State of the City -2018

 Mayor Kirsten Holzheimer Gail

Good evening Council President Mancuso, Members of Council, Directors and Chiefs, residents joining us tonight and those watching from home. It is my great honor to serve you as Mayor of the City of Euclid and I am pleased to be able to present to you the State of the City.

In thinking back to the past year, we have made some great progress, faced some challenges, and we have become a stronger, more resilient community thanks to the hard work, investment, and involvement of many.

My vision remains that Euclid will be a vibrant community where we all can be proud to live, work, and visit. It is my commitment that we will provide high quality service, communication, and accountability to our residents and businesses in a cost effective, innovative manner.

To do this, our focus continues to be on growing our business base, making safety a priority, strengthening our housing stock, providing high quality services to our residents and businesses, providing engagement opportunities to build relationships and networks across the community, and operating the city in a cost effective, innovative manner.

As I think back on 2017, 3 key themes come to mind – investment, resiliency and collaboration – you will hear these themes throughout and they will continue to play a critical role as we move forward in 2018.

We have certainly made some great strides this year in growing our business base. I know everyone shares my excitement to see the former Euclid Square Mall being demolished to make way for an Amazon Fulfillment Center. This not only removes a blighting influence in our city, but will bring $175 million investment in our industrial corridor, more than 1000 jobs, and improvements to the roadways surrounding the property. While this is a wonderful investment in itself, we are working hard to make sure that we use this to multiply the impact - or take advantage of the "Butterfly" effect. As discussed at the recent Chamber of Commerce forum on the Amazon story in Euclid, we will be working proactively to capitalize on this development to increase the tax base, replace blight, bolster restaurant and retail sales and offerings, and be a catalyst for additional redevelopment both in the surrounding industrial corridor but also through the attraction of additional business, retail and homeownership opportunities across the city.

In 2017, we welcomed new businesses such as Amazon Flex at Bluestone Business Park, Northeast Factory Direct, Chipotle, Drive Time, Simons Grocery Store, Irie Jamaican Kitchen and are working through the permitting process for additional new businesses due to open in 2018 including Universal Electronics (in Euclid Medical Building), Domino’s Pizza on Lakeshore, O’Reilly’s Auto Parts on E. 200 Street, completion of the 3rd building at Bluestone Business Park, Ardleigh Minerals on E. 222nd Street and we are working hard to fill the old Twin Value site adjacent to the Amazon site. So, one month in to 2018, I am confident in saying as recently quoted in the Cleveland Magazine supplement "investment is on the rise" and we are seeing "an industrial resurgence in the City of Euclid."

While attracting new business is important, we also are thrilled to work with existing companies to help them expand and grow. 2017 brought several exciting projects including the $30 million investment in the 130,000 square foot addition of Lincoln Electric Welding Technology and Training Center. We look forward to the grand opening in March. Additionally, other important expansion projects took place at Rick Case Honda, American Punch, Keene Building, and Action Car Star, and continued improvements and upgrades occurred at Euclid Hospital, HGR, NEO Sports Plant, and many other businesses across the city. Also of note, Ss. Robert and Williams Parish has invested more than $1.5 million on improvements to their facilities since their merger and has announced a new capital campaign to fund to add multipurpose gathering space – a continued commitment and investment in our community.

Planning and Development Director Holody and I also continued our outreach through business visits and meeting with brokers and developers and potential new businesses. We worked with partners like Jobs Ohio, Team NEO, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Cuyahoga County, Euclid Chamber of Commerce and others to make sure Euclid is on the forefront for additional opportunities. The Planning and Development Department began a new e-newsletter to make sure our business community is informed and connected to us.

One of the most common areas of concern heard through the business visits was workforce development and the ability to fill jobs. Understanding that workforce is important to our businesses it also offers opportunities for many of our residents to improve their lives. We have partnered with the Euclid Schools, Euclid Chamber of Commerce, WIRENET and business representatives in the "Euclid Works" project in order to impact this area. This is a collaborative effort to help ensure Euclid students and residents have educational and technical training opportunities to enable them to transition effectively into today’s workforce. We will be joining the Chamber of Commerce for a Euclid Works Job Fair and Expo on March 8th.

In addition to economic development, there has also been progress in 2 other main priorities of the Planning and Development Department in 2017. We completed the Master Plan process and are thrilled that City Council tonight officially adopted our new Master Plan. We went through a very robust process that included public input, public hearings, a steering committee of residents, a project team and online feedback. The result is a plan that includes data on current conditions, visions, goals, and action items including suggestions for implementation. I look forward to working with City Council, Directors and staff as well as community groups and residents to begin the implementation and realization of our vision.

In 2017, we also took a major step forward in our Waterfront Improvement Plan. All the necessary easements have been obtained. We have received 2 of the 3 necessary permits and have confirmation that the 3rd in on the way. City Council has authorized us to go out to bid for phase 2 of the Plan which includes a ¾ mile multi-purpose trail along the shoreline, erosion control, habitat and shoreline restoration, and a paddle craft beach at the eastern end and unprecedented public access to Lake Erie. We were also fortunate to have gained much public interest across the region and state including a front page feature in the Sunday Plain Dealer. Again, this is a true partnership and would not be possible without the help of the State, County, various funding sources, residents, and community support. We look forward to breaking ground in 2018 on this exciting and long awaited project!

Safety:  
Safety continues to be a priority of my administration. 2017 certainly brought some challenges, but I believe they have made us stronger and more focused on improving the way we serve our community. In 2017, our Police Department responded to 43,471 calls for service. I was thrilled to be able to swear in 4 new officers in 2017. In keeping with tradition, the Euclid Police Department received many awards and much recognition in 2017. The Community Policing Unit was recognized by the multi-county Safe Kids/Safe Communities Coalition as their "Agency of the Year" along with the "Community Outreach Award". For the second year in a row, the department also received the American Automobile Association’s Platinum Award- their highest award given to "commendable leaders for safety efforts and enforcement geared toward making communities safer." The Cuyahoga County DUI Task force awarded three departmental awards, in addition to three awards for individual officer recognition to Captain Jim Savage and Officers John Foran #34 and Tony Brentar #77. Officers Doyle, Coyne and Rhodes received Local Heroes award from Farmer’s Insurance for their actions within the community both on and off duty. The recent media coverage of Officer Matt Gilmer and Officer Todd Gauntner who took quick action and provided life saving measures in a police car when EMS services were not available further exemplifies the heroic efforts our police officers take to keep us safe.

The Euclid Police continued their commitment of working with the community and providing positive interactions throughout Euclid. Some of these include the popular Coffee with a Cop, Citizens Police Academy, Jr. Police Academy, Safety Town, PAL soccer and basketball programs. In addition, they worked closely with the schools, conducted toy and food donations, and organized a very popular National Night Out Against Crime. There are so many more I could name! All of these activities provide a great way for the community to interact with police officers and allow all of us to be engaged in making our community a safer place.

The Fire Department responded to a record number of calls for service in 2017 – responding to 10,824 calls. These were made up of 9203 EMS calls and 1621 for Fire. These numbers reflect a 4.8% increase from 2016. I was also thrilled to swear in 2 new Firefighters in 2017 and celebrate new leadership through the promotion of Platoon Chief Mike Gulya, Captain Chris Ciami and Lieutenant Chris Wilson. New leadership also took place in Fire Prevention as Captain Tony Pellegrino took on this role. The Fire Department has remained committed to leadership development and training to ensure the department continues its tradition of excellence with Chief Haddock graduating from the Executive Leadership Program at the Naval Post Graduate School and Assistant Chief Will Anderson graduating from the Ohio Fire Executive program. In all, the department participated in more than 13,000 hours of training.

The Fire Department also provided some important community engagement and interaction activities including Operation Save a Life. This is a partnership with the Red Cross that provided 346 smoke alarms in 154 homes. They also conducted the 3rd

 Annual Fire Safety Walk in partnership with both the Red Cross and Lincoln Electric that resulted in 369 smoke alarms in 127 homes.

I want to commend both departments for their commitment to continued growth, leadership and training which demonstrates the departments’ commitment to continuous improvement and quality service. I also appreciate their continued partnership with regional agencies and other cities which allows us to share resources, technical expertise and equipment. All of this has led to better service.

Two specific programs I found incredibly interesting were EPD’s "Day in the Life" simulation put together by Officer George Panagiotou and the Fire Departments’ Live Burn training scenario. I was able to experience firsthand the difficult and critically important work these departments do on a daily basis. I want to thank all of our First Responders and all of the residents who support their work and all of our work to make Euclid a safe community for all.

Building/ Housing:  
In 2017, we also made progress in improving the department and its processes. We welcomed Keith Foulkes as the new Chief Building Official in order to continue to provide technical expertise needed to improve the department and respond to growing investment in building and housing. We converted to CitiShere. This is a new building and housing software that was created specifically for us to streamline processes and better integrate multiple departments’ communication and documentation. The Law Department continued to assist in working towards compliance with our codes. They are an integral part of the compliance process as we work together to improve our housing and commercial properties. 2017 saw 1230 cases created for building, housing, fire, zoning appointments and 118 criminal cases filed in court. The Law Department also enhanced the nuisance abatement program to help improve quality of life and resolve safety issues in the neighborhoods.

We were also fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in a 5 city property survey funded through the Cleveland Foundation and conducted through the Western Reserve Land Conservancy to have a parcel by parcel inventory of our properties and the development of an interactive web-based tool to help in planning and decision making going forward. I want to thank Councilwoman Gorshe for her leadership and involvement in this process, as well as the involvement of the resident Housing Task Force who will help us to hold public meetings to share the results and help educate about the resources available. The results show 98% of our housing stock is in good condition. Foreclosures have decreased, vacancies have decreased, and property values have increased. We will continue to work with our partners S. Euclid, Maple Heights, Warrensville Hts, and Garfield Hts to strategize how to best use these results and to work with partners to address the remaining challenges each of our communities face.

The Plain Dealer has reported that our housing values have increased 16% in 2017 which also marks the 6th consecutive year of growth for our housing values. Unfortunately, we still are not back to previous high values but we continue to make progress. With a continued focus on code enforcement, nuisance abatement, rental registration and point of sale inspections, we will continue our work to strengthen and improve our housing stock. We have developed additional partnerships to help encourage and assist residents in improving their homes: EDCOR, Home Repair Resource Center, First Time Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance and the Heritage Home Loan program. We are seeing increased activity in the number of permits pulled for home improvements and repairs across the city.

We continue to utilize Cuyahoga County Demolition funds and in 2018 will continue to remove blighted structures as identified across the City.

In 2018, I look forward to working with Council to encourage new home building – both though RFP for development at Russell Erwine and other sites and also to explore partnering with developers to utilize landbank lots for in-fill housing development. New housing will help us to continue to attract new home owners but also help increase our housing values.

Also important to our strength as a community is the continued commitment to providing opportunities for our community to come together, engage with one another and create vibrancy across the city.

In 2017, we continued to support the role of neighborhood groups with technical assistance. We awarded 12 annual neighborhood associations grants and helped to spur additional creative engagement and resident-driven community building efforts through 6 Engage Euclid Challenge Grants.

We continued to improve and expand community events such as Wind Fest, Art Walk, Holiday Fest, 200th Street Stroll, Neighbors Night Out, Pond and Garden Tour, Memorial Day Parade and the Veterans Day program to name a few. Multiple neighborhood/ community meetings such as Muffins with Mayor, Coffee Connections, Neighborhood Association meetings, Dine and Discuss and Fireside Chats also continued throughout the year. Our Faith in the City group helped to connect our faith leaders and their communities through programs like the MLK Celebration of Honor, National Day of Prayer, the Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service, and Unity Walk. They continue to offer assistance in supporting and strengthening our community.

Again, in this area, partnerships have been incredibly important and we look forward to continuing to support and work with groups like Bike Euclid, Euclid Chamber of Commerce, County Board of Health, our neighborhood associations and faith and community organizations around many topics to help engage and support our residents. We look forward to continuing the formation of the Community Relations Task Force and introducing City Hall Academy to provide residents with the opportunity to learn more about how City Hall operates.

City Services: Service, Seniors, Recreation  
The provision of City services is one of the most important functions of a city government. Our departments have continued to look for ways to improve the services and improve our city. There continues to be re-structuring among departments and an emphasis on inter-departmental collaboration and communication which has resulted in better service. I hope you noticed an improvement in leaf collection, snow plowing and general upkeep of our public spaces. Progress continues at the Water Reclamation Plant – where the roof was placed on the equalization tank and work is now progressing in full force on the treatment plant buildings. On top of maintaining the important services to residents, Director Dan Knecht and his team were involved with more than 65 projects throughout the year ranging from public building improvements, street and sewer projects, utility upgrades and projects, waterline projects, storm water management, lane lining, road improvements, and so many varied and important projects.

For Senior Programs, 2017 was the year of collaboration. Several new partnerships were developed.   
Fresh Thyme Farmer’s Marker joined the senior center to provide bags of food once or twice a week for seniors to take home, Cleveland Food Bank brought over 2500 pounds of food on the 4th Monday of each month for a mobile food pantry that included fresh fruits and vegetables and several new classes and programs including ballroom dancing, Art with Jack, Fun with Foodies, computer literacy classes and grief support group, evening events, dances and Paint and Sip activities were added. We are extremely grateful for the many meaningful donations from businesses, banks, community and county grants which helped senior programs serve an average of 100 seniors each day at the Lakefront Community Center. In 2017, we served over 23,000 meals at the center, delivered over 17,000 meals to homebound seniors, and provide over 10,000 transportation trips.

Euclid Recreation Programs also introduced new programming including Dance, yoga, afterschool open gyms, Zombie 5K Dash, and re-introduced Touch a Truck. The Skate Park, playground equipment, and Willo Pool were improved. Grants were received to help with football equipment, basketball and community programming. Youth programs continue to provide not only high quality recreational activities but also mentoring and personal development for our young residents. Notable in 2017 was the success of the U9 Panther Football team who went undefeated and won North Coast, Midwest and National championships! A special thanks to participants, coaches and parents for helping to make this program and all of our other recreation programs successful.

A major accomplishment in 2017 was becoming an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. The Keep Euclid Beautiful committee has made great progress and impact by focusing on litter control, recycling and beautification throughout the City of Euclid. They organized litter clean ups, provided supplies, worked with adopt a spot and planning projects to help keep Euclid beautiful. We made progress on developing a stronger tree canopy by planting 533 trees thanks in part to a grant from the Cuyahoga County Supplemental Block Grant.

I also want to acknowledge the role of partners to help in our beautification efforts. Two new murals were installed on 185th on the side of Sammich and one on Lakeshore on Beach Club Bistro.These coupled with the addition of public art, benches, and planters has helped to improve these areas. I encourage any resident, family, neighborhood group, business who is interested in helping to call my office to learn how.

On the Administrative side, I am proud that we have also continued to work gaining efficiencies and innovation in the operation and management of the city. Some notable accomplishments include adding approximately $400,000 to our cash balance in 2017. The Finance Department once again received the Auditor of State Award of Excellence. The department transitioned to new software that is more efficient and cost effective and much more user friendly. Through the work of the Law Director and Finance Director, we partnered with the Attorney General’s Office to help collect delinquencies and have recently met with the County Treasurers and Prosecutors Office to develop a program for Real Estate Delinquencies and look to expand those efforts in 2018. In 2017, we completed LED lighting conversion in 6 city buildings including City Hall and continued meetings with other companies to explore how we can utilize state authorized programs to help improve buildings and systems through the energy savings.

As we work with Council on adopting the 2018 budget, it will be important that we seriously look at the imbalance in capital needs and available funds. I look forward to our discussions and working to create a long term plan that will allow us to address our needs.

I appreciate the hard work and diligence of all the Directors, Chiefs and staff who continue to look for ways to improve our service and operations through technology, inter-department collaboration and openness to innovation.

As we look forward to 2018, I am enthusiastic that we will continue to see increased investment and growth in the City.

The newly adopted Master Plan provides a new vision for our future and will guide our efforts and initiatives as we look to add businesses and improve our community.

You will see construction begin for an 850,000 square foot Amazon Fulfillment Center, the Grand Opening of Lincoln Electric’s Technology and Training Center, the completion of the 3rd Building at Bluestone Business Park.

You will see the opening of Dominos, O’Reilly, Universal Electronics, Ardleigh Minerals, the re-use of the old Twin Value site as well as other additional investment and development.

You will see Road improvements including re-paving of E. 222 from Marginal to Babbitt, completion of the St. Clair Corridor improvements, improvements on 260 and Euclid Avenue, and roadway improvements around the Amazon site.

You will see continued progress at the Water Reclamation Facility moving to work on the treatment buildings and beginning planning for the top of the tank when complete.

You will see continued work to improve our housing stock including the demolition of blighted residential and commercial properties utilizing County Demolition funds, new partnerships to encourage home improvements, efforts to spur construction of new housing.

You will see the completion of the new tennis and pickle ball courts in Memorial Park.

You will begin to see the new High School/ Middle School and Early Learning Center construction begin as we continue our partnership with the schools.

You will see construction finally begin on Phase 2 of the Waterfront Improvement Plan.

And, you will see the continued commitment to work together with City Council, community groups and organizations, partners across the region and residents to make sure that Euclid continues to grow and thrive. I do believe that we can be the vibrant community where we all can be proud to live, work and visit and I look forward to working with all of you to make that a reality.

Thank you for listening and thank you for your involvement and commitment to the City of Euclid.