

One of the many great parks within the City of Watertown's Park System is The Bentzin Family Town Square, located on Main Street between First and Water Streets in the heart of our Downtown. Since its creation, The Bentzin Family Town Square has become a vibrant community hub for Watertown residents and visitors alike. Among the most popular community events hosted at The Bentzin Family Town Square is the annual Tree Lighting event, scheduled for Saturday, November 14th, 2026. This free, family-friendly community event officially kicks off the holiday season. Previous Holiday Tree Lightings at The Bentzin Family Town Square have brought an estimated 1,500+ spectators to downtown Watertown while creating a memorable holiday experience.

Due to the popularity of the annual Holiday Tree Lighting event, our Department has been able to secure generous donations from local businesses, individuals, and organizations. Unfortunately, these donations do not cover all event costs, causing the event to run at a deficit. Aside from basic operational costs to make the Holiday Tree Lighting event a success, the decorating of The Bentzin Family Town Square to make it a gem within Watertown is a costly expense on an annual basis. When grant funding is not available, event-related expenses need to be covered through this fund balance, which reduces the resources available for necessary Bentzin Family Town Square maintenance, repairs, and improvements. Grant funding is extremely valuable in helping offset event costs while allowing the Future Fund to remain available for its broader intended purposes.

The second main component of the Holiday Tree Lighting is the Make Your Business Sparkle competition, a holiday tree decorating contest that provides local businesses with the opportunity to sponsor and decorate a tree as part of a friendly community contest. Businesses can showcase their creativity while engaging with the community, and the public can vote for their favorite tree. The winning business is recognized with a trophy. While business sponsorships help offset some of the costs associated with Make Your Business Sparkle, there are additional expenses required to organize and provide the event. Grant funding would help offset these costs and allow the City to continue offering this popular community tradition while minimizing the financial impact on existing City resources.

Supporting the Holiday Tree Lighting will help a well-established Watertown tradition that brings hundreds of people Downtown continue to grow. Your \$8,000 grant would help ensure this free community celebration remains financially sustainable while preserving the Future Fund for future improvements and enhancements to The Bentzin Family Town Square.

I appreciate your consideration of our grant request and continued support of events at The Bentzin Family Town Square.