

## **2011 State of the City Address**

### **Members of City Council, City staff and citizens of Oakwood:**

Why does Oakwood continue to be “The Premier Residential Community in the Dayton and Miami Valley Region?” It is simple. It is our neighborhoods, our schools and library, city services, public safety, recreation and leisure; but most of all it is our citizens.

### **Neighborhoods**

Whether it is a Normandy Contemporary on Park Road, a Cape Cod on Oakwood Avenue, an English Cottage on Orlando Terrace, a historical farmhouse on Wiltshire Blvd. or a Craftsman Foursquare on Wisteria Drive, we have outstanding diversity in housing choices.

Two homes bear special mention this year. Hawthorn Hill was featured in the January 2010 issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*. Former Oakwood resident Dave Bohman remarked “I have lived in several communities in the United States but have never encountered the hometown feeling of Oakwood, Ohio, a suburb of Dayton. The feeling of community and the beauty of the homes are unmatched. Oakwood was also the home of Orville Wright for most of his adult life, and his mansion on Hawthorn Hill is now a national historic landmark. A visit to the Wright Memorial Public Library is a must. Look at the plaque inside the front door and you will see the names of the board members who got the library built in 1939. When you see “Orville Wright, Vice President” and consider the man’s accomplishments, you realize how proud you are to have been a part of Oakwood and say it was your hometown.”

In June, Mission Manor, a Colonial Revival home on East Schantz Avenue was chosen the 2010 Designer’s Show House by the Dayton Philharmonic Volunteer Association.

### **Schools/Library**

Everyone knows Oakwood has great schools, but did you know this about Oakwood schools?

- Oakwood schools have received the top rating of “*Excellent with Distinction*” from the State of Ohio since the inception of the rating system.
- Oakwood High School ranked in the top 3% nationally and first in the region on *Newsweek’s* 2010 list of “*America’s Best High Schools.*”
- The High School Academic Decathlon Team placed first in Ohio and third in the nation in competition in March and April.
- The varsity golf team won its second consecutive Division II state championship.

Wright Memorial Public Library received another 3 star rating as one of “America’s Star Libraries”. The award was based on circulation, number of visitors, program attendance and internet usage.

### **City Services**

The city services offered to Oakwood residents are unsurpassed. We continue to provide weekly backyard trash collection, year-around curb collection of yard waste, fall leaf collection and spring mulch delivery and sidewalk snow removal. We were honored as a Tree City USA for the 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Our Johnny Appleseed program has planted over 2,500 trees in Oakwood since the inception of this program. We commend the efforts of our 32 member public works department during the recent ice storm. Their service under dangerous conditions kept our streets clear and our citizens safe.

## **Public Safety**

Formed in 1927, our 36 member public safety department is the second oldest consolidated department in the United States. It is unique because all our officers are cross-trained and state-certified in law enforcement, fire fighting and emergency medical services. Our police response time is two minutes. Our fire response time is 4.7 minutes; the national standard is 6 minutes. Our medic response time is 3.9 minutes; the national standard is 13 minutes. After reviewing over one hundred applications, the City hired five new public safety officers to replace officers who retired or resigned in 2010. We now have the finest group of public safety officers in recent memory.

## **Recreation/Leisure**

Where else will you find in a community of 2.2 square miles the parks and green space offered in Oakwood? We offer three neighborhood parks, Shafor Park, Orchardly Park and Fairridge Park.

Our natural areas include Loy Gardens, Elizabeth Gardens, Houk Stream and Centennial Park.

Our recreation facilities include the Oakwood Community Center and Gardner pool, Creager field, Irving field, Old River fields and Mack Hummon Stadium.

In June, Oakwood City Council adopted an Athletic/Recreation Master Plan. With the help of a 25 member Athletic/Recreation Master Plan Committee, city staff, outside consultants and significant public input, we have a guide for operations, maintenance and capital improvements of Oakwood's athletic and recreation facilities for the next five to 10 years.

In December, Vickie Gearhart retired from our Leisure Services Department with 37 years of public service. She will be missed.

## **People**

Oakwood's strength is its people. Just consider some of the events in which our citizens participated in 2010.

- In January, several hundred people attended the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Kettering-Oakwood Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast.
- In April, over 150 volunteers participated in a cleanup of the Acorn corridor sewer access road.

- In May, over 800 walkers participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Breast Cancer 5K CARE Walk. The event raised over \$17,500 to support a cure for breast cancer.
- That Day in May, sponsored by the City and the Oakwood Rotary Club continued the tradition of the pancake breakfast, 5K and 10K runs, community parade, games, rides, refreshments and displays. This year included a car show.
- The Oakwood Historical Society created a Shafor Heights self-guided walking tour booklet highlighting the architecture and history of more Oakwood neighborhoods. In addition, they completed a four-year restoration of the Long-Romspert Homestead on Far Hills Avenue. The home is now an educational house museum.
- The Oakwood Sister City Association, under the leadership of Dr. Kirsten Halling, held several events in 2010. Their mission is promoting peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation—one individual, one community at a time. We have two sister cities: Le Vesinet, a suburb of Paris and Outremont, a suburb of Montreal.

### **The Value Proposition**

We have not raised City income taxes since 1984 or City property taxes since 1991. In fact, we lowered property taxes in 2008 by allowing a property tax issue to expire. Our citizens pay less for water and sewer than most people in Montgomery County. The services we receive in Oakwood exceed those provided by other cities. We have reduced our city staff by seven fulltime positions since 2002 with no reductions in city services. The reductions were possible by finding efficiencies and by asking our employees to do more. We have cash reserves to pay off all our debt incurred to renovate our Public Works Center, Administration/Safety Building and purchase the Old River Athletic/Recreation fields.

Our financial strength is a direct result of the Ohio estate tax. We have received on average \$2.7 million of estate taxes annually over the last ten years.

The most significant financial threat to our City is the elimination of the Ohio estate tax. Many Ohio state representatives wish to repeal this tax. They believe that when you die the government should be done with you. It is a compelling argument. I support an increase in the exemption amount and a lower tax rate. I also believe any state estate tax paid should be a dollar for dollar credit instead of a deduction from their federal estate tax. As Warren Buffett said, "A very rich person should leave his kids enough to do anything but not enough to do nothing." Regardless of your position on this matter, City leaders need some certainty from our state legislators regarding this source of income.

Our largest source of revenue is the city income tax. We project collections of \$5.8 million in 2011. Over the past few years we have lost about \$300,000 annually of income tax due to other municipalities raising their income tax rates. Because we give a 100% credit for taxes paid to other jurisdictions, for an Oakwood resident working in Dayton or Kettering, where the income tax rates are 2.25%, Oakwood only receives 0.25% of the 2.5% total taxes paid.

It is possible the City of Dayton will ask its citizens to increase their income tax rate in the near future. If so, Oakwood would lose an additional \$300,000 annually. Accordingly, it may be time to limit the amount of the credit permitted on income taxes paid to other communities.

### **Well Governed, Well Managed and Financially Strong**

We have citizens who are willing to pay the extra costs to have this special Oakwood community. As former city manager J. David Foell once said, "It's not a question of how much you pay in taxes; the question is whether you receive good value for each dollar spent."

Accordingly, it was not surprising our citizens passed a school levy in November by a 63% margin and the County Human Services levy by a 75% margin.

Our citizens demand that our elected officials represent and listen to everyone in our community. They expect us to provide community service to Oakwood and its neighbors. I am honored to serve with four such individuals.

Vice Mayor Steve Byington was recently re-appointed to the First Tier Suburbs Council Steering Committee of the National League of Cities. He represents our City on the First Suburbs Consortium and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission. Stanley Castleman represents our City on the Miami Valley Communications Council. Rob Stephens and Anne Hilton completed their first year on City Council and play a vital role ensuring Oakwood remains a premier residential community.

The services provided by our public safety, leisure services and public works departments would not occur if not for the leadership of city manager Norbert Klopsch. He is recognized throughout the region as an outstanding city manager. He is also blessed with a fine group of department directors and deputy city manager Jay Weiskircher.

Our nation and our state face serious fiscal problems. There is a nationwide debate about the size and role of government in our country. It is my hope we can debate the issues of public sector compensation and benefits without demeaning the public sector employees who provide valuable services to our citizens.

Regardless of the outcome of this debate, Oakwood City Council represents you and will provide the services you believe are necessary. We will manage the resources given to us prudently. We will also ensure our city staff continues to provide our citizens the high quality and personal services they have come to know and expect.

With the help of City Council, city staff and the citizens of Oakwood, we will continue to be well governed, well managed and financially strong. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

William D. Duncan, Mayor