

City of Highland Heights, Ohio 2019 State of the City Address

Dear Residents:

As the Mayor of the City of Highland Heights, it is my responsibility to prepare an annual State of the City report for the residents and businesses of our community. I am honored to be your Mayor and to call the City of Highland Heights my home. Our City is a close-knit community that is a wonderful place to live, raise a family, work, or even own a business.

Not only do we realize the unique and special qualities our City has to offer, but Cleveland Magazine apparently agrees by ranking the City of Highland Hts. within its list of the top ten suburbs in the Cleveland area. We were especially honored by improving our rating from the seventh best suburb in 2017, to the third best in 2018! Their annual "Rating the Suburbs" report is based on many factors including safety, the quality of school systems, walkability, and home values, among others. This is a significant achievement that increases the desirability of our community when prospective home buyers and businesses are looking to relocate.

Recognition like this would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of all of the city departments and staff, as well as each and every resident taking pride in making their community a great place to live, so that we can continue to be "The City with Pride and Promise".

The following information is meant to be informative, and I welcome any comments or questions that you may have about the enclosed material.

Financial Overview

The City of Highland Heights remains financially strong. Although our General Fund expenses increased by \$127,000 in 2018, our revenues increased by \$920,000. City Income Tax collections represented \$783,000 of the total increase. We are fortunate to have a diverse, yet seemingly stable, employer base which contributed heavily to our income last year. Our General Fund balance at the end of 2018 was \$9.147 million dollars.

City Council was presented with, and passed, a balanced budget for 2019. Expenditures for 2019 include \$1,393,000 in street repairs with a County reimbursement of \$270,000 toward those expenses. Also budgeted is the purchase of two police vehicles, replacement of police weapons and radios, a new fire engine and other equipment for the Fire Department. Also included in the budget is \$700,000 for sewer and drainage projects, for which we are also being reimbursed by the County. Plans are in the works for updating the Dispatch Center at a cost of \$300,000, while the Service Department will be adding a new dump truck, pickup truck and a riding lawn mower to their equipment.

The Municipal Park will also see improvements and upgrades in 2019. Some of those items will be new chairs and a foosball table at the pool, along with new bike racks, bleachers, picnic tables and benches throughout the park.

At the Municipal Complex, roof repairs are needed in addition to a new floor and an upgraded bar room area at the Community Center. The City will transfer \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to the Capital Fund in order to proceed with the capital expenditures needed throughout the City.

Every other year, the State of Ohio requires a full audit of City financial statements and related procedures and finances. In accordance with Government Auditing Standards, extensive review is given to the City's internal controls over financial reporting and testing of compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements and other matters.

The audit of 2016 and 2017 statements was completed late last year, and once again, the City was presented with a clean audit report and the auditor's report states "in our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the City of Highland Heights." We are proud of the results of this and previous audits, and we remain committed to remaining fiscally responsible while providing quality services to our residents and businesses.

Building Department

The Building Department, under the direction of Building Commissioner Dale Grabfelder, is staffed with a full-time Assistant Building Commissioner, a part-time Building Inspector, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. The Building Department personnel are fully certified by the State of Ohio Board of Building Standards to enforce the Ohio Building Code and Residential Code of Ohio for the safety of all residents and businesses. The department handles the issuance of all permits for both residential and commercial construction.

In 2018, the department issued 528 residential permits (17 for new home construction) and 151 commercial permits. These permits generated total receipts of \$232,854 with an estimated construction value of \$19.7M. The final phase of new home construction on North Legend Court in the Aberdeen area began in 2017, and should be completed in 2019. The eventual construction of 13 new homes by K. Hovanian will complete the development of more than 700 homes in the Aberdeen community.

On the business side, Progressive Insurance announced and began the process of expanding their presence in Highland Heights with a major expansion of their current location in Alpha Park. The expansion includes the construction of a new 96,000 sq. ft. office complex and adjacent parking garage. The new building may hold up to 700 employees. The building and parking garage should be completed by the end of 2019.

Progressive Insurance also purchased the former Philips building on Alpha Drive with plans to occupy this space sometime in 2020.

The Building Department is responsible for enforcing all zoning laws, property maintenance codes, storm water management plans, including roadside ditch and rear yard swale maintenance, and the issuance of right of way permits. With the help of a part-time inspector, the department issued 233 violation notices, primarily identifying violations and enforcing of our zoning code and residential and business maintenance codes.

Fire Department

The Fire Department, under the direction of Chief William Turner, continues to provide superior services to the residents and businesses of our community. Chief Turner also serves as the Emergency Coordinator for the City. In this role, Chief Turner is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing city-wide policies and programs related to emergency management to meet County, State and Federal mandates.

In 2018, the department underwent an extensive review by the Insurance Services Office (ISO). ISO is a national insurance industry risk rating and assessment service that rates municipal fire departments on a scale from 1-10, with a rating of 1 being the best. They look at department operations, policy and procedures, training, communications, water supply and other analytical data to rate the department. We are pleased to announce that the Highland Heights Fire Dept. was awarded an ISO 2 rating. That makes our fire department one of only 77 departments in the State of Ohio with this score.

The department currently has a full-time staff of nineteen members which includes the Chief, Assistant Chief, Fire Inspector, three Shift Lieutenants and thirteen Fire Fighters. Funding for two additional full-time fire fighters was included in the 2019 budget. In addition to full-time personnel, the department also has six part-time fire fighters.

The department operates on the traditional 24 hours on, 48 hours off basis with a minimum of four firefighters on duty at all times. In addition to fire suppression and pre-hospital emergency medical care, the department provides fire prevention services, public education, hazardous materials response and mitigation, technical rescue and preparedness to both man-made and natural disasters. All department members are crossed trained as fire fighters and paramedics. The department operates under the guidance of University Hospitals, but we will transport residents to any local hospital under normal circumstances. In 2018, the Fire Department responded to 1,643 calls for service, 427 were fire responses and 1,216 calls were for EMS services.

The Highland Heights Fire Department is an active member of the Heights-Hillcrest Technical Rescue Team which includes approximately 75 members from the cities of Beachwood, Cleveland Hts., Euclid, Gates Mills, Highland Hts., Lyndhurst, Mayfield Hts., Mayfield Village, Pepper Pike, Richmond Hts., Shaker Hts., South Euclid, University Hts., and Willoughby Hills. The team is the largest in Cuyahoga County and provides specialized rescues such as swift water, building collapse, confined space, ice, dive, trench, rope and tower rescue. In addition, the team provides technical rescue services to the Chagrin/Southeast region of the county through a reciprocal agreement. In exchange for technical rescue response, the department in the Chagrin/Southeast region provides hazardous material services.

As a part of a community outreach effort, the Fire Department offers free CPR training and fire extinguishing training classes to residents and businesses within the City. The department also continues to support the efforts of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and remains the Charter Sponsor for Boy Scout Troop 461

Additional information about the fire department can be found in the 2018 Annual Report found on the city website at www.highlandhts.com.

Police Department

The Highland Heights Police Department is led by Chief James Cook. Chief Cook is responsible for the overall effective and efficient management of the Department. He is assisted in this role by a Lieutenant, an Administrative Assistant, and a Communications Specialist. The Department consists of 48 employees, 27 of which are sworn police officers and an additional 21 civilian and part-time employees. The department's organizational structure consists of an Administrative Assistant to the Chief, the Detective Bureau, the Patrol Unit, Jail Facility, the Communications Specialist, Records Unit, Communications Center and the School Crossing Guards. Emergency services are provided by the Police and Fire Departments through a 24 hour dispatching center located in our Communications Center.

The Highland Hts. Police Department is Nationally Accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Known as the "gold standard", less than 4% of the country's police departments have earned this award. In 2018, the Highland Hts. Police Dept. completed an annual assessment in which they were found to be in compliance for continued accreditation.

In 2018, the Department complied with the Ohio State Mandated Standards on Bias Free Policing and Investigations of Employee Misconduct through the policies, procedures, training, review of complaints, and reports made available to the public. In addition, annual training is required of all officers on the use of force, weapons, and all equipment that they use.

The Communication Center monitors cameras and recorders located within the Municipal Complex, City Park, City Pool and St. Paschal School, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, to ensure the safety and security of the people, buildings, and grounds in these areas.

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, and in conjunction with the Mayfield School District, a School Resource Officer (SRO) was assigned to Millridge Elementary School. The SRO is at Millridge every school day and serves as a positive role model for the students, as well as assisting with any problems that may occur within the school or on school grounds.

The Police Department continued ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) training for schools and businesses in Highland Heights. During the year, an Active Threat Scenario training session was held at Millridge School. The four hour training session was attended by police and fire personnel.

In November, Chief James Cook was appointed Chairman of the SPAN Chief of Police organization. The Suburban Police Anti-Crime Network (SPAN) is the Hillcrest area law enforcement partnership that includes Highland Heights, Richmond Heights, Mayfield Village, Mayfield Heights and Lyndhurst Police Departments. SPAN shares training and resources to maximize law enforcement and crime prevention services while reducing costs. APAN specialized units consist of Traffic Accident Investigation, S.W.A.T. Tactical Team, Drug Enforcement Unit, Bomb Squad, Hostage Crisis/Negotiation and Detectives. Highland Hts. Finance Director Joe Filippo is the Fiscal Officer for this organization, and Highland Heights has eight officers assigned to these specialized units.

Early in 2018, the Highland Hts. Police Dept., along with the mayors and the other police departments of SPAN communities, implemented the Safe Passages Initiative Program. This program encourages opioid addicted persons to seek help through the Police Department.

Individuals can receive expedited placement into an appropriate detox or treatment program without fear of arrest.

The department also provides community services such as School Safety, Crime Prevention, and the Drug Awareness Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program. Since its inception in 1992, the program has graduated almost 4,700 students.

In the community, we continue to offer the Community Policing Initiative Program to identify and prevent crimes of convenience, as well as the “Coffee with a Cop” Program held the first Sunday of each month at the Aberdeen Crossing Assisted Living Facility.

In 2018, there was a reduction in crime within the City. There were two reported residential burglaries and two breaking and entering situations. The Police Department had approximately 18,076 requests for service in 2018. The total breakdown of service requests is as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events	684
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict	258
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety	5,810
Assistance Related to Emergencies	3,876
Assistance Related to General Duties	6,460
Assistance Related to Jail Activities	988

In addition, the Police Department operates and manages a twelve-day Jail Facility certified by the State of Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention. During 2018, 286 inmates were incarcerated in the Jail Facility for a total of 5,885 hours. This is a significant reduction in the total number of hours (more than 50%) as a direct result of the Lyndhurst Municipal Court’s bail reform practice of releasing individuals with minor, non-violent offenses on reduced or personal bond instead of sitting in our jail facility awaiting trial.

Service Department

The Highland Heights Department of Public Service serves a growing community of more than 8,400 residents, with more than 3,400 homes, and over 200 businesses. The department is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the publicly owned infrastructure and public land, including more than 90 lane miles of roadway, 52 miles of storm sewer drainage and 112 acres of public property. The department interacts with the City’s safety forces and other departments as well as county, state, and federal agencies to coordinate a wide range of services in the community.

The Department is comprised of a staff of nine full-time laborers, part-time and seasonal employees, an administrative assistant, and the Assistant Director, and the Director of Public Service. Department personnel are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year, to respond to the emergency needs of the community. Under the leadership of Service Director Thom Evans, the department has been able to maintain its current level of employment despite a 30% increase in population and infrastructure.

In addition to programmed activities such as road patching, crack sealing, street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, property maintenance, leaf collection, snow plowing, etc., the Department responded to hundreds of miscellaneous requests for service in 2018. Additionally, the Service Department provides residential collection programs at various times throughout the year for brush, computers, household hazardous waste, and shredding.

The City's curbside solid waste and recycling program is contracted through Kimble Recycling and Disposal Inc. Kimble has provided service to our City since 2004. In June 2019, the City will begin the fifth year of a five year contract with Kimble. The contract allows the City to extend the contract for an additional two years if desired.

Since curbside recycling began a number of years ago, many changes have occurred in the recycling industry. Communities and recycling contractors around the country are facing higher costs and less demand for recycled materials. In our current contract we do not pay a disposal fee for recycling materials; however, moving forward there is a trend of recycling contractors beginning to charge a processing fee as a way of recovering costs in a declining market.

The 2018 Road Program included the complete reconstruction of Lynford Circle; asphalt resurfacing on Rutland Drive, Sturbridge Drive, and Kennelwood Drive; partial depth repairs on Brainard Rd.; full depth concrete replacement on Aberdeen Blvd. at the intersection of Bishop Rd.; and miscellaneous repairs at various locations throughout the City. The project was completed by CA Agresta Construction of S. Euclid at a cost of \$1,217,322.00

The 2019 Road Program will include sectional concrete pavement repairs in the Aberdeen and Maypine Farms neighborhoods, as well as the concrete streets south of Wilson Mills; replacement of the right turn lane on Wilson Mills from the freeway to Alpha Drive; asphalt repairs on Highland Road, Wilson mills, and Ridgebury Blvd.; and some paving in the Community Park.

The 2018 street tree program included the trimming and pruning of trees on Brainard, Canterbury, Clinton, DeWitt and Burwick. The goal is to service all neighborhoods on a six to eight year rotation.

The Service Department maintains an on-call staff available around the clock to handle snow plowing, deicing, and any other emergencies which may arise. During non-business hours, the Service Department relies upon the Police Department to advise when there is a need for service. The staff of ten full-time and two to four part-time drivers maintain approximately 92 lane miles of roadway and 22 lane miles of sidewalk throughout the City.

Storm Water Management

The City's Storm Water Management Plan and NPDES MS4 permit define and implement measurable goals to ensure storm water quality throughout the City and our local watershed area. The plan and permit are mandated by the Federal and Ohio EPA as a requirement of the Clean Water Act.

The City's Storm Water Manager, Chuck Zibbel provides technical and field related services and supports all areas of storm water management in the City with a strong emphasis placed upon the reduction and elimination of basement flooding, the management and improvement of drainage systems, and the management of activities and compliance related to storm water regulations and permitting.

The Drainage Committee has prepared, and has presented City Council with a revised Drainage Policy to help guide residents on how to handle drainage problems on private property.

Community Park

Along with the Park and Recreation Committee, Recreation Director David Ianaro is responsible for planning and coordinating all the recreation events within the City. With the help of program managers, directors, commissioners, seasonal employees and volunteer coaches, the Recreation Department offers a wide range of quality recreational programs and entertainment for all to enjoy.

Along with the regular summertime park activities of baseball, softball, tennis, swimming and day camp, the Recreation Department also offers special events each year such as Family Fun Nights at the Pool, the Neighborhood Bicycle Ride, and Family Movie Night at the Park. In addition, an adult pickleball program was added to the summer recreation program in 2018.

The Community Park is also the site of the annual Highland Heights Community Day. This one-day event is sponsored by the City of Highland Heights and includes food, fun and entertainment for all. The event concludes with a fantastic firework display to cap off the day of activities.

The Community Pool, located within the park, is open to Highland Heights and Mayfield School District residents and their guests. The zero-entry pool is approximately 10,000 square feet. Please refer to the 2019 Summer Sizzler for information on pool passes, swimming lessons, tennis lessons, and day camp, as well as other summer activities.

In 2018, improvements and expenditures in the Community Park included a new bocce ball court, improvements to the sound system at the ball fields, and the purchase of replacement chairs and buck-up pumps for the pool. As a part of the 2019 Road Program, areas within the park will be paved such as the upper parking area, the parking area next to the pool, and additional parking in the stone lot adjacent to the pool.

Registration for our summer recreation programs is currently underway. Residents may register in person at City Hall or by using the online registration link on our website at www.highlandhts.com. We are fortunate that our City offers such a wide range of quality programs and activities for children and adults of all ages to enjoy.

City Hall/Municipal Complex

Two major projects were completed within the Municipal Complex in 2018. The first was a contract awarded to A&J Cement Contractors for the complete removal and replacement of all the concrete walkways throughout the complex. The second project was a complete overhaul of the landscaping, along with the installation of a sprinkler system and new lighting around the outside perimeters of the buildings. The concrete and landscaping replaced in these two projects was dated back to the original construction of the Municipal Complex back in 1983.

The City of Highland Heights was awarded a NOPEC Energy Savings Grant in 2018 of \$34,662.00. A portion of the grant was used in 2018 to replace all of the windows in the City Hall building (which were the original windows) with energy efficient windows at a cost of \$16,630.00. In addition, \$6,900.00 was used to replace incandescent lighting in the Fire Station with energy efficient LED lighting. The remainder of the funds will be used in 2019 toward the replacement of the windows at the Community Center.

The Community Center is available for rental by residents and businesses of Highland Heights. Community Center Coordinator Gina Bissell is responsible for booking all events and activities at the Center. Information about the amenities and rental costs of the Community Center are available on our website at www.highlandhts.com.

Each year, the annual Memorial Day ceremony is held at the Peace Memorial within the Municipal Complex, where we honor veterans, current military personnel and their families for their service to our country.

The Highland Heights Community Garden, also located on the Municipal grounds, continues to be popular with residents of the City. The Highland Hts. Garden Club is responsible for coordinating the rental of the garden plots, which include two raised handicap accessible plots and an area donated to St. Paschal's Church for produce distributed to those in need.

City Council

As the former Council President, and Representative at Large, I can truly appreciate the hard work and dedication of each and every Council Representative currently in office. As Mayor, I look forward to working with Council toward our common goal of serving the needs of the residents and businesses in this community in the best possible way.

Below is a list of our City Council members and the committees on which they serve:

Cathy S. Murphy, Ward 1	440-442-0377	cmurphy@highlandhts.com
Leo R. Lombardo, Ward 2	440-449-2881	llombardo@highlandhts.com
Robert Mastrangelo, Ward 3	440-442-2854	rmastrangelo@highlandhts.com
Ann D'Amico, Ward 4	440-461-4224	adamico@highlandhts.com
Frank DiLalla, At Large	216-849-4476	fdilalla@highlandhts.com
Edwin V. Hargate, At Large	440-473-5476	ehargate@highlandhts.com
President Lisa Stickan, At Large	440-759-1106	lstickan@highlandhts.com
Regina Cahill, Clerk of Council	440-461-2440	rcahill@highlandhts.com

Legislative and Finance: Ed Hargate, Chairman
Cathy Murphy
Lisa Stickan

Safety and Service: Lisa Stickan, Chairperson
Ed Hargate
Bob Mastrangelo

Drainage: Cathy Murphy, Chairperson
Ann D'Amico
Leo Lombardo

Conclusion

In addition to serving as Mayor, I also serve as the Safety Director for the City. Many cities, similar in size, have mayors that also serve in this dual capacity role. Within the community, I currently serve as a member of the Suburban Police Anticrime Network (SPAN) Eastern Suburban Regional Council of Government. SPAN is a unit comprised of members from the following Hillcrest Police Departments: Gates Mills, Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, and Richmond Heights. SPAN members are highly trained and skilled

in special weapons and tactics, bomb squad procedures, hostage negotiation, accident investigation, and drug enforcement.

Within our school community, it is my pleasure to serve as a member of the Excel TECC Advisory Council, as well as the Advisory Council on Instructional Innovation. And finally, I also serve on the Council of Government for the Community Partnership on Aging (CPA). CPA is an organization that was established in 1978 (formerly the Tri-City Consortium on Aging) and was organized to meet the needs of senior adults, their caregivers, and families.

As your Mayor, I am deeply invested in the continued success of our City, and it is my promise that we will continue to remain financially strong by remaining fiscally responsible in planning and providing the very best services to the residents and businesses of our community.

Sincerely Yours,

Chuck Brunello, Jr.