

2020 University Heights State of the City

Ari. Jaffe. (the chair of our BZA)

And I had a conversation

Not quite a month ago

About the vacancy on city council.

Created. When Councilman Mark Wiseman became Magistrate Mark Wiseman.

In talking about the leadership qualities we'd hope to see in council's appointment, the conversation turned quickly from that to where we've been and where we are as a city.

Ari asked me, if I remembered what he had told me when I was campaigning for mayor.

I told him, I did not.

Consolidation, he said. He said I asked you whether you'd be consolidating our city with one of our neighbors. Because, he explained, and I'm paraphrasing, that at that time, our city was adrift, without direction, without purpose, without identity.

But in two years, you've brought new energy to this city. Things are happening. We are happening. We have found ourselves. You did that.

And I quickly reminded him, that I didn't do it alone. We did it. Working together. The mayor's office. City council. The good men and women who come to work every day for our city. Citizens like him who step up and serve our community. And the residents – the people – who put us here, and expect good things, and deserve good things.

I am happy to report at my Second State of the City Address that the State of the City is Strong, and growing stronger, provided we stay on track, and keep making the decisions we need to move this city forward. The strength of our city is thanks to the collaborative effort of our elected leadership, and the collective effort of the people who serve this city – all with the full support of the best residents any mayor could hope to serve.

We have found our identity, we are back on the map, and we're building something special here in University Heights.

Beginning with University Square.

One year ago I stood behind this podium and reported to you that University Square continued to be confounding to this community. Ill conceived from the start and mismanaged for years, it nevertheless represented an opportunity for the right developer to make something not only productive, but special and worthy of this community.

Tonight I am pleased to report that in 2019 we found that developer.

One year ago, I acknowledged that your patience was running thin. That my patience was, too. But that under this administration, economic development is no longer something we wait to *have* happen. It is now something we actively seek and *make* happen.

And we have made this happen, and it is happening.

I began meeting with the current ownership and their agents in November 2017, after my election, before I even took office.

City council and I created the economic development department and then named Susan Drucker to lead it. And she got to work.

Joining our law director, Luke McConville, who was a vital participant in our late 2017 meeting with ownership and had worked hard throughout this process.

Last spring, we saw the blossom that would become the fruit of our efforts. We met with the county, which is to say, we met with the county prosecutor, we met with the county land bank, we met with the chief of staff, we met with the director of regional collaboration, we met with our county executive, we met with our county councilperson, we met with bond counsel, we met with development counsel, and when the bondholders presented their proposal with our new developer, we took all those meetings once more, and then met with our school board.

It has been said that politics is about relationships, that politics is the art of the possible. And late last year, we all came together to make the redevelopment of University Square possible. Culminating in December in a presentation by developer Brad Kowit, and by me, to our school board, with the attendance and support of our city council, who has been with us and a part of this every step of the way.

We would not be where we are without the support of our school board. Our school board came through, making this development possible, seeing the big picture, and the benefit that our community would

ultimately see. That new development was a gain not only over the status quo, but a change of course from the trajectory that would have led to the closure of the parking garage and the failure of the remaining businesses. Our school board had the wisdom and the judgment to see it. And I take this opportunity to thank them each once more: Jodi Sourini, Jim Posch, Malia Lewis, Dan Heintz, Beverly Wright. Thank you.

With the financing piece worked out, the drafting of the development agreement and cooperative agreement among the parties is underway. Mr. Kowit is hopeful to have shovels in the ground this summer. It is ambitious, but possible. And this city will continue to work to make the ambitious possible.

What is in store for phase one is approximately 203 market rate apartments, with approximately 5000 square feet of new retail, some of which may be live/work space. As phase one is completed, we will look together at phase two, and the possibilities appropriate for our community, for what we as a market will support, and for what is worthy of this high profile center of our community.

Turning now to the neighborhood residential side: our new City Beautiful CIC came to terms with Knez Builders to build three infill homes on vacant lots here in the City of University, starting with the vacant lot on the west end of Northwood Road. The home you see on the screen has already gone through Planning Commission, through the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Architectural Review Board. This home features architectural characteristics consistent with our city and with the street it will be built on, yet it is thoroughly modern construction, with open floor plan, and amenities today's new homebuyer expects – all with a University Heights address. Knez Builders, has been building better homes throughout the region, including Ohio City, Gordon Square, downtown Cleveland, and Willoughby, will this year begin building new homes in University Heights.

These new infill homes are a prelude to our next residential development:

Our new townhomes, in the new Residential Attached zoning district, in the NW corner of the city, on the north end of the Cedar-Taylor District. These new townhomes will feature the luxury finishes appreciated and expected by new home buyers, these being aimed

especially at young professionals and empty nesters. With rooftop views of downtown Cleveland, they will be a ten minute drive from University Circle, the medical, scientific, and cultural hub of Northeastern Ohio. It'll be all that and a Heights address.

2020 is the year we will begin seeing the fruit of the seeds we planted these last two years. We will be building new homes in our city, single family homes, townhomes, market rate apartments, making more places to fill the demand to live in our city.

Up to this point we have already built:

The first mile of bike lanes up and down Warrensville Center Road – two miles if you include the return trip.

The pocket park on Silsby Road, taking a vacant lot and building a community space suitable for meditation, contemplation, complete with an iron birdnest.

Construction is nearly complete for a new youth psychiatric facility and building at Bellefaire.

We have continued implementation of our rebranding by designing our new city signage, (with the new welcome to the city signs due to be fabricated and installed in 2020).

Most of all we have continued to rebuild our sense of community.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Our city is and ought to be a community of neighbors. Neighbors who interact, socialize, and have fun together. And we as a city have found ways to enhance and facilitate that experience.

Fall Fest

The highlight of our community building effort was our inaugural Fall Fest. In October at The Walt, hundreds of University Heights residents were treated to a festival featuring artistic vendors, food, activities for the kids, and a free concert from the Springsteen tribute band, Jersey. Their mayor even had a free cider stand at Fall Fest, where I was able to meet with residents over a cup of fresh apple cider.

We did something special with Fall Fest. And now we have a template to do the event again, but even better.

I am pleased to announce tonight that Fall Fest will return in 2020, on Sunday October 11. Our plan is to double the number of vendors from 35 to 70. There is already a great buzz for our second Fall Fest, as the vendors from last year have expressed their desire to return, while many new vendors are asking what they can do to reserve space at The Walt. In addition, musicians have been asking us for months if they can headline the event.

Revamped summer concert series

Speaking of musicians, in 2019 we revamped our Summer Concert Series. Our concerts by the University Heights Symphonic Band continued to be held at John Carroll University. But the rest of our shows were held at Walter Stinson Community Park. We had returning favorites, and we introduced new bands.

The strong concert lineup, combined with the new location and increased promotion, led to bigger crowds at our shows. The highlight of the summer was seeing over 1,000 people at The Walt for Carlos Jones. We had our friends and neighbors from University Heights in attendance, plus many people from outside our city. This concert allowed people to be introduced, or reintroduced, to University Heights and everything we have to offer.

Just like our success with Fall Fest, our success with our 2019 Summer Concert Series provides us with a foundation for an even better series in 2020. We are working on securing advertisers and grants to make this summer's series bigger and better.

And tonight, thanks to a grant from the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council, I am pleased to announce that our 2020 Summer Concert Series will kick off on Thursday, June 18th at 7:00 p.m. with the triumphant return of Carlos Jones and the Plus Band.

City Beautiful 5k

Another community building event we launched in 2019 was our City Beautiful 5K. September 22nd was a beautiful day for our first race. Dozens of people started at the Walt, raced through "Logoville" before finishing back at the park. All runners received t-shirts, and the top finishers were awarded medals. Proceeds from the race benefited the University Heights City Beautiful CIC.

Mark your calendars now, and start your training programs tomorrow, as the race will return on Sunday, September 13th, 2020.

CIVIC AWARDS.

For years, rightfully so, University Heights was known as the City of Beautiful Homes. But starting in 2018, we decided once again to celebrate the kind and beautiful people who live in those homes. After a ten-year hiatus, the University Heights Civic Awards returned in 2018, and we held the event again in 2019.

The 2018 Civic Awards were in this room, the Jardine Room. In just one year, we outgrew the Jardine Room. We held 2019's event in LSC, and frankly, we probably could have used an even larger room, as we had to turn people away in November. Cleveland Indians on field host and JCU alumna Gabriella Kreuz hosted the event.

At the Civic Awards, we celebrate the people who make a difference, and whose efforts makes University Heights an even greater place to live, work, and raise a family. We honor "Good Neighbors," as well as volunteers, city employees, elected officials, and worthy organizations. And we distributed the yard signs to the winners of the Beautiful Home Awards. While we don't have a date set yet, this community building event will absolutely return in 2020.

Pride

In June 2019, I gave the fire department the direction to hoist the gay pride flag for the first time at City Hall, below the US and UH flags. We flew it for the entire month of June. It was received with overwhelming support, by the many residents who felt the inclusion and support that the pride flag represents, and we received just a few complaints.

We all want to be safe, to be accepted for who we are. The thing about flying the pride flag was, if nobody challenged it at all, then maybe we wouldn't have to do it. But because a few people did -- and it wasn't many, just a few -- it did tell me that a display like that is appropriate to bring awareness and remind people that we've got work to do.

Later that month, city council passed a resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of Stonewall. And come June of 2020, we will be flying the pride flag again at City Hall.

In late 2018, county council passed antidiscrimination legislation making it a violation of county law to discriminate based on LGBTQIA. When I ran for this office, it was before the county had taken action, and I then came out in support of a local ordinance in UH stating the same. While the County ordinance applies to University Heights, I believe it is appropriate for all levels of government to enact such legislation. I call on our city council to consider and pass our own antidiscrimination ordinance. If council passes it, I will sign it. Standing here at a podium on the campus of our local private Jesuit university, this school currently is more progressive in its policies and rules towards the LGBTQIA community than the city is in ours. It's time to update our laws.

Parade

While we added new community events this year, and revamped old ones, there's one event in University Heights that needed little change. That of course is the University Heights Memorial Day Parade. This parade is the biggest of its kind in Northeast Ohio. Not only is it the biggest, it's also the best. I say that without hesitation or fear of contradiction. Or, as Will Rogers once said, "it ain't bragging if it's true." Or maybe it is bragging because it's true. Either way....

Our parade not only honors our Veterans who served our country, but it celebrates the freedoms that their sacrifice helped create. And it serves as our city's official kickoff of summer.

And let me give credit where credit is due. Our Memorial Day Parade is a success each and every year, due to the hard work of our amazing parade committee (

Pete Bernardo

Barbara Blankfeld

Harvey Blankfeld

Phil Ertel

Jane Evans

Rich Fried

Robin Gernsheimer

Wendy Gernsheimer

Jerry Jacobson

Patty Sheil

Sean Weiss

...all led by Special Projects Coordinator Rachel Mullen, with the assistance of our service department and safety services.

In 2019, our Memorial Day parade may have been the largest we've ever held. Parade goers were treated to the debut of Cooper, our city's brand ambassador. Cooper spent the summer attending city concerts and visiting kids' lemonade stands throughout the city.

We are often asked, who is Cooper? I prefer not to talk about the individuals inside the costume, because that's not important. What's important is that, if we open up our hearts, there's a little bit of Cooper inside all of us.

Planning is already underway for the 2020 parade. I'm already re-working on my candy distribution strategy. Last year, it seems I tossed most of my Tootsie Fruit Chews before I even got to Miramar. For all the kids who are at the Belvoir end of the parade route, your mayor vows to do better in 2020.

MOSAIC Magazine.

In 2019, we partnered with the Cleveland Jewish News to create Mosaic, our first ever city magazine. Mosaic is another way for us to communicate with our residents about the great things happening in our city. Each issue includes a feature on a city employee, a small business spotlight, articles from the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District and from John Carroll University, and a restaurant review from the loveliest restaurant reviewer I know – true story, my first encounter with our “Lunch Date” reviewer was in reading her restaurant review of Mallorca in Northern Ohio Live magazine back in 2002.

Every issue of Mosaic allows our local businesses to advertise to every household in University Heights. We published three issues in 2019, advertising revenue is through the roof, and our next issue will hit later this month. And as with previous issues, not only will they be mailed to every residence, they will be available in local businesses, and provided to local Realtors to have at their open houses here in the City, to help them let prospective home-buyers know everything our city has to offer.

POLICE AND FIRE

The most important role of any mayor is to work to keep their city safe. In their first full calendar year in their respective positions, Chief Dustin Rogers and Chief Robert Perko built upon their departments past successes in 2018, and are well positioned to continue to do the hard and important work to protect the safety of everyone in University Heights – not just those who live here, but those who work here, go to school here, and those who shop and visit, as well as to our neighboring communities in mutual aid. The men and women of our safety services are prepared to put themselves in harm's way to protect and to serve. As Safety Director that is a responsibility I hold seriously, respectfully, and carefully, so as never to be casual with the responsibility I have towards those who have undertaken these duties for our community.

POLICE

In 2019, our Police Department continued updates to ensure policy and procedure is reflective of recognized best practices, state law, federal law, and case law. This will allow our police department to keep up with legislative changes, maintain positive relations, and ensure officer safety – all in service of public safety.

In addition, our police procured equipment to help officers more effectively respond to active threats. They earned a grant from the Department of Homeland Security to allow them to purchase 31 portable radios. Our officers participated in numerous regional trainings, and earned the Triple A Community Traffic Safety Gold Award.

And perhaps the highlight of the year was our first ever Shop with a Cop event. In December, our officers participated in a fun filled day with local students. The officers helped kids shop at Target, they wrapped presents together, and they enjoyed a lunch from Rascal House Pizza. The officers may have had just as much fun as the kids, if not more. We're planning on making this an annual event.

Looking ahead to 2020, the Police Department will continue its community policing and outreach programs through Coffee with a Cop,

National Night Out, and other programs, with the goal of strengthening relationships between our officers and the people they serve.

We look to update our civil service rules, to help us attract and recruit candidates. In 2020, we hope to implement our first ever K9 unit.

FIRE

Moving over to our Fire Department... under the leadership of Chief Bob Perko, in 2019 our department focused on staffing, fire prevention, and training.

Last year, the Fire Department hired four members, fully restoring on-duty staffing levels. This allowed for vacancies to be filled due to previous promotions in 2018 and the re-opening of the Fire Prevention and Education Bureau. These actions will greatly reduce overtime costs to the city in 2020. New employees have breathed new ideas and energy into our Fire Department.

The re-opening of the Fire Prevention Bureau involved plenty of hard work, but it was well worth the time and energy. We recognized that much more how we had fallen behind in community engagement and prevention practices.

For the first time in over 15 years, our Fire Department has comprehensive and current building plans. These are accessible on new departmental CAD software that offers in-apparatus emergency incident information, turn-by-turn directions, silent dispatching, pre-plans, and mutual aid response information. Thanks to the work by the Fire Prevention Bureau, our firefighters are safer, and so are our residents.

And thanks to improved training, the department is growing intellectually and becoming more confident through enhanced competence. Morale within the FD continues to improve and culture continues to change for the better.

One of the highlights for 2020 will be the Home Safety Inspection program. Officers will literally go door to door in University Heights to meet with residents, and offer services like free home safety inspections and installation of smoke detectors. We are proud to team up with the American Red Cross on this project.

Last but not least, in 2020, our new ladder truck will arrive. It will be worth the wait, and this too will make University Heights a safer place to live and work.

More economic development

As previously mentioned, redevelopment is coming to University Square, and new townhomes will be built, and new infill housing will be constructed. Much of the credit for these projects belongs to Susan Drucker and the Economic Development Department.

2019 was a busy year for the Economic Development Department. We created the Storefront Improvement Program. We created a database track available commercial space in University Heights. Mrs. Drucker conducted 121 business visits, including visits to welcome 12 new businesses to University Heights.

Working with Communications and Civic Engagement, the Economic Development Department produced Welcome Bags for new residents. Our interns deliver bags filled with information about city services and local businesses to new home owners. Not only do these packages serve as an introduction to our city, it helps our businesses attract new customers.

2020 will continue to be busy at Development. In 2020, we aim to redevelop the former Action Pest site, and bring development to the former KFC and Midas sites. The Home-Based Businesses ordinance is being rewritten in an effort to better serve our residents and their home businesses.

In addition, we will ask council to approve a comprehensive zoning code update. This is greatly needed, as our current zoning code is terribly out of date, and not business-friendly.

Our zoning map also needs to be updated to ensure the current uses actually comply with the zoning designations. As part of this update, we

need to eliminate multiple zoning districts assigned to the same property, and ensure the parcels detailed on the map are the actual parcels.

A comprehensive zoning code and an updated zoning map would go hand in hand, and are essential to serving the city for many years in the future. It will make commercial redevelopment easier. It will make residential improvement easier. It will help us further the city's master plan to ensure that we are encouraging our long range vision for our city. It will make our city more attractive for investment, which enhances our quality of life, and strengthens our tax base.

Turning now to Housing and Community Development...and Building

Under Housing and Community Development Director Patrick Grogan-Myers, we applied for and were award six grants in 2019, bringing in \$253,395, and bringing the office's grant award total between 2015 and 2019 to almost \$1,000,000. These grant projects include producing recycling awareness marketing materials; organic playfield management education; upgrades to LED pedestrian crossing signals, LED traffic lights, and school zone signs; and improving pedestrian safety and reducing impervious surface at the Washington Boulevard-Silsby Road-Saybrook Road intersection.

Several pieces of legislation were introduced to City Council to clean up and modernize our Zoning Code.

In housing, Mr. Grogan-Myers performed a review of several major programs in the Department, removing redundancy in processes to deliver better quality and faster services to residents and stakeholders. The department conducted over 1,000 inspections across the point of sale, inspection, and exterior maintenance programs, and completed a survey of the City's housing to assess the housing stock quality, so that we can better focus efforts on exterior maintenance.

Speaking of exterior maintenance, Mr. Grogan-Myers administered our city's new Exterior Maintenance Grant program. Homeowners whose

income met certain requirements could obtain a 90-10 grant of up to \$2,500 to fix an exterior maintenance problem for which they'd been cited. One senior resident on a fixed income wrote the city to thank us, that this grant program allowed her to afford to repair her driveway stay in her home. We plan to bring this program back in 2020.

Our Housing Department has worked hand in hand with our Building Department. Under Building Commissioner Jim McReynolds, we brought in two new inspectors, though we did lose one late in the year. We have been actively engaged in building inspections, to promote safety, and to facilitate the opening of new businesses. Mr. McReynolds has been with the city only since 2017, after coming out of retirement to serve, initially part time, then full time, initially temporarily, then permanently. Every business own and building owner I've spoken with, when it comes to Mr. McReynolds, all say the same things: he is courteous, pleasant, explains what needs to be done, without being punitive about it. Unless they don't do it, in which case, we have a new prosecutor, Stephanie Scalise.

Mr. McReynolds has notified the city of his intention to resume his retirement. Last week, Mr. Grogan-Myers accepted the position of Economic Development Director for the city of Maple Heights. I could not be happier for them, and I will miss them both.

This time of transition will serve as a time of opportunity. With these coming departures, we have begun considering the restructuring of the Building and Housing departments. I envision a singular department that oversees three areas: planning (zoning, master planning, development, grantwriting), building (permits, construction, inspections), and maintaining (Point of Sale, Exterior Maintenance Program, Property Maintenance Grants). In short, plan it, build it, maintain it. This reorganization will be designed to create efficiencies that improve service in all three areas while controlling costs. Soon in 2020, we will be proposing some changes to council towards the goal of enacting this restructure.

Turning to Finance

In recalling a recent time when consolidation or merger into another city seemed likely, I note that now two of our four neighbors have higher tax burdens than we do, Shaker Heights which you all knew, and South Euclid which eliminated its city income tax credit, now requiring its residents to pay the full municipal tax rate regardless of how much local tax their residents pay where they work. The city of University Heights has not raised income taxes in University Heights since 2006. Meanwhile, expenses are up. Unavoidably. The price of everything goes up. Even as we talk about whether we can afford raises, the rate of inflation in 2019 was 1.9% and in 2018 was 2.4%. Even a 2% raise this year, which is being talked about in princely terms, only keeps up with inflation. This year we will begin making payments on a new ladder truck that will cost us \$1.6m over ten years. The acquisition of this new truck was unavoidable and absolutely necessary, and rightly had the unanimous support of council in 2018 in recognition of public safety.

For 2020, administration has delivered a budget to city council that eliminates deficit spending, is a balanced budget across all funds, but innovatively, uses means at our disposal so as not to eliminate fulfilling the needs this city nevertheless has, in making necessary road repairs, in replacing outdated fire equipment, in restoring the replacement schedule for police vehicles, in providing our fire prevention bureau vehicles that are road worthy and don't shut down in traffic, in making vital equipment replacements in the service department, and all doing so without tapping into our reserves. When it comes to capital expenditures, our city has a history of binging and purging. One year, we will buy to make up for years of austerity, and then the following year we will cling to austerity again, creating a need to have a makeup year again in the future where we will again seemingly overspend to make up for lost time. That's no way to run a city, but we can avoid it this year.

We have the means to obtain a bridge loan, to make available today the money we need and that we can pay back as other obligations come off the books over the course of the next three years. With that money being freed up, we will have the ability to pay off that loan – without even factoring in the income we can properly expect on the townhomes and University Square, not just from the new residents who will live there, but

from the payroll taxes of the construction workers on these projects. Nevertheless, some are hesitant about the idea. Don't be. This is a sensible way to provide the residents the level of service they need and expect. And we can do this without increasing the tax burden on our residents.

One of the reasons we brought in an expert like Dennis Kennedy to be our finance director was to have a sure hand to show us the way financially and help us make good long term decisions. Towards that end, we have revised our investment policy. We have implemented a reserve policy. We have created a special account, to save money for the 27th pay that we have to pay every eleven years (including this year) that blew a \$375,000 hole in our budget this year. It is quite likely that not one of us in elected government today will be in office to see the benefit of that last policy improvement. But we did it anyway, as responsible stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. And to leave this city and its finances in better condition than how we found it.

The alternatives to the bridge loan are raising the income tax, eliminating the tax credit like South Euclid just did, or by reducing the effectiveness of our safety forces, either by having our safety service do without the equipment they need to protect our residents, or by reducing their numbers and reducing staffing – which got the last mayor tossed out of office in a popular revolt – because our residents don't want their safety compromised.

I do not and will not support raising our city income tax. I do not and will not support eliminating the tax credit. And I do not, will not, and cannot support gutting our safety services. Therefore, I support the bridge loan, as should council, and I call upon our council to approve the administration's proposed budget with the bridge loan. Because it is going to be one of these four things. Let's pick the right one. It is the easiest multiple choice quiz ever.

SERVICE/TRASH/RECYCLING

Let's talk a little bit about the service department.

Our city service department continued to provide responsive personalized services for rubbish collection with over 4,500 tons of residential waste with tipping fees of \$195,000. Included in this total are approximately 1,800 Special Pick-ups which generated approximately \$18,000 in fees.

We collected and recycled 265 tons of mixed recyclables and approximately 22 tons of mixed paper and cardboard. We purchased a new shipping container and modified it to allow for the collection of mixed paper and cardboard recyclables in-house.

We collected and recycled approximately 2500 tons of yard waste. (grass, brush, and leaves)

We conducted two household hazardous waste collection events with paper shredding.

FLEET MAINTAINANCE:

We replaced one rusted out and worn out 2001 Dodge Dakota with a 2019 Ford Ranger at a cost of \$23,689. And with that, we reduced to zero the number of calls from residents complaining about the appearance of that old truck.

All Service Department vehicles were upgraded with new rebrand logos.

And we performed general maintenance, oil changes, and tire replacements on over 50 pieces of equipment in the Service Department, 16 in the Police Department, and approximately 10 in other departments.

SEWER MAINTENANCE:

The Service Department responded to a total of 155 sewer calls for lateral inspections and cleaning- 125 sanitary sewer calls and 30 storm sewer related calls. The approximate cost for these services was \$55,000

MAIN LINE SEWER TELEVISIONING AND CLEANING:

AAA Advanced Plumbing & Drain Co. completed their second year of a two-year contract for sanitary and storm sewer maintenance in the city. Following is a breakdown of the work they performed in 2019:

16,200 feet of sanitary sewer line cleaned and televised.

15,100 feet of storm sewer line cleaned and televised.

7 emergency call-ins for blocked sewers. All at a cost of \$ 26,742

CATCH BASIN CLEANING & REPAIR:

The catch basin cleaning and repair program continued in 2019 with 291 catch basins cleaned at a contract cost of \$62.00 each and an extended cost of \$18,042. The continuation of the cleaning and repair rotation throughout the Service Department Staff repaired of two (2) basins. Each basin required approximately a day to complete with two staff members assigned.

All at a cost of \$19,842

STREET SWEEPING:

Street sweeping operations were performed from April through December by the service department street sweeper when available. A total of 280 cubic yards of debris were collected and disposed of in a sanitary landfill.

A total of 20 days was devoted to street sweeping.

The debris collected from street sweeping was disposed in a sanitary landfill at a cost of \$41.90 per ton. The City collected 280 cubic yards of material. Approximate disposal cost of \$11,732. Approximate total Cost: \$22,772

SEWER REPAIR:

Sewer repair activities were performed by both city crews and contractors in 2019. Under contract, Fabrizi Trucking & Paving, Inc. completed three (3) storm sewer lateral repairs, eleven (11) catch basin repairs and thirteen (13) roadway repairs at a cost of \$91,323. Add in the In-House Jobs, and the total Cost: \$ 113,403

TOTAL SPENT ON STORM WATER BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN 2019: \$237,759

It is our robust sewer program that has extend the life of our sewer system. One day we are going to have to make some major upgrades – NEORSD will require it, the EPA will require it – in 2019 I met with the EPA Wastewater Administrator and advised that of the impossibility of

making our city pay for \$178m in proposed sewer upgrades. So at this time, we are taking good care of what we have.

ROADWAY MAINTENANCE:

Service Department Staff provided weekly pot hole patching of roadways throughout the City.

Approximately forty (40) water main excavations were repaired by City crews, and paid for by Cleveland Water.

MAINTENANCE OF PARKS AND PUBLIC PROPERTIES:

Service Department Staff provided weekly landscaping and rubbish collection services to all parks, public properties and medians.

In 2019, after multiple requests, we purchased and installed doggy bag dispensers in Walter Stinson Community Park.

SNOW AND ICE CONTROL:

In the 2018-2019 season the Service Department used 2,118.5 tons of road salt at a cost of \$138,587.

URBAN FORESTRY:

During 2019 the Service Department managed two contracts for urban forestry management. 2018-2 for tree pruning and removal and 2019-1 for fall planting. The two contracts resulted in 730 trees pruned, 75 trees removed (\$72,311), and 136 trees planted (\$46,270). For a total cost of \$118,581. In 2020, we have brought in a new arborist, Jason Knowles, to review and then continue our tree program.

POOL & RECREATION:

Service Department Staff managed the replacement of the sand filters at Purvis Pool, the installation of emergency exit gates and the electrical conduit and boxes for the installation of internet, Wi-Fi and a new Point of Sale system. Staff also replaced the main filter pump and had the spare repaired. Pool staff learned to operate and maintain the new POS and pool ID systems.

New wind screens were installed around all tennis courts.

And further, our service employees assisted with setup and cleanup for special events such as Memorial Day, the concerts, turkey give away, touch a truck, movie nights, Fall Fest, and new this year: Holiday Lighting at City Hall.

For the present snow season: we have increased the staffing of the salt call-in crew from 3 to 4 to improve snow and ice control operations. With the mild winter, we've had less occasions to call so far. But I understand Cooper saw his shadow, so we'll be having six more weeks of winter.

Coming up:

We also will be negotiating new collective bargaining agreements with our service employees, as well as police and fire. All of our contracts expire in June. We will shortly begin work and commence negotiations to complete all new CBAs this year.

And as many of you have heard, this year we will be completing the Solid Waste Collection Study. Working with city council, while being responsive to community concerns, we will seek to implement improvements to how we collect rubbish and recycling.

[Introduce council]

At last I would like to take a few minutes to introduce our city council.

I have had the pleasure of working with Councilwoman Sue Pardee over the course of the last two years as Vice Mayor. She is within sight of the end of her third and final term on council. She came in on wave of reform, having served on charter review. She is not here tonight as she is still recovering from a slip on the ice, a broken knee cap. But she is not one to let something like that keep her down. She has always had the best

interests of the city at heart. And while she has two years left on council, she selflessly stepped aside to allow a transition in council leadership. It has been my pleasure to work with Mrs. Pardee, and to continue to do.

In turn, I can say with great pleasure that Councilwoman Michele Weiss was elected unanimously last month to be our city's Vice Mayor. She is a thoughtful, inspiring public servant, and I look forward to working with Vice Mayor Weiss in her new role.

Phil Ertel represents the old guard here in University Heights. An advocate for Cedar-Taylor, and redevelopment, and that elusive ice skating rink.

John Rach perhaps is the new guard here in University Heights. We share a Mahoning Valley connection. He is an architect and an advocate for improving public safety and with Mrs. Weiss, the city's rebranding.

We have our two new members of council, Barbara Blankfeld and Justin Gould, who both served in volunteer capacities with the city before their election, and will soon be making their mark as councilpersons.

I would be remiss if I did not take one more opportunity to recognize departed councilmembers Steve Sims and Pam Cameron, and thank them one more time for their service, which concluded at the end of 2019. As well as Councilman Mark Wiseman, who left our council just shy of one month ago to become a magistrate in the Cleveland Housing Court.

There's one more person I want to recognize. She's not on council, quite yet. But we have a special meeting tomorrow. Sandra Berry grew up far from here. In Alabama. With her good friend Stephanie, since they were both, I understand, nine years old. And they both found their way here to greater Cleveland. Where one, Sandra, became a teacher, a CPA, an auditor, and a PTA president of Wiley, and would come to help her friend Stephanie, as her treasurer, for Stephanie's campaign for judge, become the county prosecutor, and ultimately our member of Congress. And

when we lost Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and Warrensville Mayor Marcia Fudge stepped up to serve, Sandra was there to help her too. Sandra Berry has advocated for our schools, for school levies, for students, and in her years of serving the community, rose to serve as Clerk of the Cleveland Heights Municipal Court. A resident of our city for 38 years, she is finding yet another way to serve our community, as – and I’m a day early here – our newest city councilperson to be officially named by city council tomorrow night. But since we are all here, I’d like to recognize and thank Sandra Berry. Welcome. [clap]

I’d also like to recognize and thank the other 25 people who applied for this vacancy – all of whom brought unique and valuable qualities, a sense of civic virtue, and dedication to our community. It is a testament to the strength of our community to have that much interest.

Speaking of School Levies....

We are all working together and rebuilding University Heights. But as we continue to build, we cannot neglect our foundation.

The foundation of any successful city is a successful public school district. We need to protect our foundation by supporting our local school levy.

Like you, I wish there wasn’t a need for school levies in University Heights, or in any school district in Ohio. The way Ohio funds its schools was declared unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court 23 years ago. For nearly a quarter century, we have called on Columbus to fix it. But they haven’t, in spite of the efforts of our own representatives. In spite of the flurry of attention given by the state legislature at the end of January, resulting in little that shores up our school district. The burden falls on us again to protect our public schools.

Paying more isn’t easy—even if it is just 76 cents per day, per each \$100,000 of home value. But what is the cost of not passing the levy?

Around Ohio, communities that have failed to invest in their schools are paying the price. Fewer people want to live in those places. In addition to the lost opportunities for our children, property values fall.

In contrast, people want to live in University Heights. In the first half of 2019, more homes sold in our city than were sold in all of 2018. In 2019, the median sales price for homes in University Heights exceeded \$150,000 for

the first time since the real estate crash of 2008. Property values are growing even stronger in 2020. We need to protect our home values. Passing the levy helps to do that.

If we don't pass the levy, our kids and our community will be increasingly at the mercy of the whims of politicians in Columbus, or worse, their continued inaction. I trust Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby to fight for what's best for our students. I trust University Heights' own Jodi Sourini and the rest of our school board to do the same. Passing the levy gives them the resources they need to work for the children of our community.

I want to be clear here. I am not here arguing against vouchers. I support families making decisions that they think best for educating their children. Here in University Heights, we have so many excellent educational options. But the state funding for vouchers should be funded at the state level.

Nobody locally is to blame for the school funding problem, but we have to act responsibly. We're all in this together, including those of us who don't have children enrolled in the public schools. Even if your children attend private school, our public school district acts in a supporting role, from busing, to facilities and playing fields, to developing Individual Education Programs, and more.

The future of our students and our cities depends on keeping the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District strong, and working at making it stronger. We must protect our foundation. On St. Patrick's Day, please join me in voting Yes on the Issue 26.

Continuing with education....

[University relations]

In another city with a university, this might hardly be worthy of note. In this past year, John Carroll University, approached the City of University Heights about its interest in building an NCAA competition approved tennis facility. JCU does not hold tennis matches here on campus, because the courts here do not meet NCAA competition standards. Representatives of the University met with me, met with our Building Commissioner, and we shepherded the university through the process: Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Architectural Review Board. And the new tennis court facility has been approved. Now all they have to do is finish fundraising and break ground. That might happen this

year. It was not always the case that the University could come to the city in confidence that we would work together on a project. But we do that now.

We are rooting for John Carroll!

Census

Before I conclude tonight, I want to give you all the pitch about the US Census.

Next month, University Heights residents will receive invitations to participate in the 2020 Census. It is vital to the future of University Heights that everyone in our city is counted.

By law, the U.S. government is required to count the number of people living in the United States every 10 years. Getting an accurate count is important, because census numbers impact daily life in the United States in many ways. For example, census data are often used to determine how much federal funding is allocated for important projects and services that benefit local communities. The census also plays a vital role in our nation's system of government by determining how many representatives will be sent to Congress from each state.

Ohio lost two Congressional seats after the 2010 Census, and our state is at risk at losing another after the 2020 count. If there is any chance in avoiding that, it is in ensuring that every Ohioan is counted. Even if we cannot avoid that outcome --

The Census will shape the future of University Heights. We can't afford to be an undercounted community. A study by George Washington University estimates that every person not counted this year costs the State of Ohio \$19,500 in federal funds over the next decade. Some estimate that number is even higher.

Locally, the Census Bureau estimates our population has decreased since the last census. But I don't believe it. We have fewer vacant homes than we did ten years ago. We have more and larger families that have moved into our city. If everyone steps up to be counted, we may find that our population may have actually increased over the 13,539 counted in 2010.

We have been promoting the Census for months now, via social media and our city publications. We hope to secure a grant from The Cleveland Foundation to allow us to directly contact “hard to count” residents. We will continue to reach out to residents via social media, including through a 90 second promotional video. The spot is called “Shape the Future of University Heights.” It is based on a video from the national census campaign, but we’ve made it our own, and I’d like to show it to you now...

[play video]

I want to thank Mike Cook, and the many residents who appear in this video, for encouraging Census participation in University Heights.

BIG PICTURE

Finally I want to take a moment to talk about our city within the context of our state, and of our country.

I don’t have to tell you that nationally this country is tearing itself apart. We have seen our national office holders put the coarse in discourse. We have seen a disrespect for the rule of law, of discarding longstanding norms of decency and civility. Some may argue that we were always this coarse, but if so, now it is out in the open. I would submit that it was always there, yes, but that there was once balance. Albeit, that balance sometimes came at the cost of impeding progress. Painting the grass green. A peaceable patina masking precariousness, unrest, and injustice.

As your mayor, I resolve to continue to strive to be the change I want to see in our country. Positive. Progressive. Responsive. Sensitive. Open. And strong. It has worked here in University Heights, and while this is a special community, I don’t think we are so different from anyone else in wanting what we want, having what we have, valuing what we value, striving to be better, while aiming for the best.

Our community is a diverse mosaic. Not merely because we say so, but because we are so. But because we *say* so, we are celebrating that University Heights is a place where people from all over the country and all over the world – from all walks of life and from a vast array of experiences, all races and creeds and colors, come and choose to make this city their home. I could not be prouder to hold the honor of being your mayor and leading this city, and all it represents. University Heights

is truly So Much More than Home. And we're telling the world, and we're back on the map.

Thank you to Kate Malone, and John Carroll University for hosting us this evening. Thank you to Mike Cook and Rachel Mullen for their assistance in making this evening happen. Thank you, the citizens, the city council, the directors and chiefs, our clerk of council, everyone who makes this city work, and most of all, I want to thank my wife, Gina Ventre, without whom I couldn't begin to have the headspace to do any of this. Thank you. God Bless You. And good night.

**Respectfully submitted,
Michael Dylan Brennan
Mayor of University Heights, Ohio
February 11, 2020**