

2023



# STATE OF THE CITY

Jamestown, New York

Presented by:

Edward A. Sundquist, Mayor

Collaboration for a New Generation

JAMESTOWN

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PRESENTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE  
JAMESTOWN CITY COUNCIL ON THE  
30<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JANUARY, 2023

To Council President Dolce, Council Members, and to our residents-

As we reflect on 2022 and head into 2023, I want to acknowledge the great work all of our departments have done over the past year. We have seen incredible strides forward for Jamestown, with groundbreaking American Rescue Plan programs, strong city finances not seen in decades, and technological advancements in City government. Our City departments, and workers, have risen to the challenge and delivered excellent results for the residents of Jamestown. I am proud to say that the state of our city is strong, and focused on finding collaborative solutions to move our City forward.

**Reflecting on 2022 Achievements**

When I started back in 2020, the City was on the brink of a control board, with outdated labor contracts, wage lawsuits, and no financial breathing room. After hard work and careful planning, we now have the largest fund balance in decades, all without raising taxes. We have settled every single union contract, something that hasn't been achieved in years. Saddled with legacy healthcare costs, we worked with unions and retirees on a new healthcare option, resulting in personal savings for retirees and millions of dollars in savings to our taxpayers. We have invested in record amounts of technology to both protect the City from cyber-attacks, and do business more efficiently. We are working towards improving our school zones, and ensuring student and pedestrian safety with walking and biking route improvements. We are investing into our parks, including the opening of a new world-class skatepark, and planning for new splash pads in Jamestown. We are working with our partners in New York State to create a municipal broadband system that will ensure that all students, job-seekers, and seniors have access to affordable, high-speed internet.

**Transformational Rescue Plan Funds**

However, nothing has been quite transformational as the funds we received from the American Rescue Plan Act. Due to the hard work of many organizations, and our direct lobbying, we were able to secure over **\$28 million dollars** in federal funds. These funds give the City an opportunity to invest in needed capital improvements across every city department, help homeowners and businesses recover from the pandemic, and improve public safety. From these funds, we helped over 300 senior households with needed home improvement projects, replaced over 100 heavily damaged roofs across Jamestown, cost-free to working-class and middle-class homeowners. We have given businesses affected by the pandemic resources and

investments to hire more people locally, and a substantial amount of funds to demolish blighted buildings and redevelop properties for first time, low income, home buyers. It was our team that joined with the Community Foundation to hold listening sessions across Jamestown, giving the opportunity for every single resident to let their voice be heard. The programs and projects are vast and touch on every single aspect of the city, and made because we listened to our people.

As we transition into 2023, I am proud to say that more than \$23 million has been allocated for ARPA projects and programs, including needed capital spending for every City department, more public safety officers, cleaning up the Chadakoin River with the removal of invasive species, investments into our incredible parks system, and programs for homeowners and businesses. Every single City department has contributed hard work to this process. This is truly transformational funding for Jamestown and its residents, and I am proud of the work all of our departments have done in the creation of programs, projects, and implementation. Work will continue on these items into next year, but our goal of allocating the vast majority of funds has been accomplished. I am excited to announce more projects with this federal funding coming in the future.

### **Enhancing Public Safety**

As we have seen in our community, and across the country, a rise in gun violence has taken place. Jamestown is no exception to the national trend. We knew that investment into our police department was necessary, and wanted to do it the right way. Working with our City Council, we approved new officers to help with protection of citizens through a new program, which brings our police department staffing up to full force. This includes the approval of gun task force officers, which will continue the work of decreasing gun violence in the City, as well as a quality-of-life officer to deal with the nuisance complaints that plague our residents. We also added a new School Resource Officer for elementary and middle schools, as well as K-9 Grimm, the department's first explosive detection dog.

The Police department, through its drug task force, has also seized more firearms and drugs in the City, making our neighborhoods safer. We also added a number of new officers this year including K-9 Hope, who has assisted in more than 70 details as a comfort dog for victims of domestic violence. At the beginning of this new year, we are restarting the Citizen's Police Academy for the first time in over 20 years, to give the public an opportunity to see the work our officers do day in and day out. The continued work of our officers as members of our community, keeping the public safe, and being responsive, is certainly recognized by City residents, and we thank all of our officers for their hard work and diligence.

Our Public Safety also includes our Fire Department, undergoing several additions this year, especially after the devastating fires we have seen. We welcome an increase in firefighters through Rescue Plan funding, allowing the City to increase fire protection and EMS coverage. In the Fire Department, we have seen the continued successful implementation of a new EMS billing system. During our first full year, we have exceeded revenue projections, allowing us to invest in much needed equipment for our firefighters to save lives. I applaud the hard work of our firefighters.

Last year, our finance department, in partnership with City retirees, members of City Council, and other City Staff, formed a Healthcare Committee, which rolled out a Medicare Advantage Plan to City retirees. In an enormous collaborative success, over 60% of our Medicare eligible retirees have signed up, saving the City, and retirees, hundreds of thousands collectively. I am proud to say that not a single retiree has dropped off from the plan and many more have signed up as we have offered it again to retirees this year. Under this plan, a retiree pays zero dollars for this specialized insurance plan for the first five (5) years. In turn, this has saved the City \$1.6 million last year alone.

### **Revitalizing Infrastructure and Business**

Our Department of Public Works also had a record year, repairing, repaving, and improving our infrastructure, with an influx of work from more state and federal funds, record miles of roads, renovations of city parking garages, stormwater retention ponds, and many more infrastructure projects. The year also saw the start of construction of our new centralized Fleet Maintenance Facility, which will be completed in 2023.

Our Department of Development has played a large role in administering ARPA programs, to focus on recovery from the COVID pandemic. Their work in the creation of dozens of programs, as well as the beginning of administration, has put \$13.1 million dollars of improvements into our community through local businesses and homeowners. The number of projects will only increase in 2023 as more programs are implemented.

The City of Jamestown's aggressive approach to cultivating a new cannabis related industry has proven to be successful, and is continuing to develop in 2023. We have seen numerous growing operations established in the City, as well as several respected local businesses taking next steps in securing dispensary status. This new industry will not only create hundreds of new job opportunities in the City, but will also see recently purchased, and often, underutilized spaces repurposed and back on the tax roll. Jamestown is fully committed and steadfast in ensuring this new development will be done properly and by law. In fact, we are the *only* City in New York State to crack down on illegal dispensary operations. Jamestown, with the help

of our industry partners, will become an innovation center for the budding cannabis industry.

After hosting a public meeting for the City's Municipal Broadband Feasibility study, we have successfully created a Broadband Commission, which is comprised of City residents, Board of Public Utilities staff, and local organizations. Other cities using this specific fiber model have seen tremendous uneconomic growth. As we enter 2023, the Commission will continue their dedicated work in determining the best path for a future in city-wide connectivity for our students, job seekers, and seniors.

### **Investment in Transportation**

Getting people to and from Jamestown is key to a functioning and thriving economy. In an attempt to expand the City's current transportation options, my staff has communicated with state and local partners to address the current lack of air and rail services. We are working to secure federal rail investment to bring back rail service, to Buffalo, New York City, and all points east and west. We continue to work with the Department of Transportation for not just trains, but planes as well. We, along with, Jamestown Airport management staff are helping to determine the feasibility of the return of Essential Air Service (EAS) to the area; a key component to bring people here.

Not only air, rail, and car matter in the grand scheme of transportation; bicyclists and walkers are a crucial to a vibrant city. Since the initial Vision Zero proposal in 2022, the City continues to explore all options for pedestrian safety, and works to redesign our street for everyone. We have applied for numerous grants, and remain dedicated in eliminating all fatal and serious traffic related accidents. In this mission, we will begin to add new bike lanes in highly traveled streets, fix current sidewalk issues, and, in the near future, install speed cameras in school zones.

### **Putting People First**

Our community is resilient and has seen many ups and downs this year. As we all saw over the past summer, homelessness spiked in our community. We knew something had to be done, and a role for the City to play, which it has never had to do. We rolled up our sleeves, went out and secured almost \$200,000 in federal grants and brought together resource providers, faith communities, and medical providers to help solve this problem.

As I told faith leaders, show me a religion that doesn't say to help the poor and those without. We realized that the biggest issue was the coming winter. We simply didn't have enough shelter beds to cover a freezing night in the city. We asked

churches and non-profits to do what they could, to donate food, clothing, time, and space for an emergency shelter.

Despite all the hurdles, all the red tape, I am proud to say that as of today, we have brought on two (2) new emergency shelters right here in the city of Jamestown, focused on families and individuals. People who are down on their luck can be given a hot meal and a warm place to sleep, along with connecting them with resource providers so they can get back on their feet. I have never been prouder to see our community step up and help people, simply because it was the right thing to do. There is still much work to be done, but it is a step in the right direction.

### **The New American Dream**

Jamestown is a proud city built by the labor of immigrants, those who helped make this place into an industrial powerhouse, and have contributed immeasurably to the city we know today. When refugee crises sparked all over the world, I knew we had to jump into action. A year and a half ago, we worked with a refugee resettlement agency, Journey's End, and have now passed on the work to a group of citizen volunteers who have pushed to make sure that Jamestown is prepared to accept refugees. I am proud to say that this work will lead to new Americans coming to Jamestown. Jamestown is uniquely positioned, with plentiful housing, employers looking for workers, and a support system that will integrate these new Americans into our community. This will help grow our city, ensure our vacant houses become well-loved homes, and to helping a new generation achieve the American Dream.

### **Collaborating for the New Generation**

When I look back at my past few years as Mayor, I see the greatest accomplishments are the result of collaboration. It is impossible to solve everything by yourself. Solving problems requires trust, honesty, hard work with others, and seeing what we can all bring to the table. My administration's priority has been accountability to the people we serve, and to build relationships with all groups in our community. This includes the departments I oversee, the employees that work at the City, surrounding local governments, businesses who invest in our city, non-profits who provide essential services, faith groups who provide charity and spiritual guidance, and of course, everyday citizens. Our city is full of incredibly talented, passionate people. All of you are truly what makes Jamestown special.

I thank you for putting your trust in me. I know we have had much success in achieving what we have set out to do, and will continue working tirelessly to bring about a brighter future for Jamestown.