

# CITY OF JACKSON

OFFICIAL CITY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2022

## DOWNTOWN DELIGHTS SWEET SUCCESS FOR JACKSON BUSINESS EXPANDING TO DOWNTOWN ICE CREAM SHOP

There's a "cool" new business in Downtown Jackson that is ready to provide relief from climbing temperatures this spring.

RJ's Metropolitan Ice Cream Co. at 135 E. Michigan Avenue is the latest confection of Robert and Yvette Wilkie.

"It's been a busy place. We're gearing up for the warm season," Robert said.

The Metropolitan Ice Cream Co. was already open for one year when the husband and wife team took ownership last fall.

"It was a great business opportunity. We've been wanting to get downtown for a while," Robert said.

With the RJ's name now atop the sign, the family-run business has been making the space their own.

"We've been adding our own twist and making it a little sweeter. We're constantly looking for ways to evolve it," Yvette said.

Eight years ago, the

couple started with RJ's Heavenly Delights.

The bakery and dessert business has since expanded into a shop on N. West Avenue.

Their new downtown venture has lots to offer, with ice cream, milkshakes and burgers on the menu.

The Wilkies say the eatery's bright, cheery atmosphere is winning regular customers.

"It's a cute place for kids and families to come," Yvette said.

They also have the distinction of being one of the few Black-owned businesses in Downtown Jackson, something that's a point of pride for the couple.

"I think that's actually very exciting, and the encouraging thing is that other minorities who come in here say it's inspiring to them," Yvette said.

When they're not working or raising their daughter, the Wilkies are active in the community.

They recently host-



Yvette and Robert Wilkie of RJ's Metropolitan Ice Cream.

ed the Jackson Black Excellence Community Awards, which honors African American residents making an impact.

"It's important to have that representation. We like that it's inspiring people," Yvette said.

Two other businesses also opened on the same block of E. Michigan Avenue in 2021; Ogma Brewing Co. and the Marketplace Manna Around the World Shop, a fair trade store that moved downtown from the Jackson Crossing Mall.

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## FIRE STATION NO. 2 REOPENS FOR SERVICE

A Jackson fire station is coming back online to provide improved fire protection for the community.

Fire Station No. 2 on S. Milwaukee Street was reopened by the Jackson Fire Department in Jan.

The station was closed in 2011 due to budget cuts, leaving only one fire station open for the entire City, the Central Fire Station on N. Jackson Street.

With Jackson now in better financial shape, City administration worked with police and fire services to

reopen the station.

Having another functional fire station will bring quicker response times to the southern half of the City.

While the building was in fair enough condition to open, improvements are needed for the longevity of the building and to better accommodate firefighters.

Earlier this winter, the City Council approved \$40,500 in American Rescue Plan funds toward designing renovations for the station.



Fire Station No.2 reopened for service this winter.

Extensive renovations remains fully operational and will assist Station No. The Central Fire Station 2 when needed.

## BRIDGE WORK STARTS CONSTRUCTION SEASON

The 2022 construction season got an early start in March with work on three bridges.

All of the projects are being funded and carried out by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

Construction crews are fully replacing two railroad bridges that go over N. Mechanic and N. Jackson streets in Downtown Jackson.

The rail bridges are more than 100 years old and in deteriorating conditions.

They are also not tall enough to accommodate larger trucks, which often get stuck under the bridges.

Amtrak is expecting minimal disruption to train service during the construction, which is expected to wrap up in Nov.

MDOT is also replacing the E. Washington Avenue bridge over the Grand River.

The 35-year-old bridge is being replaced due to its age and structural problems.

E. Washington Avenue will reopen when bridge work is completed in May.

The first big street construction project of this year begins in April on S. West Avenue between W. Michigan Avenue and Carlton Boulevard.

This area of West is re-



Railroad bridges in Downtown Jackson now under construction.

ceiving a new water main and lead service line replacements.

Sections of Denton Road, Greenwood Avenue and Wildwood Avenue will all

see construction projects this spring.

Go to [cityofjackson.org/pavingjackson](http://cityofjackson.org/pavingjackson) for a full list of street construction projects planned in 2022.



## JACKSON WARD LINES CHANGED BY CITY COUNCIL

### MAYOR

Daniel Mahoney

### COUNCIL

Arlene Robinson

Freddie Dancy

Angelita V. Gunn

Laura Dwyer Schlecte

Karen Bunnell

Will Forgrave

### Ward

1

2

3

4

5

6

*City Council contact information listed on City website*

### CITY MANAGER

Jonathan Greene

### MEETINGS & IMPORTANT DATES

**APRIL 5 • 6:30 p.m.**

City Council Meeting

**Friday, April 15**

City Hall closed for Good Friday

**APRIL 19 • 6:30 p.m.**

City Council Meeting

**MAY 10 • 6:30 p.m.**

City Council Meeting

**MAY 24 • 6:30 p.m.**

City Council Meeting

**Monday, May 30**

City Hall closed for Memorial Day

**June 14 • 6:30 p.m.**

City Council Meeting

**Monday, June 20**

City Hall closed for Juneteenth

Some Jackson residents are seeing their ward number and where they vote in-person change.

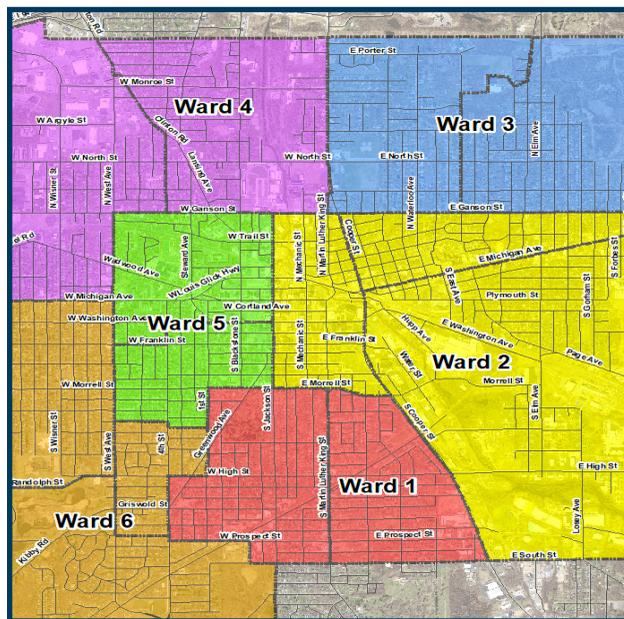
Earlier this spring, the Jackson City Council finalized a new ward and precinct map for the City's six wards.

These borders are redrawn every 10 years to reflect population changes determined by the 2020 U.S. Census and to comply with new Jackson County Commission district lines.

The City's Election Commission reviewed this information and presented two maps to the City Council for consideration.

The map selected by the council changes boundaries for every ward but Ward 1.

The changes take effect in the Aug. 2 Primary Election.



This could change where you vote in-person and what ward you live in.

A closer look at the new ward map is available on the City website, [cityofjackson.org/elections](http://cityofjackson.org/elections).

The City Clerk is also mailing out new voter registration cards to impacted residents, informing them of their new ward and voting location.

## JUNETEENTH CITY HOLIDAY

Juneteenth is now an official holiday in the City of Jackson.

Late last year, the City Council voted to make Juneteenth a holiday.

This means City Hall and some City programs will be closed on June 19 every year in honor of Juneteenth.

Because June 19 falls on a Sunday this year, the holiday will be observed on Monday, June 20 for 2022.

Celebrated since 1865, Juneteenth recognizes the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States following the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation.



proclamation.

Jackson's decision to formally recognize the holiday comes after the federal government made Juneteenth a federal holiday in 2021.





## Message from the Mayor

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**Daniel Mahoney**

What is the current state of Jackson?  
It's a question our residents and officials ponder on a daily basis.  
In March, I was able to answer that question, delivering my first State of the City Address at the Boos Recreation Center.  
I am proud to say that our City is in a state of renaissance.  
In my address, I highlighted how this rejuvenation is unfolding.  
New parks, improved public safety, housing initiatives, and a vigorous pandemic response are just a few of our recent achievements.  
However, we cannot be satisfied with what we've accomplished when we've still got so many challenges left to face.  
Reducing gun violence, building affordable housing, revitalizing neighborhoods and replacing lead service lines are some of the issues that require action in Jackson.  
While we may have many differences, opinions, backgrounds, upbringings and political beliefs, we are all Jackson.  
When I was sworn-in as your Mayor, I made a promise to work on the issues challenging our City.  
It's going to take more than just myself to fulfill these promises.  
I'm going to need help from all Jackson residents.  
My ask of you is simple, wherever you go, whatever you're doing, please let the world know that we are Jackson, and we are making the renaissance happen.

Sincerely,  
*Daniel Mahoney*

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Do you need help and don't know who to call?  
Here are numbers that could be useful if you're experiencing a life crisis.

### **Mental Health**

Henry Ford Allegiance Health (800) 531-3728  
Lifeways 24-Hour Crisis Hotline (800) 284-8288  
Center for Family Health (517) 748-5500

### **Utilities**

Community Action Agency (517) 784-4800  
Jackson County MDHHS (517) 780-7400  
True North Community Services (231) 355-5880  
The Heat and Warmth Fund (800) 866-8429  
St. Vincent de Paul Society (877) 788-4623

### **Rental Assistance**

Community Action Agency (517) 784-4800  
Jackson County MDHHS (517) 780-7400

### **Emergency Shelters**

Jackson Interfaith Shelter (517) 789-8735  
Aware Shelter 24-Hour Crisis Hotline (517) 783-2861

### **Animal Control**

Jackson County Animal Control provides animal control services in the City of Jackson. Contact them by calling 911.

Dial 211 to get more information on available services in Jackson.

## GRASS CUTTING REMINDER

Failing to cut your grass could bring a fine from the City of Jackson.

The City's mowing ordinance says residents are responsible for maintaining lawns and must keep grass and weeds below 8 inches in height.

Letting grass grow beyond 8 inches for weeks or months can result in a fine and City contractors coming onto your property to cut the grass.

The average fine for this violation is around \$150, but it can sometimes cost more depending on how much grass and weeds have to be removed.

Please help us keep Jackson's neighborhoods looking their best by staying on top of grass cutting this spring, summer and fall.

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## NEW RESIDENT GROUP MAKING IMPACT IN CITY PARKS AND TRAILS

While riding his bike down the City's MLK Equality Trail last year, resident Aaron Dimick noticed a lot of litter.

"Instead of figuring out who I could complain to, I started thinking about long term solutions to help the problem," Dimick said.

He reached out to the Parks and Recreation Department and started conversations with Assistant Director Andrew Sargeant.

"We came up with solutions for how residents could work with the City to improve parks, and People for the Parks and Trails was born," Sargeant said.

In summer and fall 2021, People for the Parks and Trails (PPT) held seven volunteer projects.

Five City parks and two trails got some much need-

ed attention, and a total of 34 Jackson residents came out to volunteer.

Volunteer projects included spreading mulch in playgrounds, cleaning up litter, trimming brush, clearing out gardens and removing graffiti.

During the holiday season, volunteers put up lights in parks to spread holiday cheer to neighborhoods.

Dimick, who is organizing PPT outside his work as the City's Public Information Officer, says park and trail access is a big contributor to Jackson's quality of life.

"I think our parks and trails are in excellent shape. This group is dedicated to making them even better for the entire community," Dimick said.

PPT says it's important



Volunteers collected litter along the MLK Equality Trail in Sept.

to know that volunteers are not taking the place of City staff.

"These efforts have been a big help to our department. Volunteers do projects that our limited staff don't always have the time to get to. It also adds a sense of ownership and care for our parks that's encouraging to see," Sargeant said.

PPT is gearing up for its 2022 volunteer season, which began in April and will go through the end of Oct.

"The City has 28 public parks and a growing trail system, so it's important that we do volunteer projects in every area of the City," Dimick said.

The group is also organizing into a formal non-profit

organization.

"This will help us with fundraising efforts for park improvements, along with making sure we can be a community mainstay for years to come," Dimick said.

If you'd like to get involved, visit their website, [peoplefortheparks.org](http://peoplefortheparks.org) and fill out an interest form.

"From there, you will get updates on volunteer opportunities. You do not need to be a City resident to volunteer, we welcome anyone who wants to make a difference in their local parks," Dimick said.

People for the Parks and Trails is also active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



Volunteer Matt Heins helps remove brush from Ganson Street Park during a cleanup event in Oct.

## WIPES CAUSING SEWER BACKUPS

They're marketed as "flushable wipes", but flushing these products could cause major toilet trouble.

In recent years, Department of Public Works crews have responded to a surge of sewer backups caused by personal care and cleaning wipes.

Making sure sewer mains are wipe-free is becoming a big duty for Public Works.

One sewer line on Jackson's southeast side has been cleaned out six times over the past year due to wipe backups.

When these products build up in sewer lines they can cause big clogs, possibly sending sewage back into your home.

Sizable clogs also have the potential for neighbors to experience sewer backups.

Public Works says wipes that claim to be flushable do not dissolve like toilet paper and bind together in sewers.

Only toilet paper and human waste should be flushed.

Wipes should be disposed of in the trash and kept out of toilets.

Other materials such as diapers, hygiene products, towels and rags have also been known to cause backups and should not be flushed.



## LOCAL PEARL HARBOR SURVIVOR HONORED WITH PROCLAMATION

A witness to the "Day of Infamy" recently received a special honor from Jackson's Mayor.

Mayor Daniel Mahoney met with Herb Elfring in March, presenting him with a Mayoral Proclamation that declared March 2022 as "Herb Elfring Month" in the City of Jackson.

Elfring is one of the few remaining survivors of the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7, 1941.

During the strike, he saw Japanese planes assault the base with bombs and gunfire, coming within feet of getting shot.

Elfring continued in the U.S. Army, serving in the Pacific during World War II.

After the war, he eventually made his way to Jackson, where he worked for Consumers Energy for 35 years.



Herb Elfring with Mayor Mahoney.

With Elfring turning 100 years old this March, the proclamation also honors his centennial year.

He continues to be active in the community, most notably with the Kiwanis Club.

The City thanks Elfring for his lifetime of service to the nation and Jackson community!

## FIREFIGHTERS DONATE COATS

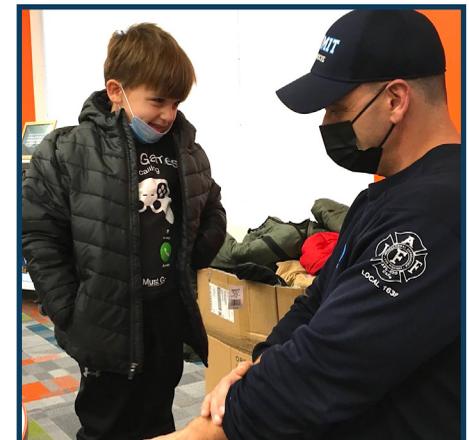
Local kids are getting lots of warmth thanks to Jackson firefighters.

City of Jackson and Summit Township fire crews raised more than \$3,000 to buy and giveaway coats for free to kids in need.

Most of the funds were raised through golf outings.

The firefighters distributed the coats in early Jan.

94 coats went to students in Jackson Public Schools and the Vandercook Lake School District.



Local firefighter helps a JPS student try on a new coat.