

Message from Mayor Womer Benjamin



Aurora is a community that is on the move! We are one of Ohio's five "Best Hometowns," due in part to our lovely residential areas, sound financial management, highly rated schools, recreational opportunities, and growing industrial and retail sectors which provide financial security. In 2014 opportunities abound to move us

forward, with new residential and commercial building planned, park improvements under way, and sidewalks and bike paths anticipated. In addition, Aurora is seeking to capitalize on the development potential of the former Geauga Lake Park property by securing a citizen vote to rezone it to "mixed-use" from industrial so that it can become a more useable and attractive part of our city. As your new Mayor, my hallmark is an open door, so please feel free to come see me when you want to discuss an issue.

Aurora's Best Hometown!

Aurora was chosen as one of Ohio's Best Hometowns for 2013-2014 by the editors of *Ohio Magazine* and was featured in the November 2013 issue. The city celebrated the honor at the Aurora High School Homecoming football game on October 11, and again at the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on November 28.



Economic Development News

In an effort to take economic development to the next level, Aurora hired Jack Burge as its first Economic Development Director, launched a new economic development page on its website, and created an Economic & Entrepreneurial Development Board. The following Aurora residents were selected to serve on the panel based on their business leadership and experience: Darrell McNair, Julie Messing, Jim Cossler, Todd Clossin and Brad Ehrhart. Additional board members include the Mayor, Council President, Economic Development Director and a Chamber of Commerce Representative.

City Finances

2013 General Fund Budget Review

	Expenses	Revenue
Budget	\$ 13,596,992	\$ 13,463,114
Actual	\$ 14,984,929	\$ 15,313,206

Fitch Rating Service confirmed another AAA rating for the City of Aurora – that's 13 straight years of AAA ratings!

Rezoning of Geauga Lake Property Issue 11

The city has worked with stakeholders and Council to place rezoning of the Geauga Lake property on the May 6, 2014 ballot as Issue 11. Voters will be asked to support a change from Industrial to a Mixed-Use Development District to allow **residential, retail, recreational and business uses** over about 560 acres. More information regarding this important ballot issue will be forthcoming.



Safety Highlights

Police Department

- After two years of planning and funding, the Police Department completed a renovation of its dispatch center. The city invested \$230,000 in the project and the state-of-the-art facility is expected to serve Aurora for at least a decade.
- Officer Chris Reiter was added as the second full-time School Resource Officer in August 2013, along with Michelle Ice.
- SafeWise, a company that provides home security systems, named Aurora one of the 50 safest cities in Ohio. Aurora ranked ninth on the list of cities of at least 15,000 in population.

Fire & Rescue Response

- The Fire Department purchased a new state-of-the-art pumper truck and took delivery in December.
- The department responded to 1,498 EMS calls and 386 fire calls.
- Lt. Matthew McBirney and Firefighter Ed Grecol taught several fire extinguisher classes to over 600 employees of businesses within the city. Firefighter Mike Overholt conducted CPR training for the schools and other local groups and certified over 440 people throughout 2013.

Real Heroes

Aurora Fire Captain Bill Lovell, Police Sergeant Andrew Lumpkins, and Officers Joe LaPerna and David Prislán were honored in May at the American Red Cross of Summit & Portage Counties Real Heroes Awards for rushing into a burning home to rescue a resident.

2013 Building Stats Aurora Continues to Develop

Residential Construction	\$22,766,917
Commercial Construction	\$6,530,000
Industrial Construction	\$552,039
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION	\$29,848,956

Public Services to Residents

The Service Department added to its fleet a new 8-ton plow truck and a hydraulic excavator for ditch cleaning and large excavations. The department also collected 4,840 cubic yards of brush and 3,375 cubic yards of leaves and turned them into mulch and compost for residents. It also striped 99 center lane miles of roads, removed 1,200 cubic yards of debris from roadways, tested 314 backflow devices, tested 430 residential irrigation systems, flushed 1,526 fire hydrants, exercised 235 water valves, and cleaned 229 septic systems.

Charter Review Commission

Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin along with former Mayor Jim Fisher named the following residents to the city's 2014 Charter Review Commission: Jane Adams, William Keckan, Charisse Louis, Dale Moravec, Larry Oswick, Nancy Schnell, Liz Sutter, Mary Thomas and Rich Vlasak. A Commission is appointed every five years to review and recommend revisions to the municipal charter. Thank you to the citizen representatives for volunteering.

Snapshot - 2013 Year in Review

- The National Weather Service in Cleveland reported measurable rainfall for 16 straight days – June 25 to July 10 – the longest stretch recorded in more than 100 years.
- The city replaced more than 1,000 ash trees infected by the emerald ash borer insect, funded in part by the ash removal and canopy restoration grant through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.
- In July, Mayor Jim Fisher announced he would not run for Mayor on the November ballot.
- Ann Womer Benjamin was elected Mayor in a 6-way race in November 2013, following two years as an At-Large Member of City Council.
- Also re-elected or newly elected were James Vaca, Ward One; Kathi Grandillo, Ward Five; Reva Barner, Ward Three; and Amy McDougald, At-Large.
- Law Director Alan Shorr and Planning, Zoning & Building Director Rich Wehrenberg retired.
- Mayor Womer Benjamin appointed Dean DePiero of McDonald Hopkins, LCC as Law Director.
- In January 2014, Council appointed K. Scott Wolf to fill the vacant At-Large Council seat following Ann Womer Benjamin becoming Mayor, and elected Ward 4 Councilman Goerge Horvat President and Ward 2 Councilman Dennis Kovach as Vice-President.



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Veterans Memorial Park

The city officially changed the name of Breezy Point Park to Veterans Memorial Park on Memorial Day, May 27, 2013. The new park sign was unveiled during a holiday ceremony.



Snapshot - What to Look for in 2014!

- Restoration work and path reconstruction will begin on the Aurora Golf Course property.
- Villas of Bertram will begin constructing 91 units in two phases at Treat Road and Route 306.
- Sunny Lake Park improvements will begin, including new restrooms and expanded parking.
- Bike paths and sidewalks will be built to create a more walkable town center and connect parts of our city with bike trails and paths.
- Police Chief Seth Riewaldt will retire in July – the city will form a search committee in early spring to find his replacement.

Meet the Law Director



Attorney Dean DePiero, Of Counsel at the Cleveland-based firm of McDonald Hopkins, was appointed to succeed retiring Law Director Alan Shorr. Mr. DePiero served with Mayor Womer Benjamin in the Ohio House of Representatives and went on to serve as the Mayor of Parma, Ohio, for eight years. He also served as Assistant Law Director and Prosecutor for Berea and currently serves as the Assistant Law Director and Prosecutor for Broadview Heights. Welcome Dean!