

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST – The 2022 Budget
Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan
January 11, 2022

My budget priorities are what University Heights residents have been asking for over the last few years. Residents want us to do something about flooding. They deserve to have roads fixed. And they insist on a modern and sustainable approach to improved recycling. It's also time to make new city facilities a reality. Just to name a few.

I've heard the residents, and their priorities are my priorities – indeed they are the City's priorities. With this budget, we are Putting People First.

We begin with approximately \$2 million in infrastructure improvements.

Infrastructure: The Manhole Separation Project.

Too often when it rains in University Heights, residents are subjected to sewer backups in their basements. In my budget, we'll use federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to begin a manhole separation project, separating access to storm and sanitary lines, with an eye towards further upgrades, e.g. the eventual building of separate trenches for the lines. This will reduce backups significantly.

As I reported to the community in September 2021:

"[A]cknowledging the sewer upgrades called for by NEORSD in their May 2020 report, upon the recommendation of City Engineer Joe Ciuni and Service Director Jeff Pokorny, the City's efforts to begin rehabilitating the sewer system should start by separating the combined manholes.

In order to separate the combined manhole system (and remove the steel plates that separate the over/under sewers) the storm sewer would be relocated and a new storm only manhole adjacent to the sanitary manhole would be installed. The storm sewer would be intercepted approximately 50 feet short of the existing combined manhole, deflected enough to clear the existing combined manhole, attach to a new storm manhole installed and

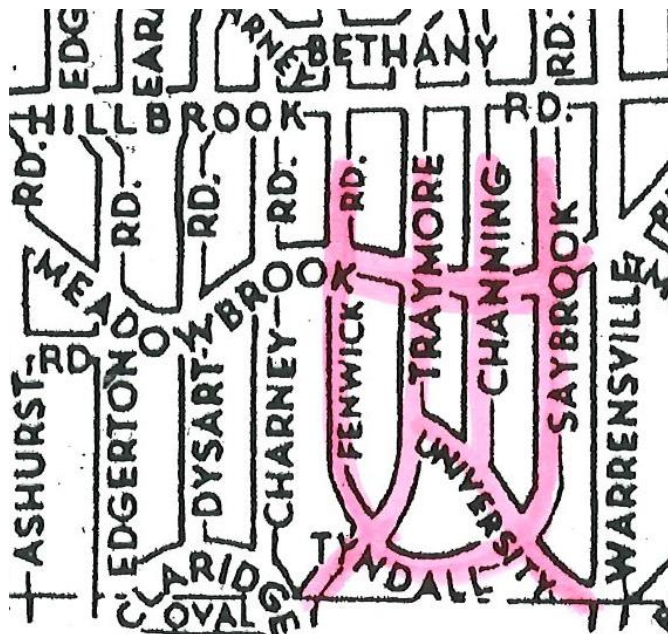
then deflect back approx. 50 feet to the original alignment (and repair the street above).

The City Engineers estimates the approximate cost to separate the manholes, install a new storm only manhole and eliminate the steel plates at approximately \$20,000 per location. Some locations may require more work due to the presence of other utilities, but the \$20k is a round, ballpark number.

...

The Service Director and GPD Group can choose the most needed areas to begin this project... based, in part, where flooding that occurs due to the overwhelming of the sewer system during storms has been attributed, in part, to combined manholes where utility workers have been prone to remove the plates but failed to fully restore the plates once they have completed their work, resulting in storm water overwhelming the sanitary sewer lines. Additionally, GPD advises that they may project where new trenching for sewer separation may be planned, so that the new manholes do not become obsolete upon further sewer system upgrades.

As since recommended by the Service Director, the “use of ARPA funds to remedy/reduce sewer flooding along Meadowbrook Blvd. through the separation of manholes and the elimination of steel plates, is recommended to begin south of Hillbrook Road from Saybrook Road east to Fenwick Road each south to Meadowbrook Blvd. and north of Fairmount Blvd. from Saybrook Road east to Fenwick Road each north to Meadowbrook Blvd.



“We estimate approximately 30 manholes @ \$20,000 per location, or \$600,000. The manholes along Meadowbrook Blvd. intersections will need to be evaluated for potential inclusion in the project.”

While some sewer upgrades might lack an immediate appreciable effect on residents, this one stands to reduce the instances of flooding. For the residents who have experienced and endured flooding, this will come as welcome relief.

Infrastructure: The Traymore Road Water Main Project.

This project is in partnership with Cleveland Water Department as part of their Suburban Water Main Renewal program. This \$.5m project would replace the water main on Traymore Road from Hillbrook Road to Warrensville Center Road.

After a competitive bidding proceed, the City awarded the Traymore Road Water Main Project to Terrace Construction. Due to supply chain issues, the project did not commence in 2021 as once planned. It should proceed in 2022.

Infrastructure: Cedar Road Project.

The much anticipated Cedar Road Project is the resurfacing of the road and the improvement of pedestrian crossings on Cedar Road from South Taylor Road to South Green Road (suspending and resuming work at the concrete section from Fenwick Road to Miramar Boulevard) in the Cities of University Heights and South Euclid.

This project is being done in partnership with the City of South Euclid, and uses funds from federal, state, county, and local governments. The engineering has been completed, and after consultation with ODOT, the project is ready to proceed in 2022. The City of University Heights' contribution in 2022 is \$280,000.

Infrastructure: Road Resurfacing, and Complete Curb Replacement.

The residents maintain beautiful homes, and as residents we take care to landscape and keep up our exteriors. The City then repaves the streets and (except on main and secondary streets) has been doing only spot replacement of curbs. It's like wearing a new suit with scuffed up old shoes.

This is an issue I have heard about from residents all over the city. The policy of spot replacement has resulted in spotty outcomes. Some of our streets have mismatched curbs, and curbs that have sunken from years of inattention. They don't come back on their own.

On one resurfacing project last year, new curbs were built with a slope to meet sunken curbs that weren't replaced. We must do better.

As I announced in November 2021, beginning this year, it is the administration's policy that full curb replacement is to be done with every resurfacing project. Full curb replacement is included in the roads program estimate. If a particular new curb might be detrimental to an existing tree lawn tree, I am open to creative options that may avoid harming the tree. The general rule shall be full curb replacement on all streets starting in 2022.

The streets to be done in 2022 are Bushnell Road from Edgerton Road to Warrensville Center Road, White Road, and Glendon Road from Meadowbrook to Silsby. None of these streets have been resurfaced since the 1990's. The estimated cost for each street is based on 3" of Mill and Fill resurfacing, an estimated amount of pavement base repairs and replacement of all curbs between the drive aprons. A minimum amount of driveway aprons are also included in the estimated costs.

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| 1. Bushnell (Edgerton to WCR) – Last resurfaced in 1997 and 1998 | = \$256,000 |
| 2. White Road – Last Resurfaced in 1994 | = \$ 85,000 |
| 3. Glendon (Meadowbrook to Silsby) – Last resurfaced in 1998 | = <u>\$ 160,000</u> |
| Total = \$ 501,000 | |

Ensuring that we do full curb replacement on projects going forward is among the most responsive things we can do as a local government. The overwhelming feedback from residents regarding the street program is about the curbs, and the dissatisfaction regarding the city's previous failure to replace curbs. Over time, we will rectify this as resurfacing projects continue.

Sustainability: Improved Recycling.

Residents want a greener city, and one of the ways we do that is by improving recycling.

University Heights currently has one of the most inefficient recycling programs in Cuyahoga County. With only 6% of our solid waste recycled, University Heights has the third lowest recycling in the county outside of Cleveland.

We aim to turn that around. It requires that we collect loose recycling instead of bagged recycling.

Under this budget, residents will no longer have to shop for blue recycling bags for their recyclables.

In the current system, we send blue bags filled with recyclables to Kimble's Twinsburg Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) for processing. The bags are ripped open, the contents are dumped onto a conveyor belt, and the torn blue bags themselves are then sent to a landfill. It's wasteful, and frankly, it goes beyond the whole intent of recycling. It's also costly. Since 2020, Kimble charges the City 50% more to process bagged recycling than it charges other communities in the East Side Consortium for processing loose recycling.

To accomplish this, the budget provides for one 69-gallon recycling cart on wheels for each household currently serviced by the City for rubbish and recycling pickup. Residents may place their recyclables directly in the cart, loose and without a blue bag. The Service Department already has a cart flipper on hand for handling the carts. All we need now are the carts.

With the increase of mail order delivery for goods, especially since the pandemic, the carts are simply better suited for the volume of cardboard we use as residents. Currently, loose cardboard that isn't tied or bagged (as currently required) is frequently discarded with the rubbish instead of the recycling, as our current method of pickup is not compatible with handling a high volume of cardboard. Those two fixed cans on the fronts of the Kubotas simply don't hold cardboard well.

People want to do the right thing with all of their cardboard. Understanding that the City doesn't handle cardboard well



when we pick it up, and we have allowed residents to bring their cardboard directly to the service yard to place in the blue cardboard container. Well intentioned residents then overfill the cardboard container on site. Turns out we don't handle it well here either. Cardboard intended for recycling gets wet and/or contaminated. The yard is left a mess. And there isn't room for additional containers.

We can do better, and with the recycling carts in this budget, we will do better for our residents, and yes, for the planet.

New Signage: the Deployment of the UH Mosaic Brand Resumes.

The Priority 1 Signage phase of the City rebranding project was originally scheduled to deploy in 2019.

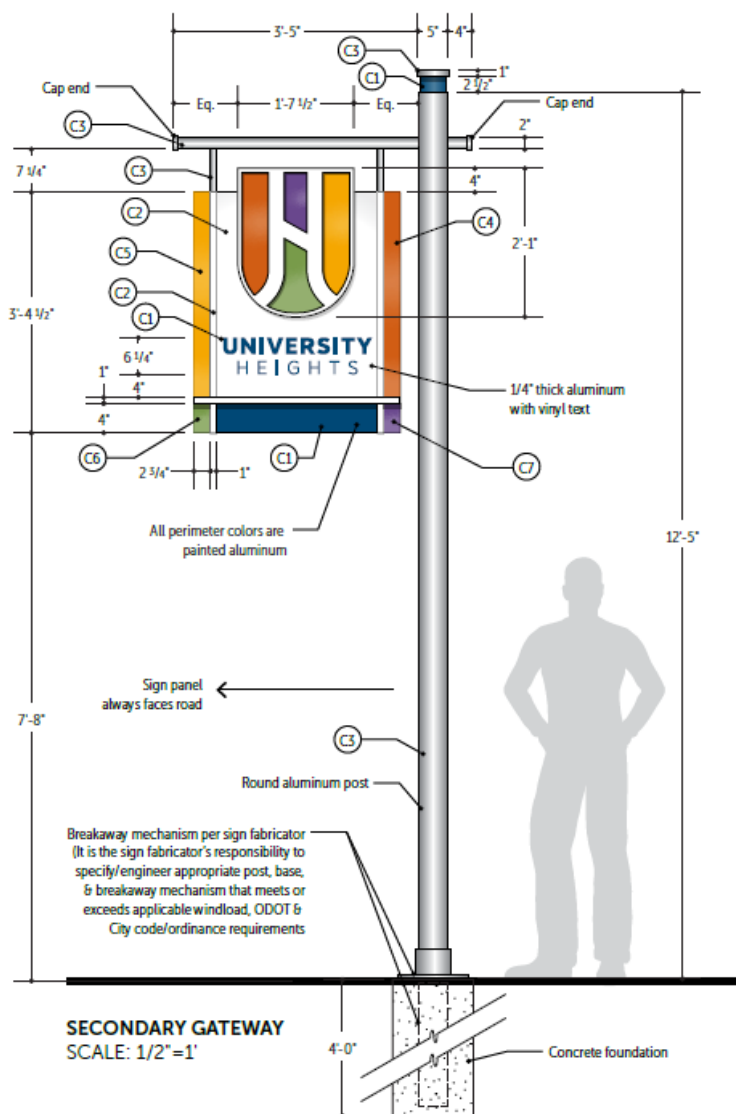
In 2022, our new city logo and branding will be seen on new signs welcoming visitors and residents to University Heights.

The Priority 1 Signage includes new primary and secondary gateway signs, new pole mounted gateway signs where space does not allow for a primary or secondary gateway sign, and permanent signage for Walter Stinson Community Park: a monument sign on the Saybrook end of the park, and a sign utilizing the existing arch on the Fenwick end.

Signs for City Hall, Purvis Park, Gateway Banners, pocket parks and other points of interest will be covered in later phases.

The City developed the new branding with the assistance of Guide Studios. The City plans to use the services of Guide Studios once again for this project.

Budgeted originally at \$100,000 in 2019, the 2022 budget is for \$125,000, in acknowledgement of inflation, increased labor and material costs.



New Municipal Facilities.

Over the last four years, we have increased programming at The Walt. We have moved our summer concert series there. In the summer we have events most weeknights, from Yoga in the Park to Tai Chi in the Park, to Bootcamp in the Park.

Organically, we have seen the park transform into a city center. Coffee sales on weekends. Volunteers tending to flower beds. Impromptu performances by musicians. Freecycle meetups. Even as the weather turns, people keep trying to use The Walt, even in the cold.

The demand is clearly there. People want a place to congregate year round. With new municipal facilities, we can truly achieve the year round programming our residents have been craving. Not to mention better serve the whole community, with improved police, fire, administration, and service facilities. And even host our own city council meetings in our own facilities again one day soon.

In 2021, I proposed transferring \$100,000 into a new fund (Facilities Capital Improvement Fund) for New Municipal Facilities. City council agreed, and we created that fund and made that transfer.

Last year, the City spent \$45,800 from that fund for a Municipal Facilities Needs Assessment Study. The first draft prepared by GPD Group has been reviewed administratively. GPD is preparing forthwith a second draft to be presented to City Council for council review and input.

While we await the next draft, at this time, I have budgeted an additional transfer of \$100,000 to the Facilities Capital Improvement Fund.

This budget proposal reflects what we all know. The City Hall is obsolete, out of date and inaccessible. There is no gathering space for the community. The buildings for our police, fire, and service department are woefully inadequate. The residents of University Heights expect and deserve better.

City Hall, Fire, and Police would ideally remain located at the current location on the corner of Warrensville Center Road and Silsby Road. Additional property could be acquired for a comprehensive

redevelopment. The Service Department remains a suitable candidate for relocation.

Residents need and deserve year-round senior and community program, and new facilities will allow that to happen. A new City Hall will be environmentally efficient and ADA compliant with community spaces. New buildings for fire and police will allow greater access and help us serve the public more efficiently.



The Fire Department was constructed in 1941, while the Police Department followed in 1953. The “town hall” building was built in 1925, the year Idlewood adopted the name University Heights.

New municipal facilities were studied in the 2003 University Heights Master Plan, and adopted in the updated plan in 2016. We all know it needs to be done. What we are studying is how to get there.

Once Council has received and reviewed the facilities study draft and met in Committee of the Whole with our consultants, together we should consider and take the next steps, including the hiring of a project manager among other professional services. Additional funding and sourcing for that funding should be considered at that time.

In the meantime, the City will do its part to keep making The Walt a happening place, and do what we can for programming for seniors given the current facilities limitations. More on this below.

Our Community Centers: The Walt and Purvis Park.

Many of you know that my entrance into local issues was being part of the 2012 grassroots effort to build the community park now known as Walter Stinson Community Park, or The Walt. We had great expectations, but in 2012, even I did not dare to hope the degree of success The Walt has been.

When the pandemic drove people outdoors, The Walt was one place people could safely gather. The use of The Walt has transformed from seasonal to year round activity.



3D RESTROOM STRUCTURE VIEW 1

The park restrooms were designed for seasonal use only. Currently, they close for the season from Halloween till Memorial Day. Their

design requires closure so that winter temperatures don't freeze the pipes.

The 2022 budget has funding towards modifying and heating the restrooms to keep them open year round.

Turning to Purvis Park, the Beryl Rothschild Pool at Purvis Park has long been our community's greatest amenity. To keep it that way, it is time to paint the pool, paint the waterslide, and replace the poolside lounges and vertical chairs.

The budget also funds our traditional community activities, including the Memorial Day Parade, the Summer Concert Series, and Fall Fest.

Finally, the budget restores the stipend position for Seniors Services Coordinator, a position last held by Walter Stinson, who retired for the last time with the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are working with the Heights Libraries to coordinate the eventual resumption of Senior Happenings, a new part time coordinator will be given the latitude to create and arrange senior events that are safe and advisable under the ever fluid conditions of the pandemic. In Putting People First, we owe it to our seniors to do what we can with what we've got, even with the challenges of COVID variants and our own limited facilities.

Public Safety Remains Paramount.

When I first took office four years ago, I ran on rebuilding the Fire Department, and together we did that. We reopened the Fire Prevention Bureau, and opened the Office of Community Policing.

The Putting People First Budget includes the funding the Fire Department needs for turnout gear. It includes two new police cars, and the funding needed to complete the police radio system upgrade. It continues the funding needed for the Fire Department's voluntary Home Safety Inspection Program that residents may utilize to identify fire risks in their homes.

Our police, fire, and service employees worked the duration of 2020 without a raise. Working together in negotiating the new Collective Bargaining Agreements with all unions, we all agreed that 2020 would

remain a zero raise year, and instead agreed to 3.5% raises beginning in July 2021 and again in 2022. Council has approved these CBAs, and the new raises for both years will be paid for largely out of the 2022 budget. The 2022 budget also provides the funding needed for increased health insurance costs.

Exterior Maintenance Program Restoration.

The Putting People First Budget restores funding for the exterior home maintenance program for University Heights homeowners. Every homeowner wants to keep their home looking beautiful and up to code, but sometimes needed repairs are often out of their price range. By restoring funding for the exterior home maintenance program, we can support homeowners, maintain property values and ensure University Heights remains “The City of Beautiful Homes.”

Established in 2019, the Exterior Maintenance Program provides a 90-10 grant up to \$2,500 to qualified homeowners for resolving an exterior violation. For some prior grant recipients, it was the difference between being able to afford to age in place, or giving up and selling the house.

The Putting People First Budget makes \$50,000 available for grants.

The Service Department at Your Service.

Over the years the City has increased the workload of the Service Departments without adhering to the equipment replacement schedules or addressing their staffing needs.

The Putting People First budget recognizes that the Service Department’s role in the everyday lives of residents. We all hope we will never need to call the police or call for an ambulance, but every week, we need the rubbish picked up. Every winter, we need the streets plowed. Every fall, we want our leaves picked up. And when the sewers back up, or trees fall in a storms, they are there, day or night.

To better do all that, we must finally address and fill the need to hire two additional service department employees. At times this year, we

had no more than one driver and one temp on a rake doing leaf pickup, while everyone else was assigned to solid waste pickup. That isn't sustainable and cannot continue. We need help.

The previous City Council declared as recently as November 15, 2021, that "[t]he City of University Heights shall maintain backyard solid waste collection for its residents." In order to do that, we need more employees. Two new full time laborers are in the budget, one funded in the service budget, and one in the sewer budget. These hires are essential to ensuring the timely collection of rubbish, the ongoing improved plowing of streets, and keeping leaf pickup on schedule.

As for equipment, and as scheduled, the budget provides for another new garbage truck, a one ton pickup truck with plow, and a mower. All are to replace equipment in poor condition that are due or past due to be replaced.

Improving Internal Operations to Better Serve You.

The new year will see us formalize at long last a regular IT provider for the City, and we have budgeted for this. This will finish the transition I started four years ago to IT that is proactive and not merely reactive.

With that, we have budgeted for a new website with improved functionality. During the pandemic, we moved special pickups online. Other city payments, like ordering a garage sale permit or for a civil marriage ceremony, are planned to be moved online as well.

Further IT enhancement include a budget for new Surface Pros for councilmembers to replace the long obsolete iPads purchased under a prior administration, and an Owl device for recording and/or streaming council committee meetings.

We have budgeted for an outside HR consultant to handle the day-to-day HR duties, in a proactive and not merely reactive way. Currently we rely too heavily on department heads to serve as their own HR. This creates problems when we have workers compensation and disciplinary issues. We often end up referring matters to labor counsel

that could have been handled more efficiently and more economically by an HR professional. With the adoption and implementation of the new employee handbook, the time is ripe for professionalizing the city's HR functions.

Planning, Building, and Maintaining the Sustainable City.

The Building Department budget is actually less now than it was in 2019 thanks to the efficiencies created by SafeBuilt. In late 2020, our City Planner was temporarily promoted to interim manager of Building and Housing while we transitioned to SafeBuilt. At that time, he left to pursue another professional opportunity. We did not fill his position in 2021. Restoring the City Planner position is in the budget for 2022. This is essential to the Community Development function of the Housing and Community Development Department.

The Putting People First budget contemplates and continues the strong work of the City Economic Development Department, provides funding for the widely-supported comprehensive zoning code update, and restores the Storefront Improvement Program. Suffice it to state, it is the widely held opinion throughout city government officials that the redo of the zoning code is essential to planning by design the University Heights we want to be for decades to come.

Putting People First.

Even at this length we have not covered every aspect of the 2022 budget. There are bound to be questions and suggestions by council and by the public. In Putting People First, we welcome ideas that better serve the public, and deliver the results and outcomes that the people of University Heights demand and deserve.