

Happy Port-a-Versary!

Earlier this month marked three years Tom Brown has served as executive director of the Lorain Port Authority! Tom's third year was filled with a number of projects and partnerships, and he took the time to reflect on some of the highlights. Keep scrolling to see what Tom had to say about his third year leading the Port Authority.

Executive Director's Year in Review

On March 6th I celebrated my third anniversary here with the Port. I did so with gratitude for the opportunity to work here with a great staff and board of directors. I know it is very cliché, but I will say it anyway... "I cannot believe it has been three years already!"



The last year was filled with some great memories and new partnerships. On the business side of our mission, we hosted a PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) event to highlight a great program that we feel can help a lot of commercial building owners and we finalized our first two PACE projects here in Lorain. We look forward to expanding our Energy Special Improvement District (ESID) to surrounding communities as well, so if anyone wants to learn more please contact us! We also presented at a state and national conference to tell others about how the Port worked with Ariel Ventures to creatively finance the redevelopment of the historic Broadway Building. It may not be the biggest project on the agenda, but it often gets the most questions due to the multiple programs used to revitalize this historic structure in our downtown district. We were grateful to watch and support this project through its up and downs in the past year, always cheering it on while telling the naysayers to "just hang in there" and "watch and see." It was a very proud and somewhat surreal day when we finally cut that ribbon and welcomed all to see what our very talented partners at Ariel Ventures had accomplished. Radhika, Lynn, Irene and Annette have shown what an amazing group of hard-working women with vision and a love for transformative projects can do for a city like Lorain. We are so thankful for their partnership and their commitment to this project.

We continue to follow the recommendations of our 2018 Strategic Plan and have worked very hard to follow that guidance in our

decisions, planning and day to day operations. As with anything, there have been some challenges, but we continue to re-circle, adjust and strive to be a resource to those interested in development in our city and our port. We hosted a Lunch-and-Learn event at the city's Riverbend Commerce Park and continue to work in partnership with the City of Lorain to showcase the properties and services it and the Port have to offer. On a county level we continue to collaborate and communicate with our Lorain County partners as well. These partnerships are crucial to everyone succeeding and we look forward to future projects and collaborations.

After some intense searching and deliberations, we began a new partnership with Oasis Marinas at Port Lorain who now manage not only the lakeside marina complex, but our boat launches as well. They bring to our port a high level of customer service, world class technology and the ability to transform marina sites into destinations and we are excited to see the updates and changes they are making to our facilities. Lorain will be their first site on the Great Lakes so we know they will be super motivated to show the region what the Oasis brand is all about. No pressure Oasis team...!!!

On the maritime side of our operations we saw a slight increase in total tonnage for the year and continue to seek additional opportunities for shipping within our harbor. We saw the completion of over \$2.5 million in dredging on the Black River south of the high-level bridge. This project was completed by the United States Army Corp of Engineers and is crucial to keeping our harbor ready for shipping and industry. While we are still an active shipping harbor, it is done with balance. We actively support the efforts of the Black River AOC (Area of Concern) group and closely follow all the wonderful reclamation projects that have been accomplished within our harbor and river. Slowly but surely nature is reclaiming some of our industrial areas and the river has experienced an amazing comeback in fish and wildlife. We have hosted various meetings and conferences to assist this work and look forward to continued partnerships with groups like the LoCo 'Yaks who plan a yearly Black River Clean-Up we actively support. Our Lorain Marine Patrol program had another successful year of protecting our waterways while also educating our boaters and paddlers. The educational component is often overlooked in their mission, but it may in fact be the most important part of what they do to prevent maritime accidents or tragedies. Our officers continue to do a great job with that. Our shuttle boat tours to the lighthouse and down the river continue to be quite popular and we continue to work with our partners at the Lorain Lighthouse Foundation and the Lorain Historical Society to offer programming that all can enjoy.

On the land side of things, we were very happy to begin planning and implementing improvements to Victory Park. This great little park has an extraordinary story to tell and we could not be prouder to be a new part of its history moving forward. Keep watch as we look forward to seeing the results of the updates this Memorial Day. We also worked with a dedicated group of volunteers led by Gail Bonsor and the Tourism Committee at Lorain Growth to bring to

Black River Landing a caboose that is being refurbished by the talented and committed Lorain Caboose Committee members. A special thanks goes out to Paul Springowski who told us about the caboose and made the introduction to the people at CSX who donated the caboose to the committee.

We have also worked alongside another group of volunteers to begin creating a new Main Street Lorain. Although very new, we look forward to supporting this group in following the guidance and principles of Heritage Ohio to create a Main Street program that will engage and support all the long-time and recent investors and businesses in our downtown district.

The International Festival brought its usual sights, sounds and most importantly tastes to our site last summer and we look forward to working with them again this year.

We also met the incredible Erin Stack and her group Girls Give Back. For the first time ever The Summer Market will take place at Black River Landing this July. We are really excited to bring another banner event to our site and cannot wait to see what Erin and her team bring to the Landing.

Speaking of excitement... the 2019 Rockin' on the River (ROTR) concert series was the biggest year yet! Bob and Sandy Earley continued to bring amazing entertainment, food and drinks to our site every weekend throughout the summer. The impact ROTR has had on the redevelopment of downtown Lorain has been extraordinary and to show how much that has meant to the Port we extended our contract with ROTR for another five years. We value our partnership with Bob and Sandy, and I personally cherish the friendship we have forged. I love Bob (there I said it publicly, Bob) and all the antics that he and I get into. He truly brings an energy to our summers at the Port. This year Bob also introduced us to Jason Miller and the team at River City Pop Culture Festival and they will be collaborating on that festival being held at Black River Landing for the first time ever on August 15th. Another great event coming to Lorain!

I hope you see the trend in all that we did last year at the Port... it is all about partnerships (or *Partnerships* as I like to say...sorry...could not resist). We are at our best when we work together and we will continue to look for new partners to work with to develop, finance, educate, collaborate and hopefully even entertain in our next year together.

As a last note, I type this in a very quiet office. With the recent Coronavirus (Covid-19) developments we have been forced to change the way we operate. Our main mode of operation is engagement and meetings, so life is a bit strange right now at the Port. We are very cognizant that some of the programming and events I wrote about could be affected in the coming months, but it remains our greatest hope that with some precaution today, we will be able to get back to some normalcy in the near future. So next

year when I sit down to reflect, my story will not be about today but about all the great things that we accomplished in spite of this pandemic and the recovery that will assuredly follow.

Support Local!

Although dining in is currently prohibited, many of your **favorite** Downtown Lorain businesses are still offering carry-out, curbside and/or delivery! Click [HERE](#) for a list of open restaurants in the county as well as other resources.



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Port Happenings is a periodically emailed newsletter that is sent as new and exciting information becomes available. It compliments our monthly Lorain Port Press newsletter which includes information about ongoing/upcoming events, economic development and our board meetings.

