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2023 State of the City Investing in Community

It is always a pleasure to prepare and present the State of the City. It gives us a chance to reflect upon the previous year's accomplishments and look forward to some exciting goals for 2023 and beyond. Looking back over my time as Mayor, I am reminded of how important collaboration has been to Nappanee's success. We all have unique talents and gifts we offer to the community, but when we harness and combine those efforts by working collectively we can go much further and achieve greater results than we thought possible.

As we review the past and plan for the future, I want to stress that none of this would be possible without the unselfish and dedicated support of all of the city employees, elected officials, board members, residents, businesses, and other partners. As we bring this report to you, we do so with a sound financial foundation, anchored by a history of balanced budgets, healthy cash reserves, and conscientious spending.

Some of the highlights of 2022, include the completion of the renovation of South Park, the construction of permanent restrooms at Stauffer, Recovery, and South Parks, the renovation of the Derksen Farm Nature Center, and the reconstruction of Oakland Trail, including the addition of another art pod, the addition of lighting, and the widening and resurfacing of the path. The City Parks Department and Wa-Nee Schools partnered on the opening of the new facility at Wellfield Park that includes restrooms, concessions, and locker rooms.

The street department, in collaboration with the Redevelopment Commission and INDOT's Community Crossing Matching Grant (CCMG) Program, completed work on the reconstruction of Miriam Avenue. Miriam Avenue improvements include improved drainage, new curbs and gutters, and a new sidewalk and pedestrian bridge over the Berlin Court Ditch, connecting it to Oakland Trail. The City also received additional CCMG funds for resurfacing of several other existing street surfaces. Along Woodview Drive, utility relocation work began in preparation for the reconstruction of that section of road.

In addition to assisting with funding for Miriam Avenue, the Redevelopment Commission remains focused on downtown improvements by expanding and increasing funding for facade improvements. Redevelopment was also involved with the design of a turn lane along US 6 at the Airport Industrial Area and exploring the implementation of residential tax increment financing, allowing for new housing growth.

*Embrace the P*_l*ace*

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In partnership with Wa-Nee Schools, the Police Department added two new School Resource Officers at Nappanee Elementary and Woodview Elementary. With the addition of our two officers and one officer from Wakarusa, the school district now has an officer in every building. The Police Department saw the retirement of longtime officer Matt Tice in June and the addition of several new officers throughout the summer and fall. The Fire Department continues to merge Fire and EMS services under one umbrella, adding full-time paramedic and firefighter/EMT personnel. In preparation for a new station, staff and administration worked on programming the spaces that will be required for the new facility.

Nappanee continued its positive, steady growth in 2022. Although the overall number of permits was down slightly this past year, the estimated construction cost of \$49 million almost doubled the estimated construction cost of 2021. New industrial growth included new facilities for inTech, ATC, Right Angle Steel, and Gen-Y Hitch.

The Airport Water Tower was brought online this past fall. While we still work on finishing site restoration, the water main improvement project is complete and fully functional. The City continues to resolve some outstanding stormwater issues as we look at a more comprehensive approach to planning and designing for future growth. Collaborating with Elkhart County and the Regional Sewer District, the City of Nappanee also entered into an interlocal agreement to accept and treat sewage from unsewered areas of the county, including Foraker, Southwest, and Tecumseh Acres. Construction of the new regional sewer will begin this spring.

The Elder Haus continues to serve our seniors. With the retirement of Rex and Beth Hershberger in June, the City hired Kim Howenstine as the new Director of the Senior Center. After a few years of disruption due to COVID, Kim and her staff are focused on resuming normal operations and expanding programming moving into 2023.

The Nappanee Art Council (NAC), working with the Parks Department added a new node to the Art Path along the Oakland Trail named "Tunnel of Love". The lighted archway creates a unique way to experience the various works of art created by our local artists. This past year also marked the commissioning of the 100th sculpture of the NAC, which is planned to be located just south of County Road 54, near the 16th green of McCormick Creek Golf Course. Downtown sculptures in 2022 were the result of a private fundraising event to raise awareness for ovarian cancer. Each sculpture incorporates a teal butterfly representing the hope of a cure for this deadly disease.

In August, Nappanee and Wakarusa came together for a Pedal Party bike ride between the two communities. Over 100 people, including entire families, participated in the Saturday ride that raised awareness for a future trail connecting our towns. The event would not have been possible without the financial and technical support provided by the Community Foundation of Elkhart County and their "Connect in Elkhart County" trail initiative. The Community Foundation was also a partner in the funding for the lighting of Oakland Trail and the "Trails and Treats" event in October to celebrate the reopening of the trail. In addition to these special events,

Nappanee proudly hosted parades and events for Memorial Day, the 4th of July, the Apple Festival, and Miracles on Main and Market.

As you can see, 2022 has been a busy and productive year for Nappanee. While most would sit back and rest after a year like that, we are only just getting started with more exciting projects, initiatives, and programs for 2023.

The Parks Department will be working on some new pickleball courts and a disc golf course. The Street Department will begin the reconstruction of Woodview Drive, continue planning, in conjunction with the Elkhart County Highway Department, for the CR 52 west/Tomahawk Trail corridor, and seek additional funding from Community Crossings to fund our street resurfacing program. Elder Haus will see interior improvements as we begin to implement upgrades to the facility at Central School.

We plan to secure a location, from a list of several potential sites, and start designing for a new fire station this spring. Our planning department will be adding a Director of Development and Redevelopment to assist with economic growth and revitalization. The Redevelopment Commission will focus on the facade improvements for the Dietrich Building, the construction of the turn lane at US 6 east, and planning for other downtown improvements.

With the implementation of the new lead and copper rules by the EPA, our utilities department will diligently ensure that we are meeting all regulatory targets and ensure our residents have the safest and best quality water. In 2023, as testing for PFAS begins, we will continue to monitor for the presence of this and other future threats to our drinking water.

In recent weeks, we have seen our local recycling center become overwhelmed with additional recycling material. Upon investigation, there were several factors that increased the volume at this site. Several recycling centers in Elkhart, Marshall, and Kosciusko County closed at the end of the year, causing increased traffic at the Nappanee location. These closings, combined with the busy holiday season and less frequent servicing of our site, resulted in a less than ideal situation. Working with Borden and Elkhart County, we have come up with some short term solutions, including more frequent pick-ups, providing education on effective use of the recycling center, and encouraging residents to consider curbside recycling. While we hope these short term solutions are effective, we will continue our work with Borden, Elkhart County and our residents on a more permanent, long-term solution.

We are excited to announce that by the end of January, we will be launching a rebuilt website that will provide a better experience for our users and an improved interface. Included will be some enhanced applications to allow you to find information quicker and be alerted to events occurring in your neighborhood. We have been working on these upgrades for most of 2022 and are pleased to implement the new site in the next few weeks.

Beyond 2023, we eagerly anticipate our Sesquicentennial in 2024. In 1874, Nappanee was founded along the newly built B&O railroad. As we plan to celebrate this 150 year milestone, we

hope to engage many of you as we seek input on events that commemorate this momentous occasion. In addition to the sesquicentennial in 2024, 2025 will mark the 100th year of since Nappanee became a city. Please be on the lookout as we work with the Nappanee Public Library to form committees to gather ideas and plan events for the coming years.

A State of the City would not be complete without acknowledging the various local and regional partners that are vital to our success. Wa-Nee Schools have been an integral part of the appeal of Nappanee through their emphasis on quality education, exceptional teachers, and cooperation on projects that mutually benefit the entire community. Our partners at Elkhart County, including the Commissioners, the Council, the Highway Department, the Regional Sewer District, the Solid Waste Management District, the Health Department, the Planning and Zoning Department, the Treasurer, the Clerk, the Recorder, and the Auditor, all play a critical role in Nappanee's well-being. Through effective planning and technical assistance, Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) assists all local communities of Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph County. The work of the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership has allowed for unparalleled collaboration as we work as a group of connected communities to improve our collective experiences. Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau invite and welcome guests from all over the country to visit our "Well Crafted" communities. The Center and Open Door are two local organizations that never get enough attention for the life enhancing work they do with those in our community that need us most. And last, but definitely not least, the Boys and Girls Club of Nappanee and greater Elkhart County provides hope and opportunity for all youth to reach their full potential. Investing in their future is the key to Nappanee's success.

As we approach 150 years since Nappanee's founding and 100 years of being designated as a City, I would like to challenge us to think of what our future can be. Many individuals, businesses, churches, teachers, and families have shared a common passion to make Nappanee the best it can be, both now and for future generations. People have invested their time, talents, and treasures to ensure Nappanee stays vibrant and healthy. So today, as in the past, we commit to continued investment into our collective future to make Nappanee the best place to live, raise a family, make a living, and pursue happiness. May God continue to bless Nappanee!