside and the acceptance that sometimes your best efforts to “do the right thing” can leave you feeling pretty alone. It was a challenging year, from many perspectives including local, state, national and international. We are in uncharted waters and now more than ever we need a big dose of what our new President called for yesterday....HOPE.

Going forward I am going to ask each and every resident, business and anyone else who cares about Redwood City and its future the following question:

Do you want Redwood City to be successful..... and if so, how can you help? Look at Dave Karow, Redwood City businessman who committed time, energy and talent in creating the first ever Redwood City Pride Photo and Essay contest. My hat is off to Dave, to the community members and businesses that supported him.

It is in these difficult economic times that we need now, more than ever to come together as a community and start addressing those issues that are holding us back. We need to work together to develop a strategy and a game plan to fit the challenges that are coming our way. We need to set aside the special interests, the inflexibility and the disdain for positions contrary to ours and come together. Our new President said it yesterday in talking about those who have come before us:

They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics.

We have to work together to find solutions that are pragmatic, effective and forward thinking. We all have to give a little and be willing to listen.

Going forward I have grouped issues facing our community into two columns. The first is labeled Opportunities the second is labeled Challenges.

In some cases an issue can be both an opportunity and a challenge.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunity – Redwood City first ever Strategic Plan:

- Takes the Council's overarching guidelines and weaves in the 6 Council priorities. Uses this document to focus and guide the city in its decision-making process over an extended period of time (5 years is the recommended)
- Thank you to our City Manager Peter Ingram and his Dept. head team for working on this and bringing it forth to the Council on January 26th

Challenge--Fiscal Situation

- 2008-09 deficit that was anticipated at \$2m, now will be closer to \$3.7M
- 2009-10 \$4.6M
- 4-5 years out in 2012-13 \$9M
- Structural deficit with expenses exceeding revenues; Budget study session Feb. 23rd

Opportunity--New General Plan

- Our staff and consultants are working to meet the goal of delivering this exciting and innovative plan to council and the community by Fall of 2009
- Challenge--Navigating DTPP Lawsuit
- Whether it is through negotiation or the court system we are committed to resolve this and move forward. We believe as do the majority of downtown property owners that this plan is innovation, forward thinking and can truly transform downtown, respecting our historic character and added much needed housing to not only meet state requirements in our Housing Element but the needs of our residents.

Opportunity--High Speed Rail

- What does it mean for RWC?
- SF to Gilroy line, one of 8 segments
- 17 cities along the corridor
- Stops in SF, Millbrae and San Jose
- Two other stop locations being considered: Palo Alto and RWC
- Need to educate and evaluate; economic as well as other impacts

Challenge--Housing Shortage

- Persistent shortage at all income levels
- Safety and other essential emergency personnel driving long distances
- Ability for companies to hire qualified workers that can live here

Opportunity and Challenge--Retiring Employees

- Baby Boomer generation. Dearth of institutional knowledge. Plans being developed by our HR dept. to address these issues

Opportunity--Economic Development

- Business is good; Business brings opportunities; Green Jobs and VC \$\$; RWC at the forefront with a climate initiatives manager to capture some of this
- Business retention and attraction strategy
- Visiting top sales tax producers
- Letting cos. Know we are committed to their success
- Working with non-profits and service clubs to speak out for the business community

Challenge--Downtown and our Cinema Retail Complex

- Enough with the empty storefronts and absent landlords and incompetent leasing agents/property managers.
- A suggestion made by a former RWC mayor who I don't always agree with but who I admire and respect...creation of a Downtown Revolution Committee made up of council, staff, realtors, business owners, property owners, bankers, Chamber and DBG members and concerned citizens to address this ongoing challenge. If it takes a village to raise a child maybe it takes a city to force absent and incompetent landlords to change.

Opportunity--Stanford Medicine Opening

- World class outpatient facility
- 400+ jobs
- Economic engine for the neighborhood
- 500K to PAL for ongoing facility maintenance, services and loan payback to the City

Challenge--Drought Conditions

- It has been declared...therefore what are the next steps
- Recycled water to other areas that want it. How to fund it?

Opportunity and Challenge – Stanford University

- What will it bring to the neighborhood and the community at large
- Economic analysis commissioned by the city for the city to determine benefits and impacts of this project
- Desire by Stanford to “add to” versus “detract” from the community

Opportunity and Challenge – Cargill Lands

- Council received a request January from the developer to bifurcate their lands from the GP process
- This is not anew idea but one that has been raised in years past by the Planning Commission, the Council and the sub-committee of the Council and Planning Commission
- Staff and GP consultants are thoroughly analyzing this option and bringing it back to the Council on Jan. 26
- Council has and continues to be committed to a city-led public outreach process on these lands, including but not limited to nay project proposal brought forth by the landowners
- We want to lead this effort and not be directed by others
- In closing I would like to return to my theme as Mayor-- Redwood City Pride. I love this community and feel we have so much to be proud of and as you can see we have many opportunities and challenges but ones that we can and will face together. I said it last year and I will say it again....
- We are in this together.

Being proud is more than a feeling, it is an attitude. For over 30 years words of the poem I am about to read have resonated with me and speak to what I hope can be our collective “attitude of pride.” I always thought it was written by Ralph Waldo Emerson but it appears that it was written in 1905 by Bessie Stanley and won first prize in the competition sponsored by Modern Women magazine.

To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people
And the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics
And endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by
A healthy child, a garden patch
Or a redeemed social condition;
To know even one life has breathed
Easier because you have lived;
This is to have succeeded.

Together Redwood City.....we can succeed!!