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Kent County Board of Commissioners Highlight Year in Review for 2021

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (December 30, 2021) —Kent County Board of Commissioners Chair Mandy Bolter today shared some of the significant action Kent County has taken over the past year on behalf of residents and businesses.

“Despite the various pressures placed on public services this past year, our Board and staff were dedicated to continuing to provide excellent service to our community,” said Kent County Board of Commissioners Chair Mandy Bolter. “While we continued to meet the challenges of the pandemic, we also maintained a strong focus on meeting the needs of continued economic growth.”

A few of the notable County actions from 2021 are:

- **2022 Budget:** A structurally balanced Fiscal Year 2022 budget was unanimously [passed](#) in November. The total budget was \$527 million and included \$454.8 million for operating expenditures, of which, \$16.7 million was for capital improvements.
- **AAA Bond Rating:** The County maintained its dual AAA bond rating from S&P Global and Moody’s Investors Service for the 23rd consecutive year. Additionally, Kent County was [awarded](#) the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for Fiscal Year 2020.
- **Airport Expansion/Bonding:** The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is currently expanding Concourse A to add new gates and concessions to accommodate projected passenger growth over the next 20 years. In September, the Board of Commissioners [approved](#) the issuance of revenue bonds for \$93.6 million to finance these capital improvements.
- **Chief Inclusion Officer:** The County [hired](#) its first Chief Inclusion Officer to underscore our commitment to fully embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in our strategic priorities and service delivery.
- **Board Subcommittees:** Three subcommittees were established to address developing issues and submit recommendations to the full Board: Broadband/Judicial Resources/Veterans Millage Review
- **Expansion of County Park Projects:** The Parks Department completed a series of land acquisitions that will [expand](#) the Chief Hazy Cloud Park into a 395-acre natural preserve which will include woods, wetlands and three miles of frontage along the Grand River and allow for future trail expansion to connect multiple communities.

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- **Mental Health Services:** As a result of the County's work with the [Kent County Population Health Consortium](#), a continuum of six innovative crisis mental health and substance use disorder services are being developed to fill a critical community need. Of which, the Kent County Sheriff's Office has partnered with Network 180 on a pilot program to deploy co-response mobile crisis teams to assist officers with deescalating a behavioral health crisis and link individuals to ongoing services and supports. Additionally, Mercy Health and Network 180 recently [announced](#) plans to open a crisis center next year in Grand Rapids for people who need immediate behavioral health care.
- **Mobile Health Units:** The Health Department added three new mobile health units in 2021. These self-contained mobile health facilities have been used extensively to target vulnerable populations in the administration of COVID-19 and other vaccinations, HIV testing, and community outreach. To date, more than 1,000 thousand County residents have received COVID-19 vaccinations at clinics supported by these units.
- **Restaurant Fees Waived:** The 2021 food service licensing fee was [waived](#) for the 2,294 food establishments in Kent County due to the significant hardship these establishments experienced with closures and capacity limitations related to the pandemic.
- **Reduction in Lead Exposure:** Three County programs managed by the Health Department continued to reduce lead exposure in Kent County. These programs are currently or have completed investigations of 161 properties, cleared 39 homes of lead hazard, completed 57 site visits, and fully staffed a team of five sanitarians, a health educator, and a lead clerk.
- **Sheriff's Office Cruiser and Deputy Body Cameras:** Implemented the purchase and installation of body cameras for more than 200 law enforcement personnel, funded replacement tasers, and replaced 83 in-car cameras for deputy cruisers.
- **West Michigan Vaccine Clinic:** In response to the need to vaccinate as many people as possible, Kent County, Mercy Health Saint Mary's, and Spectrum Health [developed](#) one of the largest vaccination clinics in the country at DeVos Place. As a result of this partnership, more than 231,000 COVID-19 vaccinations were administered between January and May 2021.

"We are in excellent fiscal standing and are well positioned to continue to innovate, collaborate, and thrive," concluded Bolter. "I thank our committed staff for continuing to work to make Kent County a place of belonging for all to call home and prosper."

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