



fewer of us expected so much of the calendar year - and our lives - to be disrupted by a worldwide pandemic. It was easy to let COVID-19 disrupt our progress whether personally, professionally, or in our communities.

In January 2020, I authored the City of Stamford's first "State of the City Report" and outlined 20 priority areas for improvement in the community. About six months into our local pandemic response, I was discouraged. It felt like so much of my mayoral time, energy, and mental exertion had been devoted to COVID response and the 20 priority areas had been cast aside. But then I pulled out my report and read through the 20 priorities. I was heartened to see that we had

made progress on almost every area and substantial progress on many areas. If we did not make any progress, it was almost entirely a result of the social restrictions associated with the pandemic. I was still not satisfied (I will not be satisfied until everything is done to the best of our ability), but I was encouraged!

So with that, I want to renew my challenge that I issued at the beginning of 2020, to carry over into the new year: "I want 2021 to be a year of action. By making it so, and continuing the

growth and lessons of 2021, we can ensure the 2020s are a decade of transformation.

In last year's essay, and today, I want to point you to the two key words in that challenge: ACTION that leads to TRANSFORMATION.

As I wrote last year, the New Testament book of James reminds us that faith without deeds is dead. But deeds without faith are also futile. A Christian who follows the teachings of Jesus and strives to impact their world must

combine both faith and deeds. A simple deed might be beneficial, but what mighty power comes from deeds fueled by faith? Jesus tells us in Matthew 17:20-21 that faith can move mountains. It is faith - the true, deep faith that transforms hearts and minds - that gives real, mighty, awe-inspiring power to our deeds.

That brings us back to action and transformation within our communities. As I wrote last year, and I want to reiterate today, action is necessary if we want to revitalize our rural

Action and Transformation 2021

By James M. Decker
 In my first essay shortly after New Year's Day last year, I wrote "I want 2020 to be a year of action. By making it so, we can make this a new decade of transformation." Then, 2020 happened. On the day I wrote that essay, very few of us had heard of COVID-19. Even


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