



GENEVA CITY 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

2024 has been a very productive year for the City of Geneva. Like most years, it's been filled with various challenges and opportunities, but what sets this year apart, has been our ability to finally get off the ground a few long-needed major infrastructure construction and planning projects that will benefit the city for decades to come. Much of this progress was driven by substantial investments made in our community infrastructure from both public and private sources and from what we are seeing, there's much more to come.

Below is an overview of the many projects and activities that began this year, some completed and a few carrying over into 2025.

City of Geneva Projects & Accomplishments

- After finally securing a bid for the West Main Street Infrastructure Improvement project, we were able to move forward with the start of construction in April. As the project moved forward, so did the challenges of navigating the detours. After several weeks and various sign and barricade adjustments, we were finally on our way. The project, which spans between Eagle St. and West St. along West Main (Rt.20), includes the replacement of sanitary and storm sewers, sewer laterals, manholes, catch basins, sidewalks and curb, widening of section of road, removal of old trolley rails, the stabilization of the sub-surface and ultimately the repaving of the entire section of roadway, with the total project cost at just under \$10 million. The anticipated completion of this project is September 2025.
- In May, the city received a visit from Gov. Mike DeWine who announced that we were being awarded \$2.6M for our Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP) application, which accentuates downtown revitalization. This two-pronged project includes streetscape improvements and building façade upgrades to commercial properties in the central business district. Among the upgrades includes the paving of Depot St. parking lot, landscaping, wayfinding signs, murals, site furnishings in various locations and pocket parks. This will also include sidewalk replacements on the east

side of S. Broadway from Erie St. to Eastwood St., with sidewalk, brick paver ribbon and stamped decorative concrete in the city's central downtown.

- The City (the lead applicant) in cooperation with Geneva-on-the-Lake and Geneva Twp., received a \$50,000 grant from the Division of Forestry to retain the services of a Forrester. Among the services included are consultation for tree evaluation, removal of high-risk trees, tree planting in all three jurisdictions and training.
- The City was also 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 was also new electrical work for new lighting, power to the vertical lift and two new doors with push pad openers will be installed. This project should be completed in Mid-December 2024.
- The County's first ever DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area) was finally approved in September. This will allow patrons from participating vendors in our Downtown to purchase an alcoholic beverage and take them outside, walk around and enjoy themselves, while staying within the designated area. Our activation target is currently Winterfest, 2025.
- The City of Geneva was recently notified that our USDOT Safe Streets 4 All (SS4A) Application, submitted in unison with Geneva and Harpersfield Townships, has been selected for funding in the amount of \$265,000. This grant will provide for the development of a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for each of the participating communities. The aim is to create a plan that reduces transportation related severe injuries and fatalities in our communities. The project planning timeframe is 2025.
- Our Street Department has made numerous road repairs, of which include the paving of Austin Rd. and several others that were Chip-Fog sealed. They also made sidewalk repairs, replaced or repaired bad storm lines, jetted drive pipes and cleaned ditches in various locations throughout the city. They work to keep the city parks and property mowed, they pick up yard debris from spring into fall and pick up residents leaves from the curb up to the beginning of December. And throughout the winter, they consistently keep our streets plowed, salted and safe.

- We finally started our long-needed Stormwater Master Plan process, with CT Consultants as the contractor/engineer for the project. Our initial investment of \$80,000 will enable us to eventually address decades old stormwater issues as this plan is the beginning of a long-term commitment to finding solutions to our stormwater challenges. This project, among other things, includes the collection of data through research and on-the-ground investigations which will ultimately help identify and map problem areas throughout the city with the intent of providing scalable, workable solutions.

Recreation and Quality of Life

- Our Geneva Recreation Department organized some great events like the Summer Concert Series, which was held bi-weekly on Thursday evenings at Rotary Pavilion, the Summer Movie Series; “Movies under the Stars, Geneva Community Garage Sale, Back to School giveaway, Ghoulfest and Winterfest events.
- Ghoulfest 2024 was another resounding success! Featuring a pancake breakfast, a Craft Show, BBQ at the pavilion, the Witches Walk, the famous Coffin Race, a Parade, Trunk or Treat, the Haunted Gym and so much more. This is a great annual community event that’s enjoyed by many!
- Of course, our Rec. Basketball and Soccer Leagues remain a staple of the Rec. Department as these leagues are very popular with our youth, as are the occasional Self-Defense classes for women and girls.
- The 59th Annual Grape Jamboree had beautiful weather and another year with a record number in attendance.
- You can’t talk about Quality of Life without mentioning the ongoing dedication and commitment of our Safety Forces. Our Police and Fire Departments remain second to none, and are always there for our City and neighboring Township residents, if and when called upon. To these dedicated professionals, boundaries are irrelevant in the call of duty.

Economic Development

- There continues to be interest in landmark buildings being acquired in the city's Downtown, which has either already occurred or is in the discussion stages that involve exciting business plans. Among the active acquisitions include new, soon-to-open businesses. One in an old, renovated Bank, another in an old Gas Station and yet another in an old pharmacy. Various other storefronts have also either been purchased or are in discussions with property owners with new business plans under consideration.
- The Harpersfield/Geneva Joint Economic Development District's (JEDD's) Board remains steadfast in our pursuit of continued development along the SR 534/I 90 corridor. Centrally located between Lake Erie and wine country, with the Spire Academy centrally located, this corridor is a hot market and positioned to take off as new businesses continue to show interest in the area.
- New Permits have been pulled in the past few months by different business and Industrial entities for purposes tied to business growth and expansion. Assisting these potential and existing businesses with creative incentives to assist with job growth and expansion remains a key component of the city's economic growth strategy.
- As our City Zoning Code Update process is nearing completion, we're getting closer to moving the updated recommendations to council for their review and approval. 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 maintain good working relationships with various Local, County, State and Federal entities as well as the Growth Partnership of Ashtabula County and the Youngstown Business Incubator (YBI) in seeking funding opportunities for Economic Development initiatives and strategies to assist local businesses with information, resources and capital.
- Economic growth can't happen without efficient infrastructure. As such, the city continued to invest in our Wastewater and Water Distribution Systems throughout the year. Strategic investment in our utility infrastructure will enable us to efficiently handle existing and future growth within the city and the JEDD's for years to come. Of note, the updating of our Asset Management Plan and the OPWA approval of our waterline replacement

project along Lawn Street, a project estimated at just under \$700,000, go a long way in enhancing our long-term efficiencies.

VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

As 2024 comes to an end, we can reflect proudly on all that has been accomplished in our quaint and growing community. We are extremely proud of the foresightful planning and the various improvements completed and started, of which many will continue well into 2025. Our city staff remains diligent in their duties and continues to strive towards providing the best service possible, which our residents expect and deserve.

We will continue working hard on bringing new development to the area and are optimistic in realizing growth among all sectors: residential, commercial and industrial. We recognize the leveraging of our JEDD's as an excellent economic development strategy for future growth opportunities as we continue to work closely with our Township partners. The city will continue being aggressive with grant opportunities to keep improving our aging infrastructure throughout the city. Short-term and long-range planning remain key to providing a clear vision for both our operational and capital needs. With a compilation of management staff, committees and work sessions of the City Council, we will continue to push forward strategies to secure dedicated funds for future capital infrastructure and equipment needs.

Our appreciation goes to the continuous support of the Geneva Business Association (GBA), Community Improvement Corporation of Geneva (CIC), Geneva Chamber of Commerce, VFW, FOE, Rotary, Geneva Schools, the Hospital and our numerous community-wide volunteers for making Geneva successful. The citizens of the greater Geneva 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 to our City Council, our Township partners, commissioners, board members and staff for their sincere efforts and genuine commitment to the success of our community.

As has been a reoccurring theme over the past few years, with an aging workforce, there have been some major personnel changes throughout the city. We have again seen a few long-term employees retire during 2024. We have or will be filling these positions as time and opportunity permits but replacing their experience isn't possible. However, our current employees continue to work hard and have stepped up to the challenge as we continue to build our staff for the future. Our community should be proud of the vision and hard work that so many staff and volunteers have committed year after year in finding new ways to improve and promote our community. I can assure City Council and the citizens of Geneva that our City Administration, employees and boards remain dedicated in our pursuit of a better future for all, and we will never stop seeking ways to make Geneva the best place to live, work, play and raise our families.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph J. Varckette
City Manager