



## State of the City 2025

It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. The same philosophy applies here in that it takes our great citizens and employees of Montague to keep the city moving forward. And we are moving forward because of you.

Every year the state of Michigan requires the city to have an audit. Once again, the audit results show we are in good shape. Funding of employee pension, retirement, and health plans has a much healthier balance. Funding for these plans has increased at a steady pace as well as the city maintaining regular operations and completing extensive street and sidewalk projects. All while lowering the tax millage rate again in 2024, by .15 mils.

In the August 2024 election, Muskegon County residents approved a renewal for the county-wide senior millage for another six years. The City of Montague gets a portion of those senior millage funds and in 2024 used them for insurance and maintenance of the White Lake Area Senior Center and the popular senior vouchers for the Montague Farmers Market. City Council will once again determine the 2025 allocation of those funds at an upcoming council meeting.

The City and Downtown Development Authority continue to work together to help local businesses expand and attract new businesses to the downtown area. During 2024 there have been several new businesses and/or new owners of established businesses. Welcome to Stoney Ridge Winery and the new owners of Papas Pizza, The Vintage Salon, Jimmy'Z Pub, and The Wayside. We also saw upgrades to several buildings within the downtown area, notably the Hughes and Lipka buildings. The Social District also opened last spring with the city providing infrastructure and signage.

In April, Council approved changing local elections from odd to even years and this past November, voters approved the changing of the mayoral term from 2 years to 4 years. These changes bring a great savings in election costs as local elections will now coincide with larger county, state and federal elections; significantly lessening the burden of expense. The city also participated in the county-wide agreement available to municipalities to facilitate the mandatory 9 days of early voting for all state and federal elections. The first election to include the 9 days of early voting was the Presidential Primary this past February.

Part of the role of the city is to enhance the safety of our citizens. In 2024, several new or revised ordinances were put in place to address safety issues. These include clear vision areas at intersections, on-street parking, and dangerous / vicious animal ordinances. City staff also coordinated with Montague Area Public Schools on a Safe Routes to School program. Grant monies

from the program will help cover the cost of new sidewalks in the city. The Master Plan was updated and adopted in 2023 and we are now in the process of updating the Zoning Master Plan and the Parks and Recreation Plan. Updating these essential plans ensures that the city reaches goals and keeps moving forward with improvements.

The city completed many road and sidewalk upgrades in 2024. The upgrades included the Cook and Wilcox Street projects and the pedestrian bridge on Old Channel Trail. A portion of the expenses were covered with Federal and State grant monies. Over 2600 feet of sidewalk were updated or newly installed! And more will be coming in 2025 as the city prepares for the larger Safe Routes to School program. MDOT did several preliminary borings on the US-31 business route. Upgrades on this state-maintained business route are expected in 2026/27.

Other projects completed by the city in 2024 include the repaving of the Hart–Montague bike trail through town and toward Whitehall. Again, this was possible with help from a grant from the state. The Montague Boat Launch had many improvements including updating the fish cleaning station and the parking lot lights.

2024 was not without its struggles. In June we had an intense weather situation with high winds. Parts of the city had much storm damage. City staff worked around the clock to clear the roads and an extra brush pickup was scheduled. There was also a fire in the downtown area at North Grove Brewery early in the year. North Grove and the adjacent businesses affected by the fire rebounded and returned to usual operations as soon as they could.

Many of you took part in several surveys during the past year: including the Parks and Recreation survey, the leaf pickup survey, and the fireworks survey. Thank you for your participation, input and suggestions. Each suggestion was read, discussed and evaluated by city staff and council.

Some items to be discussed in the coming months are the Ferry Street parcels downtown, a possible relocation of the farmers market, and new designs for the band shell. Our regular City Council meetings take place the third Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. We welcome your input on city projects and plans! Again, the city keeps moving forward partly because of citizens like you. There are several committee and board appointments that occur each year according to term schedule. Feel free to contact city staff or city council members to find out how you can help fill these positions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas Lohman".

Mayor Tom Lohman  
City of Montague