

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Regina Dunkin, City Council President
City of Beloit, Wisconsin
April 3, 2023

Good Evening councilors, City Manager, City staff and our entire Beloit community-

As City Council President, it is my distinct honor to give this year's State of the City address.

Today, we celebrate the power of community and how it can bring about positive change. When we look back on 2022, we have seen our community come together and work towards common goals. When we do so, we can achieve great things that would have been impossible for one person alone.

ARPA (AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT)

In 2022, there is no greater example of all of us working together than the work that we have done in establishing the City's ARPA funding programs. We have spent countless hours hearing from the community, debating priorities, and collaborating together to determine how best to spend these funds. We prioritized initiatives that reflect the values of our community -- initiatives that prioritize compassion, empathy, kindness, and care for those in need.

ARPA dollars will help us fund programs that will provide shelter, food, and basic necessities for those who are struggling to make ends meet. But beyond the practical support, the ARPA program offers something even more powerful -- it provides hope, dignity, and a sense of belonging to those who have been marginalized and forgotten by society. It reminds us that every human being deserves to be treated with kindness and respect, and that we all have a role to play in building a better Beloit. For that - we should all be proud.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Our strategic goals are something that we have historically discussed during the state of the city address, and tonight I will continue that tradition. As we look back on 2022, we can see a city that has come together to make incredible progress to achieve great success.

SAFE AND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

Safe and healthy neighborhoods are important to our community. The Beloit Police Department has recently reported that over the last year, various forms of criminal behavior have reduced significantly.

Reduced crime rates are something that we can be proud of. It shows that we are a community that cares about each other and that we are willing to work together. Let us continue to build on this success and strive to make our city a safer and more prosperous place for all our residents and visitors.

Beloit will also continue to invest in our neighborhoods through the use of CDBG funds. In 2022, CDBG funded many of our local non-profit partner programs, including funds for job training, literacy programs, housing assistance, and clean-up events in our Hackett and Merrill neighborhoods, to name just a few. These programs are important to the residents of our community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Economic Development and growth are vital to a community's success. We have a thriving economy that is supported by a diverse range of industries, including manufacturing, healthcare, and education. Through our strategic investments and partnerships with local businesses, we have seen a steady increase in job creation and economic growth. We have worked diligently to attract new businesses and retain existing ones, resulting in the capital investment of \$98 million dollars and the creation of nearly 100 new jobs.

One of the highlights of 2022 that I would like to point out is the closure of several TIF districts, including the Gateway Business Park, which led to significant property tax relief in 2023 for our residents. The City has also been fortunate to receive several federal and state grants which will provide us the assistance necessary to meet the needs for our future growth and development.

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

A high quality of life outside of work is crucial to our overall health and well-being. In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to get caught up in the daily grind of work and forget about taking time for ourselves.

We are proud to celebrate all that Beloit has to offer our families, including quality park and playground facilities and outstanding recreation and educational opportunities. We have set aside ARPA dollars to reinvigorate our programs and facilities. We are also partnering with our local non-profits agencies to creatively engage with our youth and seniors.

HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

Let us celebrate our staff who have contributed to our success as a high performing organization. Our staff worked hard to move the city forward, despite the many challenges facing local governments today. Staffing issues and budget limitations plague nearly every employer. But our staff have remained resilient during these tough times and we are truly grateful for their efforts. Thanks to each one of you for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to making our community a better place.

We are committed to focusing on ways to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within all of our departments. Over the last year, all city staff have participated in training opportunities to learn how to create and foster a welcoming and inclusive workplace, regardless of race, gender, or background. We strive to maintain an inclusive workplace culture by promoting open communication, encouraging diversity of thought, and valuing different perspectives.

Another top priority for our city is to engage with staff and provide resources to allow growth and opportunities for the future. Continuing to make these investments in our staff will help us accomplish the city's mission -- which is to provide outstanding public service.

HIGH QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

In 2022, our City Council allocated ARPA dollars to invest in our high-quality infrastructure by funding vital improvements to programs that will assist in addressing lead-service lines and sub-standard water lines. These dollars, along with the wastewater treatment plant project, will ensure that we are ready to serve our community for years to come in a more sustainable manner.

We have also set aside TIF Housing funds to encourage, promote, and support residential housing development in our Beloit community. These efforts, will supplement the \$4 million dollar investment made in residential housing projects in 2022. We have a number of exciting opportunities that lie ahead.

ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, WHILE MAINTAINING A POSITIVE IMAGE

Beloit continues to value community engagement which is critical to our success. Volunteerism on city boards, committees, and commissions keeps our government functioning. We are so grateful to the nearly 100 volunteers that serve on these committees every day. Your work has not gone unnoticed and we appreciate you.

In 2022, we had a unique opportunity to showcase the City of Beloit to the rest of the world through the christening of the USS Beloit. We are thankful to Fairbanks Morse Defense, Senator Tammy Baldwin, Major General Marcia Anderson, the U.S. Navy, and all those who were a part of honoring our community with this recognition. We are incredibly fortunate to have this prestigious honor.

CONCLUSION

Beloit's accomplishments have positioned the city for continued growth and success in the years to come. Along with our new City Manager, we will face new challenges, but we will also find ways to work together and make progress. Let us celebrate this wonderful city that we are proud to call home and renew our commitment to making Beloit an even better place to live, work, and play.