

Economic Development ANNUAL REPORT

Highlights from June 2016 to December 31, 2016

We made forward progress on many important projects in Richmond Heights from June until December 2017. The top four most significant advancements are as follows:

- a. **Master Plan Update** – In June, 2017, after many weeks of establishing the Master Plan Update Steering Committee and Project Teams, the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission began the process of analyzing Richmond Heights. This analysis was for the purpose of formulating a plan for growth of the City for the immediate and distant future. The County Planning Commission, through the efforts of Marionette Richardson Scott, first studied our city’s demographics and current conditions. By the autumn of 2016, the County was giving our City stakeholders “homework” and asking us to explain areas of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats. We had public meetings and encouraged group participation. By the end of the year, Marionette and her team helped us identify 7 key zones where we can focus our City’s energies to help facilitate growth and prosperity in Richmond Heights. This work on the Master Plan Update continued through the first half of 2017. This Master Plan Update was conducted through a grant for which the City had applied. The grant was awarded through Cuyahoga County’s Planning Commission and was worth approximately \$50,000 to \$60,000.
- b. **Kiwanis Lodge \$200,000 Grant Request** – On December 23, 2016, The Department of Economic Development, working in collaboration with the Recreation Department, applied to the Cuyahoga County Department of Economic Development for grant funds in the amount of \$200,000 to provide ADA compliance upgrades to Kiwanis Lodge. In addition, the City sought grant funds for the renovation of the lower level to the Lodge in order to improve this community resource. Specifically, the City requested \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant Funds and another \$50,000 Community Development Supplemental Grant Funds. The City was awarded \$50,000 from the County from this Project. It is anticipated that the City will continue to pursue the other grant funds. However, in the meantime, the City is working to renovate the Lodge lower level and install an ADA-complaint chairlift in the internal stairwell which leads from the main level to the lower level.
- c. **Residential Real Estate Showcase** – On June 25, 2016, the Department of Economic Development hosted its second annual Real Estate Showcase. This year, the focus of the Showcase was more on residential concerns, such as housing stock, financing, credit worthiness and home repair. We held the event at La Taqueria in Richmond Heights, which was an added benefit—as we supported a local business. We know that the beautiful and diverse housing stock in Richmond Heights is a draw for families and new businesses alike. Therefore, we are working to grow this annual event and continue to draw bigger and bigger crowds.

- d. **Due Diligence and Analysis to Allow Growth and Sale of Medical Marijuana** – In the autumn and winter of 2016, the Department of Economic Development worked closely with other City departments including the Building Department and the Law Director’s office regarding the economic benefits of allowing marijuana grow, sale and/or lab facilities in Richmond Heights. This opportunity came about after the State of Ohio legalized medical marijuana use, cultivation, processing and sale under very strictly monitored circumstances. The due diligence we conducted during the second half of 2016, including attending business owner meetings, governmental hearings, and reading various studies and reports, served as the underpinnings for the City to move forward with allowing medical marijuana grow and distribution facilities in some of our City’s challenging commercial districts. It is believed that these businesses will provide economic opportunities for the City. In fact, because the State of Ohio is only allowing a limited number of licenses for small grow facilities and a limited number of licenses for large grow facilities, if a Richmond Heights business is awarded such a license, there will be great demand and potential success for such business.