

## 2017 State of the City

Read on Tuesday, April 3, 2018 at City Commission Meeting

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To the residents and businesses of the great City of Aventura, It is my pleasure as your Mayor to present the City's annual state of the City report.

Our fiscal year blew out with the strong winds of Hurricane Irma in early September. While we were fortunate to not have a direct hit from the storm, our community was impacted by debris, downed trees and streetlights, and damage to park structures. I was so proud of our employees' preparation and response before, during, and after the storm and pleased that we were able to clear the streets of debris, replant trees, and repair structures in a timely manner.

Fiscal Year 2017 also saw the culmination of many years of planning with the City Commission's approval of our own charter high school. In September, we adopted a resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the Miami-Dade School Board to open the 800-student school on two acres adjacent to Waterways Park. The project is well on its way with the City closing on the land and assembling financing, and we will welcome students to the new facility, which will include a gymnasium that will be available to the school and the community at large, in August 2019. This school not only provides an additional educational choice for our children, it promises to become a shining beacon for our community!

The City is able to support this and similar capital projects because of our strong financial position, which is made possible, in part, through economic development. Several significant additions to our community came on line in 2017 including the opening of the Aventura Mall addition, the AC Hotel, and the Aventura Hospital Emergency Room expansion. There are many more projects in the works for 2018, which will add to the excitement and vitality of our City.

The model of privatizing many service areas of the City's operations over the years has served the City well and has allowed for a more cost effective service delivery system, as compared to the traditional government structure. We are firm in our knowledge that we must continue to remain prudent and conservative in our financial management of the City. We are proud of the fact that after 22 years, the City's tax rate remains the lowest in the County, while we have maintained a high standard of providing services to the community. As a testament to the City's financial stability, we have received the Government Finance Officers' Association ("GFOA") Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting and Distinguished Budget Award for the 21st and 10th year in a row, respectively.

We continue to look for ways to assist our residents in getting around town. The City's bike share program, Aventura BCycle, ridership continues to grow and we added a sixth location along the Don Soffer Trail at East Country Club Drive/Yacht Club Way recently. Another transportation option is our popular shuttle bus service. With monthly ridership approaching 25,000, we are pleased to be offering a new route in the near future.

This past year your City Commission focused on expanding facilities and special events that magnify our sense of community and promote community involvement. The latest addition to our great park system, Peace Park on NE 188th Street provides playgrounds for all age groups and outside exercise equipment for adults to utilize while they jog or walk along the promenade on the inter-coastal waterway. Special events include our annual Founders Day celebration, with over 8,300 in attendance this year, additional movie nights in Founders Park, the Halloween Harvest event, the Ride with the Aventura Police bike event, and this year we are adding a wine, cheese, and jazz event for

the enjoyment of our residents. I look forward to seeing you there at Arthur Snyder Park on April 14.

Our Arts and Cultural Center offers a wide variety of entertainment options for all ages. The 2018-2019 season will include theatre, music, comedy and variety performances. Please visit [aventuracenter.org](http://aventuracenter.org) for performance and ticket information. To find out about these and other events, sign up for MyAventura E-Notifications on our website [cityofaventura.com](http://cityofaventura.com) and follow us on social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram).

Speaking of community involvement, the City Commission created a Youth Advisory Committee and appointed seven local high school students to be a part of the first participants. We look forward to hearing from these young people and working with them on various educational, civic, and community events and activities. In addition to the Youth Advisory Committee, the City has other opportunities available for those civic-minded residents. I would like to thank the members of our Community Services Advisory Board and the Arts and Cultural Center Advisory Board for your service and contributions to the community.

The safety of our residents, businesses and visitors remains a high priority. The men and women of our Police Department work tirelessly with the various condominiums, businesses and religious institutions to maintain our reputation for a safe community in which to live, work and play. This past year, the budget provided for the addition of four sworn law enforcement officers that will enhance safety and security as part of the Aventura Mall addition. In addition, expanded social media and community outreach initiatives, including the assignment of an officer to each community and business district, were implemented in order to engage the community in joint problem solving and crime prevention techniques.

Aventura began celebrating 22 years of history in 2017. In the years since our boundary lines were drawn, we have been blessed with incredible prosperity. But that doesn't just happen. From our founding days, this City has been governed by elected leaders who are selfless, dedicated and exceptionally bright. As we have transitioned from one Commission to another, innovation has prospered and politics have never taken precedence over people-driven policy. Inside the City of Aventura, the quality of life of our residents has always been the first priority. This City Commission is no exception. So I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my partners in The City of Excellence: Vice Mayor Robert Shelley, Commissioner Denise Landman, Commissioner Dr. Linda Marks, Commissioner Gladys Mezrahi, Commissioner Marc Narotsky, and Commissioner Howard Weinberg.

In closing, I would like to thank our former City Manager, Eric Soroka, for his 22 years of service to our community. We wish Eric the best in his retirement. I would also like to welcome our new City Manager, Susan Grant, and wish her every success working for and with our community in the future. I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of our community for their valuable support. The future looks bright and I know that because of all of you, Aventura will be ready to address all future challenges and opportunities.

Thank you.