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OP-ED
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A PROMISING OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

Last week the headlines of major newspapers nationwide screamed about the economic crisis. Every media outlet gave us graphs, charts, and pictures visualizing the stock market plummeting to below 2008 levels. We were also and provided articles warning of another economic meltdown, or even a double-dip recession.

For the last four years, despite the fiscal hurdles, we thought it important to focus on what we can control; our community and our infrastructure, investing back in our community and planning and development. These tough financial times will not simply go away overnight. Our recovery as a city will not strengthen if we reverse course, slash services and put a halt to our infrastructure improvements. We, as a community, must choose wisely and be realistic, pragmatic and practical in our efforts. As we recover, we need to focus on the things that will position our City as a frontrunner, so we don't get lost in the background.

I, as much as each of you, am concerned about our tax rate. As a small business owner and Everett homeowner, I know how rising costs affect my everyday life. Property values around the country are still slow to recover, and the City of Everett is facing the same burden. The dramatic decrease in property values caused our tax rate to increase, however, we still need to meet the cost of supporting the functions of the city.

New growth in this community is a top priority of my administration. The Parkway Overlay District, currently pending review in the Planning Board, is an perfect example of major planning for the future. This Zoning tool will help attract types of businesses, companies and development we want to see in our neighborhoods. An articulate vision of the Parkway will encourage more businesses to come into our City. New Development will bring tax revenue, better jobs and ultimately will increase our property values.

The inspiration from our work on the Parkway is also helping this administration focus on other key areas of the City. We are currently working on visioning projects in Everett Square, lower Broadway, the Old High School site and along the Malden River.

The past four years were a financial struggle for every municipality in the country but we in Everett, have been dutiful in finding creative ways to raise revenues and find funding sources without burdening our residents and commercial tax base. We worked with local officials to implement the meal's tax, increase permit fees and aggressively collecting back taxes and past due water bills. Midway through last fiscal year, I instructed my department heads to cut each of their budgets to offset potential cuts in state local aid, and through diligent spending, this administration turned back \$1.06 million dollars at the end of the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

To stay ahead, we're applying for community planning grants on both the State and Federal level. I speak weekly with State Officials advocating for our city to receive state funding for multiple projects and consistently lobby for an increase in our local aid. And we are successful in our efforts at the State House. Just this past week, I signed a release for over \$50,000 to be granted to the City of Everett from the State to help pay for last winter's Snow Removal Costs. I, with my fellow Mayor's, was also very instrumental in the passing of the municipal health insurance bill. At the end of the day, we can save significant amounts of money while still offering our employees a fair and affordable health insurance plan.

We have worked with our Community Development office, Board of Health, and Public Safety Departments to apply for grants to offset the costs of construction, programming and personnel. Through grants we're working on the re-construction of Air Force Road and the multiple Street Construction work done through Chapter 90 money. We used grant monies and money from the sale of real estate, to fund a portion of the Stadium Project. We installed new artificial turf and are make much needed renovations to the walking track and practice fields, and are currently are utilizing skilled city employees to renovate the bathrooms at the stadium.

We're also successful in getting small projects funded through State and Federal grant money. Through grants, we transitioned to wireless fireboxes and paid for our Police Department to purchase a license plate reader. Grant money pays for the Energize Everett Program, which continues to promote a healthier Everett. Demolition required by our Inspectional Services Department for a structure weakened by fire was paid for through grant funds.

Currently we have five police officers in the Police Academy, who will be joining our community on the streets in the coming months. This great addition to Everett Police is paid entirely through grant funds, including health insurance and other benefits.

As values start to increase and new growth rises, inevitably the tax rate will decrease. We have a strong industrial base already in Everett and to improve our tax rate we

continue to work to bring new, jobs creating development to the City of Everett. This is why we devote time to visioning and planning, looking ahead to keep Everett a strong, vibrant and great place to live. This is why we will continue to push for the capitol improvement money. This is an investment in our infrastructure, improving, restoring, and preventing future issues. \$1.2 million dollars invested in you, in your streets, your sidewalks and in your community.

Our success can only come through a collaborative effort. Working with the City Council, our State Delegation and our department heads, we're keeping Everett strong during uncertain times. Teamwork and creative thinking amongst city officials and departments allow us to do more with less, to keep a positive outlook and never look back. I am proud to be Mayor during this time because while never easy, the most rewarding part of my job is that we always look to push Everett in a better direction. In Everett we can all look ahead to a better future, even as some of our counterparts are struggling, we continue to prosper.

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For additional press information please contact Matt Laidlaw, Director of Communications, City of Everett.

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