

Press Release Office of Mayor William R. Wild



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Mayor Wild Proposes Bold "Build a Better Westland" Initiative at 2021 Annual State of the City Address



December 3, 2021 - On Thursday, December 2 Mayor William R. Wild delivered his 2021 State of the City Address. The address can be viewed on the City's cable channel, WLND on and on the city's YouTube channel throughout the month of December.

Highlights from this year's address include:

Continued vigilance in battling the Covid-19 Pandemic.

- The city's Vaccinate Westland team helped over 14,000 residents receive vaccinations. Westland's dedicated firefighters even went mobile to the city's homeless, homebound and special needs populations to deliver this life-saving vaccine.
- Westland will partner with Kroger Pharmacies to create a booster clinic within the Westland Friendship Center. Eligible residents can contact the Mayor's Office to

Public Safety

Fire Department

- Continued collaboration with FEMA following the massive rain events in Southeast Michigan in June, which resulted in a Federal Disaster Declaration. The City has helped to direct residents and small business owners effected by the rain events to county and federal funding opportunities.
- The Fire Department has hired 24 firefighters over the past 20 months with each successfully completing 160 hours of new hire training.
- The Department is nearly fully staffed, and with a steady increase in call volume has placed a fifth ambulance in service to better serve the community's needs.
- The department has also recently deployed 15 new wirelessly monitored Automated External Defibrillators throughout all of the city buildings.
- Officers in the Fire Prevention Division are currently working toward acquiring their Certified Fire Investigator Certifications. This is a nationally recognized certification based on the officer's experience, education, and knowledge regarding fire origin and cause determinations.
- The Fire Prevention Division also helped out the business community during the pandemic by servicing fire safety issues, free of charge to 54 local small businesses, which included ensuring fire suppression systems, fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems and emergency exit lighting, making sure they were operational and fire code compliant.

Police Department

- In 2020 the Westland Police Department made headlines when it launched an innovative department transparency page on the city's website, placing up to date information on citizen's complaints, crime rates, arrest and citation data, by gender and demographics at the public's fingertips.
- Establishment of a Mobil Crisis Co-Responder program within the Detective Bureau. With the help of a Michigan State Police grant, the department will soon partner with Hegira Health to employ a state licensed, full time social worker specializing in psychology, guidance and counseling to help provide face to face co-response with police officers to individuals encountered with behavioral health needs.
- Creation of a Specialized Victim Violence Unit in response to rising calls of domestic violence in the community.

Neighborhood and Infrastructure Improvements -

- DPS launched "Operation Clean Sweep", which was a major blight busting effort to clean up the city
- DPS also oversaw over \$13 Million in road, sidewalk, water and sewer projects, all across the city.
- Major road projects were completed on Newburgh Rd, Avondale, John Hix, Superior Parkway, Yale, Carlson and Grand Traverse while neighborhood road repairs and maintenance was performed in eight neighborhood districts as part of the ongoing Neighborhood Makeover Program.
- Substantial water main replacement projects were completed on Arcola and Cavell streets.
- Sanitary Sewer lining projects were completed in six neighborhoods that will help extend the life of the sanitary sewers, prevent collapsing and eliminate storm water from entering the sanitary sewer system, which will help prevent basement flooding.
- Wayne County resurfaced Venoy from Glenwood to Palmer and Wayne Road from Warren to Ford.
- Resurfacing of Wayne Rd from Ford to Cherry Hill, work on the Merriman Bridge north of Warren Road and continued work on the highly anticipated Venoy Dorsey Park canoe/kayak launches will take place in 2022.
- DPS also created a state of art sign shop within the DPS Building and oversaw the incredible makeover of the Westland Recycling Center.
- Working with DTE on tree clearing strategies to help ensure the reliability of Westland's power grid and minimize future power outages.

Fiscal Responsibility -

- In June, the City Council approved a \$72 million balanced budget for FY 2020/2021
- 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 unqualified opinion from its auditors, which is the highest opinion that the auditors can give.
- The Finance team completed a municipal bond sale to fund the city's unfunded MERS Pension obligation which will ultimately bring the funding level close to 95% and reduce the city's annual payments.

Catalyst Developments and Planning for the Future -

- The City processed over 80 new business applications for 2021 and saw over 30 new businesses open their doors during the economic challenges of the pandemic.
- New \$11 million dollar Westland Community Health Center, owned by Garden City Hospital. The new Health Center will provide Westland residents access to state-of-the-art Emergency Room medical services 24hrs a day without having to leave our community, for the first time.
- US ICE, an innovative ice manufacturing plant in a creative use of the former Dicks Sporting Goods Building.
- Nearing the opening of the new 40,000 square foot Grand Westland Banquet hall which is slated to open in early 2022.
- Creative redevelopment of the historical Eloise property on Merriman and Michigan Ave. .
- Major reinvestment by Kohls, including a dynamite new Sephora located within the store.
- Historic Kronk Gym opened in the Norwayne Community
- New housing projects from Lombardo Homes on the sites of the former Madison and Kettering Elementary Schools, marking the first new major residential projects in the Wayne-Westland School District since the recession. These two projects will play a major role in economic development in the 48186 zip code portion of the city.
- The Village of Westland, a non-profit affiliate of Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, is planning a \$60 million investment in a significant redevelopment and expansion of their 30-acre affordable senior living campus located adjacent to the shopping center at the southwest corner of Cherry Hill and Merriman.
- The City is currently updating its zoning ordinance and development codes that will better align with the recently updated Master Plan.
- Establishment of the Westland Walk & Roll Plan which will identify and prioritize future bike lanes and pedestrian connectivity and safety projects aimed at improving the walkability and bike friendliness of the community.

Developing Champions in the Classroom, in Competition, and in Life

This year's State of the City also included a special presentation from the new Wayne-Westland Community Schools Superintendent, Dr. John Dignan, who highlighted their ongoing efforts and made it clear he has big plans for the school district in the future. In 2018 residents passed a \$158 million bond which is currently funding transformational projects at John Glen, Wayne Memorial and the William D. Ford Career Technical Center. Future projects are also planned for Edison Elementary, Hamilton Elementary, Schweitzer Elementary, Franklin Middle School and Stevenson Middle School. All of the projects are expected to be completed in 2026. Dignan also noted that over \$10 million in scholarships were awarded last year alone and indicated the programs at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center are a strong point of academic pride for the district, offering students a viable alternative to a four-year degree.

What's to Come?

Mayor Wild closed out his comments with a hint of things to come in 2022 and beyond. Westland received 26 million dollars as part of the 2021 American Rescue Plan. Earlier this year the city received the first payment of 13 million and will see a second payment of 13 million early in 2022.

"This historical, once in a lifetime, federal funding provides the city an opportunity to

advance a bold vision to build Westland's future and strategically invest in our residents, businesses, infrastructure and community assets," commented Mayor William R. Wild. While the Mayor noted the city has not expended any funds to date, he plans to begin working swiftly and efficiently in 2022 with the City Council to establish a comprehensive strategy for the utilization of this funding in order to achieve true transformational progress. Following guidelines and recommendations from State and Federal government, Mayor Wild shared his vision for a "Build A Better Westland" Plan, which he stated, "would be the city's boldest initiative yet," and included proposed uses of the funding to:

- partner with the YMCA and create a modern recreation center within the vacant 140,000 Sq. Foot Marshall School. The building could potentially house a branch of the Westland Library, offer additional services for our seniors and perhaps offer the opportunity to partner with other organizations to create a true community center located in the center of the city.
- replace the city's two oldest Fire Stations - Station #2 on Merriman and Ann Arbor Trail and Station #4 on Palmer and Newburgh and make final improvements to the Westland Police Station.
- replacement of the city's two oldest fire engines and an update to the Police Department patrol car fleet with new Hybrid Ford Explorers.
- update Westland's recreational structures in all city parks, build additional pavilions and add amenities to help us meet current ADA standards.
- Create and fund a program to help alleviate basement flooding in areas of reoccurrence.
- creation and funding of a program that would help pave the remaining 7 miles of dirt roads in the community.
- Fund investments to help strengthen our two historic neighborhoods Norwayne and Annapolis Park.
- Move on plans to expand the city's Historical Village Park and a facelift for the Community Arts Center, which is the home of the Inspire Theatre.
- Partnering with non-profits to help with investments in equity and diversity.

"As you can see 2021 has been a year of progress in the All American City and looking ahead 2022 may ultimately be our best year yet," Wild concluded.

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.