



## City of Bronson 2021 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), some of the 2021 Council meetings were held at the Bronson Farmer's Market as well as virtual meetings using 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)

**Council:** William Rinehart (term expires November 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

## **2022 City Council Meeting Schedule:**

The following are the meeting dates for 2022:

### **2022 Meeting Dates:**

- January 10, 2022
- February 14, 2022
- March 14, 2022
- April 11, 2022
- May 9, 2022
- June 13, 2022
- July 11, 2022
- August 8, 2022
- September 12, 2022
- October 10, 2022
- November 14, 2022
- December 12, 2022

## **City Council Goals 2021-2022 (from FY2021-22 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 and update parks amenities with increased accessibility.
- Work towards evaluating and updating, as needed, City Zoning Ordinances, Master Plan, and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Continue working with and supporting the Downtown Development Authority
- Continue working 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**

- Apply for infrastructure grants as they become available (MEDC Infrastructure Grants, MDOT, others)
- Work with EGLE towards addressing Inflow & Infiltration in the sanitary sewer system
- Work towards implementation of improvements outlined in the City’s 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 2021 Annual Report Introduction:**

This report provides a brief summary of City projects and accomplishments for the year 2021. As a community we have made significant progress in addressing infrastructure, transparency, and equipment upgrades during the year. In 2021, the City began recording video and audio of City Council meetings and updated the City's website to be more user friendly along with being ADA compliant. The new website is also easily translated into many different languages. In 2021, the City also adopted a Public Participation Plan which outlines goals and objectives for effective communication and transparency with the public.

In 2021, the City utilized funds awarded by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Infrastructure and Resiliency Grant with Community Development Block Grant funds to reconstruct watermain, sewermain, and roads on South Ruggles Street from Rudd to US-12 and Compton Street from Mowry to South Ruggles Street. Construction began in June and the work was completed in the fall. The total project cost was \$1,322,850 with the City paying 25% of total costs. Additional sidewalk was added to the west side of S. Ruggles between Rudd and Compton Street making it safer for students to walk to and from Ryan School. The City was 1 of only 8 communities awarded this grant.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, 2021 started with virtual meetings on Zoom until the weather was nice enough to meet at the Farmer's Market.

The City was awarded an additional \$20,000 in 2019 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. Due to COVID, the City was granted more time to work on this project and it was completed in 2021. Three (3) projects were awarded funds for new roofs and two homes replaced some of their windows.

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brandon Mersman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brandon M. Mersman  
City Manager

## **Highlights of 2021 Projects & Accomplishments:**

### ***911 Radio Tower:***

As part of the County wide 911 radio upgrade, approved by voters in November of 2020, a 911 tower was required in Bronson. After working closely with the County on a location for this tower, it was decided to place it at the City's well #4 property on Parham Road just outside the City limits. An easement for this was approved by the City Council in March of 2021. Testing of the new system was conducted in the fall of 2021 and it is expected that the system will be completed in March of 2022.

### ***Lawn Maintenance Bid:***

In March, the City Council approved a contract with O'Rourke Lawn Care for the mowing of several City properties, including; City parks, cemetery, water tower, and vacant lots owned by the City. A three-year bid was awarded for 2021-2023.

### ***Policy, Planning & Ordinance Changes:***

#### ***Fireworks Ordinance:***

With the Police Department receiving several complaints throughout the year, the Police Department proposed changes to the fireworks ordinance. The complaints mostly centered around igniting loud fireworks in the late evening and overnight hours which disrupts the sleep of children and neighbors nearby. The ordinance that was passed by City Council limits the use of fireworks only on the designated holidays consistent with Public Act 256 of 2011. The ordinance also prohibited the use of fireworks on public, school, or church properties and the use of fireworks by a minor unless under the direct supervision of an adult.

#### ***Public Participation Plan:***

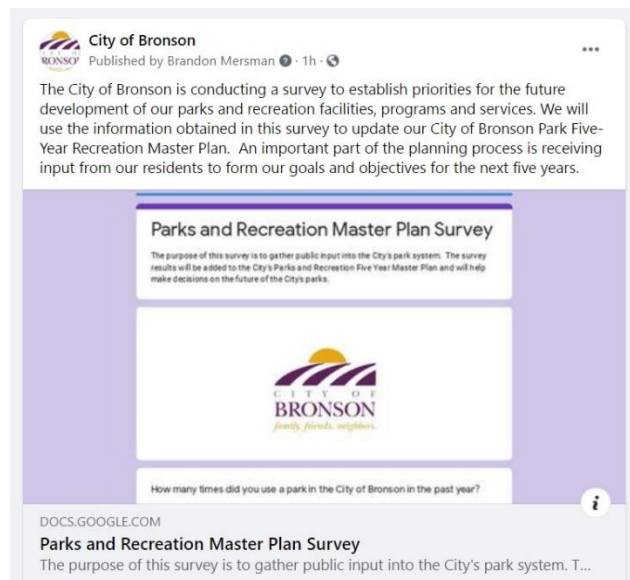
In October, the City Council approved a Public Participation Plan for the City. A public participation plan is essential for outlining how the public will be engaged during the planning and development process. Engaging citizens through the planning process is crucial to the success of the plan; such as major planning, zoning, and development projects. Soliciting input throughout the planning process contributes to greater public understanding of community projects and also provides greater transparency in local government operations. Adoption of this plan also satisfied a requirement of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities Program of which the city is working to achieve as time permits.

#### ***Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update:***

At the end of 2021, the City Council was presented an updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The original plan was adopted in 2016 and was in need of updating in order to stay eligible for any of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants including; Trust Fund Grant, Passport Grant, and others. A community survey was conducted using an online survey which offered an opportunity for residents to provide input on what they would like to see in our City

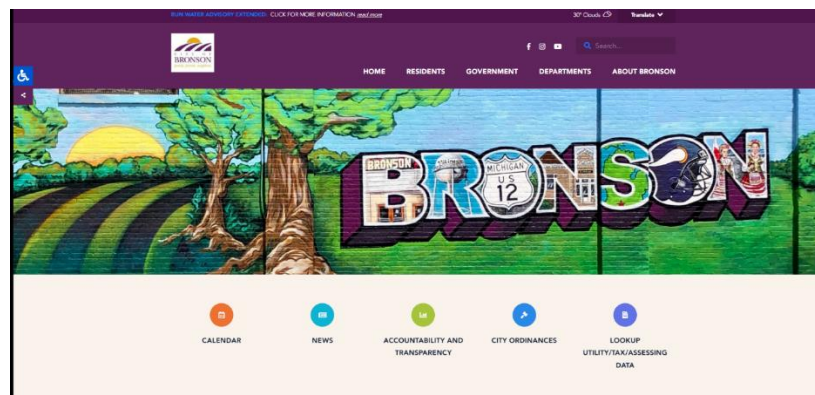


park system. The plan will serve as a guide for future decision-making regarding recreational facility improvements and programs over the next five years and was approved in January of 2022.



### ***City Website Redesign:***

In April of 2021, the City Council approved an agreement with Revize Government Websites to do a redesign of the City's website using a template. Using a predesigned template, the City was able to save a considerable amount of money. The new website was completed and went live in July of 2021. The new website is ADA compliant, more user friendly, and offers language translation into more than 75 languages. The new website also allows for news alerts at the top of the page.



### ***Online Record Search of Tax, Assessing, and Utility Billing:***

In August, council approved the purchase of licensing to allow for residents and property owners to search for tax, assessing, and utility billing data online. This was integrated into the City's new website soon after it launched.

***Employee Pension Plan:*** In 2021, the City received its 2020 MERS pension plan valuation. The plans funding ratio went from 71% funded at the end of 2019 to 73% funded at the end of

2020. In the spring of 2022, the City will receive the 2021 valuation. The City has made significant progress in increasing the funding ratio by making voluntary contributions in years prior. Without those voluntary contributions the current funding ratio would only be 64%. Below is a table from the 2020 valuation that shows the funding ratio percentage by year:

**Table 7: Actuarial Accrued Liabilities - Comparative Schedule**

Valuation Date December 31	Actuarial Accrued Liability	Valuation Assets	Percent Funded	Unfunded (Overfunded) Accrued Liabilities
2006	\$ 378,462	\$ 251,253	66%	\$ 127,209
2007	378,679	279,034	74%	99,645
2008	413,492	301,718	73%	111,774
2009	424,998	330,009	78%	94,989
2010	1,454,330	886,237	61%	568,093
2011	1,579,361	973,741	62%	605,620
2012	1,665,666	1,051,720	63%	613,946
2013	1,768,256	1,167,052	66%	601,204
2014	1,917,762	1,237,160	65%	680,602
2015	2,161,142	1,310,864	61%	850,278
2016	2,296,215	1,399,354	61%	896,861
2017	2,399,836	1,508,387	63%	891,449
2018	2,521,583	1,809,973	72%	711,610
2019	2,677,653	1,902,634	71%	775,019
2020	2,843,354	2,088,747	73%	754,607

Notes: Actuarial assumptions were revised for the 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019 and 2020 actuarial valuations.

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

*New Police vehicle-* In October of 2021, the City approved the purchased/order of a new 2022 Ford Explorer Police Interceptor for the Police Department. The vehicle will replace a 2016 Chevrolet Tahoe which was requiring regular repairs. In February 2022, a similar vehicle arrived on the lot with a few additional features and the purchase was approved in early 2022.

During 2021 the City also upgraded the in car computers for both police vehicles for better reliability.

*See the Police Department 2021 Annual Report for More*

### ***Republic Trash & Recycling Contract Renewed:***

In February, the City Council approved a contract extension with Republic Services for trash and recycling services in the City. In exchange for an extended contract, Republic lowered their price from \$17.39/month to \$15.91/month for the first year. Years two (2) through five (5) the price will increase 3% annually. At year four (4), the price will be back to \$17.39, which means the price will be lower or equal to the 2020 pricing level for four (4) years.



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

***Road Maintenance/Improvements-*** During the summer of 2021 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:

Union Street  
N. Ruggles Street  
Shaffmaster Blvd.

The City was only able to do preventative maintenance on three (3) roads due to the S. Ruggles and Compton Street project. The City's match for the work on the Ruggles Street project used up the vast majority of the City's road funds for the budget year. The actual cost for these three roads was \$37,890.33 with the original estimate being \$43,182.90. The Branch County Road Commission will be redoing this work in the summer of 2022 due to issues with the sealer used on these roads.

### ***MEDC Community Development Block Grant Infrastructure Resiliency Program:***

During the summer of 2021, the City of Bronson completed work on the grant project for S. Ruggles and a portion of Compton Street in the amount of \$1,322,850. The City's match was 25% of project costs. While the project is not completely closed out, the local City match will end up being roughly \$360,750 (\$134,750 for construction costs and all of the engineering costs totaling \$195,000). The original budget called for a City match of \$440,950, a cost savings of roughly \$80,000.

The grant allowed the City to update watermain (Compton Street only), sanitary sewer mains, storm sewer, new sidewalk with ADA ramps, and roads on South Ruggles Street from Rudd to US-12 and Compton Street from Mowry to South Ruggles Street. The City was also able to add sidewalk to the east side of S. Ruggles Street, making it safer for children to walk to and from Ryan School. The City was one of only 8 communities in the state chosen for this grant. Work began in June and ended in the late fall.

In November of 2021, the City was informed it had received an award for this project from the American Public Works Southwest Michigan Branch in the category of Environment greater than \$1 Million. The City Manager, DPW/Utilities Director, engineer, and contractor (Concord Excavating) were at the awards banquet held on December 8<sup>th</sup>.





### *Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) Grant:*

The City's Engineer for this project, Prein & Newhof presented the findings of the SAW grant during the summer of 2021.

Work performed in 2021 included:

- 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)

The report found a number of defects in the storm sewer which, for the most part, was installed in the 1930's. The sanitary sewer system also found numerous defects that was constructed in the 1950's and 1960's. The report outlines the system deficiencies and outlines suggested projects in the Capital Improvement Plan to address in the future.

#### *Administrative Consent Order:*

In 2021, the City continued to work with EGLE on the proposed Administrative Consent Order for the City to address the Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) in the sewer system that causes the City to discharge more than the permitted level of .5 million gallons per day. While the agreement is still being negotiated, the City is continuing to work with EGLE and will continue to make improvements where we can. The SAW report was extremely valuable in identifying deficiencies that the City can concentrate on correcting to lower I&I. Staff believes the S. Ruggles and Compton Street project may have helped lower flows significantly and we will continue to monitor how much of an improvement this made.

#### *Drinking Water Asset Management Grant (DWAM):*

In 2021, the City was awarded a drinking water asset management grant which focuses on Lead Service Investigations/Inventory and Water Asset Management Planning. Prein & Newhof will be working on this project for us and will complete the following:

- Field GPS existing hydrants, valves, curb boxes and service lines, with the assistance of the DPW. P&N anticipates needing 190 hours of City staff assistance in locating these items.
- Update the GIS with field data that was collected.
- Link available record plans to GIS system.
- Verify if existing easements were recorded and/or exist.
- Prepare a contract and competitively bid to prospective contractors to perform potholing with field verification of service line materials.
- Prepare a comprehensive Drinking Water Asset Management Plan including water asset inventory, condition assessment, identification of projects, cost estimates, generation of a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan, and Rate Study to evaluate funding options.
- Perform hydrant testing for updating the water hydraulic model for calibration purposes.
- Update water hydraulic model and perform water loss evaluation, water quality evaluation, and update demand distribution.

- Update City's Asset Management Plan.

The total grant amount is \$469,400 which is 100% reimbursable through the grant. The work will satisfy the requirements for a detailed inventory of lead service lines which is due in 2025 and will give the City an asset management plan to better plan for water system improvements.

*Water Meter Replacement:*

In July, the City Council approved the purchase of new water meters which will be replaced over two budget years. The current meters are at the end of their useful life with parts no longer available. The cost to replace all meters at once was quoted at \$276,522.46. Phase one of the project was \$160,862.96. The phase 1 cost is significantly more than the second phase as it includes all of the larger meters and all of the startup costs and licensing costs. The City plans to purchase the remaining meters in the FY2023 budget using the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) local stimulus funds.

***Motor Pool-*** During 2021 the City made a couple of upgrades and new purchases to its vehicle and equipment motor pool. In February of 2021, the City purchased a new lawn mower (Ferris ISX800) for the Department of Public Works.

In 2021, the City approved the purchased/order of a new 2022 Ford Explorer Police Interceptor for the Police Department. The vehicle will replace a 2016 Chevrolet Tahoe which was requiring regular repairs.