



GENEVA CITY 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

2023 has been a challenging year for the City of Geneva, but as we all know, with great challenges comes great opportunities. We remain focused on completing several projects that will improve our community and make it a better place to live, work and play. Additionally, we continue to gain investments both publicly and privately, which will positively impact our community for years to come. And regarding city operations, we will always strive to do our best to provide for our citizens the highest level of service possible with the resources we have to work with.

Below is an overview of the many ventures that were started this past year, with a few carrying over into 2024.

City of Geneva Projects & Accomplishments

- Over the past year we've worked diligently on getting the West Main Street Infrastructure project off the ground. After several attempts and the receipt of a \$3M grant from the D.O.D., the city was finally able to secure a bid for the project, with Council authorizing acceptance of the bid in October, 2023. The project, spanning between Eagle St. and West St. along West Main (Rt.20), will include the replacement of sanitary and storm sewers, sewer laterals, manholes, catch basins, sidewalks and curb, widening a section of road, removal of old trolley rails, the stabilization of poor subgrade materials and ultimately the repaving of the entire section of roadway with the total project cost at just under \$9 million. Assuming an early 2024 start, the estimated completion of this project should be around October, 2025.
- We completed paving and Chip-Fog-Seal projects including Aletha, Elizabeth, Centennial and Eastlawn to East Main Streets.
- Our engineers are working on updating our asset management plan to comply with OEPA mandates.
- We were awarded \$137,200 in CDBG grant funding for a Senior Center ADA Improvement Project. This project will improve the rear entrance of the building by flattening the steep non-ADA compliant ramp at the door and installing a vertical platform lift, handrails, guardrails, stairs and a

heater unit in the entry way. There's also new electrical work for new lighting, power to the vertical lift and two new doors with push pad openers will be installed.

- The city welcomed back Traci Welch as Finance Director in February, hired Ella Stanton as the new HR/Admin Assistant along with various new police officers, dispatchers, street and wastewater employees.
- Our Street Department, though very short staffed, has made numerous road repairs, replaced or repaired storm lines, jetted drive pipes and cleaned ditches in various locations throughout the city. They have worked tirelessly to keep the city mowed and leaves and yard debris picked up.
- We're currently working with our engineers on assessing the overall capacity of our wastewater Treatment Plant. This assessment takes into consideration both planned and possible economic growth scenarios throughout the city and the JEDD's. Such a model will assist the city in preparing timely and proactively for needed capital expansion if and when necessary.
- The Gardiner Energy Efficiency Program, where the city upgraded lighting, HVAC and network-thermostatic infrastructure in all our facilities to achieve maximum energy efficiencies, is moving into the final stage, which is upgrading all city-wide streetlights to LED. The project (beginning the first full year after completion) is estimated to save the city approximately \$750,000 over a 10-year period.
- We're in the process of procuring an experienced consultant to assist the city with preparing a Stormwater Master Plan. The preparation of such a plan has long been discussed and will now begin in early 2024.

Recreation and Quality of Life

- Through the Keep Ohio Beautiful Grant Program, supported by the Sherwin-Williams Company, we were awarded up to 40 gallons of stain to re-stain our playground at Memorial Field. Through generous volunteer and employee assistance, this project was completed in October.

- Our popular Summer Movies at Memorial Field and Concerts at the Pavilion continued, as well as newer offerings like adult painting classes at the Rec Center, which are geared to residents of all ages.
- Our annual Back-to-school, school supplies distribution was a huge success again this year.
- We're in discussions with a professional events planner that will assist the city beginning in early 2024 with increasing the number and variety of events to be held at the Community Center.
- We learned this summer that the City of Geneva has been recognized as a "2022 Tree City USA" community. "Tree City USA communities see the positive effects of an urban forest first hand", said Dan Lambe, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. "The Trees being planted and cared for by Geneva are ensuring that generations to come will enjoy a better quality of life. Additionally, participation in this program brings residents together and creates a sense of civic pride, whether it's through volunteer engagement or public education". Lambe continued, "Communities worldwide are facing issues with air quality, water resources, personal health and well-being, energy use, etc." and that "Geneva is doing its part to address these challenges for residents both now and in the future".
- The 57th Annual Grape Jamboree had beautiful weather and went off without a hitch with a record number in attendance.

Economic Development

- Several landmark building acquisitions in the city have either occurred or are in the discussion stage, with encouraging business plans in the works. An old Grocery Store, Pharmacy, Bank and Gas Station have either been purchased or are under contract with new business plans under consideration.
- A new Brewery opened on N. Broadway in Downtown Geneva. The official grand opening was held the end of July.
- Numerous permits have been pulled throughout the year by different business and industrial entities for purposes tied to business growth and expansion. Assisting existing businesses with job growth and expansion remains a key component of the city's economic growth strategy.

- The Harpersfield/Geneva Joint Economic Development District's (JEDD's) I, II and III Board remains steadfast in our pursuit of continued development along the SR 534/I 90 corridor. We believe this intersection is among the most attractive in NE Ohio for ongoing growth and expansion. Nestled between Lake Erie and Wine Country, with the Spire Academy centrally located, this corridor is a hot market and positioned to take off as several new business opportunities are being explored.
- The City Zoning Code Update process is continuing. With the Planning Commission reviewing our consultant's recommendations, we're getting closer to moving the updated recommendations to council for their review. Up to date zoning codes are intended to guide and encourage economic development, while at the same time protect the overall integrity of the community.
- We're working with planners procured on behalf of the Appalachian Community Grant program to bring money into our community for downtown revitalization opportunities. This includes streetscape expansion and updates and building façade improvements within the Central Business District.
- We continue to work with the Youngstown Business Incubator's (YBI) Ashtabula County Coordinator to brainstorm ideas on how to assist local businesses with information, resources and capital. Through such a collaboration, local Geneva area businesses could benefit greatly.

Vision For Our Future

As 2023 draws to a close, we can reflect back proudly on all that has been accomplished in our community. We are proud of all the activities that have occurred in 2023 and will continue into 2024. We strive to always seek new ways to enhance the level of service we provide our citizens. This, we believe, they deserve.

We strive to keep working hard on bringing new development to the area and are optimistic about realizing growth in all sectors: residential, commercial and industrial. We will continue to work closely with the JEDD's [and NextSite](#) on any growth opportunities that make sense for this market. The city will continue

being aggressive with grant opportunities to keep improving our aging infrastructure and will do our best to keep our costs under control. Additionally, short- and long-term planning will be key to providing a clear vision for both our operational and capital needs as maintaining a foresightful strategy for securing funds for future capital infrastructure and equipment remains a high priority.

Our appreciation goes out to the continuous support of the Geneva Business Association, Community Improvement Corporation of Geneva, Geneva Chamber of Commerce, VFW, FOE, Rotary, Geneva Schools, our hospitals and our civic organizations for making Geneva successful. The citizens of Geneva and the greater Ashtabula area have much to look forward to. There are a lot of new possibilities for growth and we are working to explore every avenue. We are thankful for our City Council, commissioners, board members and staff for their sincere efforts and genuine commitment to the success of our community.

Finally, our community should be proud of the vision and hard work that so many of our staff and volunteers have made year after year and in their ability to find new ways to improve and promote our community. I can assure our City Council and the citizens of Geneva that our employees are dedicated and work very hard to provide the best services possible with the resources we possess. As we continue to look forward, it will always remain our goal to make Geneva the best place to live, work, play and raise our families.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph J. Varckette, City Manager