



City of Oakwood unveils new logo

In this inaugural issue of the City of Oakwood's citizen newsletter, you may have noticed a different, more colorful image – particularly for a small-town municipal government.

We're starting the new year off with the unveiling of a fresh new look in our City emblem, reflecting a new direction and focus under Oakwood 2030, our community's collective vision for the future.

The new City logo features elements of that master plan in its depiction of a tree-lined path, a city street, and a bicycle – displayed as three separate icons that are connected together as one. A cleaner, more up-to-date type font also spruces up our city name in the logo.

"In addition to our new logo, we came up with a tagline – Building the Future Together – to reflect our open government and the wonderful partnership that we have with our citizenry and businesses," said Patti Doss-Luna, the city's longtime assistant city manager.

With the newly expanded City Hall and the Oakwood 2030 master plan, the future of Oakwood is bright, indeed, and the new logo and this newsletter are intended to reflect our pride in where we've come from as well as our renewed enthusiasm for where we're going in the days ahead.

Looking to Oakwood's future...

Understanding the past helps us see where we're headed



Oakwood City Council members are Gary Anderson, left, Sam Evans, Martha Collins, Ron McFarland, Montie Robinson and Mayor Lamar Scroggs.

A few years ago, our community of Oakwood was at a crossroads. We needed to protect our future from the growth sweeping through South Hall.

The result was Oakwood 2030 – an exciting master plan developed with input from our City Council, City staff, and our citizens. This plan, which will continue to evolve, was a monumental achievement that has received praise throughout the county. Still, there is a lot of work ahead. And we will keep you informed each step of the way.

This first-edition newsletter is part of our promise to update you on the master plan on a regular basis as well as to educate you about important City services and issues that may affect you, your home and business.

How we got here

To better understand where our City is going, it is helpful to look back at how we got here. Over the last three decades, the Oakwood City Council has sown seeds and steadily prepared for growth by installing necessary infrastructure such as sewer service. With the placement of our first sewer line in 1984, we pushed the doors wide open to new business, and you can easily see the results today up and down

Mundy Mill Road and the rest of the City.

Continually expanding our sewer service has attracted even more property into the City, approximately 75 percent of which is currently zoned commercial or industrial. This has created a very strong commercial tax base, easing the property-tax burden on our residents. It also has enabled us to offer higher quality public services to our residents such as police protection and curbside trash pick-up.

When you support business, it pays off in the long run. The proof is in our millage rate, 2.48 mills, which has remained the same since 1999 – and let us tell you, our residents get a lot for their money.

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At Your Service: Planning and Development

As City grows, department juggles many duties



The Oakwood Planning and Development Department consists of Planning Director **Larry Sparks**, left, Administrative Assistant **Teresa Sexton** and Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer **Joe Hayes**.

As a citizen of Oakwood, you might be surprised by the different ways the City's Planning and Development Department can affect your life.

Annexations, zoning, code enforcement, building inspections, and permits for new development and building are all handled through the Planning and Development Department. And that is a plus.

"When people start to do building-related projects, they are pleased to discover that we are a one-stop shop," Oakwood Planning Director Larry Sparks said.

Sparks, who has served as planning director for 3½ years, heads a busy three-person department: Joe Hayes, the City's full-time building inspector and code enforcement officer; and Teresa Sexton, administrative assistant.

You will find the Planning and Development Department – as well as the Public Works and Parks departments – in all new offices within the recently expanded City Hall at 4035 Walnut Circle. The new entrance for Planning and Development is on the left side of the City Hall building.

Annexation

Annexation projects are processed through the Planning and Development Department. In some cases, the City will approach landowners to ask if they are interested in being annexed into the City. Other times, citizens come to the City.

Sparks said the City has a helpful packet of materials that outlines the available services and advantages of being in the city limits.

Over the past few years, Oakwood has annexed property along Ga. Hwy. 53 as it installed sewer line along this major thoroughfare. That effort brought approximately 100 parcels of land into the City.

A more recent annexation project came from the Oakwood 2030 project – the City's master plan for the future of the community. One component of the master plan involves remaking the current downtown area into various districts.

"Most of the area identified for these districts is in the City but there were some pockets in unincorporated Hall County," Sparks said. "If we are going to have a master plan for that area, we needed to have those areas within the City. Again, we contacted the property owners and subsequently annexed about 65 parcels."

Comprehensive plan

The Planning and Development Department is also responsible for current and long-range planning activities that guide the orderly growth and development of Oakwood. The City's Comprehensive Plan sets goals for community development and dictates public policy for transportation, utilities, land use, recreation and housing.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs requires all cities and counties to update their plans regularly. The Oakwood Comprehensive Plan is due for a minor update in June 2009. The Hall County government and the cities in Hall County are required by the state to fully update their comprehensive plans in June 2011.

"The Department of Community Affairs has quality community growth objectives," Sparks said. "We will have to make a determination of how we fit in those objectives. With our Oakwood 2030 project, we will be looking closely at our future land use plan because that is going to change."

Citizens will have the opportunity to offer their opinions when the comprehensive plan is fully updated in 2011.

Planning department tips . . .

Whether you are planning an addition to your house, grading land or have a question about zoning, code enforcement or annexation, you will need help from your Planning and Development Department.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Visit the City's website (CityOfOakwood.net). There are applications, meeting schedules and conditions for annexation, rezoning, conditional use and variance request issues. This information will answer a lot of your initial questions and help you better prepare your plans.
- Come in and talk to us. Tell us what you are planning and allow us to help you along the way to make the process smoother.
- And remember, Planning Director Larry Sparks, Administrative Assistant Teresa Sexton and Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer Joe Hayes are always accessible and willing to help. Call 770-534-2365.

Rezoning, permits and plan review

The Planning and Development staff works with citizens to ensure new development projects meet the standards set by the City's development code. They regularly review and oversee rezoning, variances, conditional uses, plan review, and other compliance activities as they relate to the development process.

For projects such as streets, parking lots and structures, you will need to obtain a land disturbance/development permit (LDP) from the City before clearing, grading, and construction. City, county and state agencies will review your application to make sure it conforms to code and ordinance requirements, with help and guidance from the City Planning and Development staff.

Building permits are required for all new construction as well as most additions, alterations, and renovations to existing structures. Your fee will be determined by the square footage of the structure to be built.

Oakwood unveils 'shape of life to come'

Master plan for downtown, commercial area creates new identity

The City of Oakwood this past year unveiled the "shape of life to come" – an ambitious master plan that reinvents our entire community while preserving its most important elements – tradition, trees and trails.

"This master plan creates something we've never had before in Oakwood – a true destination community," said longtime Mayor Lamar Scroggs. "This is our legacy. We're designing a place that fosters a green and healthy lifestyle, and we're protecting a small-town way of life for our children and many generations to come."

Oakwood's master plan focuses on two primary areas: the current downtown and an all-new Commercial Center alongside Interstate 985. In all, the master plan covers approximately 253 acres.

Oakwood 2030

Oakwood's long-term master plan is part of the City's much larger Oakwood 2030 program, which encompasses a long list of forward-thinking projects such as its recent in-fill annexation program and strategic sewer line expansion along Highway 53.

Oakwood 2030 borrows its name and focus from Hall County's Vision 2030 program, a citizen-led effort that outlines a wish list for the entire county.

"We want our goals for Oakwood to be in line with the overall goals of Vision 2030 and to benefit all of Hall County," says City Manager Stan Brown.

'People-connected' districts

The Downtown and Commercial Center master plan is divided into distinct development districts. While each

area has its own personality and focus, they are all connected through a series of trails, greenways, tree-lined streets, and even a central traffic roundabout.

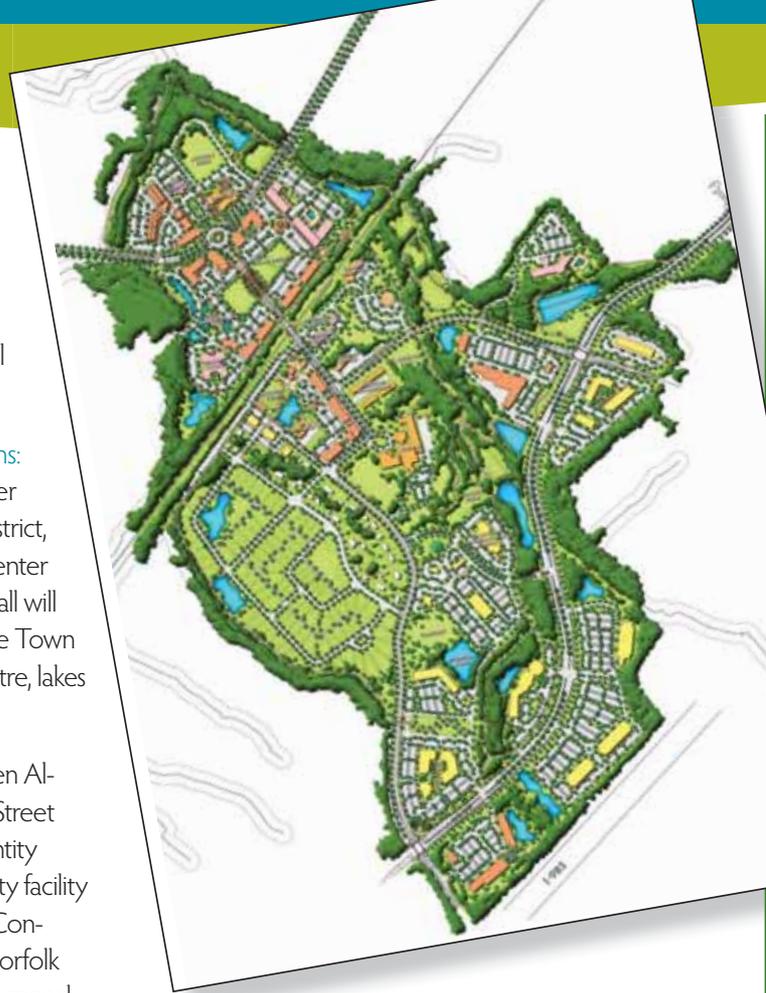
Government Town Center and Town Commons:

At the top, or northwestern section of the master plan, will be the City's future central business district, which is divided into the Government Town Center and Town Commons. A new multi-story City Hall will anchor the Government Town Center, while the Town Commons area features an open-air amphitheatre, lakes and two large town greens.

Main Street Village: The neighborhood between Allen and Main streets will become part of Main Street Village, which preserves the area's historical identity while adding retail shops and a new Public Safety facility converted from the existing City Hall building. Construction of a rail transit station on the existing Norfolk Southern tracks will set the stage for future high-speed rail to Atlanta.

Historic Neighborhood: Oakwood's largest neighborhood area will be redeveloped over time with more Craftsman-style homes, small "pocket" parks, and alley-access garages to remove cars off main streets and create a more pedestrian-friendly area.

Neighborhood Village: At the crossroads of Oakwood Road and the future extension of Thurmon Tanner Parkway, this district embodies the master plan's wellness theme with a proposed medical office center and a large green space corridor. A small grocer-anchored retail shopping center is also planned.



Commercial Center: This district will run alongside I-985, where the Thurmon Tanner Parkway eventually will connect Mundy Mill Road to Spout Springs Road in Flowery Branch. It will provide highly visible office sites for future corporate, technology and R&D facilities. In keeping with the master plan's wellness theme, a community recreational center is also proposed here.

Green Space Corridors: Over three miles of connecting trails, parks and green space are such an integral facet of the Oakwood Master Plan that they are designated as their own district. These trails will also connect to the Central Hall Multi-Use Trail System.

City launches Oakwood 2030.com

The City of Oakwood has launched a new website focused on keeping the community updated on its master plan for the new downtown and commercial corridor.

The site, www.Oakwood2030.com, allows the public to see detailed images of the proposed master plan as well as provide their suggestions and opinions.

"We encourage everyone in Hall County, in addition to our own residents, to log in and let us hear from you," said Oakwood City Manager Stan Brown. "Nothing is set in stone at this point, so we all have the opportunity to help shape our future and quality of life in Oakwood."

Another feature of the Oakwood 2030 website is a futuristic virtual tour of each

district of the 253-acre master plan area. The website uses sophisticated 3-D imagery developed from CAD (Computer-Aided Design) drawings of the plan.

"The fly-through gives you a real sense of what Oakwood could look like by the year 2030," Brown said.

Under the website's Your Opinion Counts section, participants may post their observations and suggestions, which will be reviewed by City of Oakwood staff prior to posting. Comments about the development plans may also be e-mailed directly to City staff at comments@Oakwood2030.com.



Oakwood partners with YMCA for summer swimming programs

The City of Oakwood and the Georgia Mountains YMCA will work together to bring you a variety of swim programs this summer.

Activities at the Oakwood Pool, which opens on Saturday, May 23, will consist of unique programs for children and adults, including family fun nights, swim lessons and water aerobics classes. The pool is located on Railroad Street next to the Oakwood Police Department.

Regular pool hours are 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily. The admission is \$2 per session.

Some of the programs and activities include:

- Summer SWIM PASS: Receive access to the Oakwood Pool and the J.A. Walters YMCA Pool all summer long. Cost: \$35 per month.
- YMCA Swim Lessons: Two weeks of lessons for all ages are scheduled for 6 p.m., Monday-Thursday. Cost: \$50.
- Aqua Combo Classes: Water aerobics class for our active adult population. Classes are 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Cost: \$2 per class or \$50 summer season pass.
- Family Swim "Luau": BBQ, games, swimming and fun for the whole family on June 6. Cost: \$2 per person or \$10 per family.
- Outdoor Movie Night: Finding Nemo on June 19 and Little Mermaid on July 17. Movie starts at dark. Cost: \$2 per person.
- Fireworks Family Block Party: "Fun Kid-Friendly Fireworks" along with music and swimming on July 3. Cost: \$2 per person or \$10 per family.

For more information, contact the YMCA at 770.297.9622 and mention the Oakwood Pool.

Oakwood Police Department adds its first police dog

'Bandit' is a drug detection and tracking dog

The City of Oakwood Police Department has added a new officer to its squad – Bandit, a drug detection and tracking dog. "Bandit is a great addition to our department," Chief Randall Moon said. "He will be an asset to the City of Oakwood."

The 5-month old German Shepherd, which is the department's first-ever police dog, has already begun training with his handler Lt. Rick Whaley at the Georgia K9 Academy in Alpharetta.

"He is working out well," Whaley said. "We train every day. We will meet with the trainer every few weeks and receive more areas to concentrate on. We are working on tracking right now and the narcotics training will come later." Whaley said they are using other officers in the department to assist with training drills. Whaley, who has experience working with police dogs, has taken a three-week course from the state of Georgia that certified him as a police dog handler. Eventually, Whaley and Bandit will work on national accreditation.

As a tracking dog, Bandit will be used to locate suspects during police investigations, as well as missing persons.



Oakwood Police Lt. Rick Whaley with the department's new police dog Bandit.

As a narcotics dog, Bandit will be trained to detect all types of drugs.

"We've been called in to search for Alzheimer patients who have walked away from assisted living homes," Moon said. "Bandit will be a big help in those situations in the future."

The Oakwood Police budgeted for Bandit like it would any new member of the department. Moon stressed that Bandit is not an attack dog and will be used for tracking and drug detection only. Bandit stays with Whaley all the time. He has a kennel at the Oakwood Police Department and at Whaley's home.

Employee Spotlight: Stan Brown



Oakwood City Manager **Stan Brown** is a U.S. Air Force reservist currently deployed in Iraq. He is a lieutenant colonel with the 628th Civil Engineer squadron at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, GA

You may know Stan Brown as Oakwood's City Manager for the last five years, but you might not realize he also is a U.S. Air Force reservist.

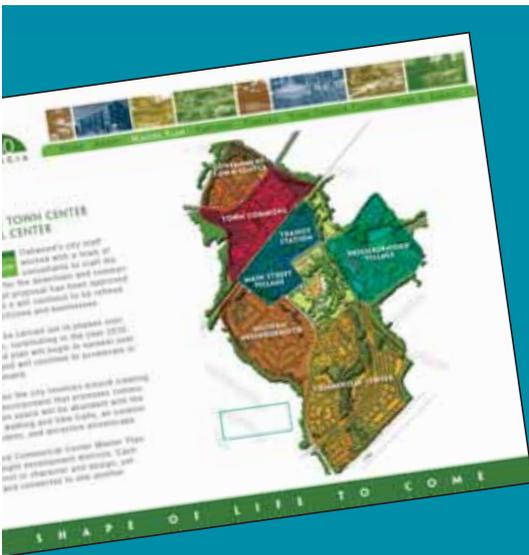
Stan is currently deployed for a tour of duty in Iraq as a lieutenant colonel with the 628th Civil Engineer squadron. As part of his duties in Iraq, he is the senior U.S. official in Basra as the U.S. begins transition of authority in the area to the British.

Since his arrival in Iraq, he has led a team providing engineering and project management support for the U.S. Army. It is the third time since 2005 that he has been deployed overseas. Stan, who has two sons, Shane and Aaron, is expected to return to the States in early summer.

During his 20 years of local government service, Stan has held various public works and engineering management positions with the City of Carrollton, Ga.; Athens-Clarke County, Ga.; the Town of Castle Rock, Colo.; the City of Laramie, Wyo.; and Jackson County, Ga. His areas of expertise are capital project management, transportation engineering, and water and wastewater system management.

Stan received his bachelor of science degree in Civil Engineering from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1982 and his master's in Public Administration from the University of West Georgia in 1995. He is a licensed professional engineer in the State of Georgia.

He is active in the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce, the local Economic Development Council, the Lake Lanier Convention and Visitors Bureau, and is a graduate of the 2006 Leadership Hall County program. Stan's primary goal with Oakwood is to ensure that the City remains pro-active and ready to meet the ongoing challenges and opportunities related to growth in South Hall County.



City Hall expansion adds needed workspace

New wing totals 4,000 square feet

The City of Oakwood recently completed an expansion of City Hall to give its Planning and Development, Public Works and Parks departments much-needed office space.

"When you are doing the people's business, you have to be accessible," Mayor Lamar Scroggs said. "We now have the space to provide the service our citizens expect. We are able to serve you quicker, better and more efficiently." The 4,000-square foot expansion nearly doubles the size of City Hall to 9,000 square feet.

As Oakwood has grown, the City has worked to meet the need for expanding city services with the addition of several key personnel. With those additions, the City quickly ran out of space.

When Planning Director Larry Sparks joined the city staff 3½ years ago, he became the City's first full-time planner. Shortly after that, the City brought on a full-time building inspector/code enforcement officer. Both needed a place to work.

During the renovations, the three-person planning department was split up. The Planning Office and Public Works shared a small building across from City Hall for approximately six months. During that time, Sparks and building inspector/code enforcement officer Joe Hayes were in the temporary office while their administrative assistant Teresa Sexton remained in City Hall.



The 4,000-square foot expansion nearly doubled the size of the Oakwood City Hall, adding much needed office space.

"It is great to finally get three staff people who work very closely together housed in the same place," Sparks said. "We also added a map file room where we keep all our plans. We have a very good storage area now. It all allows us to serve the public better."

Overall, the expansion has given the Planning and Development, Public Works and Parks departments the space needed to keep pace with the City's growth and better assist local residents and the business community.

Under the Oakwood 2030 master plan, the future City Hall will eventually be located at the end of Main Street near the First Baptist Church. The existing City Hall will be converted to a new Police Headquarters and Municipal Court.

Looking to Oakwood's future... [Continued from page 1](#)

Here's what we mean: Take a property assessed by Hall County at \$100,000. Oakwood collects on 40 percent of the value; so at 2.48 mills, your City taxes for the year would be \$99.20, or roughly \$1.91 per week. For private trash collection alone, you would have to pay about \$180 annually.

Plus, as an Oakwood resident, your taxes cover so much more than just trash pick-up. You also receive recycling pick-up, monthly limb and debris removal, police protection, street lighting and several other smaller but important City services like our Christmas tree chipping program. Now that's a deal!

Change is coming

As we plan for the future, we know change is coming. Our City population already has grown from 750 in 1980 to approximately 4,100 today. We are now part of the

Gainesville-Hall County Metropolitan Statistics Area (MSA), the fastest growing MSA in Georgia and the third-fastest growing metropolitan area in the country. Still, change needs to be on our terms. And we have set the course with Oakwood 2030.

Inside this newsletter, you can read more details about "the shape of life to come" under our exciting Oakwood 2030 master plan, and it is more than just a dream. Construction of Thurmon Tanner Parkway's final leg (see story on back page) is on schedule, and the next round of SPLOST sales tax dollars (approved in March) will fund sewer and other infrastructure for our new Oakwood Downtown.

Oakwood 2030 promises to be our legacy, and we hope all of you as Oakwood citizens will get involved in our town and our future. We look forward to building our future together.

Oakwood co-sponsoring stream and roadside clean-up

The City of Oakwood and Keep Hall Beautiful, with assistance from the City of Gainesville, have scheduled a stream and roadside clean-up for April 18.

The morning event is set for 8:30 a.m. to noon. Volunteers should meet at the Oakwood City Hall parking lot by 8:30 a.m.

The roadside litter pick-up takes place along a portion of McEver Road, while the stream clean-up is on a segment of Balus Creek. Bags, gloves, and litter tongs will be provided. If you would like to participate in the stream clean-up, please bring boots or waders if you have them.

For more information, contact the Oakwood Planning & Development Department at 770.534.2365 or Keep Hall Beautiful at 770.531.1102.

Chick-fil-A, located at 3405 Atlanta Hwy, will provide breakfast biscuits before the clean-up at City Hall and Wayne Farms LLC, which is headquartered in Oakwood, will sponsor a cookout lunch for the volunteers at noon at City Hall.

In case of cancellation due to bad weather, the make-up date is May 2.



Thurmon Tanner Pkwy construction underway

One of the key components of the Oakwood 2030 plan is a new Commercial Center district that will run alongside I-985.

That project is coming closer to fruition as construction of the final 1.3-mile leg of

Thurmon Tanner Parkway began this spring. When it is completed, Thurmon Tanner Parkway will run from Mundy Mill Road in Oakwood to Spout Springs Road in Flowery Branch.

Billed as the next "Satellite Boulevard," referring to Gwinnett County's prosperous stretch of highway between Duluth and Buford, Thurmon Tanner Parkway will be the site of future corporate offices, technology and research & development facilities in the Oakwood 2030 master plan. The City of Oakwood will provide sidewalks, streetlights and landscaping on the extension. The new road could be the site of a community recreational center.



The state Department of Transportation awarded the contract to Gary's Grading & Pipeline of Lawrenceville. The project, which will cost \$6.7 million, involves extending Thurmon Tanner from Plainview Road to Mundy Mill Road.

Thurmon Tanner now runs as a four-lane from Spout Springs Road in Flowery Branch to Plainview in Oakwood, where it connects with Atlanta Highway. The extension will allow travel from Atlanta Highway to Spout Springs Road without using I-985.

"We are not really expecting any real traffic delays during construction because it is a new road," DOT spokeswoman Teri Pope said. "There may be some when we tie in at Plainview and Mundy Mill"

The project is expected to be completed by December 31, 2010, Pope said.

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