



City of Bronson 2020 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. Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), most of the 2020 Council meetings were held at the Bronson Farmer's Market or virtually over Zoom.

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: Larry McConn (term expires November 2024)

Vice-Mayor: Matt Watkins (term expires November 2022)
William Earl (term expired November 2020)

Council: William Rinehart (term began November 2020-2024)
Rick Johannes (term expires November 2022)
Joe Duke (term expires November 2022)

Bronson Area Fire Association Representatives:

City Manager Mersman
Vice Mayor Matt Watkins

Bronson Community Foundation Representative:

City Manager Mersman
Alicia Cole

2021 City Council Meeting Schedule:

The following are the meeting dates for 2021:

January 11, 2021

February 8, 2021

March 8, 2021

April 12, 2021

May 10, 2021

June 14, 2021

July 12, 2021

August 9, 2021

September 13, 2021

October 11, 2021

November 8, 2021

December 13, 2021

City Council Goals 2020-2021 (from FY2020-21 Budget)

Goal: Business Retention and Attraction

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

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

- Continue work to make Bronson more walkable and bikeable; including updating sidewalk ramps to ADA compliant.
- 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

- Continue working with DEQ programs surrounding the SAW Grant
- Apply for infrastructure grants as they become available (MEDC Infrastructure Grants, MDOT, others)
- Work towards implementation of improvements outlined in the City’s recently adopted Capital Improvement Plan for 2020-2026
- Continue collaboration with Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study and Branch County Road Commission for street improvement targets and work
- Increase annual road preventative maintenance work using additional General Fund contributions
- 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, Facebook pages, and Instagram

City of Bronson 2020 Annual Report Introduction:

This report provides a brief summary of City projects and accomplishments for the year 2020. As a community we have made significant progress in addressing infrastructure, facility improvements, and equipment upgrades during the year. In 2020, the City was awarded a Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Infrastructure and Resiliency Grant with Community Development Block Grant funds.

2020 was a very difficult year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City took a number of precautions in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our employees and our residents. The City had to make the difficult decision to close the City Hall lobby to the public twice and rotated staff as necessary. Several City Council meetings were conducted virtually on Zoom. During the summer, meetings were held at the new Farmer's Market pavilion which was constructed in the spring and early summer.

In 2020 the City was awarded a grant for a reconstruction project on S. Ruggles and a portion of Compton Street in the amount of \$1,322,850 or up to 75% of total costs. The grant will allow the City to update watermains, sanitary sewer mains, storm sewer, and roads on South Ruggles Street from Rudd to US-12 and Compton Street from Mowry to South Ruggles Street. The City was one of only 8 communities in the state chosen for this grant. Work will begin in April of 2021 and will be completed prior to the start of the school year.

The City was awarded an additional \$20,000 to continue the City's previous MSHDA grant for exterior home improvements in the Washington Street and Winona Street neighborhoods. The City was able to expand the original district to also include North Lincoln and Buchanan Streets. Work on this project will be completed during the Summer of 2021.

Respectfully submitted.



Brandon M. Mersman

City Manager

Highlights of 2020 Projects & Accomplishments:

Community Development:

MSHDA Grant- In 2019, the City of Bronson was awarded a grant in the amount of \$40,000 from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) for exterior home improvement grants. The City applied for this grant in order to assist homeowners with exterior home improvements and to reduce blight in this neighborhood. During the 2019 grant the City was able to award six (6) grants to homeowners for work that included; new roofs at two homes, new siding at two homes, a new front porch (one home), and new porch windows and a new garage roof at another home.

In 2020, the City was named a high performer by MSHDA and was awarded \$20,000 in additional funds to do more neighborhood projects. The eligible neighborhood has been expanded in this round to include Buchanan and North Lincoln streets along with the original neighborhood of Winona and Washington Streets. Due to COVID-19, MSHDA gave an extension to complete this work by September 30, 2021.

Below is a video from the 2019 funding round:

[Click here to view a short video about this project which provides an overview of the work](#)

Policy and Ordinance Changes:

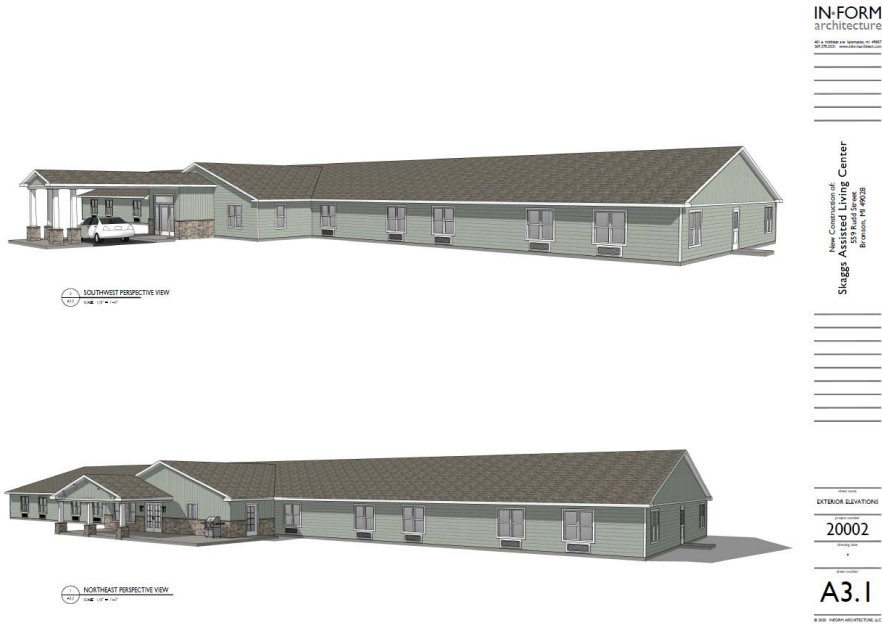
Groundwater Ordinance: In November, the City adopted a groundwater ordinance which provides for the regulation and restriction of the installation of wells in certain areas of the northern portion of the City. The intent of the ordinance is to prevent human consumption or use of wells due to the presence of hazardous substances in groundwater in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our residents. Groundwater in certain areas of the City was contaminated due to historical operations that make up an EPA Superfund site known as the North Bronson Industrial Area. The City was required to adopt this ordinance as part of the City's settlement of this matter. After many years, the ordinance has now been approved by the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRP's), the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and is now in place in the City.

CDBG Policies- In order for the City to be eligible for the CDBG infrastructure grant, the City had to adopt a number of policies to comply with federal laws. The City adopted a Fair Housing Ordinance and Policy and a Section 3 Policy. The City also had to update its purchasing policy to comply with federal requirements for procurement under the grant. At the same time the policy was amended to increase the minimum threshold for sealed bidding to anything over \$3,000. A couple of additional policies will be necessary in 2021.

Planning & Zoning:

In May, the City approved the sale of just over 4 acres to Ray and Julie Skaggs of Skaggs Assisted Living for the development of 559 Rudd Street. The Planning Commission also met to approve the site plan for the twenty (20) bed assisted living facility that will sit at the corner of

Rudd and Ruggles. This project will be a great benefit to the community by allowing seniors to stay in Bronson and will fill an area wide need for additional senior care facilities.



Police Department:

The City’s union contract with the Police Officers Association of Michigan was up for renewal due to the expiration of the current agreement at the end of June 2020. A new deal was reached and approved at the June City Council meeting. The three (3) year agreement includes a wage reopener for years two and three.

[See the Police Department 2020 Annual Report for More](#)

City Hall Security Upgrades:

In March, the City Council approved a project to upgrade and add additional security cameras as City Hall. The City was awarded a matching grant of up to 50% of the project from the City’s property and liability insurance carrier, Michigan Township Participating Plan (MTPP). The new system increased the number of cameras to seven (7) with High Definition. The cameras provide increased coverage with better quality and is able to provide video coverage of the Farmer’s Market Pavilion as well. The total project cost was \$3,971.00 with the grant covering \$1,989.00.

Downtown Improvements:

Farmers Market:

The Farmer’s Market Pavilion was constructed during the summer of 2020 and was completed by mid-June. The final touches were added and completed in August. The structure really

turned out great and has been used a lot despite the pandemic. The Farmer's Market provided a great meeting space for City Council meetings. The structure is 30'x 60' x 10' tall. 2020 also saw an increase in the number of vendors due to the great work of the Bronson Chamber of Commerce along with having a new covered space for the vendors.



Coronavirus (COVID-19):

The Coronavirus had a significant impact on the City in 2020. In March, the City made the difficult decision to close the lobby to the public which lasted until mid-June, to prevent the spread of the virus and keep employees safe. Business was conducted over the phone and email, by drop box, and mail. Another closure began in November as cases began to rise again. The City was required to put a COVID-19 Policy in place, which required numerous updates as state mandates changed. Personal protective equipment including masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, and disinfectants were obtained for employee safety. The Police Department also closed their lobby and conducted non-emergency items over the phone. The Department of Public Works and City Hall staff rotated schedules at times to avoid spread among employees and to ensure continuity of services. At City Hall a plexiglass protective barrier was installed. Considerable staff time was devoted throughout the year to making sure the City remained compliant with COVID regulations and restrictions, participating with the County Emergency Management team meetings, and webinars.

November Election- Due to concerns about the size of City Hall for the November Presidential election not being able to provide for social distancing, City Council approved moving the polling location across the street to the Fire Hall. The move was temporary in order to provide safe voting with social distancing.

CARES ACT Funds- During the year staff applied for and received grant funds from two (2) Michigan Department of Treasury programs. The first was the First Responder Hazard Pay Premiums Program. Our Police officers were the only employees eligible for this program. The City was awarded \$6,000 to provide the maximum of \$1,000 for all of our full-time officers and \$500 for every part-time officer that had worked when the COVID crisis began. The second grant program was the Public Safety and Public Health Payroll Reimbursement Program (PSPHPR). This grant provided funds for payroll reimbursement of wages, overtime, and

employer benefits paid to Police employees for the month of April and May. The City applied for \$67,802.27 for April and May wages. Due to limited funds the City was awarded \$39,901.00 towards Police payroll.

The City also received funds from the Coronavirus Relief Local Government Grants program from the Treasury Department. The City received \$23,488.00 from this program and those funds were used to reimburse the City for June Police payroll expenses.

Infrastructure (Water, Wastewater, Roads):

Road Maintenance/Improvements- During the summer of 2020 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:

- East Railroad Street
- Buchanan Street
- Park Street
- Sherman Street
- Matilda Street (Freemont to Raymond)
- South Walker Street
- South Douglas Street
- Compton Street
- Industrial Avenue
- Downtown Parking Lot (Behind Barone's)

Updated Capital Improvement Plan- In January of 2020, the City Council approved an updated Capital Improvement Plan which provides a projected project guide for 2020-2026. The plan was updated to reflect recommended projects based on the SAW Grant study as well as identifying the South Ruggles Street project (from Rudd to US-12) which also includes a portion of Compton Street (from Mowry to Ruggles). Having this project listed in our CIP allowed us to apply for the MEDC Community Development Block Grant Infrastructure Resiliency Program.

MEDC Community Development Block Grant Infrastructure Resiliency Program- On September 22, 2020 the Michigan Strategic Fund approved the City of Bronson grant for S. Ruggles and a portion of Compton Street in the amount of \$1,322,850 but the amount shall not exceed 75% of project costs. The grant funds from the state also includes \$27,240 in administrative costs for the certified grant administrator. The local City match will be roughly \$440,950 (\$296,700 for all engineering costs and \$144,250 for the City's construction match). The grant will allow the City to update watermains, sanitary sewer mains, storm sewer, and roads on South Ruggles Street from Rudd to US-12 and Compton Street from Mowry to South Ruggles Street. The City was one of only 8 communities in the state chosen for this grant. Work will begin in April of 2021 and will be completed prior to the start of the school year.

Sidewalk Ramp Improvements (throughout the City)

During the summer of 2020, the City also worked with M&H Construction to improve sidewalk ramps at intersections in the Northeastern part of the community. The City is working to improve the walkability and bikeability for our residents with the goal of improving sidewalk

ramps each year (if funds allow). In 2020, the City was able to improve 14 ramps at intersections listed below:

- Fremont & Winona – All Four Ramps
- Fillmore & Winona- All Four Ramps
- Fillmore & Buchanan- Three Ramps
- Fremont & Buchanan- Three Ramps

Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) Grant

Work on the SAW Grant continued in 2020. The City's Engineer for the project, Prein & Newhof provided the following summary of tasks completed during 2020.

General items performed was converting all the field data collected and updating GIS maps, figures, tables, etc. and creating drafting reports with the information:

Sanitary:

- Drafted sanitary evaluation report
- Metered flows in the sanitary system with flow meters
- Developed computer model of sanitary system
- Drafted Sanitary Hydraulic Flow study report
- Installed wells to record water levels for hydrogeological study for water table and infiltration
- Reviewed and discussed with EGLE – Administrative Consent Order due to infiltration
- Reviewed and discussed biosolids handling and disposal
- Evaluated the Wastewater Treatment Plant

Storm:

- Drafted storm Evaluation Report
- Flow metered storm system
- Developed computer model of storm system
- Drafted Storm Hydraulic Flow Study Report

Other:

- Submitted 12 reimbursement requests
- City purchased two computers and software
- 2.5-year financial report submitted to EGLE – no gap identified

Upcoming 2021:

- Review draft reports and maps with Bronson staff and findings
- Finalize the four primary reports (Evaluation and Flow studies for storm and sanitary)
- Develop documents for Asset Management plan/program related to sanitary and storm
- Develop Capital Improvement Plan and report for City

- Develop financial plan based on proposed CIP
- Presentation to City Board on findings per the 4 reports / studies
- Presentation on Capital Improvement Plan to City Board
- Presentation on Financial Plan to City Board
- Prepare Summary and final submittal to EGLE
- Install GIS update on City's computer system
- Provide copies of all reports and presentation to City (hard and PDF copies)

Sewer Camera Purchased- In July, the City purchased a sanitary sewer camera with an auger from Bell Equipment. The equipment allows the City to televise lines to find issues and also allows staff to cut through roots and other debris. This work was previously contracted out on an as needed basis during emergencies. This purchase will help the City locate and fix issues faster preventing further damage.

Motor Pool- During 2020 the City made a couple of upgrades and new purchases to its vehicle and equipment motor pool. In December of 2020, the City purchased a 202 Ford Explorer Police Interceptor for the Police Department. The vehicle replaces a 2015 Chevrolet Tahoe which was requiring regular repairs. The City also purchased a wood chipper for the Department of Public Works.