



Hello and Happy New Year!

I always enjoy the start of a new year. After recharging during the holidays, I am eager to dive back into the work ahead. Economic development remains a primary focus and we have great momentum heading into 2020. As you may have already seen, the winter issue of Shaker Life highlighted five small businesses and noted the 47 new businesses that have opened in Shaker since 2018.

And, there are more openings planned for early this year including new businesses at Fairmount Circle and in the Van Aken District as well as several business expansions on Lee Road.

We continue to pursue new businesses so we are anticipating another year of growth.

One of the keys to our business attraction strategy has been to leverage County funds in connection with the Small Business Administration Municipal Grant program. We recently learned that, for the second time, the City has been awarded this competitive County funding. The most recent grant of 150,000 dollars will be matched with 50,000 dollars from the City. These funds, together with SBA loans, are used to help qualifying small businesses locate or expand in Shaker Heights. Since 2014, we have made 12 forgivable loans totaling more than 350,000 dollars which was leveraged into more than 2.4 million dollars in total financing. Significantly, half of these loans were made to businesses owned by Shaker residents. If you are interested in learning more about our SBA Partnership Program, please contact the City's Economic Development Department.

I am here today at one of our newest businesses - The Candy Lady & Kids - located in the Shaker Plaza next to Walgreens (20166 Van Aken Blvd.). I'd like to introduce you to owner and Shaker resident Verna Lee. Welcome, Verna. We are glad to have your business here in Shaker Heights. Many people know that I have a real sweet tooth so this store is full of temptations for me! What motivated you to open your business in Shaker?

VERNA LEE: Well, Mayor, it's quite simple. Shaker is home. I've lived here over 30 years. Both my children graduated from Shaker Heights High School. It's a very diverse community. I enjoy

being here. It's very welcoming and we're thankful for the opportunity to operate The Candy Lady & Kids here.

Thank you, Verna.

I'd like to thank all of you for supporting our small businesses by shopping local. These merchants have invested much of their time, talent and resources into their businesses. Their contributions help to make Shaker Heights a desirable and special place to live.

And finally, as a reminder, the Shaker Heights High School PTO is inviting the community to participate in the annual MLK Day of Beloved Community on Monday, January 20 beginning at 10 am. You can find more details about this event at shaker.org. I hope to see you there.

Thank you and again, best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.