

Hello Neighbors!

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Fall is here and so is my year-in-review update. As one of the five city councilors representing you, each vote I've casted is centered around supporting **stable neighborhoods, financial security, transparency, and conservation**. Contact me with comments and/or questions.

Silvia Quezada

**SAVE THESE DATES**

**University Heights City Election – Tues., Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> @ 7am – 8pm @ city hall, 1300 Melrose Ave.**

**FINKBINE DEVELOPMENT**



The Finkbine development proposal is to build, on land leased by the U. of Iowa, mixed residential living spaces: some townhomes, some commercial and residential, and 140 active senior living condos. Under the proposal, the 140 condos would be located across University Heights and Iowa City. A number of options came up at the September 9<sup>th</sup> public meeting. **Option 1**– Move boundaries East so that the condos are located all in Iowa City. **Option 2** – Move the boundaries West so that the condos are located all in University Heights. **Option 3** – Leave boundaries as they are. **Option 4** – No development in University Heights. In options 1-3, a tax revenue sharing agreement would be in place so that both cities share from the taxes generated. **A public forum is scheduled for Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. If you can't attend contact me with your comments. Your opinion matters.**

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR MUNICIPAL PARK AND GREENSPACE**

In 2018, 76% of voters approved a bond to buy 12 acres of undeveloped land for a “municipal park and green space.” The City Council has expressed no firm commitment to ADA accessibility for this public space. Our **Veterans with disabilities, residents who use wheelchairs, older adults, families with strollers, and residents with physical limitations deserve the respect to be included in our public city spaces.** **Funding is not an issue** as per Iowa law half of the hotel tax revenue must be dedicated to a very limited set of expenditures and could easily fund park accessibility without affecting other budget areas (e.g., police, streets and sidewalks, trash collection, public works). **We can have an accessible park that respects neighbors' privacy and protects green space. If you want the park to be ADA accessible please contact me. Your opinion matters.**

**COOPERATING ON POLICY ISSUES**

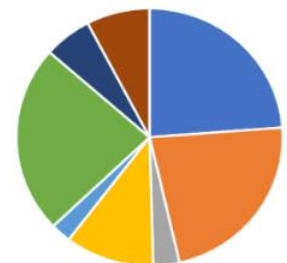
This year, the Council worked cooperatively on the Swisher Tract parkland and greenspace purchase, Johnson County Mental Health Access Center support, Ordinance 235 (5-0 vote), and appointing new police chief Troy Kelsey. On other significant policy issues with lasting consequences, such as, the budget, increasing garbage/recycling collection fees, Olive Court houses, and extending the TIF district, the Council vote was split.

**BUDGET TALK: corporate subsidy, police budget, general city operations**

The current city budget started on July 1, 2019 and ends on June 30, 2020 with budgeted expenditures of \$2,449,078. **The budget was not unanimously passed.** For this budget year, big budget expenses are: the subsidy to the One University Place developer for \$541,856; the Police Department for \$552,851; and Capital Projects for \$583,000, which covers the anticipated Olive Ct. street/sidewalk project.

**Bottom line, the City budget pays the bills and passes other bills to you, but there currently isn't enough revenue to take on new bonds to invest in badly needed street repairs in interior neighborhood streets or pick up very basic residential services that we are now paying for, such as, sidewalk repairs, trash/recycling.**

Current Budget FY2019-2020

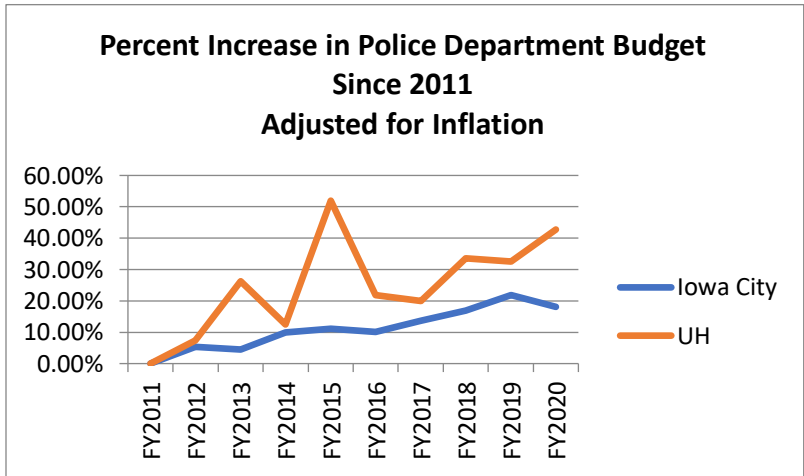


- Capital Projects
- Public Safety
- Culture & Recreation
- General Government
- Police
- Public Works
- Econ Development
- Debt Service

**THE TIF DISTRICT GROWS AND WITH IT THE DEFUNDING OF EDUCATION** The commercial space for One University Place (OUP) was subsidized by our City with a \$4M tax increment financing (TIF) award plus \$2.7M interest, totaling \$6.7M to the developer (not the current businesses). The commercial space was assessed at about \$2.5M when it was completed. As a reminder, the Marriott hotel being built will have several amenities for the community and involves no TIF. The original intent of TIF was to aid the development of blighted and/or economically depressed areas where there is high financial risk for a real estate project. TIF works by returning a portion of property taxes collected from the development to the developer up to a certain amount and with a time limit. The reality of TIF today is that it is often used to subsidize real estate in affluent areas, which was the case with our City in 2015. TIF law says that before the OUP developer receives their annual TIF subsidy, protected levies (typically to pay for bonds) have to be paid, then, from the remainder the developer gets their TIF subsidy (in our case 95% of remaining revenue).

Up to this point, education received a small stream of un-protected taxes from OUP (their portion of the remaining 5%). This council voted 4-1 to pay several thousand dollars in attorney fees to take away a few thousand dollars from the schools, the county, and other government entities every year (their share of the 5%). I did not support this policy change. In total, JoCo projects **the OUP developer TIF award will defund education to the tune of \$234,782 for FY2020.**

**A FAST GROWING POLICE BUDGET** In November 2018, the Council voted to acquire 5 new patrol cars and related equipment. I did not support this policy as I would have preferred raising police officer salaries instead of acquiring more cars. Note that our Police Department (UHPD) typically has 1 to 2 police officers working at the same time. This new proposed expense prompted me to look at 10 years of UHPD budget and share with the Council. The results are that **UHPD's budget growth significantly outpaces inflation (by more than 40% this decade).** Given the trend and lack of projected tax dollars in this budget year, researching whether there was interest from Iowa City or JoCo to provide some police support, in particular night service, made common sense and allowed our residents and Council to have full information. After initially approving the information gathering, the council voted to not gather this information.



**THE TALE OF TWO HOUSES & POOR FISCAL DECISIONS** If you wanted to sell your home for top dollar would you do it late in the fall, without listing it in the MLS, with no minimum price in mind, and an artificial deadline to sell it by? Without my support, **the City rushed** to do just that with two homes **and received a total of only \$250,000. These two homes had been previously purchased for about \$775,000.** The Marriott Hotel developers gifted these houses to the City so that it could begin revitalizing Olive Court. The \$250,000 have yet to be spent. I will continue to support investing these funds on streets and sidewalks before spending it elsewhere. Presently, Olive 24 (one of the two houses gifted to the city) is on the market for sale at \$360,000 (Zillow listings 10-05-19).

**GARBAGE & RECYCLING COLLECTION GOES UP** Workers Comp rates was the reason why the garbage/recycling operator switched to automated trucks. **I look forward to the City picking up this cost in the near future.**

**POLICE CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD & ORDINANCE 235 COMMUNITY POLICE RELATIONS**

In a 5-0 vote, the council adopted Ordinance 235 - Community Police Relations (which prohibits racial and other profiling) and funded technology for data collection. This ordinance and technology will allow the PD Chief to objectively monitor police enforcement data to assist in staff training, development, and appropriate action.