

Press Release Office of **Mayor William R. Wild**



36300 Warren Road Westland, Michigan 48185
Office 734.467.3200 / Fax 734.422.1230
WWW.CITYOFWESTLAND.COM

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Mayor Wild Delivers Virtual 2020 Annual State of the City Address



October 15, 2020 - On
Tuesday, October 13 Mayor Wild's 2020 State of the City Address premiered.
Residents can view the address on the City's cable channel, WLND all week at 8:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. The video is also available on YouTube at
<https://youtu.be/kgqOx5JsjdA>

Highlights from this year's address include:

The City of Westland's pandemic response -

- Over 1200 Westland residents have tested positive for COVID-19 and 107 members of our community have lost their lives to the COVID-19 virus.
- When Governor Whitmer issued the original stay at home order, the city quickly responded with a plan to keep the critical operations of the city functional while working with the city's unions to furlough the majority of non-public service employees. The administration worked with its labor groups to put together the City's Stay at Home Plan and later the Return to Work Plan.
- Westland has been a state-wide leader in safely reopening our buildings to the public and is one of only a few in the state that have resumed full operations.
- Westland was awarded close to \$700,000 in Federal Care Act funds under the Community Development Block Grant Program. These funds were utilized to create three Westland CARES programs, which included a rent/mortgage assistance fund, and employee retention fund and the procurement of personal protection equipment which was distributed to vulnerable Westland residents, local businesses and non-profit organizations.

Update on the Neighborhood Makeover Program -

- In 2017, Mayor Wild launched an ambitious five year, 50-point makeover program for all 50 of Westland's neighborhood districts.
- To date, significant progress has been made in 36 districts and the program is operating ahead of its completion schedule.

- A dashboard is available on the City's website to view the program's progress, which includes over 6,000 trimmed trees, replacement or repair of 1500 street signs, 3100 sewer catch basins cleaned, and over 3200 fire hydrants inspected and re-painted.
- The program also includes identifying current road, sidewalk and sewer conditions which has allowed the City to bundle extensive repairs during the bidding and scheduling process, resulting in time and money savings.

Infrastructure Improvements -

- Installation of over 200 new LED streetlights on Warren Rd. and Central City Parkway with an additional project slated to take place on Newburgh Rd. from Glenwood to Joy.
- Completion of road work on Hix between Ford and Warren, Carlson between Marquette and Ford, as well as Nankin between Central City Parkway and Wayne.
- Resurfacing of the 18th District Court parking lot
- Installation of new sidewalks on Marquette and Shuman
- Completion of a major water main and road replacement project on Brandon Street between Glenwood and Palmer.

Economic Development and Private investment -

- 100,000 square foot expansion of **US Farathane** Plant on Ford Rd., resulting in \$20 million investment and 100 new jobs in Westland.
- **Regency of Westland** skilled nursing facility at the corner of Ford and Newburgh. The 76,000 square foot facility represented a \$16.5 million investment and created over 120 new full and part time jobs.
- \$5 million reinvestment by **Emagine Theatre** that brought a new 94-ft wide screen, the largest in the Midwest, right to Westland.
- **Garden City Hospital** established a new \$11 million Community Health Center to the complex that formerly housed David's Bridal and Malarkey's Irish Pub. The new health center will include the city's first 24hr emergency room, physician offices, and a state of the art physical rehabilitation center. The project is slated to be finished by the end of the year and will create 40 new full time positions.
- A new 40,000 square foot **Grande Westland Banquet and Event Center** at the site of the long closed Fire Mountain Restaurant which is slated to open in early 2022.
- Michigan based **US Ice** and **American Pulse Processing** undertook a \$5 million dollar conversion of the 85,000 square foot former Dicks Sporting Goods building on Central City Parkway. The building will house the headquarters for US Ice, along with a cutting edge ice manufacturing factory and a customized ice carving retail center. American Pulse will bring food manufacturing to the district with a first class commercial tahini processing facility.

Public Safety and Transparency -

- Westland Police Department is one of Michigan's first police agencies to make up to date information available to the public on citizen's complaints, crime rates, arrest and citation data, and many other areas of enforcement by gender and demographics along with a comprehensive look at the training for the department's 81 sworn officers and 25 civilian employees. You can browse current data or view a five year trend for each dataset. This public transparency dashboard is now operational and you can view it by visiting the cityofwestland.com and clicking on the Police Department.
- The Westland City Council adopted a resolution declaring **Racism is a Public Health Crisis** and have called for the creation of a Commission to conduct an assessment of internal policies and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element of the City of Westland's entire organization.
- The Commission will also, amongst several other duties, work on identifying specific activities to increase diversity within the ranks of all areas of the city's workforce to be more reflective of the community that we serve.

Finance -

- In June, the City Council approved the 2020/2021 budget. It was a 72 million dollar balanced budget.

- Westland's Grant Team has brought in over \$2 million in total grants this year with another \$1.5 million pending.
- The City received an extremely positive outcome of its most recent audit. The city received an unqualified opinion which is the highest opinion that the auditors can give and that is a testament to the hard work of all the employees in the Finance Department.
- The Finance team is also currently working on a municipal bond sale to fund the city's unfunded MERS Pension obligation. The bond will ultimately bring the funding level close to 95% and by taking advantage of the city's good bond rating, low debt load and historically low interest rates, the yearly payments will be less than if we continued to make the annual required payments, creating ongoing relief for the city's general fund budget.

Return of Curbside Recycling -

- After having to suspend the program due to the changing economics of recycling, the city was able to reinstitute the popular program in July after an additional sanitation millage was approved by Westland voters.
- Early results on participation have been very favorable as Westland's recycling tonnage is quickly returning.
- The City has mailed information to residents and have used social media, the website, and the city's cable station WLND, newsletters and other forms of communication to educate residents on the new recycling rules. Plans are in place to double the outreach efforts.

Reducing Westland's Water Rates -

- Last year, the City Council approved of funding a water main leak detection program to identify and eliminate any leaks within the system. The program has concluded and several leaks including a major one in the Hannan and Palmer Road area, were identified and have been addressed.
- City Council also recently approved Mayor Wild's request to join the city of Livonia, Canton Township and Northville Township in studying the benefits of creating a Western Wayne County Water Authority to try to reduce water bills for each community's water customers. Combined, the four communities purchase more than \$34 Million a year in water from the Great Lakes Water Authority. The municipalities are exploring their options of leveraging their combined purchase power and resources to negotiate a better rate.

Mayor Wild dedicated this year's State of the City to 107 members of the community who lost their lives to the coronavirus. He closed his address with a memorial video honoring those residents.

For more information, please call (734) 467-3200.

Westland, Michigan is the state's 10th largest municipality, with a population of over 84,000.

Westland has been recognized as one of 24/7 Wall Street's America's Best 50 Cities to Live, offering residents and visitors an ideal blend of single – family affordable homes, apartments and condominiums, great schools, and access to numerous outdoor activities. Public safety is delivered by full-service, professional law enforcement and firefighting personnel.

Westland is well known as a premier destination for shopping and dining in Wayne County with hundreds of shops and restaurants anchored by the Westland shopping Center, one of the country's original four regional malls.

The City is served by two public school districts; Wayne-Westland Community Schools serving 12,000 youth was recently named one of the best schools in Michigan by WXYZ-TV and is the proud recipient of 14 Golden Apple and two Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Awards. Livonia Public Schools, educating nearly 15,000 students, is proud of their MEAP/MME scores that exceed State averages and the district has also earned Golden Apple and Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School awards.

The City provides competitive incentives for those who are interested in investing in Westland, making it one of the hottest investment markets in the region. Westland's Fast-Track to Business Team, which consists of key decision makers who work diligently to "cut the red tape" and expedite the approval

process for new business development.