



STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS 2021

To say the least, this past year has been unprecedented. A year ago, our community joined the nation to find ways to manage a pandemic that we knew very little about. COVID-19, a virus invisible to all, has affected our lives in so many ways.

Emotions and stress levels rose to an all-time high. State mandates were created, repealed, and updated. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) were scrambling to find answers and keep people safe, yet the number of cases continued to increase and so did the number of deaths.

Sadly, we have families in our community who have lost loved ones. We are still here to support you. I can't say enough for everyone who has been directly affected by this pandemic. Our residents, businesses, schools, nursing homes and assisted living, front line workers at the hospital and city employees.

Despite all of this, there are many positive topics to talk about.

It was amazing to see our children decorate the sidewalks with chalk drawings and homeowners putting art displays on their windows to lift us up.

Thank you to all the food drives that were organized and continue, for those in need during this time. Early on, the City made the decision to close our municipal buildings to keep staff and residents safe. Some employees were able to work remotely, while others showed up on a daily basis to continue doing the work they do for our community.

Our residents needed to find alternate ways to pay their tax bills, water bills, pull permits, and various other tasks. Although sometimes frustrating, you did what needed to be done, and I thank you for that.

I must also commend and thank our EMS teams on the number of COVID-19 calls they handled along with the high volume of other calls being addressed. EMS ran a total of 1,773 calls. 167 of them were COVID related. Sometimes they were running 3-4 calls at once. I want to thank Rochester and Waterford ambulances in assisting 3rd and 4th calls when this occurred.

Although many businesses struggled during the “Safer at Home Order”, they found ways to be creative and resilient; offering curbside pick-up and delivery options. Our community did their best and continues to support these businesses as much as possible.

Also, despite the pandemic, many new businesses were established in our downtown and surrounding area, including Antioch Pizza, The Low Daily, The Runaway, Bomb Burger, Hansen's Ice Cream

Parlor, Cali Parisi Artistry, Joyful Creations, Café B, and Quotes & Cotton, just to name a few. This is AMAZING! Additional growth has also been seen in our Industrial Parks.

In addition, in 2020 alone, the City awarded business owners with \$22,522.50 in Façade Grants and \$63,319.50 in Revolving Loan Fund Grants. Grant dollars have also contributed to Senior Center upgrades, a fire station exhaust system, as well as future improvements to the library and police departments and much more. A great deal of this has been at no expense to our taxpayers.

This growth has resulted in many new jobs and almost no vacant storefronts in the downtown district! I commend the investors and business owners in our city that have done major improvements during this pandemic.

Oak Park Place expanded their facility adding eight new units to the Senior Care building. Thirty new condos are being built on Falcon Ridge Drive and a 12-unit apartment is being constructed on South Pine Street near the bypass. Twenty new homes were also built within the City in 2020.

These are all examples of great successes and accomplishments to be proud of, despite a pandemic! As we continue moving forward, we must continue to believe in ourselves and our community.

Our community has always worked together to get through hardships. I ask that we continue to work together, and helping each other as best we can, as we move past these trying times and continue to grow as a community.

We are a strong community and you have shown it!

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeannie Hefty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeannie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hefty".

Mayor, Jeannie Hefty