

## January 1, 2018 Mayor's Address

Thank you Congressman Pallone for swearing in Mr. Hayden and Mr. Crowley. This is the first time I can recall having a Democratic majority on the Borough Council, and I look forward to working with our newly elected council members. But I must remind everyone that none of us would be here serving on the Borough Council if we relied solely on the votes of our own political party. In Atlantic Highlands, the number of unaffiliated registered voters is higher than that of registered Republicans or Democrats. At the local level we are all neighbors voting for the candidates we hope will best serve our community. And after the election results, whether we win or lose, each candidate still remains your neighbor who has volunteered to shape the future of Atlantic Highlands. We will at times have differences of opinions about how we achieve that goal, but I ask that all of you agree to disagree and have respect for a different point of view. Listen to someone with an opposing opinion, and perhaps that person will offer a new perspective that you hadn't considered. To our residents, I invite you to share your concerns and questions with us. Since rumors can spread easily in a small town, don't believe everything posted on social media.

A lot of changes have occurred in the past year in Atlantic Highlands.

This year we've welcomed several new businesses: the JIG Dance Factory Tea Scapes, JUS, Donuts First, Atlantic Indoor Rowing & Fitness, Vintage Cake, Selfless Love Yoga, Evolution Salon, & Steve's Mobile Marine. I am proud to point out that seven of these businesses are owned by women.

We've also said good-bye to others: Vintage Variety, Jon Peters Fine Art, and Memphis Pig Out. Some, like the AH Arts Council, Fair Mountain Coffee, Vintage Cakes, & Domino's Pizza expanded or relocated within the Borough and both First Avenue Pizza and Zoe's Vintage Kitchen continue under new ownership.

Previously approved new construction along First Avenue is in various stages of completion, finally eliminating the unsightly vacant lots. New homes continue to be built throughout the Borough and real estate sales of existing homes have been steady throughout this year. So what has caused this sudden interest in Atlantic Highlands?

Part of the answer is that the aging U.S. population and ongoing decline in the share of households with children is boosting the demand for smaller homes in more compact neighborhoods. When the housing market imploded in the late 2000's, the neighborhoods that held their property values the best were those with a mix of land uses that include housing, retail, restaurants, and office space all located within a walkable core. Sounds like Atlantic Highlands.

But another factor that is changing housing needs revolves around the demographics of today's households, in particular the Millennial Generation: those born between 1981 to 1997 and the Baby Boomers, who were born between 1946 to 1964. Population estimates by the U.S. Census bureau state that Baby Boomers now number 74.9 million, while the Millennials have surpassed us at 75.4 million-making them the nation's largest living generation. Some of the Millennial demographic results reveal these trends:

1. They do not want a long commute to a big house in the suburbs. They've increased demand for housing in a "walkable urbanism" environment with a downtown. They want to engage in a community.
2. Economics have them postponing home and even car ownership, as they are more likely to utilize ride sharing apps like Zip cars or Uber. The availability of affordable transit-oriented housing also enables older adults to live independent lives, as they downsize after retirement.
3. Millennials seek rental housing with amenities, in a neighborhood that offers cultural assets like theaters, special events, and restaurants. And surprisingly in this digital age, at 53%, Millennials are the most likely generation of Americans to visit a public library or bookmobile in person or use a library website.
4. In 2016, the median age for a first marriage is 29.5 years old for males, and 27.4 years for females. These numbers are expected to continue rising as marriage is postponed.
5. Today's changing households reflect unprecedented shifts in demographics and lifestyles across *all* ages and incomes. For example, 32% of young adults still live at home. The traditional nuclear family of two parents with children under 21 no longer represents the majority lifestyle of who we are and how we want to live. Today, nuclear families account for just 20% of America's households,

while nearly 30% consists of single adults living alone, which is a growing phenomenon across all ages and incomes.

In order to position ourselves to be competitive, we must be open to exploring a varied mix of living alternatives, and work to create neighborhoods that are beneficial to **all** ages. I am optimistic that we can meet this challenge, because Atlantic Highlands already has in place many of the components I listed, and that makes us an attractive location to both developers and future residents. Our task is to make sure we create the right balance to remain a vital and desirable place to live.

Thank you all for starting off 2018 with us at our reorganization meeting. I wish everyone a year filled with good health, great friends, and many memorable moments to treasure.