



PHIL JENKINS  
Mayor  
pjenkins@nappanee.org

## **Nappanee State of the City 2020 New Decade...New Outlook**

As we enter a new decade together, I am honored and humbled to serve the great City of Nappanee alongside so many qualified and talented individuals. I would not trade our residents, business owners, employees, youth, volunteers, or visitors with any other place on the face of the earth. As we reflect on the past year, let us continue to build on the momentum generated and shape the future we envision for a more prosperous and healthy community.

2019 was a year of significant accomplishments. We celebrated the opening of a new Boys & Girls club next to Nappanee Elementary School, watched the first season of Northwood High School soccer teams play on the new soccer field at Wellfield Park, completed and unveiled a 5-year Park master plan, introduced the Junkyard Dog sculptures to the downtown, and established a mental health task force. Along with the projects and initiatives listed above, we continue to work on a comprehensive approach to our City finances.

As we enter 2020, we will continue to work on several projects to build a better Nappanee. The Community of WaNee Vision 2020 enters into the final phases, as FCDC and Elder Haus Renovations are implemented. We celebrate together as we reshape the social services offered to the entire community, from the youngest to the oldest.

Design work for Woodview Drive continues to take shape for construction scheduled in 2023. A safe pedestrian pathway from SR 19 to Oakland Avenue will help tie the existing trail system together. New curbs and drainage will improve the overall quality of this heavily traveled road.

NIPSCO is working on upgrades to the downtown substation to provide additional power and adding transmission lines and smart switches to increase reliability in the system. Initially, this project was not scheduled to start for 5 years. Thanks to negotiations between the City, NIPSCO, and the Economic Development Corporation of Elkhart County, we have improved the timing and hope to see this portion of the work completed by the end of this year.

The Redevelopment Commission is working with businesses in the US 6 East Corridor to improve safety and circulation and to improve aesthetics of the area. In addition to the US 6 corridor, the Commission will be evaluating other projects and initiatives to pursue within our consolidated Tax Increment Finance District. TIF is another tool in toolbox to help fund projects that encourage growth and improve quality of place that benefit all of Nappanee.

*Embrace the Place*

300 West Lincoln Street • P.O. Box 29 • Nappanee, IN 46550-0029  
574.773.2112 • [www.nappanee.org](http://www.nappanee.org)

*Nappanee is an Equal Opportunity Employer*

In the downtown, plans for a dumpster enclosure and parking lot improvements will get underway in the northwest quadrant. We will also focus our attention on the entire downtown to better address parking and access for our visitors and businesses. We hope to bring suggested improvements to the Council in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and continue to develop a long-range strategy for making a visit to our downtown a positive experience. New parking guidelines, in addition to improved alleyways and sidewalks, will continue to improve and enhance our downtown vibrancy.

The Park Department will begin implementation of the master plan in 2020. First on the list of projects is the acquisition of additional land and construction of new equipment and features, including an inclusive playground, at South Park. The work at South Park is made possible by a \$250,000 matching grant from the Department of Natural Resources. Planning for other parks will continue to take shape for implementation in the coming years. We will seek to leverage current dollars with other grants to expedite projects and transform neighborhoods.

As we seek to improve the physical environment of our community, we must also seek to improve the overall wellness of our citizens. Along with opportunities for physical fitness, we seek to find solutions and answers to address our emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness. Like anything, it takes a balanced approach to stay in optimal health. This past May, the Nappanee Mental Health Task Force began meeting monthly to learn, share, and act. Our goals are to assess the understanding and identify the needs of the City. We started asking, “What does Mental Health mean to you?” and “What are you seeing as the Mental Health Issues/Needs of our Community?”. Through the feedback on these two questions, we are developing a clearer understanding of the needs of Nappanee residents. As we move forward in 2020, you will see more community events to raise awareness, educate on key issues, and connect people with resources to live a healthier and fulfilled life. If you would like to get involved, the meetings are at 4 PM, on the third Thursday of the month, at City Hall.

The Nappanee Art Council just announced their 2020 projects, Woodland Creatures and Tour de Nappanee. Woodland Creatures will be sculptures installed in the woods at Derksen nature center. Tour de Nappanee is open to all artists to create and submit works of art to the Art Council for display in the downtown. The Junkyard Dogs will be permanently placed along the Art Path, near the dog park. The City will also work with the Art Council to renovate a portion of a building on West Market Street to provide a community art studio for Nappanee artists.

As we anticipate more growth of our corporate boundaries, we continue to evaluate our infrastructure. Asset management plans for Water and Sewer Utilities, as well as streets, will be critical for maintaining our existing infrastructure and planning for future growth. These tools will be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals to guide and provide proactive input to critical decisions regarding capital improvement projects.

Part of the Water Asset Management Plan includes the replacement of the US 6 water main from Elm Street to Guiss Street and a new water tower at the Airport Industrial Park. Several breaks in

the US 6 water main have occurred in the past few years. The replacement of this main is planned to be completed prior to the repaving of US 6, scheduled for 2021. The water tower at the airport is needed for additional emergency water capacity, fire protection, and improved water pressure. As the city continues to grow, we need to make sure we have the facilities in place to handle the additional demands.

Emergency Services call volumes continue to rise as training demands increase. As a result of this and the current age and efficiency of our facilities, we plan to conduct a feasibility study to look at the Fire and EMS needs of the City. We hope to gain valuable information on equipment, facilities, and training that will allow us to plan the future of these Emergency Services. We hope to develop a clear scope of the issues and look at a potential new facility or facilities that will meet our needs for the next 50 years.

Since the founding of Nappanee in 1874, the railroad has been a key part of our daily life. With the help and research provided by Nappanee resident Ed Strohbehn, we hope to work on a plan to improve the safety of our railroad crossings and possibly set up a quiet zone within the City limits of Nappanee. We hope to work closely with the Federal Railroad Administration, CSX, and an engineering consultant to develop and implement an improvement plan to address the issues.

2020 is the year of the decennial Census of the United States. The census report will give us our 10-year snapshot of population and demographic information used for federal, state, and local representation and funding. We have a Complete Count team assembled locally to assist the federal government to ensure that we account for residents in our area. We ask for your help as we participate in the census.

I would be remiss if I did not address Amish Acres in this State of the City. Amish Acres has been a vital part of Nappanee and the greater Northern Indiana region for 50 years. The Pletcher family has poured their entire life into the preservation and cultural significance of a group of individuals responsible for the founding and settlement of Nappanee. Amish Acres has evolved into one of the most recognized destinations in the Midwest. I would like to personally thank Dick Pletcher on behalf of the City of Nappanee and wish he and Susie a relaxing and fulfilling retirement. We will soon have a better picture of the future of Amish Acres, once new owners are identified. While we are unsure of the future, the City of Nappanee is positioned to work with the new owners on a new vision for the property. While we are sad to see one act of this property end, we are excited to see what the next act has in store.

As my new term as your Mayor begins and we set out our goals for the next year, I am reminded of all the great people in Nappanee's past and present that have blazed the trail that we journey along. Their leadership and pride in their community can be seen around us every day. My hope is that this current generation can continue to inspire and instill the values that make Nappanee so special to the next generation of leaders, business owners, families, and residents. As we enter this new decade together, let our outlook always be to build a better Nappanee, one day at a time. May God continue to bless Nappanee!