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Mayor

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MAYOR KURTZ'S WEEKLY UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

Six Months and Six Million Cases



COVID-19 has taken the lives of more than 182,000 people in America. This week, Governor Mike DeWine said he has "grave concerns" about the coronavirus's spread during the upcoming Labor Day weekend, as do I.

We saw a significant spike in cases following the Fourth of July weekend. It happened again this week, likely due to students heading back to college and classrooms. It's a stark reminder that this virus continues to threaten lives every day.

We all want to get together and have fun this holiday weekend, but let's be smart. Keep wearing a mask in public, practice social distancing, and wash your hands. While the death toll is staggering, please think of the millions of people who have not been infected because they followed simple health precautions these past six months.

These Are Contentious Times

The COVID-19 pandemic, heated elections, isolation, high unemployment, and nationwide protests have increased anxiety and depression among many Americans. A recent study published in the medical journal JAMA found the problem is mostly angst rather than a full-blown psychiatric illness. Experts say even short-term periods of stress and uncertainty can interfere with people's judgment and decision making.

Please, practice mindfulness and focus your attention on the present moment without judgment. This isn't forever. It's just right now. Keep an open mind, listen to others, and just as important, listen to what you are saying and how others may be hearing you.

Health experts also stress the importance of people practicing “self-care.” That can mean simply getting outside, taking a walk, or enjoying a hobby. It is also important to unplug from the day-to-day bombardment of upsetting news.

Check out the [September Community Spotlight](#) for all the activities the City has to offer residents. We also launched the [End-of-Summer Community Concert](#) series through October 1.

Downtown Development



The idea of developing the City’s downtown began in the 1980s. Over the years, the City has acquired land, removed dilapidated buildings, conducted economic development studies, and surveyed residents. Finally, an architect was hired to develop a preliminary plan for the area.

In 2015, after more than 25-years of discussion and debate, the City was on the verge of moving forward with plans to develop the gateway to our community. The legislation stalled, and as we approach 2021, the area remains under-utilized and not meeting residents’ expectations.

Any plan must have a holistic vision for the downtown that aligns and preserves our strong sense of community.

At the City Council meeting on **Tuesday, September 8, at 7 PM**, legislation will be discussed to purchase the Kin Properties located at the intersection of Brecksville Road and Stone Road (photo above).

By acquiring this single acre of land that is adjacent to the City’s other landholdings, we will be in a strong position to offer a tract of land that mitigates a developer’s biggest hurdle - expediting property acquisition. It would give the City 193 feet of frontage on Stone Road and another 240 feet of frontage on Brecksville Road. That is nearly 500 linear feet of frontage on Brecksville Road.

The need for a more vibrant City Center and maintenance-free housing are two issues that residents told me were a priority last fall.

Sign Ordinance

A long-overdue sign ordinance will be introduced at the September 8 City Council Meeting. The goal is to allow the City to reduce the visual clutter and “sign wars” around the city that diminish our neighborhoods and create distractions and potential traffic hazards. My goal: preserve the community’s aesthetics and people’s First Amendment rights.

Rockside Woods Blvd., North - Brecksville Rd. Project

The City's Engineering Department is moving toward completing the Rockside Woods Blvd, North extension to Brecksville Road.

Last week the City mailed surveys to all the nearby residents to get their input about what they envision for the area. **If you received a survey**, please make sure you complete and return it in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope that was provided. It is essential that we hear from all the stakeholders by next **Friday, September 11**.

This week I spoke to the Cleveland Water Department about a water leak affecting Kleber Court residents. In subsequent conversations with the CWD, City Engineer Don Ramm was assured that the problem could be repaired in 90% of the cases through the main water vault.

The City coordinated with CWD to temporarily mitigate the water to proceed with our work. We were hopeful the CWD could permanently repair the leak before we finalized the pavement work at this intersection.

"The bypass line of the 30-inch diameter transmission main within the vault near the center of the Kleber Ct. and Brecksville Rd. intersection has had a slow leak for some time," said Ramm. "Due to significant challenges they are managing within their service district, the vault leak's permanent repair will have to be performed after our project is complete. This is outside the City of Independence's control."

As part of an overall strategy to enhance the City's appearance, the Engineering Department is working on creating a boulevard entrance to the Longano Drive subdivision. It would include wider access off Brecksville Rd. and new signage.

Fieldhouse Playground Shade Structure

The Recreation Department has begun the Fieldhouse Playground Shade Structure project. The site was prepped, and concrete footers and four main support posts were installed this past week.



Minor sidewalk repairs were made along Kathy Lynn Dr. near Zuber Field just ahead of the start of the school year.

Indy Youth Football

The Recreation Department staff is working with performance coach Joel Woods and local parents who are organizing a new football program. "Indy Youth Football" will be a traveling football program for children in grades 3 thru 6, and the games will take place at the Old Middle School football field. You can find more information on the group's [Facebook page](#). There are more than 55 children enrolled!



Sunflower Contest Winners

The City is pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 Sunflower Growing Contest!



Mike Dzek won \$100 for growing the tallest: **13.5 feet**
Lisa Casini won \$75 for growing the widest: **17.5 inches**

I hope this friendly, annual competition will continue to inspire both experienced and up-and-coming young gardeners to keep gardening and bringing beauty to our community.

End-of-Summer Concerts Scheduled Thru October

Families let us know they enjoyed the summer concert with Independence's own Kurt Freeman in Elmwood Park last month. The extra parking, more space to social

distance, and being close to Liberty Playground was very popular, especially with younger families.

We have extended the concerts through the first week of October. Two homegrown talents will be performing at Elmwood Park: **Taylor Tripodi** will perform on **September 17th** with Dana Catherine. **Kurt Freeman** will have an encore performance on **September 24th** in the Park.

The remaining three concerts will be at the Bandstand on Public Square. Here is the schedule of performers and food trucks:



END OF SUMMER CONCERTS | THURSDAYS 7-9 PM

Bandstand

- Sep 3rd - "The Ally Katz"
Bearden's Food Truck
- Sep 10th - "Buzzy J & The Verbs"
Southern Thangs
- Oct 1st - "Jukebox Heroes"
TBA

Elmwood Park

- Sep 17th - "Taylor Tripodi & Dana Catherine"
Cleveland Cookie Dough
Off the Griddle
- Sep 24th - "Kurt Freeman"
Barrio Food Truck

Another Banner Week for 55+ Lunches

Residents come by car, truck and even motorcycle to pick-up their senior lunches outside the Civic Center every Tuesday and Friday. The Community Services team did it again this week handling 500+ lunch orders. It was great to see so many smiling faces as we head into the holiday weekend.





Life is not measured by the
Breaths you take... but, by the
Moments that take your breath
away!



Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz



Labor Day

City Hall and the Service Department will be closed on Labor Day, Monday, September 7. Rubbish and recycling collection scheduled for September 7 will occur on Tuesday, September 8.



If someone forwarded this email and you would prefer to receive it directly from Mayor Kurtz, please send your email address to CityHall@IndependenceOhio.org.