

Northville Matters

www.ci.northville.mi.us

City of Northville • 215 West Main Street • Northville, Michigan 48167

Take the Master Plan Survey. See page 3.



New building to open with law firm, boutique and cafe

The new headquarters of Grewal Law, owned by Mick Grewal, is slated to open this winter at 345 E. Cady. It will also house two new businesses on the first floor: Revir, a women's clothing boutique and artist gallery, and Mithai & Chai café. Both plan a spring opening.

The boutique is owned by Rebecca Grewal, Mick's wife. She is a fashion designer who will sell her clothing line Revir at the store, among other labels. The couple own the café, which will feature Indian-style tea, sweets and sandwiches.

Grewal says the new building will boost visibility for the law firm, which has 14 lawyers at three locations. "I've had a small office in Northville for several years. I like the community and wanted to grow my practice here," he said.

Designed and built by D.J. Maltese, the three-story building has classic styling with modern touches. It is constructed of brick and stone with a series of nine square windows along the second floor. The first floor facing Cady has three glass-framed sections, each with a chic black aluminum door and a wide metal canopy. The third floor has a band of horizontal windows and a skylight that frame a conference room.

The interior is a cross between contemporary and industrial chic. The floors on the first level are wood while those on the second and third levels are polished concrete. Marble countertops and base moldings accent the modern, clean lines.

The structure is well positioned on the corner of Cady and Griswold, anchored by unique geometric elements. A side patio for the café is enclosed with a brick half-wall. On the west side is a sculpture garden for all to enjoy.

BZA decides land & building variances

The Board of Zoning Appeals is the great leveler. It adheres to the City ordinances and promises to preserve Northville's unique character while allowing some exceptions for homeowners, property owners and builders who seek a change from ordinances due to special circumstances or unique factors of their building or property.

The BZA must interpret and/or determine the need for exceptions to ordinances established by the Planning Commission. The BZA votes on variance requests regarding lot setbacks, building heights, fences and other matters.

"We're the gatekeepers for preserving what makes the Northville community special and we're also an avenue of appeal when a property owner has a unique situation that requires consideration," said Donna Tinberg, the Planning Commission member assigned to the BZA. "That's an important check and balance to have in place to protect property owners' interests."

Other BZA members are Michelle Aniol; Stephen Calkins; John Callahan, secretary; David Marold; Ryan McKindles, vice chair; Dominic Silvestri, chair; alternates Leanie Bayly and Joseph Corriveau, and City Council Liaison Patrick Giesa.

The BZA members deal with issues involving land and building requirements that are rarely clear-cut and often quite complex. Planning Consultant Sally Elmiger, of Carlisle Wortman Associates, an expert on the City's ordinances, attends BZA meetings and is often asked to explain the nuances and options for board members and applicants. Building Official Brent Strong attends meetings that require clarification on inspections, a building timeline, or his interpretation of the ordinance.

"In addition to considering many factors, we must decide if granting a variance will maintain or detract from our community and/or the intent of our ordinances, said Chair Silvestri. "This is why our board members are so important to the community. Each person brings a unique and different perspective, which is not only informative but invaluable when we have to make such decisions."

For an applicant asking for a variance, pride of ownership often co-mingles economics and emotions and can lead to heated back-and-forth discussion with BZA members.

"Clearly, owners view their homes, businesses, or other properties as an important investment," Tinberg noted. "Because of that, any threat to that investment – whether real or perceived – can generate strong protective instincts and emotions. Our role as BZA members is to make well-reasoned, clearly articulated decisions based on fact, so

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DDA and City get new logo

The Downtown Development Authority contracted with Bizzell Design of North Carolina, to create a new branding identity for the DDA, which represents the business interests of downtown Northville retailers and restaurants. The logo will also be used by the City for signage, stationery, business cards, vehicles and other applications. New mastheads have been developed for Northville Matters (see this issue) and City News by Julie Nyhus, a local graphic designer. To view how the logo will be used, see the brand guidelines document on the City website.

City of
Northville
Michigan

NOTICES

Online property information and payments

View your tax, assessing, utility and permit property information on the City website (Online Property Information and Payments). You can sign up for automatic payment of taxes and utilities, request to receive your utility bill via email, make payments by credit card or e-check, and view your payment status.

General property tax dates

Feb. 16 – Last day to pay winter 2020 taxes without penalty or interest. On Feb. 17, a 3% penalty will apply.

March 1 – Assessment notices are mailed in mid-February. If you have not received a notice by March 1, please contact the City assessor.

March 1 – Last day to pay summer and winter 2020 property taxes at the City. On March 2, delinquent amounts will be turned over to the County for collection.

March – Board of Review public hearings and deliberations. Dates appear on the assessment notice.

Business owners

January – Personal Property Statements were mailed the first week in January. If you filed a Small Business Affidavit in 2019 or 2020 on time and it was accepted, you will not receive a personal property statement due to recent changes in property tax laws.

Feb. 20 – Personal property statements or exemption affidavits are due to the City assessor.

City finance reports available to the public

To meet the requirements for Accountability & Transparency under City, Village, and Township Revenue Sharing/County Incentive Program (CVTRS/CIP), the City of Northville must certify to the Michigan Department of Treasury annually that it has produced and made readily available to the public the following documents:

- Citizen's Guide of its most recent local finances, including recognition of its unfunded liabilities.
- Performance Dashboard
- Debt Service Report containing a detailed listing of its debt service requirements, including, at a minimum, the issuance date, issuance amount, type of debt instrument, a listing of all revenues pledged to finance debt service by debt instrument, and a listing of the annual payment amounts until maturity.
- Projected Budget Report of revenues and expenditures including, at a minimum, the current fiscal year and a projection for the following year and an explanation of the assumptions used for the projections. These documents may be accessed on the City website (Government/Transparency and Compliance).

Snow plows ready to hit the streets

When it snows, you'll find the City of Northville snow plows and trucks out to clear local streets. Major streets such as Center, Main and Taft are plowed first, followed by streets with steep hills and sharp curves.

Wayne County plows snow from Griswold, 7 Mile, Northville Road, and 8 Mile, east of Taft. Oakland County is responsible for clearing snow on 8 Mile, west of Taft, and Novi Road.

Neighborhood streets, parking lots, alleys and cemetery roads are plowed after main streets are completed. To help the snow plow access neighborhood streets from curb to curb, please keep vehicles off the streets until the snow has been cleared.

Property owners (residents and businesses) must clear sidewalks within 24 hours of a snow or ice event by ordinance. When clearing snow, do not blow or shovel snow into any roadway.

The DPW only clears sidewalks that are on City-owned or operated properties, such as those at City Hall, the Fire Station and cemeteries. If you see a neighbor who needs assistance keeping their sidewalk clear, please offer to help.

Prompt removal of snow reduces the need for salt. That means less salt travels to storm drains, which discharge into the Middle Rouge River. The City uses salt sparingly but it may be applied at slippery spots and intersections when needed.

City Hall is open by appointment only

City Hall is closed to the public except for scheduled appointments when a transaction must be done in person. Citizens are encouraged to conduct business online and by phone, email, regular mail and by using the drop box in the vestibule or circular drive. These measures are in effect since COVID-19 cases remain high in the region and state.

Inside the building, masks must be worn. Cover your coughs and sneezes with the inside of your arm. Please refrain from using the City Hall restrooms. Drinking fountains have been turned off. Elevators should be used only by individuals who can't climb steps.

Meetings continue to be held online (Zoom platform) with login and call-in information posted on the website, in City News and often on social media.

Visit our website for news and updates about City services. If you have questions, please call the City manager at 248-449-9905 or send an email to info@ci.northville.mi.us. To schedule an appointment, call 248-349-1300. Follow us on twitter and Facebook for more immediate updates.



Time to renew dog licenses

All dogs four months and older must be licensed. Dog licenses for 2020 expire on Feb. 28, 2021. The annual license fee is \$13 (\$10 with documented spay/neuter). A current rabies vaccination certificate is required with the application. Applications can be downloaded from the City website (Services/City Clerk/Permits and Licenses). Completed applications can be mailed or placed in the City Hall drop box.

Training helps police deal effectively with people in crisis

The Northville Police Department has ramped up its training in crisis intervention to educate officers about how to effectively handle incidents that involve an individual with a mental health disorder or addiction. This comes during an opioid crisis, when growing numbers of people – regionally and nationally – are addicted to the narcotic and may overdose from it.

Two officers, from a force of 13, have been trained how to handle situations where substance abuse or mental health play a role. Both Wayne County and Oakland County offer 40-hour training for officers that help them identify the cause of incidents, de-escalate the crisis, become effective at crisis resolution, and determine when the perpetrator should be taken to a community-based mental health facility rather than be arrested and taken to jail.

The program also promotes safety of both the officer and the individual in crisis. The Crisis Intervention Team website states that the course helps officers become better equipped to understand common signs and symptoms of mental illnesses and co-occurring disorders; recognize when those signs and symptoms represent a crisis situation; safely de-escalate individuals experiencing behavioral health crises; and use community resources and diversion strategies to provide assistance.

The CIT programs are community-based – involving police, health care professionals and local organizations. The primary goal is to keep people with mental illness out of jail and in treatment – optimally on the road to recovery. One of those organizations is COPE, which offers a drug rehabilitation program and recovery coaching, among other services.

“Instead of taking them straight to the hospital, where they may not get the comprehensive evaluation they need, programs such as COPE look at the person on a one-to-one basis and find out what issues they are having,” said Officer Melissa Vernon, who completed training in the fall.

“A significant percentage of our calls for service involve persons suffering from mental illness or addiction issues,” said Police Chief Alan Maciag.



Officers Vernon (left) and Larkin.

“This training prepares our officers to identify, de-escalate and provide assistance to those in need. The last thing we want to do is take someone to jail who is in need of treatment. My goal is to have every member of the department trained in crisis intervention.”

Officer Erin Larkin learned how to implement new techniques in the (virtual) classroom through role-playing various scenarios. She was trained how to use visual and verbal cues to assess whether an individual was experiencing a mental health crisis.

That same training enabled Officer Vernon to improve her skills. “You go on their level. You could say, ‘I see that you’re upset. Why are you upset? What can I do to help you?’”

In a time of crisis, Larkin recommends that family or friends of an individual with a mental health issue or addiction learn what medication the person took (if an overdose is involved) and where they have received treatment in the past. That family member or friend may have to interact with police if the person in crisis can’t articulate their issue.

Larkin also advises that family or friends leave their contact information in an accessible location at the residence of a troubled person to help police reach them if needed.

“Important take-aways from the training were the reminder that there may be undiagnosed, untreated individuals that are in need of care,” Larkin said. “When that’s the case, I can now direct the individuals to resources they may not be aware of.”

For those in a mental health crisis, call 1-800-950-NAMI or text NAMI to 741741. The national suicide prevention lifeline is 800-273-8255.

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no matter how sympathetic we may be to your situation, we may not be able to rule in your favor.”

Silvestri said he is “really proud of the way our board comes together to make a decision - despite the fact that we may have very differing opinions. The ability to listen and understand an opposing viewpoint is crucial and, I believe, the result is what’s best for our community.”

In his early years as a lawyer, Silvestri said he worked on a case for a client who had a zoning issue with another municipality. “I realized that the role of the BZA was very important to maintaining the character and integrity of a city. I wanted to be a part of that here in Northville.”

Tinberg, a retired special education administrator, enjoys the intellectual challenge of analyzing a case, applying relevant sections of the zoning ordinance, and making decisions that align to the established criteria.

Openings arise on the BZA every few years, with members serving a three-year term. The public is welcome to attend any BZA meeting, held the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. (currently on Zoom).

Downtown Northville offers outdoor dining

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and area businesses raised funds to bring open-air, outdoor structures to the downtown Social District to keep business humming during the winter months. It’s part of the Heat in the Street event, which runs through March 1.

With colder weather, restaurants and bars needed a way to be profitable when State COVID-19 mandates required them to close their indoor space. An idea presented to DDA Director Lori Ward by local business owner Manfred Schon led to the construction of custom-built wood and metal stands. Restaurants are using them to sell food and (non-alcoholic) beverages outdoors. Patrons can eat and drink in open-air stands equipped with tall tables, lights and ceiling-mounted heat.

Portions of Main Street and N. Center are closed to traffic so people can stroll through the pedestrian walkway, dine outdoors or shop. The street closures will be monitored by the DDA and City Council and could change if warranted.

Survey #2 refines input on Master Plan subareas

The Planning Commission invites you to take part in the second survey for the Master Plan update of the Cady St., Racetrack and S. Center St. subareas. This final survey is designed to consolidate public input for a shared vision of redevelopment with benefits for the entire community. The subarea update to the Master Plan will allow the City to communicate a desired vision to developers for this part of town.

The survey was drafted by the Public Input Subcommittee and Carlisle Wortman Associates. It was further refined with suggestions by the Planning Commission and public comments at its December meeting.

The survey takes about 30 minutes to complete. Your response will help the Planning Commission solidify concepts prior to drafting language for the Master Plan subareas. The link to the survey, open until Jan. 31, is <https://tinyurl.com/ydfkinfd>. If you can’t complete it online, please contact the City manager’s office for a paper copy.

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2020 highlights/news summary

January – A Sustainability Team is established with volunteers to help advise the City and community on issues involving environmental conservation, economic development and social responsibility.

February – Master Plan subarea review (Downs, Cady and S. Center) leads to a formal public input process that includes educational sessions on creating a solid infrastructure.

March – The outbreak of COVID-19 forces City Hall to close temporarily with the governor’s executive order to shelter in place for all but essential services.

April – Census 2020 kicks off on April 1. It is deemed a success when it wrapped up in October, with an 82.9% self-response rate in Northville.

May – Infrastructure projects begin after a delayed start due to the pandemic. Having fewer vehicles on the road makes it easier for work crews.

June – A portion of both Main Street and Center Street closes to vehicles so people can dine in the street, shop from the sidewalk or simply walk through while social distancing.

July – There was no 4th of July parade due to the coronavirus. City Hall reopens to the public with restrictions that include wearing a mask and staying six feet apart from each other.

August – The State grants the City a “Social District” through 2024 allowing specially licensed restaurants and bars to sell alcohol for consumption outdoors in a designated area.

September – The Heritage Festival and Victorian Parade are not held due to the coronavirus. The deadline for adoption of the Historic District Study Report (and boundary changes) is extended.

October – Skeletons are Alive exhibit draws record numbers of visitors to town. Fish Hatchery Park has a restored creek bank and a new opening for fish migration from pond to creek.

November – Northville has its highest voter turnout; the majority cast ballots by absentee voting. Task forces are established. (See article below.) City Hall closes but is open by appointment, due to a spike in COVID-19 cases throughout the State.

December – “Heat in the Street” allows restaurants to sell specialty foods outdoors in vendor stands while new heated pods make it comfortable for patrons to dine outside (due to COVID-19).

Three task forces set up to guide areas of growth

Three task forces were approved by City Council at its Oct. 5 meeting with the intent to bring people in the community together to work toward the betterment of Ford Field, the Farmers’ Market and Rouge River Restoration.

The Ford Field Task Force will develop a plan to re-establish the park as a central gathering space. The Farmers’ Market Task Force will investigate options for future market operations. The Rouge Restoration Task Force will create a plan to restore the ecological health of the City’s waterways while improving public access and recreation through the implementation of a trail system referred to as “The Riverwalk.”

See more information on the task force membership, roles and meeting times and dates on the City website (government section).

City Directory

Allen Terrace.....	248-349-8030
Assessor.....	248-305-2704
Building Department.....	248-449-9902
Cemetery.....	248-305-2702
City Manager.....	248-449-9905
City Clerk.....	248-349-1300
Communications (print, online).....	248-305-2703
Community Center.....	248-349-4140
DDA.....	248-349-0345
Finance Department.....	248-449-9907
Fire Department.....	248-449-9920
Parks and Recreation.....	248-349-0203
Police Dispatch (non-emergency).....	248-349-1234
Police.....	248-349-5100
Public Works.....	248-449-9930
Tax Department/Treasurer.....	248-449-9901
Youth Assistance.....	248-344-1618

Frequently Called Numbers

Art House.....	248-344-0497
Chamber of Commerce.....	248-349-7640
Civic Concern.....	248-344-1033
Historical Society.....	248-348-1845
Library.....	248-349-3020
Mill Race Village.....	248-348-1845
Post Office.....	248-349-2062
Waste Management.....	800-796-9696

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City News
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