

# CITY OF JACKSON

OFFICIAL CITY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021

## NEW PARK TRAIL CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS & SCHOOLS

In the seven years they've lived in Jackson, the Choate family says they've enjoyed seeing the City's pedestrian trail system expand.

"All the trail improvements make it easier to quickly reach parks from our neighborhood," said Lesley Choate.

Brad and Lesley Choate and their 3-year-old son Cooper are now taking advantage of a new pedestrian trail along Elmdale Drive in Ella Sharp Park.

"Having a dedicated pedestrian trail really helps us appreciate all the park has to offer," said Brad Choate.

The new trail is the result of a collaboration between the City of Jackson and Jackson Public Schools (JPS).

Because this path is used by students to reach Middle School at Parkside and Sharp Park Academy, a Safe Routes to School grant from the State of Michigan was used to partially fund trail construction.



The Choate Family using the new Ella Sharp Park Trail along Elmdale Drive.

"This trail will provide safe routes to school for our children for years to come. We also expect it to increase the amount of students walking and biking to school," said Kriss Giannetti of JPS.

The Ella Sharp Park Trail replaces a 30-year-old path that was deteriorating, prone to flooding, and was too close to vehicle traffic.

The improved trail is wider than the previous path, is further set back from the street, and has a dedicated bridge over a creek.

A new stretch of the trail runs along S. Jackson Street and better connects the park to the south side neighborhood.

Parks and Recreation Director Kelli Hoover says both students and residents will benefit from this 1 mile long trail.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has brought more residents out to use our parks and trails for exercise. The new Ella Sharp Park Trail gives another option for residents looking for safe outdoor exercise in Jackson," Hoover said.

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## CITY PROPERTY SALES PROGRAM

Affordable homes are on the market and residents are enlarging their properties thanks to the City's property sales program.

Since the beginning of the year, the City has sold nearly 100 City-owned properties.

These consist of vacant houses and commercial buildings, but the majority of the sales are side lots that used to have a home on them.

Residents who own property that touches a vacant

City-owned parcel can buy the land and combine it with their property.

To qualify, you must own an adjacent property, not owe any outstanding taxes, water bills or fines, and make a minimum offer of \$300.

Side lots are purchased through the City Manager's Office.

Vacant homes and commercial buildings are offered at affordable costs on the open market through a realtor.



Vacant side lot on Burr Street.

These sales are considered by the City Council.

Learn more about these City property sales by vis-

iting [cityofjackson.org/citypropertysales](http://cityofjackson.org/citypropertysales).

## LEAF COLLECTION



Leaf vacuum machine cleans up Ellery Avenue in Nov. 2020.

Loose leaf collection is returning to Jackson this fall.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is working with four leaf vacuum machines to pick up loose leaves placed curbside.

Every neighborhood will see two rounds of leaf collection.

Additional leaf collection equipment was acquired

last year to provide an efficient leaf collection program that finished on schedule.

Residents are asked to please place loose leaf piles along street curbs in the street and not in parkways.

Collection information will be mailed to residents and available on [cityofjackson.org](http://cityofjackson.org) later this fall.

## ROAD CONSTRUCTION



New sidewalk and roadway on Morrell Street.

Drivers are enjoying smooth street surfaces this fall thanks to the completion of several street construction projects.

Construction on Morrell Street between Greenwood Avenue and S. MLK Drive wrapped up in Aug.

The project brought a new water main, lead line replacements, rebuilt roadway, and sidewalk repairs to the five-block sec-

tion of Morrell.

Other projects are bringing updated water lines and fresh pavement to Steward Avenue, Douglas Street, Clinton Street, Biddle Street and Cooley Place.

Work on new traffic signals for N. Wisner Street started in Aug. and will take place through spring 2022.



## MAYOR

Derek Dobies

## COUNCIL

	Ward
Arlene Robinson	1
Freddie Dancy	2
Jeromy Alexander	3
Laura Dwyer Schlecte	4
Karen Bunnell	5
Will Forgrave	6

## CITY MANAGER

Jonathan Greene

## MEETINGS & IMPORTANT DATES

**Oct. 12 • 6:30 p.m.**  
City Council Meeting

**Oct. 26 • 6:30 p.m.**  
City Council Meeting

**Tuesday, Nov. 2**  
Nov. General Election

**Nov. 9 • 6:30 p.m.**  
City Council Meeting

**Thursday, Nov. 11**  
City Hall Closed for Veterans Day

**Nov. 23 • 6:30 p.m.**  
City Council Meeting

**Thursday to Friday, Nov. 25-26**  
City Hall Closed for Thanksgiving

**Dec. 1 • 6:30 p.m.**  
City Council Swearing In

**Dec. 7 • 6:30 p.m.**  
City Council Meeting

## NOV. 2 ELECTION

Races for the Mayor of Jackson and three City Council seats will be decided by voters in the Tuesday, Nov. 2 General Election.

Current Mayor Derek Dobies is not seeking re-election, so residents will be electing a new Mayor.

Wards 1, 3 and 5 are all having elections for the City Council.

The following is a list of candidates appearing on ballots.

**MAYOR:** Daniel Mahoney, John Wilson.

**WARD 1:** Dena Morgan, Arlene Robinson.

**WARD 3:** Caleb Blondke, Angelita Velasco Gunn.

**WARD 5:** Karen Bunnell

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Those opting to return absent ballots by mail are encouraged to do so as early as possible.



Absentee ballots must be submitted by 8 p.m. on Election Day to be counted in the election.

Ballot drop boxes are available outside City Hall and inside the City Clerk's Office.

Learn more about voting in this election by visiting [cityofjackson.org/elections](http://cityofjackson.org/elections).

City elections are non-partisan and happen in odd-numbered years.

## COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS

\$31 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds is available to the City of Jackson over the next three years.

American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds were received by the City this summer.

A total of \$31,444,000 is available to the City through 2024.

A community meeting was held in July to hear ideas from residents about what the money should be used for.

City Manager Jonathan Greene is proposing using the funds for water and street infrastructure, City budget stabilization, park improvements, and community investment.

Allocations of the funds will be considered by the Jackson City Council.



In Aug., the City Council voted to dedicate \$1.5 million in ARP funds to a Group Violence Intervention program.

The program will bring together police and the community to reduce incidents of gun violence in Jackson.





## From the Desk of the Mayor

**Derek Dobies**

In the next issue of the City Newsletter, you will be hearing from a new Mayor.

After deciding not to run for a third term, I will be passing the torch to a new leader for the City of Jackson following the Nov. election

Looking back on 10 years of service to Jackson, there is a lot to be proud of.

Our neighborhoods have seen massive investments with new streets, improved housing quality, upgraded parks, renovated community centers, and better pedestrian connectivity.

The skyline of Downtown Jackson has been reshaped with new apartment developments and full storefronts.

Passing the LGBTQ Non-Discrimination Ordinance and recent racial equity efforts have worked toward making our City a place where everyone can thrive.

We did this by coming together as leaders and residents to do what's right for Jackson.

It's this collaborative spirit that will take our community into the future, and will be needed as we face continued challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While I am stepping out of the Mayoral spotlight for now, I look forward to working alongside residents to continue our City's progress.

I wish our next Mayor success in their effort to lead Jackson.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve Jackson as a City Councilmember, Vice Mayor and Mayor.

Sincerely,  
*Derek Dobies*

## SERGIO GARCIA IS NEW DEPUTY POLICE CHIEF



Sergio Garcia was promoted to Deputy Chief of Police in Aug.

After rising the ranks of the Jackson Police Department for the past 24 years, Sergio Garcia is ready to be the department's second in command.

Garcia was promoted to the role of Deputy Chief in Aug., a position that had been vacant since 2017.

The Jackson native has spent his entire career in law enforcement with the department, working as a patrol officer, detective, sergeant, and lieutenant. Garcia also spent time working with JNET (Jackson Narcotics Enforcement Team) and the Jackson County Special Response Team.

The new Deputy Chief says he's looking forward to this role.

"While this is a tough time to work in law enforcement, there is lots of work we can do to build bridges, and gain public trust. I want to challenge officers every day to do the best they can to serve the community," Garcia said.

Elmer Hitt, Director of Jackson Police and Fire Services, says Garcia's experience and leadership abilities make him an asset to the police department.

"I am confident he has the best interest of residents at heart and will strive to ensure the Jackson Police Department provides the highest level of police service to all," Hitt said.

A Hispanic American, Deputy Chief Garcia is the first person of color to hold this position in Jackson.

"Personally, it's awesome to see. I hope to use my background and experiences to bring better relationships with the community," Garcia said.

The Deputy Chief steps in for the Chief of Police in their absence.

They assist in the overall direction and supervision of police activities.

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## NEW MURALS HONOR JACKSON RESIDENTS

Two new murals honoring residents are brightening up Jackson neighborhoods.

They were painted this summer by Evan Struck, a local 19-year-old artist who's getting national attention for his talents.

One of the murals is on the side of a Clinton Road building that's home to Jackson Michigan Giving Back to the Community.

It shows Brenda Hughes, the founder and CEO of the non-profit that helps residents with basic needs like food and clothes.

Hughes says the mural is a reflection of her efforts to give back to Jackson.

"I get choked up looking at it. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be acknowledged in such a powerful and beautiful way. I hope it brings more positivity," Hughes said.



Evan Struck and Brenda Hughes in front of the mural on Clinton Road.

The other mural painted at VIRTUE Drums on W. Michigan Avenue depicts local drummer Geno Parker.

Struck says he painted the murals because he wanted to highlight the contributions of Jackson residents, donating paint and

time to make them happen.

"I was also looking for projects to do in neighborhoods. If we can place murals and art outside of the downtown area, it can really increase the positivity and love for art here in Jackson," Struck said.

All Star Rental donated the use of a lift so Struck could paint high walls.

The artist chose to honor Parker, a long-time Jackson drummer, on the side of VIRTUE Drums, a custom drum and music store.

Parker says he's been getting recognized around town as the man in the mural.

"The word 'Listen' in the painting really stands out to me. I hope the mural will inspire people to keep going, and encourage musicians to keep playing music," Parker said.

Struck is also the artist behind two other murals in Jackson, a mural honoring jazz legend Benny Poole on the side of the Nite Lite Bar on W. Pearl Street, and a tropical fish mural at the Pet Station on E. Michigan Avenue.

Murals and other public art projects must first be approved by the City of Jackson to make sure they are appropriate for the building.

"I thank the Jackson Public Arts Commission for approving these murals. Being able to do this kind of art the right way is always important," Struck said.

To start the process of painting a mural or installing an art piece, contact the Parks and Recreation Department using the email [recreation@cityofjackson.org](mailto:recreation@cityofjackson.org).



Geno Parker mural at VIRTUE Drums on W. Michigan Avenue.

## BETTY'S DOG PARK OPENS

There's a lot to howl about in Jackson with the opening of Betty's Dog Park.

The new park is named after Betty Dahlem Desbiens, a long-time Jackson resident who donated funds to make the park possible.

Betty's Dog Park is fully fenced, with separate areas for big and small dogs to roam free, including sidewalks, benches and picnic tables.

The City's first dog park makes use of Beech Tree Park, a public park that's been without a use since its award-winning beech tree was removed due to a lightning strike.

The central location of Betty's Dog Park makes it beneficial to residents all over Jackson.

Downtown Jackson has seen a housing boom in recent years, with hundreds of new apartment units added to the area.

Located within a short walk from downtown, Betty's Dog Park will be useful for apartment dwellers and their pets to have ample space for play time.

The dog-friendly digs is free to use and open to the public.



Jackson resident and dog enjoy Betty's Dog Park after its opening in July.

## NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIRST IN CITY FOR 50 YEARS



Jackson Public Schools administrators and staff gather to celebrate the opening of Cascades Elementary School with a ribbon cutting in Aug.

Students heading back to school this fall will be the first to learn in a new school building.

Cascades Elementary School, which replaces an old building at the same location on S. Wisner Street, welcomed students this Aug.

Jackson Public Schools (JPS) says this modern building for 21st Century learning is the result of an \$86.7 million bond that district voters passed in 2018.

"JPS is truly where community comes together. Cascades and all of our schools represent the investment the Jackson community has in our children for their success in the future," said JPS Superintendent Jeff Beal.

Cascades is the first new school building to be constructed in the City of Jackson for more than 50 years.

Mayor Derek Dobies says the new school is something the entire community can be proud of.

"Having a new elementary school inside the City adds a lot of value to our community and makes us a more attractive place for families to thrive," Mayor Dobies said.

The bond is also funding improvements at school facilities across the district, including Northeast Elementary School, Middle School at Parkside, and Jackson High School.

Students from the former Frost and Cascades schools are now consolidated into the new building.

Frost has been handed over to the Jackson County Intermediate School District for a central education facility, saving the building from demolition.