

Message from Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin



What an exciting year 2014 has been, and what incredible opportunities the City of Aurora has before it in 2015! Much is happening...parks are expanding, sidewalks and trails are developing, and the Town Center is growing in distinctiveness. Plans are being implemented to pave roadways and update infrastructure, and companies and businesses are expanding or building in the city. We also look forward to

the new opportunities for redevelopment of the Geauga Lake area. Additionally, we have one of the best school systems in the state, and the city is financially sound. Together, all of this makes Aurora a great place to raise a family, operate a business, or both. It is an honor for me to serve as your Mayor, and I look forward to the possibilities and challenges in the year ahead. My door is always open, so please feel free to come and discuss an issue or share an idea.

SafeWise Ranks Aurora 9th on Ohio's Safest Cities List

Based on the most recent FBI crime data, Aurora was ranked 9th in 2014 in SafeWise's "50 Safest Cities in Ohio" list. Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin said, "I'm proud of our safety forces – police and fire – which work diligently to keep crime down and the public safe, protecting our residents, visitors and businesses. Aurora is indeed a great place to live, work and build a future for many reasons."

City Finances: General Fund Review

| | Expenses | Revenue |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2013 Actual | \$13,704,929 | \$15,313,206 |
| 2014 Actual | \$13,685,729 | \$15,976,907 |

Among the savings, the city spent 5.2% less on health care in 2014 than in 2013, and 14.5% less on overtime.

Economic Development News

The Mayor and Economic Development Director meet with businesses constantly and also work closely with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce to build Aurora's commercial and industrial base. Aurora's industrial sector continued to keep pace with the healthy business climate in Northeast Ohio. All of our businesses have reported positive sales growth and most have added staff during 2014, in addition to having current positions open and available. A noteworthy announcement was that global manufacturer Pyrotek, Inc. of Spokane, Washington will build a new multi-million dollar facility in our industrial park. A new dental office has opened on North Aurora Road, the Atrium of Anna Maria added new facilities, the Aurora Inn renovations began under new owners, and the Avenue at Aurora forged ahead. Many prime retail and commercial locations are still available in our city.

Rezoning of Geauga Lake Property

Many thanks to voters who supported a change on May 6, 2014 from industrial to a Mixed-Use Development District to allow residential, retail, recreational and business uses over about 560 acres in the Geauga Lake area. Work is continuing with property owner Cedar Fair and Bainbridge Township to bring developers into the area to help revitalize it.

Charter Review Commission

Nine residents served on Aurora's quinquennial Charter Review Commission and 15 amendments were approved by the voters in November 2014. Thank you to co-chairs Dr. Larry Oswick and Dale Moravec for their leadership of this important undertaking. Thanks also to Council Clerk Donna Hawks for staffing the Commission.

Connectivity

Residents have increasingly voiced support for sidewalks and bike paths, and the city is committed to connectivity. The city funded a sidewalk plan and conducted preliminary engineering for it in 2014 for sidewalks along the north side of Route 82 and south down Route 43 from Pioneer Trail to Aurora Hudson Road. Much of the plan required easements which the city is in the process of obtaining from property owners. The city also has been collaborating with northern Portage communities to extend the Hike and Bike Trail, with engineering work funded for 2015. With federal road funding expected in 2016 for key roadways, bike lanes are being planned as part of that project.



2014 Building Stats

Aurora Continues to Develop

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Residential Construction | \$18,601,776 |
| Commercial Construction | \$11,342,215 |
| Industrial Construction | \$34,185,391 |
| TOTAL CONSTRUCTION | \$64,129,382 |

Public Services to Residents

The Service Department served Aurorans well in 2014:

- Collected 4,870 cubic yards of brush.
- Completed almost \$400,000 in road and concrete repairs.
- Striped 99 center lane miles of roads.
- Picked up 4,190 cubic yards of leaves.
- Removed 1,200 cubic yards of debris from roadways.
- Turned brush and leaves into mulch and compost for residents.
- Collected almost 2,500 pounds of electronics and 104 ink cartridges for disposal.
- Collected 7,076 tons of solid waste under trash pick-up program.
- Began a program to gather and digitize data of all storm water inlets and outfalls into a GIS System to measure performance and improve efficiency.
- Rehabilitated and painted the North Water Tower and replaced the Ridgeway Drive waterline to keep drinking water safe.

Meet the Police Chief



Aurora resident, Brian Byard, was sworn in as the new Chief of Police on October 31, 2014. Mr. Byard is a 16-year veteran of the Bedford Police Department and served as narcotics detective for the Southeast Area Law Enforcement Drug Task Force. He has received numerous awards over his career including Officer of the Year from the Bedford Police Department and the Ohio Attorney General's Distinguished Law Enforcement Group Achievement Award in 2006 for outstanding performance in drug investigations and prosecution. He and his wife, Dyan, have three daughters. Welcome Chief!

Police Department

2014 was a year of transition for the Aurora Police Department. Three members retired including Chief Seth Riewaldt with 35 years of service, Lieutenant Don Johnson with 28 years, and Sergeant John Bergoine with 25 years, and a new chief was sworn in on October 31. During this transition, the public continued to be served seamlessly by the men and women of the agency with pride and professionalism under Interim Chief Rob Hagquist. Some noteworthy cases for 2014 include

- indictments of members of a burglary ring targeting affluent homes in nine Northern Ohio counties,
- the apprehension and arrest of 4 males targeting Aurora residents in car break-ins, and
- a joint investigation with the Internet Crimes Against Children task force resulting in the arrest and conviction of a dangerous predator.

Fire & Rescue Response

Aurora Fire/EMS is proud to serve the community with a level of excellence which is consistent every day of the year:

- Responded to 1570 EMS calls and 416 fire calls which represented an increase of 102 calls from the previous year.
- Conducted 134 fire prevention inspections in 2014 and fire loss was estimated at \$282,121.
- Over 500 business employees were trained in fire extinguisher use.
- 375 people were trained in AED/Health Care Provider CPR and 134 individuals received first aid training.
- Participated in the Memorial Day and 4th of July Parades, Bicycle Rodeo, Relay for Life, Portage County None for Under 21 and Tree Lighting, among other events.

Did You Know?

- City Council meetings and the Mayor's monthly cable report can be viewed on Cable 9 and on the city's website at www.auroraoh.com.
- Aurora's Chamber of Commerce website at www.allaboutaurora.com is an excellent resource for those new to the community looking for community discounts and local business information.
- Community maps are free and available at City Hall for residents who would like to familiarize themselves with area streets, parks, schools and shopping areas.

Please visit the city website at www.auroraoh.com for more information.



Kudos to Superintendent Russ Bennett, Board of Education President Jerry Kohanski and members Pam Mehallis, Beverly Kuch, Annie Grohe and John Sloe on this prestigious achievement.



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SNAPSHOT - 2014 Year in Review

- **New Directors:** The Mayor appointed a new Law Director, Dean DePiero, and a Planning, Zoning and Building Director, Denise Januska, and launched a search process to find a new Police Chief. Brian Byard of Aurora was appointed this past fall.
- **Customer Friendly:** The administration has reviewed and improved building approval processes in the city and continues to work on being more customer friendly.
- **Flooding Action:** The city responded to flooding concerns with numerous residential visits and extensive culvert and drainage cleaning and repair work, and conducted targeted testing.
- **Parks:** Improvements at Sunny Lake and Kiwanis-Moore Park were launched and a new softball field was dedicated in May.
- **Gas Savings:** The city negotiated and implemented a Natural Gas Program through October of 2015 at a favorable rate to save residents money (\$4.65/mcf).
- **Safe Water:** The city painted and repaired the North Water Tower and installed a pressure relief valve to keep Aurora's drinking water safe.
- **Safe City:** Fire crews responded to almost 2000 fire and rescue calls and together with our Police helped keep Aurora one of Ohio's safest cities.
- **Strong Finances:** Finances have been strong and expenditures measured, maintaining the city's Triple A rating with Fitch.

SNAPSHOT - Looking ahead to 2015

- **Connectivity:** Projects include about 4000 feet of new sidewalks and completion of 2014 plans.
- **Safe Water:** Water line replacements will begin in the oldest section of town and South Water Tower will be rehabilitated and painted.
- **Storm Water:** Engineering study and citywide culvert replacement program are planned.
- **Safe City:** The city will implement a 911 system equipment upgrade, police bicycle patrol, and body cameras.
- **Parks:** Sunny Lake improvements will be completed including new boathouse restrooms, reconfigured parking, ball field restrooms and concession stand, and a new disc golf course.
- **Town Center:** Improvements are in the works including sidewalks and enhanced historic focus.