

2015 STATE OF CITY SPEECH

I appreciate you inviting me here annually to talk about the State of our City. I have spent a lifetime in Garfield Heights, raised my family here and have been mayor for the past five years. During that time, I have spoken to you about the many challenges our community faces as an aging suburb. As you know, the foreclosure crisis throughout the country hit Garfield Heights very hard and we, along with other communities throughout our area, had to focus on how to address the problems of abandoned houses and lower property tax revenues.

COUNTY FUNDING

Recently, the county announced a \$50 million demolition fund to help cities throughout Greater Cleveland. Garfield Heights will get about \$1 million in the first round and could get more. Our economic development and building departments are working on a plan to demolish approximately 115 structures that are blighting our neighborhoods. These are mostly houses, but there are also several commercial buildings that will be torn down. This will be happening throughout the county and the hope is that property values will increase or at the least stop declining.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The county also has assisted Garfield Heights by giving us money to fix the water line on Turney Road. Anyone who has driven on Turney Road knows this project is underway. It's going to take a couple of years, but once it is done, we will have a brand new water line and a brand new road.

Additionally, Cuyahoga County is giving us money to fix Turney Road all the way to the border with Maple Heights and also Hathaway Road. We also are getting funding for resurfacing of 11 other roads in the city. And, we have a new patching machine that will help address the pothole problem.

You may have noticed that the Ohio Department of Transportation is widening the intersection of Granger Road and Transportation Boulevard. The developer proposing the shopping center at the former Bridgeview site paid our share of that improvement.

READY NOTIFY PROGRAM

Another free county program we are encouraging everyone to sign up for is a mass notification system called ReadyNotify. We actually had considered purchasing a similar system that would have cost about \$20,000, so we are thankful we now have this one at no cost to the city. The messages that get sent are emergency alerts, water boil alerts, utility outages and other important information. They are sent to your phone or email address you get to choose. To register, go online to ReadyNotify.CuyahogaCounty.us. The information is also posted on the city website.

MOBILE STROKE TREATMENT UNIT

Our partner The Cleveland Clinic introduced their Mobile Stroke Treatment Unit to the community. A private donor gave \$1 million to build and outfit the unit which is expected to make a huge impact on healthcare. When 9-1-1 is called and the patient has symptoms of a stroke, the mobile stroke unit will be dispatched at the same time as the squad. Basically, this unit brings the emergency room setting right to the resident's doorstep. There are only two places in the country that are using this unit, so we are very fortunate to have The Cleveland Clinic saving lives right here in Garfield Heights.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

This past summer, we partnered with the Garfield Heights City Schools, the Garfield Heights Municipal Court and the Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland to provide a Boys and Girls program at Garfield Heights Middle School. Approximately 125 students participated in the program and the topics covered included goal setting, teambuilding, values, career choices, conflict and more. These are some of the things students said about the program

- I learned to think before I act because that affects my consequences.
- I learned about teamwork and focus.
- I learned that you have to be on time for things.
- I learned how to listen and cooperate.
- I learned that you should always be thankful for what you have.
- I learned to be a leader and not a follower.

We want to offer this program again this summer and have our own year round Boys and Girls Club here in Garfield Heights. We think it would be a huge benefit to our community and the futures of children. So, we are working to raise money. Operating cost is estimated to be about \$250,000 a year. We are looking for financial support from the local business community and also are seeking funding from community foundations. This is a very important project; one that will save kids lives.

RECYCLING AWARENESS GRANT AND PAPER DRIVE BENEFIT

Recycling Awareness Grant and Paper Drive to Benefit Family Resource Center
The Cuyahoga County Solid Waste Management District awarded us a grant to increase awareness for recycling throughout our community. Go Green Garfield Heights is an effort to get more people to recycle. So, please help us spread the word and improve your own recycling practices whenever possible. We will be offering some workshops and programs to help increase awareness of the importance of recycling.

We also started a paper drive that will benefit the Garfield Heights Family Resource Center. We are encouraging people throughout our community to bring their paper to the bin located at the Civic Center. Each month, the River Valley Paper Company weighs the paper that is in the bin and we receive a check from them. The more paper that is recycled, the better it is for the environment and the more money we can make to help at-

risk families here in Garfield Heights. Accepted items include mail, magazines, newspapers, phonebooks, cardboard, etc. Additional information is on the city website.

SUMMER FESTIVAL AND SAFETY FAIR

Finally, we had a very successful 95th Birthday Bash this past summer. We estimated attendance at close to 1,000 people. It was a great day for the community. We had music, a magic show, pony rides, games for kids, food, raffles, a community organization tent, and more. And, we are going to have another Community Day again this summer and add a safety fair. All of you are invited to participate and attend and details will be available in the coming months.