



## City of Bronson 2018 Annual Report



## **The Bronson Creed**

I believe in Bronson and its responsibilities; and I shall do my part to make it a better place in which to live.

I believe in good government for Bronson, and I shall assume my share of the civic responsibility that rest on the shoulders of all our citizens.

I believe in supporting local enterprises that make for community development, and shall contribute my moral support and energy to any worthy cause championed by them.

I believe in patronizing home merchants, for they are greatly responsible for our having good schools and churches, better roads and promotion of the general welfare of this community.

I believe in making Bronson clean and attractive, for a healthy atmosphere is an inducement to honest and right-thinking citizens.

I believe in boosting my home town at every possible opportunity; that thinking, talking and acting progress is the quickest and surest way to bring permanent prosperity to Bronson - the best town in America -because it is MY HOME!

**From The Bronson Journal- 1924**

## **City of Bronson City Council Information:**

The City of Bronson has a Council-Manager form of government. The City Manager is charged with the day to day operation of the municipality and is appointed by and answers directly to the Council. The Council meets at the Bronson City Offices at 5:00 PM on the second Monday of every month.

The City of Bronson is governed by a five-person, elected City Council. Three seats on the Council are open every two years. Two seats are four-year terms and one is a two-year term. Following each election, the Council elects from its members a Mayor and Vice-Mayor.

**Mayor:** Alicia Cole (term expires November 2020)

**Vice-Mayor:** Larry McConn (term expires November 2020)

**Council:** Bill Earl (term expires November 2020)  
Matt Watkins (term expires November 2022)  
Jim Kenny (term expires November 2022)

Janet Cox (term expired November 2018)

### **Bronson Area Fire Association Representatives:**

Mayor Cole  
City Manager Mersman

### **Bronson Community Foundation Representative:**

Mayor Cole  
City Manager Mersman

## **2019 City Council Meeting Schedule:**

City Council Meetings are held at 5:00pm in the Council Room of the Bronson City Hall (141 S. Matteson Street, Bronson, MI) on the following dates for 2018:

January 14, 2019  
February 11, 2019  
March 11, 2019  
April 8, 2019  
May 13, 2019  
June 10, 2019  
July 8, 2019  
August 12, 2019  
September 9, 2019  
October 14, 2019  
November 11, 2019  
December 9, 2019

## **City Council Goals & Objectives (from 2018-2019 Fiscal Year Budget)**

### **Goal: Business Retention and Attraction**

- Continue strategy of focusing on current employers and businesses and working with them to see expansion
- Implement benchmarks of the Redevelopment Ready Communities approach and engage related MEDC resources

### **Goal: Enhance and Undertake Bronson “Place-Making” Activities**

- Look for ways to implement the Walkability Study performed by MDOT in September 2013
- Develop the recently purchased former Northeastern Rail Line for non-motorized trail usage.
- Work towards the implementation of the goals set forth in the 2016-2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Continue working with and supporting the Downtown Development Authority
- Work with community partners (DDA, Chamber of Commerce, Polish Festival, etc.) and businesses to expand and better market downtown activities:

- August Memorial Park Concert Series
- City Wide Garage Sales/US 12 Sales
- Polish Festival
- Farmer’s Market
- Bronson Theater
- Other new events

### **Goal: Infrastructure Improvements**

- Work with DEQ programs surrounding the SAW Grant
- Apply for infrastructure grants as they become available (MEDC Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement Grants)
- Work towards implementation of improvements outlined in the City’s recently adopted Capital Improvement Plan
- Continue collaboration with Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study and Branch County Road Commission for street improvement targets and work
- Continue coordinated approach for infrastructure improvements

### **Goal: Optimize Organizational Efficiency**

- Consider energy-efficiency projects in coordination with Michigan Gas Utilities and Consumers Energy to improve facility efficiency

- Work with Consumers Energy on potential street-lighting improvements as programs become available
- Better plan for equipment purchases and uses across departments
- Enhance information and outreach efforts using the City's website and Facebook presence

## **City of Bronson 2018 Annual Report Introduction:**

This report provides a brief summary of City projects and accomplishments for the year 2018. As a community we have made significant progress in addressing infrastructure, facility improvements, and equipment upgrades during the year. In 2018, the City was awarded a Stormwater, Asset Management & Wastewater (SAW) Grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality which will evaluate our current systems and determine a schedule for replacement of critical infrastructure.

The City completed a number of improvements to the Downtown which included new waste receptacles, banners, bike racks, and a public art mural.

The City made significant progress during the first year of the City's engagement in the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities Program (RRC) by completing an Economic Development and Marketing Strategy. The City also adopted its first comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which provides a projected replacement schedule for infrastructure and equipment replacement. Both of these are important elements of the RRC program. The adoption of a CIP also means the City will now be eligible for Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement Grants which are periodically offered by the MEDC.

In 2018, the City Council adopted a rental housing ordinance for the first time. The ordinance will help to ensure rental properties are safe and well maintained. This was an important step taken to help preserve the City's aging housing stock. The City Council also adopted a Solar Facilities Ordinance which provides regulation for the construction and installation of solar panels for residential, commercial or industrial use.

The City Council also took important proactive steps to ensuring the City's employee pension reaches full funding sooner, thereby reducing future funds needed for these plans. The additional contributions increased the funded percentage level from an estimated 60.9% to 70.70%.

Respectfully submitted.



Brandon M. Mersman

City Manager

## **Highlights of 2018 Projects & Accomplishments:**

### ***Parks & Recreation:***

#### ***Park Improvements***



Greenwald Park: New metal roofs were installed for the two (2) picnic pavilions along with a new metal roof on the park building. New purple rubber mulch was also added to the Bronson's Backyard playground equipment.

Douglas Park: Added new blue rubber mulch to playground equipment.

All Parks: Our seasonal (summer) Department of Public Works (DPW) employees performed some additional painting improvements throughout our

parks on playground equipment.

#### ***Trail Master Plan:***

In 2018 the City Council approved a contract with Williams & Works for the development of a Trail Master Plan. The plan will assist the City in applying for grant funding for the former Northeastern Rail property. The City plans to develop this former railbed into a public non-motorized trail. The plan will identify project costs and plans for connecting the trail to the City's existing sidewalk network. Sidewalk will need to be added to the east and west side of the trail as there is currently no sidewalk around Kiwanis Park or on Albers Rd.



#### ***City Hall:***

##### ***City Hall Painting:***

The City Hall exterior was painted in the summer of 2018 by a local contractor.

##### ***City Hall Server Replaced:***

The City Hall networking server was replaced in 2018.

#### ***Police Department:***

##### ***Police Department Server Replaced:***

The Police Department Server was also replaced in 2018. The server hosts in-car camera and microphone data along with Police evidence.

##### ***Police Department Building Connected to Fiber Connection***

In order to maintain compliance with LEIN (Law Enforcement Information Network) the Department needed to have a physical connection to a fiber line. The City worked with Branch County, the Village of Union City, and the Village of Quincy on a collaboration grant which provided 100% of the funding for this project. The Fire Department was also able to connect to this fiber line and the City is working to connect City Hall to this connection as well (wirelessly).

[See the Police Department 2018 Annual Report for More](#)

### ***Downtown Improvements:***



New Downtown banners were purchased and installed to replace the Sesquicentennial banners.

New waste receptacles and two (2) bike racks were also installed Downtown.

**Art Mural.** In 2018, the City Council approved the creation of an art mural at the corner of US-12 and Matteson Street (Wall of building at 103 E. Chicago St). The project was identified as a priority during the City's Economic Development and Marketing Strategy SWOT analysis meeting. Each of the block letters spelling "Bronson" contains a different element of the community. See image below.



### ***Infrastructure (Water, Wastewater, Roads):***

**Road Maintenance-** During the summer of 2018 the City worked with the Branch County Road Commission to perform preventative maintenance on City streets. The following roads had overlays along the edges (where needed) and had a chip and seal treatment:

- Franklin (Washington to Matteson Street)
- North Walker (York to Railroad)
- W. Railroad
- State Street
- Mowry
- Rudd

Douglas (US-12 to Railroad)  
Matteson Street (crack filling)

*Wastewater (Wastewater & Storm Sewers).* In 2018 the City was awarded a Stormwater, Asset Management & Wastewater (SAW) Grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The grant will allow us to inventory our systems, create Asset Management Plans (AMP), televise and clean lines, conduct rate analyses, and many other valuable tasks for both sanitary and storm sewers. Prein & Newhof is the City engineer for this project. Work began on this project in 2018 and will continue over a three-year period. Below is a breakdown of the anticipated project costs:

Stormwater AMP: \$658,688

Wastewater AMP: \$961,419

Total Amount: \$1,620,107

Below is a breakdown of the local match:

$\$1,111,111 - \$961,419 = \$149,692$  (this is the portion of the SWAMP costs that will have a local match of 10%)

$\$658,688 - \$149,692 = \$508,996$  (this is the portion of the SWAMP costs that will have a local match of 25%)

$\$149,692 * 10\% = \$14,969.20$

$\$508,996 * 25\% = \$127,249.00$

\$142,218.20 Total Local Match

*Well Study-* In 2018 the City Council approved a professional services agreement with Prein & Newhof to assist the City in identifying a location for a new City potable (drinking) water well. The engineering firm has been gathering and reviewing area well data, groundwater data, and potential contamination sites. The information will be used to identify potential properties to further study and evaluate to determine potential drinking water well locations.



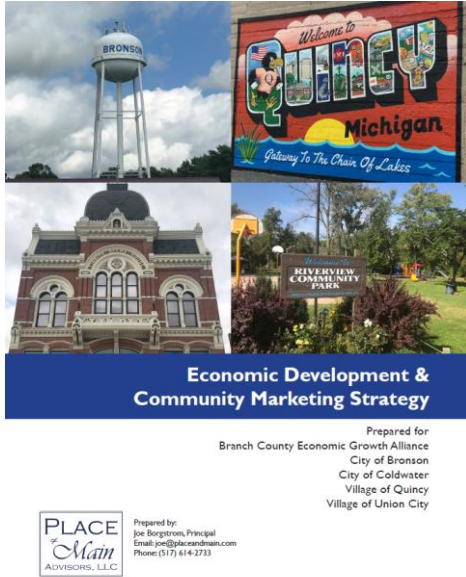
*Water Tower Cleaning & Inspection-* During 2018 the City's water tower was cleaned and inspected by the low bidder Nelson Tank Engineering & Consulting. The report found approximately \$74,000 in necessary work that needs to be completed in the next few years. Nelson Tank is also recommending the City repaint the exterior in the next five years at a projected cost of \$260,000. Prein & Newhof assisted City staff in obtaining an estimate for a new water tower:



- 250,000-gallon x 140' TCL Waterspheroid- \$1,290,000
- 300,000-gallon x 140' TCL Waterspheroid- \$1,375,000

In 2019, the City Council will need to determine whether or not we begin making repairs to the existing tower or begin working towards the construction of a new tower.

***Community Planning Documents:***



***Economic Development & Marketing Strategy-***  
 In 2018 the City collaborated with the Branch County Economic Growth Alliance and its member communities to develop an Economic Development & Marketing Strategy for Branch County. The plan will assist countywide efforts for economic development in Branch County as well as the four municipalities therein. The plan contains countywide strategies as well as strategies specific to each community, including Bronson.

The plan creation was paid for with a matching grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Branch County Economic Growth Alliance. The plan fulfills the requirements of the MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready (RRC) Communities Program for economic development and marketing

strategies. The City of Bronson fully engaged in the RRC program during 2018.

***Capital Improvement Plan-*** The City’s Planning Commission recommended the approval of the City’s first comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan. The plan was subsequently approved by the City Council. The plan estimates a replacement schedule along with a projected cost for City equipment and infrastructure. The plan outlines suggested projects through 2024. The plan is an important step in the City’s efforts to become certified in the MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities Program. The plan also makes the City eligible for Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement (ICE) Grants periodically offered by the MEDC. The City is now in a position to apply for the ICE grant the next time it is available.

***Ordinance Adoption & Ordinance Amendments: Rental Housing Ordinance***



***Adoption-*** In 2018, the City’s Planning Commission recommended approval of the City’s first ever Rental Housing Ordinance which was subsequently adopted by the City Council. The ordinance requires all rental properties to be registered with the City annually and for each rental property to be inspected every other year. The City Council provided a 6-month grace period to allow property owners time to make any necessary repairs prior to

scheduling an inspection. This grace period will end March 1, 2019 at which time properties will begin the inspection process. The ordinance is an effort to improve the appearance and safety of rental properties within the City.



***Solar Facilities Ordinance-*** The City's Planning Commission recommended the approval of a Solar Facilities Ordinance which was subsequently approved by the City Council. The City Council approved an option agreement with TorchClean Energy for a 2 MW solar farm on the two parcels the City owns at the end of Industrial Ave. This ordinance provides regulations for the construction and installation of solar panels for residential, commercial, and

industrial uses.



***Trash & Recycling Contract (Republic Services):***

In March of 2018, the City renegotiated the contract with Republic Services which included a two-year extension. In exchange for a longer contract, Republic Services will now only bill the City for the actual number of customers enrolled in the City's program at the beginning of each year rather than requiring a minimum number of customers. This will save the

City a considerable amount of money each year. The contract also included a price freeze for 2019 (same as 2018 rates) for all City customers.

***MERS Pension Contributions:***

In an effort to increase the funding level of the City's employee pension (MERS), the City Council voted to make two voluntary contributions to the fund during 2018. The additional contributions increased the funded percentage level from an estimated 60.9% to 70.70%. Reaching the full funding level earlier will greatly reduce the overall funding needed for these plans.