



**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS:
JANUARY 2009
Mayor Sandy Martin**

Each year the Mayor does a State of the City Address. In this issue Mayor Sandy Martin addresses The City's:

- Economic Development
- Improving Neighborhoods
- Community Center and Parks
- Road Improvements
- Financial Condition

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As I begin my 13th year as Mayor of this great City, I am looking to the future with some caution, but also with hope and excitement.

I am cautious and concerned because of the struggling economy, which has impacted many people, as well as the City. From an increasing number of foreclosures, job losses, and erosion of retirement funds for individuals, to a large reduction in the reimbursement of credit aid that the City would receive from the State, these difficult economic times have given us all a reason to reflect and reprioritize.

I am hopeful, however, that conditions will start to improve as we move through 2009. While this improvement may be slow and take some time, I am glad that one of the hallmarks of our City has been long-range planning. This emphasis on the longer-range plans allows Shoreview to meet our short-term fiscal challenges, while keeping our focus on the type of community we want to continue to be in the future.

I am excited because even though the City will need to continue to reprioritize our spending decisions, we will maintain the services and programs that the citizens of Shoreview deserve and expect. We also continue our commitment to maintaining our infrastructure such as streets, trails, water and sewer lines, and parks, and also plan for some smaller new projects that will continue to enhance Shoreview's reputation as one of the best cities in the nation to raise a family.

Further, we will continue our commitment to the following values that have made Shoreview one of the premiere cities in the metropolitan area. We continue to be a community that:

- Preserves and protects our natural environment;
- Develops and maintains an outstanding park and trail system;
- Has a strong business community that provides jobs, tax base, and commercial services;
- Builds and maintains quality residential neighborhoods;
- Provides a state-of-the-art Community Center that serves as the central gathering place for the City; and
- Is in strong financial condition.

Economic Development

During 2008, we had a few economic development projects of note that were approved by the City Council. In the early part of the year, the City worked closely with PaR Systems, to maintain their corporate headquarters in Shoreview. PaR Systems is a Shoreview-based high-tech robotics firm that conducts business throughout the world. PaR Systems outgrew their previous headquarters on Highway 96 when the PaR Nuclear division was acquired by Westinghouse Corporation, and they needed room to expand. The City facilitated the relocation to a vacant 70,000 square foot office/manufacturing building at the intersection of Victoria Street and County Road E. The City also acquired and then resold the former Sheriff's station at 655 County Road E to PaR Systems for future expansion. The City assisted financially in the purchase of the Sheriff's site by using funds that were specially designated and restricted by State law for redevelopment and property acquisition in this business area. By leveraging these funds, the City was able to keep a quality high tech business in the community, obtain significant reinvestment in a vacant office/industrial building, and return a former tax-exempt building to the tax rolls.

The City Council also approved a 104-unit senior housing building that will be located off Hodgson Road north of Highway 96. This senior building will be constructed and managed by Southview Senior Living and includes independent living, assisted living and memory care units. Construction is expected to start early in 2009. This new senior building will continue to provide a variety of life cycle housing choices in the community, especially because many of our seniors indicate that they would like to remain in Shoreview.

During 2009, the City adopted an updated Comprehensive Plan that will serve as a planning guide for the City for at least the next 10 years. This plan recognizes that Shoreview is now a maturing fully developed community and identifies some areas for future redevelopment and outlines strategies to maintain the high quality of life we all enjoy in Shoreview.

During the past year, the City started a new Business Retention and Expansion program that includes visits with many of the largest employers and emerging businesses within the community. Developed and promoted by the City's Economic Development Commission, the business visits have already proven to be very helpful at identifying issues and strengthening the City's relationship with our strong business community.

The Council also created an Economic Development Authority (EDA) in the fall of 2008. The EDA is off to a good start and developed a mission of facilitating economic growth in the City by supporting existing businesses, fostering reinvestment in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas,

and promoting the creation of new businesses, employment, and housing opportunities.

Improving Neighborhoods

There was significant reinvestment in many homes in the City due to severe hail storms in 2007 and 2008. Many homeowners throughout the City replaced their roofs, windows and siding.

The City is also continuing its efforts to encourage maintenance and improvement in our many quality residential neighborhoods. City staff is making stronger efforts to track properties that are in the foreclosure process and insure that exterior yard maintenance is handled. The Housing Resource Center can provide important contact information for residents in need of foreclosure assistance. Staff has continued its more streamlined approach to code enforcement and we have also maintained our SHINE program, which provides for proactive exterior housing inspections and code enforcement in selected neighborhoods. The City is also maintaining its rental housing licensing program and its contract with the Housing Resource Center that provides technical assistance on remodeling and other home improvements at no cost to Shoreview residents.

Community Center and Parks

Shoreview Commons and the Shoreview Community Center continue to be a central gathering area for the City. In 2008, we added a new innovative playground area behind the Community Center that was used by many Shoreview children after its installation in June. The popular Tuesday afternoon Farmers' Market drew thousands of people and was given an award by Minnesota Home Grown as one of the best Farmers' Markets with locally grown products in the State. The Wednesday evening "Concert in the Commons" was very successful and will also continue in 2009.

The Community Center continues to be very busy throughout the year. A Community Center membership includes access to a state-of-the-art Fitness Center with more than 80 pieces of cardio and strength training equipment, the Tropics Indoor Water Park, the gymnasium/running track area, and discounted fees on fitness classes. Annual memberships are very affordable and there are now monthly payment options that make being a member at the Community Center even easier on your budget during these tough economic times. The Community Center is also affiliated with most health insurance reimbursement programs.

In 2009, we are planning to add an indoor playground area to make the Community Center even more fun for young families. The innovative indoor play area is being designed for children between the ages of 2-12 and

should be available by late spring for year-round use.

During 2009, the City will also be making improvements to Sitzer Park. A new park master plan was developed with input from neighborhood residents and Shoreview Area Youth Baseball representatives. The project includes reconstruction of the parking area, new playground areas, as well as landscaping and site improvements. This project is expected to begin in mid to late summer.

Road Improvements

During 2008, the City facilitated the installation of a traffic signal at the Hodgson Road/County Road J intersection. The City worked closely with Ramsey County to improve traffic flow and greatly reduce the amount of cut through traffic in Shoreview neighborhoods. The City is also continuing its aggressive seal coating program to assure proper maintenance on City streets.

Planning has begun for improvements to Hodgson Road between Highway 96 and Gramsie Road. This will be a difficult segment of road to improve, but the City will work with Ramsey County in order to provide a safer road for motorists and pedestrians, while minimizing impacts on homeowners in the area.

This section of roadway is currently scheduled for reconstruction in 2010.

Financial Condition

Shoreview continues to be in excellent financial condition. This is evident by the City's strong Aa2 bond rating, one of the highest ratings for cities of our size in Minnesota.

Further, Shoreview's property taxes continue to be very low in comparison with similar cities in the metropolitan area. In fact, Shoreview's 2008 property taxes on a median value home of \$284,000 were \$669, which is the 4th lowest of 29 similar suburban communities - more than 30% below the average City taxation level of \$967.

Although the City has been impacted by a loss in Market Value Homestead Credit Aid from the State, I am pleased to report that we had planned ahead and reserved funds at the end of 2007 in anticipation of this potential loss. As a result of this proactive financial planning, we have been able to continue to maintain the quality services during this difficult economic period. Despite having to make some difficult financial choices during the 2009 budget process, I am confident that we will continue to preserve our long-term forward thinking approach that has served us well in the past.

Conclusion

On a sad note, in June of 2008, the City mourned the passing of former Mayor Dick Wedell. Dick served our community for more than 30 years – and it was his leadership as Mayor for 14 years that really helped to shape the great community that we live in today. His vision, passion and leadership helped to develop the City’s extensive parks, trails, and the Community Center.

We also lost our fellow-councilmember, Larry Morrisette, who died unexpectedly in April. Larry had served on the City Council since 2002, and was reelected in 2006. He will be remembered for his support and involvement with community television. Both Larry and Dick represented great examples of positive leadership and commitment that has helped to build Shoreview’s great reputation. They will be remembered and missed.

On behalf of the City Council, I would like to offer our sincere thanks to our many committee and commission members who volunteer their time and expertise to help make Shoreview a better place to live and work. I would also like to express our thanks to our entire City staff that takes great pride in delivering quality services and programs to our citizens.

Throughout my tenure as Mayor, it has been my goal to insure that government is open and accessible to our citizens. We work hard to achieve this through good communications with residents through the ShoReview newsletter, televising of our Council and Planning Commission meetings and our City’s website. I also hold open office hours between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on most Tuesday afternoons. This has proven to be an excellent method for meeting many residents and listening to your thoughts and concerns. I look forward to meeting with you in 2009.

Finally, I want to extend personal congratulations to my colleagues on their re-election to the Council – Blake Huffman, Ady Wickstrom, and Ben Withhart, and to continuing Councilmember Terry Quigley. It has been a pleasure to work with each and every one of you. I know each of you spend countless hours working to make a positive difference in our City. We all took great pride in Shoreview’s recognition by Family Circle Magazine as one of the “10 Best Towns in America to Raise a Family”, and I know will continue to maintain these high standards as we look toward the future.

Thank you.