

State of the City
January 23, 2025
Presented by Ron Mozer, Mayor

Good evening, Monessen.

As your Mayor, it is both an honor and a privilege to come before you today to deliver this year's State of the City Address. This is an opportunity to reflect on our progress, acknowledge the challenges we face, and look forward to the future with determination and hope.

Progress and Investments in Infrastructure

Our city has made significant strides in addressing long-standing infrastructure issues. I'm proud to report that Monessen has advanced two major storm sewer projects that will greatly enhance the resilience and reliability of our water management systems long into the future.

First is the construction as part of a \$2.2 million loan through PennVest started in 2023 for the Phase 4 Storm Sewer Project. I'm pleased to announce that we completed this critical work in 2024 and we are currently working on closing out the project. These upgrades significantly improve our sewer and storm water infrastructure, reducing the chance of failure and ensuring better protection for properties across the city.

Additionally, we worked on the Phase 3 Storm Sewer Project, supported by an incredible \$15 million investment made available through the USDA. This transformational project will further modernize our infrastructure, ensuring that Monessen is well-prepared to meet future environmental and public safety challenges. The focus of additional work funded through a \$4.5M USDA Grant will be from the CSX tracks to the river. This includes lining 125 year old storm drain pipes, giving them another 100 years of life, as they run under the CSX tracks all the way to the river, ensuring comprehensive improvements in this critical area.

Economic Development and Revitalization

We continue to address the issue of blight through our partnership with the Westmoreland County Land Bank. The County ARP fund, as administered by the Westmoreland County Land Bank and Redevelopment Authority, has demolished over 125 properties. Working with the codePro system, the Land Bank has acquired and demolished 42 properties through the judicial process, while Monessen has submitted over 127 applications for development through local legal action. All told, there are 163 properties that have been demolished or are in the process of being released for demolition. We will continue to work with our County Commissioners, who are committed to supporting Monessen as we submit additional blighted properties for demolition. This work is essential to creating a city we can all be proud of.

Economic development remains a cornerstone of our vision for Monessen's future. With the help of a \$75,000 LSA Grant, we are focusing on initiatives to attract businesses, promote entrepreneurship, and revitalize our local economy. These funds will be instrumental in creating new opportunities for growth and prosperity within our community.

Simultaneously we are embarking on a new initiative through the DCED-sponsored Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) with the assistance of Westmoreland County Community Development. This program is expected to bring approximately \$3 million to spark our development efforts, providing a significant boost to our city's economic revitalization. These funds will enable us to address critical needs and seize opportunities for growth and transformation.

In addition to the LSA Grant, we are working closely with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) through the Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP). The financial health of the city is based upon rebuilding our tax base as supported by DCED. Our application includes the completing of an economic analysis of our state of our current and forecasted condition.

In collaboration with Re-imagine Westmoreland County, we are exploring innovative ways to work more effectively with surrounding municipalities to create a regional approach to development and shared resources. Though this process we expect to bring new opportunities to the city that include cooperation of nearby communities.

We are also excited to announce the "Music In the Park" initiative, a series of concerts scheduled for the summer of 2025. This series will feature big names, including Billy Price, and will be held on June 29th, July 30th, August 24th, and September 21st held at the Ampletheater in City Park. We expect this initiative to grow as we seek sponsors and explore potential sites for a permanent indoor facility to house such events, eliminating the risk of weather disruptions. This effort is another step in enhancing our city's cultural and economic vitality.

We also continue to work with various for-profit and non-profit organizations to evaluate potential projects, including apartment complexes and senior citizen gated communities. These projects aim to diversify housing options and improve the quality of life for residents in Monessen while improving out tax base.

Infrastructure Improvements

Our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for Monessen's residents includes investments in our streets and public spaces. This year, through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, we completed the paving of 3rd Street. Projects like this not only improve mobility but also reflect our dedication to maintaining and upgrading the city's essential infrastructure. We also have applied for State LSA moneys to provide upgraded tools and machinery that promise to help us improve our roads.

Fiscal Responsibility

I am proud to announce that, for the third consecutive year, our administration ended the fiscal year with money in the bank. This achievement reflects our commitment to prudent financial management and our focus on delivering essential services while being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Supporting Our Most Vulnerable

None of our progress would be meaningful without addressing the needs of our most vulnerable residents. We owe a debt of gratitude to Westmoreland County Community Action for their tireless efforts to combat homelessness, provide food to families in need, and deliver a host of valuable services that uplift our community. Their partnership is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together to ensure that no one in Monessen is left behind.

Looking Ahead

While we have accomplished much, there is still work to do. In the coming months, my administration will continue to focus on:

- Expanding economic development initiatives to attract new businesses and create jobs.
- Strengthening partnerships with county, state, and federal organizations to maximize resources for our residents.
- Ensuring transparency and fiscal responsibility in every project we undertake.

Closing

Monessen is a city with a proud history and an unwavering spirit. Together, we are laying the foundation for a brighter, more prosperous future. I am deeply grateful for the hard work and dedication of our city employees, community partners, and, most importantly, you—the residents of Monessen.

Thank you for your trust, your commitment, and your belief in what we can achieve together. The state of our city is strong, and with your continued support, it will only get stronger.

Thank you, and may Monessen continue to thrive!