

Newcomerstown lives up to its name as a welcoming place for newcomers, according to Mayor Pat Cadle.

“When you come in, it’s like going back in time a little. We have a lot of older homes that are well taken care of,” Cadle said. “People are really nice and friendly. It’s good to be around.”

Cadle has been mayor for about five and a half years. He initially had no intention of running for the position. Cadle came to Newcomerstown in 1980 when he got a job as a teacher, then moved to being a guidance counselor and later the principal of the elementary school.

As a “newcomer,” Cadle said he was invited to play in a softball league the summer after he moved to Newcomerstown.

“They didn’t know me other than through their kids,” Cadle said. “In Newcomerstown, I was the newcomer, so they made me feel very welcomed.”

The previous mayor asked Cadle to attend some meetings in his place because he was working a full-time job. Cadle noticed that Newcomerstown was missing out on some opportunities.

“That’s pretty much what inspired me to run, because I thought I could make things better,” Cadle said.

The biggest employer in Newcomerstown, according to Cadle, is the school system with about 100 employees. There are many smaller businesses in the town, which provide a range of places for people to be employed, he said.

Cadle’s aspirations for the town are to improve housing and create an inviting place to live. Cadle said the town has had a bad reputation in the past, and is trying to get beyond that and have more community pride.

“The goal of any mayor is to leave the town better than when they got there,” Cadle said.

In his tenure so far, Cadle has been able to get rid of “eye-sore” properties, and he’s hoping to create new housing so people can take advantage of the school system and town, as well as recruit new businesses.

One of the properties Cadle has seen taken down was a four-story hotel that began construction in the 1920s. When the stock market crashed, work stopped on the hotel, and it sat in the middle of the town for 90 years, never finished.

In recent years, Newcomerstown has been able to put in a nature park and a new boat ramp thanks to some of the eye-sore properties being removed. There are also plans to revitalize the downtown area.

During the pandemic, Cadle tried to make things as normal as he could by supporting businesses, he said. Newcomerstown was able to use the majority of its CARES Act money for grants to businesses. Most businesses used the money to pay utility bills because they lacked revenue to pay for them, Cadle said. Almost all of the town's businesses were able to stay afloat.

Cadle said his approach to the pandemic was creating a balance between the choice for both citizens and businesses. For example, some businesses in town had to require masks while some citizens did not want to wear them.

Moving forward, Cadle is planning for the future as if the pandemic doesn't exist. While he said he doesn't expect cases to go up, as long as people act in ways to protect themselves, they'll be fine.

"We accomplished a lot despite the pandemic. We only changed how we handled ourselves," he said. Government offices never stopped working during the pandemic, he said.

The Mayors' Partnership for Progress, supported by Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service, has provided important resources for Cadle and Newcomerstown during the pandemic. Cadle said he had access to information months before the press did for things such as funding, which allowed the mayors to discuss ways to spend the money and plan in advance.

"I think the pandemic is a good time to be a mayor. Yeah, the pandemic has actually thrown wrinkles into it, but there are more options and more resources out there if you're a small town mayor, or a big one, than there's ever been before, and the good ones always go after that stuff," Cadle said. "I think that sets you apart – how much you're trying to improve your town, your village, your city and going after the resources and getting it."