

# Celebrating a Changing Community

*A column by Circle Pines Mayor Dave Bartholomay for the Quad Community Press Newspaper (April 30, 2019)*

‘The only person who really likes change is a baby with a wet diaper’.

That old political saying has a lot of truth in it. Folks often say they support change in the abstract, but not so much when it will really impact their life. It might be fear that drives them back to the status quo; it could be that they weren’t involved in the decision-making process; or maybe they want to avoid the short-term pain that change may cause on the path to a ‘better situation’. But change is indeed inevitable, and as I’ve written before, it is occurring more often than in the past.

Fear, and in particular fear of change, can really hold back a person and a community. While it is certainly good to celebrate the history of what has made a community special, there is also a crying need to build on that history in a way that continually improves the quality of life for all residents, old and new. We don’t live in museums – we visit museums to better understand, appreciate, and learn from the past. However, we live in a vibrant, always evolving world.

But, you are thinking, much of what is changing is not for the better. Indeed, the increasing scarcity of deep relationships, of knowing your neighbors, the impact of environmental change, and an increasing distrust of organizations meant to serve us – all of this and more drives us to resist change and to become frustrated and disengaged. But here change is, all around us. So, really, what then are our options? To let our lives get swirled around and dashed upon the rocks by the ever stronger currents of change? Or to seek a way to bob and weave through the changes, accepting some, adapting to others, while resisting others and vowing to fight to make sure that changes are for the betterment of all people. That is an energizing and uplifting challenge, one done best in community with others.

A changing community can be a wonderful thing. An old decrepit building long out of use and an eyesore can be torn down, prompting an opportunity to be replaced by a new business that seeks to be part of a healthy and prosperous economy. The public library can be remodeled and expanded to meet the changing needs of those thirsty to learn and to be a place to come together as a community. Public investments can be made in playgrounds, parks, and other amenities so that they continue to help the community stay active and connected. And perhaps most importantly, our schools can continually update their buildings and their in-classroom strategies to better prepare our young people to become resilient, life-long learners.

One of the biggest changes in a community involves its people. Wonderful people who have contributed so much can pass away and our community is a bit lesser. Others can become worn out by work and life and health problems and lose their energy to be a vibrant part of the community. But those changes, painful as they may be, are offset by new energy and ideas from the latest arrivals to our community. Because change is a continuous process that can't be avoided.

What if each of us took a moment to perhaps fondly recall the past and what it meant to your life. And then commit yourself to the hard work of creating positive change in your life and the lives of those around you. Because it is by working to become more positive and involved that you will find joy in your life.