

## 2022 State of the City Address

Members of City Council, honored guests, City staff and citizens of Oakwood:

Last March *Niche.com* recognized Oakwood as the “Best Place to Live in Ohio” out of 728 communities ranked based on the overall livability of an area. They considered factors which include cost of living, education, home values, crime rates, diversity, walkability and health and wellness.

The Ohio State Senate issued a proclamation commending our city for this ranking noting “the City of Oakwood has gained a reputation as an amiable and pleasant community, offering wonderful places to live and explore, and has flourished in its efforts to achieve great progress. As a result, the city and all those who reside within it are afforded the opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the past and look forward to a future filled with promise.”

Accordingly, and on behalf of Oakwood City Council, it is my honor to proclaim that Oakwood, with its newly counted population of 9,572 residents, continues to be the premier residential community, not only in the Dayton region, but in the entire State of Ohio.

We have this distinction because of our beautiful neighborhoods, our excellent public schools and library, unmatched city services, including public safety, public works, recreation, and leisure, and most of all because of our citizens.

### City Services

The primary purpose of local government is to provide for public safety, refuse services, water and sewer services and other governmental and infrastructure services. We also have the obligation to create a community ambience that encourages citizens to want to live in our fine community.

As our City Manager reported in his budget message to City Council in December.

- We have the safest community in the region, with very low crime and very low fire loss.
- We have an extremely fast police and fire response time, and we answer every call with highly trained professionals.
- We always have qualified paramedics and EMT’s on-duty to respond to medical emergencies. On average, medical help arrives in less than two minutes – unparalleled in the area.
- We have well-maintained streets, sidewalks, public trees, and landscaped boulevards.
- Although most of our housing stock is over 75 years old, our citizens maintain their homes and properties in very good condition and our home values prove it.
- Our city parks, public pool, community center and public natural areas are wonderful community assets.
- Our overall community ambience is second to none.

## Community Ambience

Community ambience is the character and atmosphere of a place. All our traditions and community events have been affected by the pandemic. Nonetheless, just consider some of the following events that occurred in our city in 2021.

- In March, 160,000 daffodils were in full bloom on Ridgeway Road in a stunning display of beauty.
- That Day in May, organized by the Oakwood Rotary Club, returned with a virtual 5k and 10k run and a dog show costume contest at Mack Hummon Stadium.
- Wright Memorial Public Library raised over \$1.5 million dollars of private contributions for its capital campaign.
- The Oakwood Academic Decathlon team won its ninth consecutive Division III national championship. Whether in person or virtually, our students keep winning. Congratulations, yet again.
- In May, a new tradition which began in 2020, we celebrated the Oakwood High School graduating class of 2021 with a community parade through the city along with pictures of all the seniors on Shafor Blvd.
- The Oakwood High School girls track and field team won its first ever Division II state championship in June. Congratulations ladies.
- For 22 years, the Giving Strings Orchestra performed a summer concert with the proceeds this year benefitting Hannah's Treasure Chest.
- We continued traditional city sponsored events, the ice cream social, the family fall festival and the holiday of lights.

Oakwood City Council added "An Oakwood Moment" to our monthly agenda and recognized the following moments:

- Smith, Loy, and Francine's Gardens,
- A neighborhood band known as "Six Feet Apart,"
- The Oakwood High School marching band at "The Farm,"
- A block party on Volusia Avenue,
- American flags prominently displayed on Far Hills Ave., Shafor Blvd. and selected residential streets,
- The third annual Holiday Home Tour conducted by the Oakwood Historical Society.
- Santa Claus touring our city aboard Fire Engine #26.

Community ambience indeed.

## **Financial Stewardship**

Under the leadership of City Council, our outstanding city staff and the advice and counsel of our 35-member citizen Budget Review Committee, we met the challenges to our financial stability. Our revenues exceeded our expenses in 2021 and we anticipate this will also occur in 2022.

This year, we plan no increase in income tax, property tax or refuse, water, sanitary sewer, or stormwater fees. In fact, our water rates are now the second lowest of any jurisdiction in the region.

We thank our citizens for their continued confidence in our city leaders as they passed our property tax renewal levy last November by a 76% to 24% margin. This levy provides about \$468,000 annually for city services. And, as you know, only 8% of your property taxes go for city services. The rest goes to Oakwood Schools, Montgomery County agencies and Wright Library.

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

As I begin my 19<sup>th</sup> year on Oakwood City Council and my 13<sup>th</sup> year as your Mayor, I am also honored to serve with my fellow members of Council. Steve Byington begins his 15<sup>th</sup> year as a member of Oakwood City Council and his 13<sup>th</sup> year as our Vice Mayor. I congratulate Leigh Turben on her election last year and look forward to serving with her as she begins her 2<sup>nd</sup> year on Oakwood City Council. I also congratulate Council members Rob Stephens and Anne Hilton on their re-elections last November as they both begin their 13<sup>th</sup> year on City Council.

This Council, like those that preceded it, operates in a collegial style and everyone believes in doing the right thing for the citizens of Oakwood. We listen to one another, no one has hidden agendas, and we believe in community service.

When I joined City Council in 2003, it was my belief that Oakwood was well governed, well managed and financially strong. I still hold that belief and will continue this tradition.

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 again for the opportunity to serve you.