

State of the City Address – January 20th, 2015

City residents, business partners, investors, visitors, staff, leadership, and elected officials:

As we move into 2015, I believe exciting and extraordinary things lie ahead for our great city.

In fact, together we look forward to what could be one of the most exciting years in Port Washington's storied history. Here are just a few of the many things we have to celebrate:

- The Historical Society's **Port Explorem** opens its doors this Spring. The Explorem will celebrate our city's very proud maritime past and local history while engaging visitors in its present and future. It represents a multi-million dollar investment on the part of countless individual, corporate, foundation, and other groups – people who believe not just in the Historical Society, but the city it calls home. The Explorem will have a profound impact on all aspects of our great city – our downtown business district, our city business partners, our residents and visitors, and our educators and students!
- Our **North Beach Public Access Improvement Project** will be completed, representing an approximately \$500,000 investment in our lakefront. For residents and visitors, this Project will produce an improved parking area; a significantly widened pedestrian walkway; new lighting; enhanced aesthetics; handicap accessibility on a portion of North Beach; and more. As we improve functional public access, we make north beach, one of our great lakefront assets, all the more attractive and inviting to residents and visitors alike.
- The **Harbor Lights Condominiums Project** is nearing its launch. This Project, a public/private partnership as part of our Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) district, is the vision of city resident and visionary developer Gertjan van den Broek, and the culmination of significant investment of financial and intellectual capital. It is an exciting and important success for all of us as we strive to bring more necessary residential into our downtown – residential that will help sustain our business partners located there and inject important energy into the business district.
- During 2015, we hope to advance the proposed **Cedar Vineyard Development**, another substantial development project. Envisioned for the former VK Land along Highway C, this development will be unique in the residential atmosphere it will offer and tourism interest it will attract. It is the outcome of collaboration among several key partners, namely our City, the County, Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, the winemaker, the bank, and of course, the developer and landscape architect at the forefront. This has the potential to be a very important investment in Port that will ensure public access to the beach via the land, conservation of the most environmentally sensitive areas, enhanced bluff stability, and more. I know you join me in declaring that Port is not only worthy of such private belief and investment, but that Port has earned this kind of private belief and investment.

- Throughout the year, we will work closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as our project partners, Foth Infrastructure & Environmental and SmithGroup JJR, to lead forward more significant repair of the north **Breakwater**. This work, involving necessary surface work and structural reinforcements, as well as a new ADA compliant and family friendly gateway entrance and fishing platform, and a remediated habitat area. Phase One, as we all know, was completed in 2014 and represented about \$1 million in investment; this Phase Two work will represent about another \$1.5 million investment. And, there is more to come in 2016, when we will shift our focus on the walkway out to the north breakwater light house – a Coast Guard asset currently that may well become a community asset in the years to come.
- We will continue our journey to a **National Marine Sanctuary** off our shores, with the initial response from NOAA being very positive. Should we eventually be successful in securing the National Marine Sanctuary, with final word likely coming sometime the next two to three years, it will mean incredible things for our great City of Port Washington!
- Our Community Development Authority’s public, transparent, and deliberate **master redevelopment planning process** is already paying dividends – and will throughout 2015 and the years to come. In fact, we know now that from the five identified redevelopment priorities in our downtown lakefront business district, as a city we are positioned to realize over \$20 million in valuation increment. From strategic and catalytic new retail and commercial to vital residential, varied in type and price point, we will bring more people into our beautiful downtown to live, work, play, and shop – making a lasting, profound difference for every business and taxpayer in our city.
- Finally, **our city business partners** have worked hard not just to survive but to thrive, and as a result of that hard work, many now are in the position of growing and expanding, right here in Port. In fact, through our Economic Development Committee outreach efforts over the past year, we’ve established stronger-than-ever relationships, especially with our manufacturing and industrial partners, one of the strongest providers of jobs and sustainers of growth wage and standard-of-living metrics in any community. We celebrated when the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel’s “Top Workplaces” list honored four City of Port Washington Businesses – Allen-Edmonds, Ansay & Associates, Molded Dimensions, and Port Washington State Bank. No other community in Ozaukee County had more than one. And more recently, we celebrated Ansay & Associates as the “Large Business of the Year” in Ozaukee County – and Modern Equipment as a finalist. Franklin Energy, Kieckhaefer Manufacturing Company, Construction Forms, Kleen Test and so many other companies who call Port home are making significant investments in themselves, their employees, and our city – and their substantial and continued investment in our community is difference-making. Businesses of all sizes in all areas and in all sectors throughout our city are succeeding and partnering with us, and thus are playing a critical role in our city’s economic development efforts. On behalf of our city, we say **THANK YOU!**

In short, then, our City is strong, and only finds itself getting stronger.

And over the course of the past year, I've heard from many of you – our residents, our business partners, our investors, our volunteers – that you feel similarly, that you believe as I do that the best and brightest days for our City of Port Washington are yet to come, that we will realize them together.

And so, to all of the “You” out there, all those who have made our great city their “Own Home Port” – tonight we extend our gratitude. To all who have played a role in our city's numerous accomplishments during 2014, who have helped position us for success in 2015 and beyond, from our city's educators, to our police and fire service providers, to business and property owners and private investors, to committee and nonprofit volunteers, to city leadership and staff and to the members of our Common Council and so many, many more – we say **THANK YOU!**

Ultimately, you are the driving force behind what makes Port Washington so great.

The above all said, and with my eternal optimism and very positive outlook all very warranted, there remain very significant challenges for us all to tackle and overcome together.

Our city business partners are facing very tangible shortages of skilled labor, the very people they need to employ to grow their business and expand their investments in our community. We hear it across all sectors and in all areas of the city, but most notably in our industrial park and throughout our manufacturing partners. While talent acquisition and retention and workforce development is first a business responsibility, we can and must do all we can to help partner with them, support them, invest in them, advocate for them, and provide for them – and that means commitment to collaborative marketing efforts to help attract workers and execution on redevelopment priorities that will offer them new housing opportunities throughout our city.

Our infrastructure, both that we own in the letter of the law and that which we call our own in spirit of the law, continues to age and, in some instances, near a tipping point. We have fought hard collectively to secure federal funding for the federal asset that is the breakwater, protecting our harbor, marina, and lakefront assets. But despite our successes, much more work remains, and more funding is essential to get that work done – and we have not been able to yet procure what we need. We cannot fail in this effort; this is our window of time in history in which to ensure both the north and south breakwaters, owned by the Corps of Engineers but so important to all of us as lakefront community, are made viable and sustainable for generations to come.

And, more directly, to the point of the assets for which we are directly responsible, we must continue to take steps – as Council and as city staff and leadership – to put in place a plan for sustainable roadway infrastructure. Ours is a growing community, and with over 55 miles of road to maintain and much of it aging rapidly, we face a potential \$20 million impact in the years to come. We cannot simply talk about this issue, we must set about to solve it, and we cannot solely plan on borrowing to

fund that solution. There is no money tree, not here, not in Madison, and not in Washington D.C. – and we can and should expect ourselves to be up to this task of crafting and funding these collaborative solutions.

For this reason, and so many others, then, our city must embrace this reality – **economic growth and development is not a choice, it is a necessity**. If we do not collectively explore the opportunities before us to partner with those who seek to partner and invest in those who wish to invest in us, then we will fail the generations of Port Washington residents to come. We have so much of which to be proud, but inaction now on the vital priorities we’ve set forth will have devastating consequences and leave us unable to make the necessary investments in community and lead forward the community-wide initiatives that we all desire, need and expect. And, I believe we can act in a responsible, smart, strategic manner that still makes clear our core principles hold strong – fiscal responsibility, sustainability of our environmental commitment, and advancement of affordable quality of life.

Collectively, all of us who live and work here are coming together to accomplish great things for our great city, and that will continue this New Year. In fact, this Sunday evening, January 25th, as we gather to celebrate our hundreds of city volunteers and the specific, actionable, tangible ways in which they have an impact on our community, we are reminded that we all have a stake in its outcome. The time to be an active participant is now, in whatever manner you are able – **WE NEED YOU!** I assure you, your gifts of time (however much you can give!) and talent (whatever it may be!) are an investment in our city’s future and will pay dividends! If you are interested in helping, please let me know.

So again, **THANK YOU** for continuing to make us “Your Home Port!” I know I speak on behalf of our entire Council when I declare how truly honored, proud, and privileged we are to be partnering with and serving on behalf of such generous, talented, and passionate people. *Together, we WILL make Port EXCEPTIONAL!*

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Tom".

Tom Mlada
Mayor – City of Port Washington