



Village of Jackson Center

122 East Pike Street, P. O. Box 819
Jackson Center, OH 45334-0819

PH: (937) 596-6314
FX: (937) 596-6672
www.jacksoncenter.com

STATE OF THE VILLAGE ADDRESS

January 2026

Residents of the Village of Jackson Center, thank you for joining me for the 2026 State of the Village Address. I will highlight some personnel changes and then share the progress we achieved in 2025 and outline some key projects we look forward to pursuing in 2026.

First, let me call attention to some public office and staff changes that have already taken place...

- Street Superintendent Jim Butler retired in May 2025 after 36 years of service to the village. Thank you, Jim, for your loyalty and devotion to the village and its residents. The Street Superintendent position has been filled by Nathan Hensley, who is busy amassing the experience that will shape him into the leader he is already becoming.
- Jim Gooding was hired in March of 2025 as the Assistant Fiscal Officer with the intention of gaining the necessary experience for the assumption of the Fiscal Officer role as it comes open. It is for this reason that Jim vacated his position on council to avoid any possibility of a conflict of interest.
- Luke Doseck was elected by council members, from a list of qualified applicants, to fill the remainder of Councilman Gooding's term on village council.
- I would like to thank former Councilman Quentin Reese for his loyalty to the village. Quentin was an active council member serving 4 elected terms while participating on many essential boards and committees. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the 16 years of service Quentin has dedicated to the village. His efforts have helped shape policies and projects that will benefit our community for years to come.
- Ross Ludwig was elected to village council by residents and was sworn-in at our first meeting on January 12, 2026, accompanied by friends and family members.



In the upcoming year we anticipate the following staff changes...

- This May we will say goodbye to our longtime Fiscal Officer, Bev Wren. Bev has served as the village's fiscal officer for 24 years and has vastly improved the entire tracking and reporting system of the village's finances since she accepted the position. For those that aren't aware, Bev stepped in to a role that was abruptly left vacant over the New Years holiday, just as the annual state audit was set to begin. The words "trial by fire" have never rang truer. Bev also serves council in a role in which she prepares agendas and articles for council review, as well as records and distributes the minutes of each

meeting. Bev, thank you for your diligence and service to the village as we wish you the very best in retirement.

Infrastructure & Asset Replacement

- Morris-Rose Road Watermain Loop

In late 2024 the village went out to bid for on a watermain loop that would extend water utilities from the end of Village Parkway to Morris-Rose Road, and then connecting to the existing watermain on State Route 274. This new 12" watermain loop will increase fire flow and overall water quality by reducing the opportunity for end-of-pipe stagnation. Precise Boring of Lancaster, OH was awarded the project and it was completed in July of 2025. This project was funded by the Note Retirement Fund.

- Leininger Lane Public Roadway Construction

Contrary to popular belief, the path connecting SR 274 to Davis Street, between TRG and the Family Life Center, was actually on private property and not intended for public travel. However, over the many years the path existed, it became what it fundamentally was... a shortcut to/from the JC Schools/ Family Life Center to/from SR 274.

The scope of the project was to obtain the land and provide a public throughway that the village will maintain, relieving the private owners of liability and cost. The Village received and opened bids for the Leininger Lane Road Construction Project in May of 2025, and was awarded to Fillmore Construction of Leesburg, Ohio. The project also consisted of new paved parking lots, curb and gutter, and site grading. The village was able to mitigate some costs by performing some tasks with our own village crews, such as installing new stormwater basins and removing electrical poles. The project was completed by November 1st of 2025 and was funded by the General Fund.

- Tiger Trail Ball Diamonds

In 2025, the village installed backstops, dugout fence, and foul poles to the new fields. The village also installed/purchased a storage shed for the handling of equipment and storage of material for the diamonds. Plans for improvements continue for future seasons as funds allow. This project was all funded from the General Fund & Park and Recreational Fund.

- New Water Treatment Plant:

The new Water Treatment Plant continues its progression into 2026. The building was constructed, concrete floors poured, raw water lines rerouted, and new water softeners, aerator tower, and pressure filters installed. The upgrade of the new plant will allow us to provide better service for our customers with one benefit being the ability to partially soften the water before it arrives at your house. This will lessen the wear and tear on the facility and provide cost savings to our residents and businesses.

The project is expected to be completed in March of 2026 and is being funded by the Note Retirement Fund, OWDA Loan, and CDBG Loan. To date the project has received \$1,000,000 in grants.

- Street Paving & Conditioning

The village continues our street conditioning program to extend the life of current pavement, thereby decreasing the frequency of repaving. Our overall pavement condition rating is 80.3%, which is a very good indicator considering the national average is 70%.

- Robb Street Reconstruction

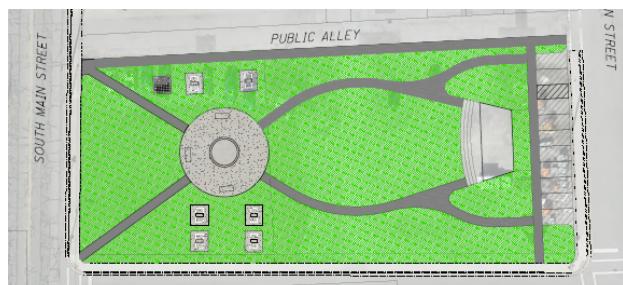
The village has received a grant for \$250,000 and a 0% loan for \$200,000 to assist in the widening and reconstruction of Robb St. The project is hoped to be ready for bid in early 2026 with construction completed by year end. The water line will be replaced with 12" line to connect the Main St. 12" water line with the 12" line that extends east under the RR track. Additional funding for the \$1.2 Million project will come from Note Retirement for water line improvement and General Fund monies for the street reconstruction.

- James & West Street Electric Pole Project

This project consists of rebuilding the last 10 to 12 poles that support the electric powerline between James Street and West Street. Those poles have been identified as potential failures due to age and condition. In addition, rebuilding is also needed for increasing ampacity purposes. This project will be completed by the Village's Electric Crew and will be completed by the end of the year as time allows.

- "Carnival Square Park"

The Village received a grant for Phase 1 development of The Carnival Square Park Project. This will take place in the vacant lot on the north side of Davis St between Main and Linden streets. The purpose of this development is to provide a gateway area between the school and the businesses downtown where adults and students can find a place to relax and enjoy the weather or bring a laptop to work outside while having a coffee or a meal, or use the space to gather as a group. Phase 1 will focus on sidewalks, seating areas, grass reseeding, and added parking. At some point, Phase 2 may possibly see the addition of an amphitheater or pavilion as monies become available.



- Ron Leininger Veterans Memorial Park

Jackson Center Veterans Memorial Park was renamed in 2025 to honor the memory of Ron Leininger. Mr. Leininger was responsible for majority of the work, planning, and maintenance of this park. It would not be what it is today without his commitment and attention to detail.

Zoning & Economic Development

Jackson Center continues to see steady growth through economic development. Ed Maxwell serves as the village's Zoning Enforcement Officer as well as our Economic Development Director and facilitates development negotiations. He reports for 2025:

- Zoning Summary:

22 Total Permits issued in 2025 with 2 New Homes. 24 Total Projects. (*122 Total New Residential Home Permits since 1/1/2000, including multiple residence units. 10 of which were not started and 112 have been completed or are in-process.*)

Hudson Lake Phase Three: Currently, one zoning permit has been issued, and upon final acceptance of the subdivision into the village, there will be 22 additional lots available for purchase.

- Economic Development:

Courtside Tavern took over operations of the former Buckeye – Jackson Center. They have kept many of the popular menu items and have expanded their sandwich offerings. The new lessee is Tom Bodenmiller with Carrie Brown continuing to assist in the management of the operations.

Village Business Directory - Local business information has been uploaded with a new QR code that shows a map of the village and the location of many of our local businesses and attractions. Window clings are being placed around the Village for scanning by a smart phone or tablet. A hard copy is also in the works.

C.I.C./Mayor's Economic Development Award - In 2025, the C.I.C. made the decision to recognize the work done by businesses to improve the aesthetics and/or promote economic development within Jackson Center. The award is in conjunction with the mayor's approval and was presented by the Mayor, the Village Administrator, and the JC Economic Development Director. The awardees in 2025 were – Curly's Meats, Sip & Stream, JC Subway, Speckman Automotive (NAPA), Allenbaugh Insurance, Airstream Club International, and Peoples Savings and Loan. This is expected to be an annual award to recognize the investment in JC by our businesses.

We continue working with Small Nation for assistance in economic development. A group of business owners, CIC members, Council members, village administration, and school officials were assembled as a panel to provide insight into our dreams and the obstacles that we incur. We are excited about the potential that these recommendations will do to assist our current business owners and attract additional businesses that complement our existing ones.

Childcare has become an increasing concern for our residents and our businesses' employees. There have been many discussions and ideas over the last few years, but few have offered much progress. As the plan progresses, the village has partnered with the CIC to purchase 209 West Pike St. as a location for childcare with any improvements to the building to be partially paid for with county ARPA funds. The building is to be leased by a third-party for operation of the daycare and staffing requirements.



The Elder Theater's previous owners discontinued operations at the end of 2024. Becky Miller and the late Rodney Miller provided our community with quality entertainment and great popcorn for over 40 years. *"The Friends of the Elder Theatre"*, a 501c3 corporation, has begun to raise the funds to purchase and continue to operate the

Elder as a community theater. The “Friends” have negotiated a land contract for 3 years giving them additional time to raise funds. The non-profit took over ownership in January 2025.

Please support our local businesses to keep our community strong and growing!

Fiscal Status Report

The Village of Jackson Center relies on the one-and-a-half-percent income tax to fund police, fire and public works departments. Our income tax collection in 2025 was down 8.1% compared to 2024 and 4.8% below our previous five-year average (which contains an exceptionally high collection in 2023).

83.3% of the income tax money goes to the General Fund while the remaining 16.7% goes to the Note Retirement Fund. This fund is used to retire debt for our water and wastewater departments.

The General Fund, which pays for all expenditures for the Police, Fire and Parks Departments, also pays for a large portion of Street Department expenses including wages for all of those employees. The largest revenue stream for the General Fund is the Income Tax, followed by the village share of real estate taxes and Local Government Revenue. One possible obstacle in the future of village finances is House Bill 335 which would repeal the unvoted 10-mill property tax often referred to as “inside millage.” The Shelby County Auditor estimates that The Village will receive approximately \$85,000 from this unvoted property tax in 2026.

Due to The Village’s conservative approach to handling public monies, we have managed to complete several projects over the last several years and kept fund balances in the black. Overall, the state of village finances is very healthy.

Emergency Services

The JC Police Department remains under the purview of Chief Joe Mahan as he continues to strive for stability in today’s age of police work. The Police Department is dispatched by the Shelby County Sheriff’s Department via (937) 498-1111 and #1 at the prompt to access dispatch for the Jackson Center Officer on duty.

The Jackson Center Fire Department is led by Chief Braden Lotz, Deputy Chief Ron Ludwig, Assistant Chief David Schwartz, and Lieutenants Ross Ludwig, Dana Ware and Bryan Doak. Thank you for your selfless support in keeping our residents safe.

In the next several months you will be hearing about a rescue services levy that will be on the May ballot. Let me provide a little background and let you know what to expect. Currently, the residents of Jackson Township are supporting a levy for emergency rescue services provided by Anna Rescue. Dinsmore and Franklin townships are separately doing the same, but unfortunately at different rates and valuations. To ensure that the three townships are contributing equally, and at current valuations, those townships and the villages of



Anna, Botkins and Jackson Center voted to form a rescue district that is recognized as a single taxing district by the state. It is important to note that this new levy, if passed, would replace the current levy and not add to it. The new group is named the Northern Shelby County Joint Ambulance District. Its primary role is to ensure the residents of those townships and villages have access to emergency rescue services of the highest quality and strengthen the level of emergency response. This will understandably create a lot of questions and the NSCJAD Board is working on methods to provide as much information as possible to the public through social media, town hall meetings, and more. Minutes and schedules of the NSCJAD board meetings can be located at this location on the village website:



State-Level Political Activity

Ohio state-level politics in 2025-2026 are aggressively targeting the reduction of what they call "local government bloat" by passing laws that threaten the existence of small villages. House Bill 331 mandates audits after every census, forcing villages to prove they provide at least five essential services and hold elections, or face a dissolution vote. This initiative aims to reduce taxing jurisdictions, potentially folding villages into townships.

Key Impacts of State-Level Politics on Ohio Villages:

- Threat of Dissolution (HB 331): Signed in 2025, this law mandates that after the 2030 census, county auditors must evaluate if villages provide at least five of ten essential services (e.g., police, fire, water, sewer).
- Service & Election Requirements: Villages must maintain a minimum level of service and demonstrate at least one candidate for each elected position on the ballot, or face a mandatory dissolution vote by residents.
- Targeted Areas: Over 25 villages in Southwest Ohio alone are already considered at risk due to lack of competitive elections in recent years, making them vulnerable to future audits.
- Financial & Administrative Pressure: State efforts to reduce the number of government entities, including proposed \$25 million in grants for merging local governments (HB 574)—are putting pressure on small, often understaffed, villages to merge or dissolve.
- "Home Rule" vs. State Control: While Ohio has a tradition of strong local, often rural, control, new state laws are limiting this by encouraging the consolidation of local, independent governments into surrounding townships.

These policies represent a significant shift toward reducing the 600+ villages in Ohio, pushing them toward consolidation.

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) and the Village of Jackson Center oppose these unfunded mandates and state pre-emption of local authority, advocating for full state funding for any state-mandated costs. OML strongly defends the constitutional rights of municipalities to govern their own affairs. Village leadership is committed to ensuring we meet the mandated requirements handed down from the state level to protect our community, its residents, and our way of life.

If you have a concern or a suggestion to better our community, feel free to reach out to me or a council member. Your village council members are:

○ Leisha Elchert, (President Pro-Tem)	lelchert@jacksoncenter.com
○ Gina Ludwig	gludwig@jacksoncenter.com
○ James DeVine	jdevine@jacksoncenter.com
○ Wayne York	wyork@jacksoncenter.com
○ Luke Doseck	ldoseck@jacksoncenter.com
○ Ross Ludwig	roludwig@jacksoncenter.com

You are also welcome to attend village council meetings, which take place in village council chambers on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 7:00pm.

Before closing, I would like to remind everyone that this year is the 250th anniversary of our nation's independence, also known as the United States Semiquincentennial. As the 4th of July grows closer you will begin to notice more mention of this event and advertising of the planned celebrations (one in our own village). As you and your families participate in the celebration activities, I would like to urge you to remember the reasons and the people that gave so much so that we are able to celebrate this milestone today.

In summary, the state our village stands strong—rooted in unity, resilience, and a shared commitment to the prosperity of every family who calls it home. Through cooperation, hard work, and unwavering community spirit, we continue to build a future that honors our heritage while embracing the promise of tomorrow.

I hope everyone has a fantastic year!



Jesse Fark
Mayor of Jackson Center
jfark@jacksoncenter.com

“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”

- Henry Ford