

A Thank You to the Salem Community

As I prepare to begin a new chapter in my professional life, I want to take a moment to say **thank you** to the Salem community.

Since 2023, I have had the privilege of working alongside our department heads, city staff, elected officials, business owners, investors, community leaders, and, most importantly, the citizens of Salem. Together, we have accomplished a great deal, and I am proud of the progress we have made.

One of the things I am most proud of is the foundation we have put in place for Salem's future. We developed and implemented a new Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan designed to provide greater direction and purpose for the community's continued growth and development.

We also worked aggressively to identify resources and opportunities for our community. We attracted more than \$3 million in grant funding for infrastructure projects, including improvements to our gas, water, and road systems. We enacted 41 TIF agreements, extended an existing TIF for 12 years, and established a new TIF district. We also identified numerous BMECs and Enterprise Zone projects that have helped encourage investment throughout our community.

The numbers tell part of the story as well. In 2024, 71 permits were issued, representing \$22.3 million in construction value. In 2025, we issued 80 permits representing approximately \$25 million in construction value. Through 2026, we have issued 65 permits representing approximately \$3 million in construction value.

But perhaps more important than the numbers are the people and businesses behind them.

We have seen meaningful investment and revitalization throughout Salem, particularly in our downtown. Sterling Avenue's move downtown, the opening of Red Brick Coffee and TruSwing, the sale and renovation of Leon's Furniture Store, and the sale of the former Sav-A-Lot building, now home to Air Apply, are all examples of people investing in the future of our community. We have also seen renewed investment in apartments above the first floor downtown, as well as the construction of new apartments on Airport Road.

Our manufacturing and industrial sectors have experienced significant investment as well. The opening and growth of 618 Plastics, along with the sale of the NAL expansion building to Agracel for more than \$10 million, represent substantial commitments to Salem's industrial future.

We were also able to help incentivize the construction of a new dermatology office near I-57. Rollinson's was purchased and is being revitalized to accommodate an expanding local business. Land along I-57 has been sold and earmarked for a truck stop, a project that remains in development and one that I sincerely hope comes to fruition.

Each of these projects represents more than a building, a permit, or a dollar amount. They represent people choosing to invest in Salem. They represent entrepreneurs taking risks, business owners creating opportunities, property owners reinvesting in their buildings, and community members believing that Salem has a bright future.

And that is why I believe it is important to recognize that these accomplishments do not belong to any one person or department. They belong to the community.

Economic and community development is a team effort. It requires cooperation, creativity, patience, persistence, and a willingness to work together toward a common goal. I have been fortunate to work with people throughout Salem who share a genuine desire to see our community succeed.

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to serve our citizens and to work toward providing a high level of customer service. Government works best when people feel heard, respected, and valued, and I have always believed that serving our community should be approached with that mindset.

Salem has so much going for it. We have dedicated people, strong businesses, available resources, a great location, and tremendous potential. With good leadership, a clear vision, and the right people in the right seats, I believe the possibilities for Salem's future are tremendous.

So, thank you, people of Salem.

Thank you for trusting me, challenging me, working with me, and allowing me the opportunity to serve. Thank you to the business owners, investors, property owners, community leaders, city employees, department heads, elected officials, and citizens who helped make these accomplishments possible.

There is still much work to be done, and Salem's story is far from finished. I am grateful to have been a small part of that story, and I am confident that the best days for this community can still be ahead.

Thank you, Salem, for allowing me to serve.

Leah Dellicarpini, PCED