

## Building a Stronger Belpre: Mayor Abdella's Vision for Progress and Community Renewal

November 5, 2024

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Mayor Abdella, who took office in January 2024, brings not only a passion for infrastructure and community development but also a unique perspective shaped by her background as a nurse. Her experience in healthcare has made her deeply attuned to the needs of her community and has influenced her collaborative, problem-solving approach to governance. She is dedicated to

addressing Belpre's aging infrastructure, particularly the 100-year-old galvanized pipe system that spans 34,000 feet of the city. With no previous plans to replace these pipes, Mayor Abdella is focused on ensuring the community has access to safe drinking water and improving sanitation.

Beyond infrastructure, Mayor Abdella is equally passionate about revitalizing Civitan Park, a central meeting place along the river that holds a special significance for Belpre residents. She is working to renovate and expand the park to better serve future generations, listening closely to community feedback to create a space that reflects the needs and desires of its citizens. For her, Civitan Park represents the heart of the community, and she sees its revitalization as an investment in the city's identity.

From the moment she took office, Mayor Abdella emphasized the importance of a team approach. Drawing from her experience in healthcare, where collaboration is critical, she ensures that everyone in her administration stays true to their mission and works cohesively. The city of Belpre, with a population of 6,600, operates through the hard work of just 40 individuals, reflecting a remarkable spirit of unity and teamwork. This sense of camaraderie, combined with the city's longest unencumbered waterfront, makes Belpre a unique and special place.

In her short time as mayor, she has already made significant strides, particularly in addressing the city's water infrastructure. Years ago, a fee was added to water bills to fund a new water tank, but it fell short of covering the full cost. Under her leadership, the city council conducted a thorough analysis of water and sewer rates, passing legislation that will not only complete the

water tank but also set the city up for long-term infrastructure improvements, including a new sewer plant.

Mayor Abdella's leadership style, much like her approach as a nurse, is grounded in accountability, collaboration, and clear expectations. She believes in prioritizing the city's improvement and surrounds herself with people who complement her skills. While she values input and teamwork, she is also decisive when needed. Learning from others and continuously improving herself is central to her philosophy.

Her involvement with the Mayors Partnership for Progress (MPP) began before she became mayor, during her time at Ohio University's Small Business Development Center. Familiar with the partnership's goals, she knew it would be an invaluable resource in her role as mayor. She appreciates the technical assistance and the shared knowledge from other mayors, particularly regarding best practices. Through MPP, she has learned about innovative solutions, such as floodplain housing strategies and available grants, which have opened her eyes to new possibilities for Belpre's development.

Looking toward the future, Mayor Abdella envisions a city with stable, reliable infrastructure. Addressing the long-neglected stormwater issues is one of her top priorities, and she is committed to directing resources and funding toward resolving this challenge. She also aims to implement processes that will help the city run more smoothly, ensuring that employees fully understand the work required to keep Belpre functioning successfully.

Among the upcoming projects she is excited about is a new well project aimed at ensuring a safe drinking water supply. She is also focused on balancing the city's budget, working to ensure that revenue outweighs expenses, which has not been the case in the past. Additionally, she is leading efforts to update the city's emergency operations plan, which has not been revised since 2002, ensuring that Belpre is prepared for future challenges.

Reflecting on her time as mayor so far, Mayor Abdella advises aspiring leaders to care deeply about their communities and to love what they do. She emphasizes that success is not possible without the support of family, friends, and the broader community. For her, leadership is about relationships, learning, and having the passion to drive positive change for the people she serves.