

Mayor Don Mason: Leading Zanesville into a Bright Future

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By Alyssa Manning



When Mayor Don Mason took office in Zanesville, he had a clear goal in mind: to improve the quality of life for the city's residents. Over the past few years, his leadership has transformed the city, focusing on revitalizing parks, cleaning up streets, improving housing, and fostering a sense of community.

A City Reimagined

For years, Zanesville's parks had fallen into disrepair, but Mayor Mason saw them as vital gathering spaces for families and friends. Under his leadership, efforts to restore and enhance these parks have been underway, creating more inviting spaces for recreation and relaxation.

The city's streets have also seen a major transformation. To combat litter and improve sanitation, Mason's administration distributed 96-gallon trash and recycling containers to residents, making waste collection more efficient and significantly reducing scattered trash. The impact was immediate—cleaner streets, better waste management, and fewer storm sewer backups. The addition of two street sweepers running daily has further ensured that roads remain clean, and storm drains clear, reducing the risk of flooding.

Housing has been another cornerstone of Mason's agenda. Instead of tearing down homes, the city has shifted its focus to rehabilitation and home improvements. Additionally, Mason's administration has partnered with developers, bringing 130 new housing units to the inner city. By making housing development a priority, the city aims to attract more commuters and encourage them to become active members of the Zanesville community.

Building a Connected and Vibrant Community

Infrastructure improvements have been central to Mason's vision. The ongoing reconstruction of Dug Road, a major primary street that has been closed since 2017, will connect the downtown business district with lower-income neighborhoods, fostering economic opportunity.

Additionally, the acquisition of a 28-acre superfund site has been cleared and is being developed for recreational use and housing, is another step toward making Zanesville a more dynamic and engaging place to live. The site is well situated for easy access for recreational use such as soccer, flag football, pickle ball, basketball, a dog park, and amphitheater.

Beyond physical improvements, Mason has worked to strengthen the social fabric of the city. He believes in leading by example, a lesson he learned from his father who was a Marine Corp staff sergeant. He personally meets with every newly hired city employee and is deeply involved in the community. He shares with the new hires the value of working for the public.

His leadership has encouraged collaboration among businesses, nonprofits, and residents. Downtown concerts have become a popular initiative, bringing people together, boosting local businesses, and raising funds for community programs. His philosophy is simple: get people out of their silos and create opportunities for them to connect.

The Role of the Mayors' Partnership for Progress

One of the key resources that has helped Mason in his efforts is the Mayors' Partnership for Progress (MPP). Through this network, Mason has been able to share strategies, gain insights, and advocate for policies that benefit not just Zanesville, but the entire region.

MPP serves as a platform for small and mid-sized cities to address common challenges, from economic development and infrastructure improvements to housing and public safety. By engaging with other municipal leaders, Mason has been able to bring innovative ideas back to Zanesville, shaping policies that enhance the city's growth.

One notable outcome of MPP's influence has been the city's renewed focus on housing development. Recognizing the need to attract more residents and workers, Mason has leveraged ideas from other MPP municipalities to encourage investment in Zanesville's housing market. Additionally, the MPP has provided opportunities to advocate for state and federal funding, ensuring that Appalachian Ohio's communities receive the support they need.

Mason's involvement in the Mayors' Partnership has reinforced his belief in collaboration as the key to success. By working together, small cities can amplify their voices and create meaningful change.

A Legacy of Revitalization

Reflecting on his time, Mason takes great pride in the revitalization of downtown Zanesville. Once a quiet area, the city center has transformed into a bustling hub of entertainment, dining, and shopping. Seeing hundreds to thousands of people enjoying downtown on a Friday night reminds him of his childhood, proof that the city is back on track.

Looking ahead, Mason envisions Zanesville as a thriving city with more housing, strong schools, and quality healthcare. The city's proximity to Columbus, just an hour away, makes it an attractive place to live, and with more people working remotely, Zanesville's appeal as a residential hub is growing.

His advice to other mayors and aspiring leaders-engage as many community members and government entities as possible. Collaboration is key to meaningful change.

Mayor Don Mason's leadership has set Zanesville on a path of renewal and growth, proving that with vision, determination, and community involvement, a city can be transformed.