

## **2020 State of the City Address**

*Mayor Sandy Martin*

As we enter a new decade, I can honestly say that I have never been more hopeful and excited about the future of our great community. During the past two years, the city has undertaken a number of high profile projects that will continue to enhance the quality of life for our residents and position us to provide outstanding services and programs as we move into the 2020's.

The City has just completed its first full year of operation of the expanded Community Center. The expansion included the construction of Bamboo Bay, an interactive shallow water pool with a large tropical-themed play structure, which has been extremely popular with our younger members and guests. It was the first expansion of the pool area since the Community Center opened 30 years ago. The pool expansion also addressed the need for more family changing rooms which have been well received by our members and guests. The Tropical Adventure Indoor Playground was doubled in size to create a much larger toddler play area, improved seating, and a private birthday party area. The fitness center was enlarged and updated, and four new group fitness studios were constructed to accommodate a wide variety of fitness classes that are available to both members and non-members. Finally, the addition of four new multi-purpose activity rooms created space to increase both pre-school and senior programming, and also provide area for enhanced arts and cultural programs.

During 2019, the City began work on the Phase 1 Shoreview Commons area improvements that significantly enhance the outdoor park area around the Community Center. The first phase of the project includes the construction of a decorative pond and formal garden area that will beautify the Commons area, expansion of trail and sidewalk links throughout the site including a new pedestrian connection between the Community Center and the Ramsey County Regional Library, a new plaza-style skatepark that is expected to open next spring, and parking lot modifications designed to improve traffic flow and enhance pedestrian safety. These phase 1 improvements are expected to be completed early summer. The Shoreview Commons Phase 2 improvements include construction of a large destination playground and new park building. The Phase 2 improvements are scheduled to occur in 2021.

These important civic improvements were planned and undertaken due to the vision and leadership of our outstanding City Council. Each of the members of the Council work extremely hard to ensure that Shoreview continues to remain one of the premier places to live and work in the entire state of Minnesota; and I would like to extend my personal thanks to my colleagues – Terry Quigley, Emy Johnson, Cory Springhorn, and Sue Denkinger.

As we move into 2020, the City has also updated its overall image and online presence. In late 2019, the City Council approved an updated logo for the City. The new logo design has both a modern and timeless quality and reflects our many lakes and trees throughout the community. The new logo is currently being used on our website and social media accounts and will eventually be used on all City vehicles, uniforms, street and park signs, and water towers. The City is also in the process of updating our website to make it easier to navigate. The city is also working with an outside agency to develop a separate website to assist with marketing the city's business and economic development efforts. These new and updated websites are expected to be launched in the next few months.

## **Economic Development**

There are several exciting economic development projects that were either completed during 2019 or are currently under construction in Shoreview. Loden SV, a two-phase, 400-unit market rate apartment project located in the Shoreview Corporate Center across from the Green Mill Restaurant, opened in late 2018. They were fully leased within the first few months of operation. This major redevelopment project was undertaken by the development team of Eagle Ridge Partners and Greco, a Minneapolis based multi-family housing developer. Phase 2 of the project, which is expected to begin in 2020, will include a second 200 unit apartment complex just north of the first building.

Eagle Ridge Partners is also undertaking a major reinvestment in an office building in the Shoreview Corporate Center located at Lexington Avenue and County Road F. They are converting and updating a 120,000 square foot single user office building into a multi-tenant facility that will further diversify our business community, grow our employment base, and increase the tax base of the City. This work is expected to be completed by late spring or early summer.

Another major multi-family housing development is underway in the Rice Creek Corporate Park in northwest Shoreview. The Edison, also a two-phase project, will include a 300-unit market rate apartment project and 68 rental townhomes. The first phase of the project, which includes a 150 unit apartment building and approximately 40 townhomes are well underway and many of the townhome units will be available this spring. The apartments are expected to open sometime this summer. The second 150-unit apartment building is expected to begin construction later this year.

Oliver's, a unique new locally owned restaurant, will be opening on the ground floor of the new McMillan apartment complex at the northwest corner of Rice Street and I-694.

## **Parks and Trails**

In 2019, the City Council officially designated the land around the historic Larson/Lepak house at Lexington Avenue and County Road I as Heritage Park. This is the first new park in Shoreview since the early 2000's and was created to reflect Shoreview's rich history. The site is also home to the Guerin Gas Station, the first gas station in Shoreview. The Shoreview Historical Society is using a small portion of the home for its office and storage of historic documents and will be partnering with the City to furnish the main floor of this Chaska brick farmhouse so that it can eventually be used for tours.

During 2020, the City is planning to conduct a park system plan that will review all of our city parks, examine demographics and recreation trends, and develop conceptual master plans for all of the parks. It is anticipated that there will be an active public involvement process that will involve youth athletic associations, the park and recreation commission, and Shoreview residents.

During 2020, the City is also planning to replace the playground equipment at Rice Creek Fields and Shamrock Park. In addition, during 2020, we anticipate that a new trail link along County Road E from Vivian Avenue to Lexington Avenue will be completed. Another significant trail extension planned in 2020 is along the unimproved Gramsie Road right of way, located just east of the new Loden SV Apartment complex.

Unfortunately, Ramsey County's Vadnais-Snail Lake Regional Park continues to be impacted by record high water levels both in Snail Lake and throughout the open space area. The impacts have resulted in the beach being closed the past few years and major sections of the trail system in the open space being inaccessible. The City is continuing to work with Ramsey County and the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District in efforts to determine the best method of addressing the high water levels. In 2020, the County is planning to restore the beach area and they are also beginning an update of their Vadnais-Snail Lake Master Plan in an effort to address the impacts to the trails and other recreation features in the park. I strongly encourage our residents to be actively involved in this process.

### **Road Projects**

The long-awaited reconstruction of the Rice Street Bridge over I-694 is well underway. The reconstruction of this bridge and freeway intersection was a high priority for both Ramsey County and the City for many years due to traffic congestion. This County project began last spring and is scheduled to be completed this August. Due to the complexity of this intersection, the new design will feature a series of three roundabouts that should significantly improve traffic flow and provide improved access to neighborhood streets and local businesses. The westbound freeway access and both eastbound and westbound freeway exits are now open to traffic, as are the connections to local roadways.

Beginning this spring, the City will be reconstructing North Owasso Boulevard between Rice Street and Victoria Street. This project is much-needed due to the poor pavement condition and will also facilitate the completion of the County's renovation of Lake Owasso/Wabasso County Park. Trails along North Owasso Boulevard will be reconstructed and pedestrian connections to the park will be improved as part of the work.

During 2019, the City completed a two-year project that repaired and resurfaced about 5 miles of streets throughout Shoreview. More than 30 miles of local residential and collector streets in Shoreview have either been reconstructed or rehabilitated since 2005. The city is also completing the final two segments of its street reconstruction plan that started in the 1980's. In 2020 and 2021, the City is planning to reconstruct streets in the Edgetown Acres neighborhoods in northwest Shoreview. Once the streets in this neighborhood are completed, all city-owned streets will have concrete curb and gutter and modern drainage systems.

### **Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives**

The City Council is committed to many environmental and sustainability efforts from preserving our urban forest as demonstrated by our Emerald Ash Borer Treatment Program to using less salt on residential streets to protect water quality in our lakes and streams. During 2019, the City added a solar array on the maintenance center roof to provide for about one-half of the electrical demand of that facility and also received the Sustainability Award from the League of Minnesota Cities recognizing the City's efforts to encourage water conservation through use of the WaterSmart program. In addition, the City now has weekly recycling collection, making it easier for our residents to The City is also planning to install electric vehicle charging stations at the Community Center during 2020. The Environmental Quality Committee will again hold its annual Environmental Speaker Series the third Wednesday of each month from February-May and will also sponsor its annual Green Community Awards program.

### **Financial Condition**

The City continues to be in excellent financial condition as evidenced by our AAA bond rating from Standard and Poor's. This is the highest bond rating available and reflects the City's focus on long-range financial planning and a strong regional economy. The City Council recently adopted a biennial budget of approximately \$65 million, along with a five-year operating plan that establishes financial targets for all of our governmental funds. It is also very gratifying that the City portion of property taxes on a median value home is fourth lowest of 29 cities between 20,000 and 50,000 populations. In Shoreview, city taxes on a home valued at \$303,800 in 2019 were \$969, about 25% below the average city property tax of \$1,296.

## **Conclusion**

During my many years as Mayor of Shoreview, I have always believed that local government is not only the closest to its citizens, but can make the greatest difference in the quality of life for people. It is this firmly held belief that continues to keep me focused on creating a better community for both our current and future generations of Shoreview residents and ensuring that Shoreview remains one of the top rated communities in the State of Minnesota.

As a city, we are committed to having an open and accessible government. We do this by televising and streaming all of our City Council and Planning Commission meetings, publishing the quarterly ShoreViews newsletter, and increasing our social media presence through Facebook, Twitter, and the Access Shoreview bi-monthly newsletter. The city also sponsors a Citizen's Leadership Academy every other year where residents can learn more detailed information about City operations and programs.

On behalf of the City Council, I would like to thank our many committee and commission members who volunteer their time to make Shoreview a better place to live, work, and play. I would also like to thank our many community groups like the Shoreview Northern Lights Variety Band, Slice of Shoreview Committee, Gallery 96, Shoreview-Einhausen Sister City Association, Shoreview Historical Society, and the Shoreview Community Foundation that help build civic pride and make our community stronger. Finally, thanks to our dedicated and professional city staff that work hard to provide the services and programs that our residents have come to expect.

It is truly an honor and privilege to serve as the mayor of our great city, and I look forward to continuing to work with our residents as we enter the 2020's. Happy New Year.