

Focusing on the future of Luna Pier

Looking back on the rich history of Luna Pier, it is ease of mobility that put us on the map. Before the original pier was built, it was the inter-urban rail line or trolley cars that enabled people to escape the oppressive heat of the city during the summer before air conditioning was available. Affluent business owners built cottages and moved with their families to Lakeside or Lakewood to take advantage of the cooler temps on the shores of Lake Erie and commute to Downtown Toledo or the area now known as the Old West End. The men rode back and forth to work while their families relaxed in their beachside resort. The inter-urban line which also carried visitors to Toledo Beach made several daily runs on what is now Harold Drive. Automobiles took over and by 1927 the Toledo, Ottawa Beach and Northern Railway ceased operations but not before the "Luna Pier" opened featuring big bands and dancing under the stars. The pier flourished into the 1930s but rapidly declined after prohibition ended. Coincidence? I won't speculate here but we are less than 19 miles from the Canadian border.



The world continued to change and the residents adapted. Paul Dussia's Big Store of Lakeside became the Chateau Louise. Lakewood and Lakeside became Luna Pier. More seasonal residents made this their year-round home, especially when I-75 opened. A Consumer's Power plant opened, the old trolley line became Harold Drive and Luna Pier became a city in 1963, building the infrastructure on tax revenue from the power plant. A new pier was built in 1983 resulting in the formation of the beautiful beach we have today.

It has been over 8 years since the JR Whiting plant closed, taking with it the majority of our property tax base. That was devastating to our city finances but once again, we adapted. Through it all, our real treasure has always been "place". We still have beautiful beaches, and what I consider, the best access to the Great Lakes in Michigan. We have our beautiful wetlands and while I-75 has long replaced the trolley line as our link to the outside world, we still have a walkable community. Most of all, we have a safe community of people who care. That is our core on which everything else is built. Change is inevitable but incredibly talented people work together to manage that change. We watch out for each other and we take care of our public spaces as city resources are limited. We know things can be better and we roll up our sleeves to work towards reaching our potential. Projects always take longer than we think they should but we keep working. I can tell you, others are noticing. Visitors tell me what a treasure we have here, especially if it has been a while since they last visited.

Our beautiful new overpass is now open with progress being made on our non-motorized lane and our city logo over the northbound lane. Soon all lanes will be open as the work is finally wrapping up. Significant improvements are under way at the Luna Pier BP travel plaza with a new restaurant opening soon. The highway construction has significantly impacted all of our local businesses and it will be good to put that behind us. All of this along with the new travel plaza under construction just across I-75 in Erie will really put Exit 6 on the map. How we manage the change going forward is just as important now as it has always been. With your help, we will seize opportunities and still preserve our place. We can't do it without you. We have openings on boards and commissions eager to put your talent to use. We also have other volunteer opportunities if you have scheduling limits. Contact me through our website, through our City of Luna Pier Facebook page or just stop in some time and we can talk. Be a part of this amazing legacy we call the City of Luna Pier.

Mayor Jim Gardner