



MARK BARNETT, MAYOR  
KAITLYN ALDRICH, CITY MANAGER  
DEBORAH L. LUSKIN, CITY CLERK  
RENEE CAITHAMER, CITY TREASURER

## CITY OF LUDINGTON

400 SOUTH HARRISON STREET  
LUDINGTON, MICHIGAN 49431  
PHONE (231) 845-6237  
FAX (231) 845-1146  
WWW.LUDINGTON-MI.GOV

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### 2026 STATE OF THE CITY

I have lived and worked in Ludington for over twenty-five years. In that time city residents, private business owners & employees, health care workers, public safety workers, educators, public service & utility workers, skilled tradesmen, factory workers and many others, have faced a variety of blessings and challenges in our city. I have witnessed a true spirit of cooperation and generosity as you have cared well for each other. We are a community defined by resilience, partnership, and pride — a lakeshore city that honors its history while embracing opportunity.

As your mayor I would like to reflect briefly on 2025 and look ahead to 2026, recognizing both our progress and the challenges before us.

#### **City Resources:**

Like many communities across Michigan, we are facing rising costs, aging infrastructure, and limits on revenue growth. Inflation has increased the cost of materials and services, and state revenue sharing has not kept pace with community needs.. The services our residents and businesses rely on – public safety, infrastructure, and daily operations – are essential, but also costly to maintain. These are challenges, which is why careful planning is critical. Our goal is simple: to protect the services you rely on every day while preparing responsibly for the future.

This year will require an even greater effort as we review our operations, pursue grant opportunities, evaluate revenue options, and identify cost-saving measures. We are taking proactive steps now to ensure long-term sustainability. Because at the end of the day, every budget decision reflects our shared priorities as a community.

#### **Infrastructure & Public Services**

Maintaining infrastructure remains one of our highest priorities. From water and sewer systems to streets and sidewalks, these foundational systems support every resident and business. Strategic capital planning ensures we are not simply reacting to emergencies but anticipating needs. Investment today prevents greater costs tomorrow.

Public safety continues to be a cornerstone of our community. Our police officers, firefighters, and emergency personnel serve with professionalism and dedication. We are committed to supporting them with the training, equipment, and staffing necessary to keep Ludington safe.

*On the Shores of Lake Michigan*

### **Economic vitality:**

Economic vitality does not happen by accident, but rather through active partnership. Ludington is proud to work closely with Chamber Alliance of Mason County, the Ludington Downtown Development Authority, the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, and The Right Place to strengthen our downtown and grow our local economy.

The last year has seen continued investment in downtown properties, an alley project, façade improvements, business expansions, and renewed interest in mixed-use development. Our social districts, walkable streets, and year-round events continue to draw residents and visitors alike. Tourism remains a significant driver of our local economy. As we welcome visitors, we remain mindful of maintaining the quality of life for our residents and neighborhoods.

### **Housing**

Housing continues to be one of the most important issues facing our community. Like many communities across Michigan, we are experiencing increased demand, limited inventory, and rising costs. We value our partnership with the Mason County Housing Alliance and our many collaborators across Mason County as we work to address housing availability and affordability.

Through implementation of our Unified Development Ordinance, the city continues to thoughtfully increase residential density in appropriate areas — supporting workforce housing, encouraging reinvestment, and ensuring that those who work here have opportunities to live locally as well.

Housing is not simply a development issue — it is an economic vitality issue, a workforce issue, and a quality-of-life issue.

### **Zoning & Unified Development Ordinance Updates**

One of the most significant structural updates in recent years has been implementation of the City's Unified Development Ordinance. The UDO modernizes outdated zoning regulations and aligns them with our Master Plan goals. It provides:

- Clearer development standards
- Streamlined processes
- Greater housing flexibility
- Support for mixed-use and infill development
- Predictability for investors and property owners

At its core, zoning is about shaping the future of our community in a thoughtful and intentional way. The UDO is key in modernizing our zoning framework and thoughtfully increasing residential density in appropriate areas. This supports workforce housing, encourages reinvestment in existing neighborhoods, and allows property owners more flexibility while maintaining the character that makes Ludington special.

We will continue aligning housing strategy with economic development to build long-term sustainability.

## Looking Ahead

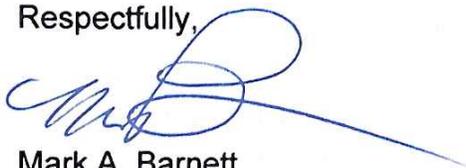
Ludington's strength lies in collaboration. We are proud of our partnerships not only within the City but throughout Mason County. Whether it is addressing housing, strengthening our downtown, improving infrastructure, or preparing for fiscal challenges, progress happens when we work together.

We are fortunate to live in a community known for its natural beauty, strong neighborhoods, and welcoming spirit. But what truly defines Ludington is not just where we are located — it is how we care for one another.

The work ahead will require continued collaboration, careful financial stewardship, and thoughtful growth. I am confident in our direction. We are planning wisely. We are investing strategically. We are protecting what matters most.

The State of our City is steady, forward-looking, and rooted in partnership. Thank you for your continued trust, involvement, and commitment to the City of Ludington. Together, we are building a community that honors its past and prepares confidently for its future.

Respectfully,



Mark A. Barnett  
Mayor, City of Ludington, Michigan