

State of the City Address
Mayor G. David Gillock
January 18, 2007

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank President Jenkins, Executive Director Noll and the Chamber of Commerce for again sponsoring the annual State of the City. I would also like to recognize and thank Larry Bowersox, Superintendent of Schools, for hosting today's event.

Exciting things are happening in North Ridgeville and I can't wait to tell you about some of them. Having been involved in city government for almost 13 years, I have had the privilege to witness first-hand many changes which have improved the standard of living in our great city. But, to paraphrase the words of Al Jolson "you ain't seen nothin' yet!" There have been significant successes over the past year and I'm happy to have the opportunity to be here today to share some of them with you.

But, before I begin, I would like to recognize several elected officials who are here today. Please stand as I introduce you. _____

Good government is not possible without the dedicated efforts of citizens willing to get involved. North Ridgeville's City Council is a good example of this. I have enjoyed a strong relationship with council and although we don't always agree. . . . Together, we share a clear and concise goal of ensuring that your voice is heard and good decisions are made. Allow me to introduce your 2006-2008 City Council. They are, and please stand as I call your name, President Ron Arndt, President Pro-tem Gail Manning could not be here today, Councilman At Large, Bernadine Butkowski. 1st Ward Councilman Nancy Beuscher, 2nd Ward Dennis Boose, 3rd Ward Dick Jaenke and 4th Ward Bob Olesen.

A city's only as good as their schools and our schools continue to make great progress to ensure that our children leave their care with the tools they need to succeed. Larry and I meet regularly to discuss issues of importance to our city and our schools and it is a partnership I value greatly. I would like to recognize our school board members that are here today. They serve as a positive force, maintaining a steady course toward continuous improvement for our schools.

President Ross Mitchell, Robin Hrabik, Manny Dominguez, Marie Sycz, and Bill Harnish.

I would like to introduce Safety Service Director Dennis Johnson. Denny is a key, integral part of the City administration and makes my job so much easier. Without Denny I would not be able to accomplish the things that I do. It is more than a full time job to manage the city and that is what Denny does on a day-to-day basis. Thank you Denny for the good job that you do for our city and for being there for me each and every time I need you. But let me tell you a little story involving Denny. One day a couple came in for a wedding and told us that he was deaf, we had to provide an interpreter and we had to pay for it. Denny said, Judge Musson's court uses interpreters and could do it over the phone. I had to ask him, how do you do sign language over the phone? After we finished wiping our eyes, Sandy was able to secure an interpreter who came for the wedding and did a fine job in person.

Law Director Andy Crites is also here. Andy was involved last year in several property acquisitions that you will hear more about later, and was instrumental in the City acquiring the property at the corner of 83 and 20. His expertise in dealing with the legal issues that arise on a continuing basis keeps our city out of expensive lawsuits and affords us excellent legal counsel when we need it.

Robin Smith and Sandy Hall, who together really run the Mayors office are also here. They do an excellent job keeping Denny and I on schedule and making sure we are where we are supposed to be and that things in the office run smoothly.

I would like to thank my wife Beverly who is not here today, as she is spending some time with her mother in Texas. Without her support, I could not work the 60+ hours that make up my normal work-week. She holds down the fort at home which, truthfully, makes my job look easy!

The State of the City is always dependent upon our department heads and their crews. Their day to day dedication certainly deserves our acknowledgment and we are fortunate to have so many capable, hard working people employed for our city. I would also like to introduce our Department Heads.

Don Daley, French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant Superintendent, Gary Teel, Grounds and Maintenance, Chris Rangus, Service Garage, Chief Rick Miller from the Fire Department, Chief Rick Thomas, Police Department, Rita Price from the Office of Older Adults, Jim Spaulding, Parks & Recreation, Dee Graham, Mayors Court, Chris Costin, who is the part time auditor and Donna Kiraly, Deputy Auditor neither could be here today, Tony Hatmaker, Treasurer who also handles our grants and most human resource responsibilities, Rita Taylor, Information Technology, who could not be here today because of a special training class, Laverne Porowski, Income Tax, Jim Whitlock, Utilities, Chuck Norris, part time Clerk of Council and Paula Cope, Chief Deputy Clerk of Council, Guy Fursdon, Building Department and Larry Griffith, Engineer. They certainly deserve a round of applause in appreciation of the great job they do in managing their City responsibilities. Let me give you an example of their dedication. We had a lady who refused to pay her water bill. Her turn off valve had been destroyed and we couldn't find it. Every time we went down to try and shut it off, she laughed at us. She bounced 2 checks, and then just quit paying. We heard through the grapevine she was going to move and intended to stiff the taxpayers for her water bill. We asked Chris Rangus for his assistance. When the lady next looked out her window, she saw a backhoe in her front yard prepared to start digging, and then she paid up real quick!

2006 was an extremely busy and productive year. We've been improving services for our residents, investing and improving our infrastructure which will allow us to continue to build the economy of tomorrow. By attracting new businesses we have been able to continue to grow our tax base which has allowed us to keep our tax rate as low as possible. Let's take a look back and review some of the major accomplishments of 2006.

One of the things that we are most proud of, are the efforts we have taken to help alleviate some of our flooding problems, and these efforts continue. Stormwater management is a huge issue everywhere now, but especially in North Ridgeville, affecting residents throughout the City, not just in new developments which seem to garner most of the attention. Through the efforts of our Engineering Dept and Service Garage, along with work being done by URS Engineering, a tremendous amount of work has been done to address this problem. This is not to say that we are done. We are not. However, we have made significant advances in identifying our problem areas, analyzing the extent of the problem and planning and

implementing solutions. We are replacing and grouting lines and manholes, requiring developers to take additional measures, working with our residents to clear lines, including educational reports at Council, cleaning ditches and retention/detention ponds and testing for Infiltration and Inflow in our sanitary lines. We will also be installing an effluent bypass line at the French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant in 2007 to help keep the sewage moving in our lines. This is not a glamorous, exciting topic, but it is a critical part of what we do at City Hall. We have made tremendous strides in this area. And you have my pledge that we will continue to keep this as a high priority in 2007.

We have also moved the Center Ridge Road and Lear Nagle Road projects closer to becoming a reality. Let me address them individually.

In the early part of 2006 we continued to meet monthly to prepare an application to request funding for the Center Ridge Road widening project. In January and March we held public meetings which helped us define the project. In May we submitted our application to the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency and the Transportation Review Advisory Committee. In August we appeared before the NOACA board and in September we made our presentation to the TRAC board. The total project cost is estimated to be \$31,000,000. We already have a commitment from ODOT for \$5,000,000. We requested \$7,000,000 from NOACA. The project continues to work its way through NOACA's approval process and currently is shown as a Tier 3 project. This means further evaluation is needed by their board before any final funding decisions are made.

As I have stated before, this is a long process. In fact, we were told that we would probably not receive TRAC funding on our first application. However, I have been informed by the Ohio Department of Transportation that based upon their review of our application, ODOT has decided to fund the environmental study from their Safety Funds. Our goal remains to begin right-of-way acquisition in 2011 and construction in 2013. We will continue to be diligent in seeking funds to move this project forward, as it is one of the most critical infrastructure needs that the City faces and we will be back to the TRAC committee this year, seeking funding for the engineering phase which is the next step in the process.

The Lear Nagle project has moved to the forefront. The next step is for the City to complete engineering and land acquisition. In 2006 we contracted with Arcadis

Engineering to complete an overview of the project, updating cost estimates, reviewing traffic counts and assisting us in identifying what improvements specifically should be made. In December Council approved an ordinance allowing us to borrow up to \$600,000 interest free to be used to address more detailed engineering requirements. The next phase will be to use \$399,000 of that \$600,000 to complete the engineering to determine specifically what will be done, and what all is entailed. We will be moving forward with the engineering in 2007. This is actually steps 1-4 on the ODOT project design plan for minor projects, a 10 step process we must go through. At this point, we are looking at expanding Lear Nagle to 3 lanes between Center Ridge and Chestnut, and 4 lanes from Chestnut to Center Ridge. Some of our concerns are the width of the 2 bridges that were rebuilt during the last administration. They may not be wide enough for the recommended expansion and may need to be extended. In addition, there is a high pressure water line under the road that will have an impact on what can be done. It remains to be seen whether we can do curbs and gutters with underground storm water sewers or if we have to stay with open swales. We naturally would prefer curbs, but at an estimated additional cost of \$5,000,000 if the line has to be relocated, we may have no choice. Also, the culvert on Chestnut east of Lear Nagle will have to be addressed as part of the project. But we have moved this project forward along the ODOT minor project plan, and look forward to making this a reality in 2010.

We completed the railroad overpass with a ribbon cutting on May 30th. I chauffeured well-known resident Lois Sullivan across the bridge in recognition of her contributions to the City, including suggesting that the overpass be known as the "Shawville" overpass. Many years ago there was a train station at that location, and the stop was known as Shawville. Naming the overpass the "Shawville Overpass" helps keep a little bit of our history alive and we thank Lois for her suggestion. This improvement not only benefits our traveling public by keeping traffic moving and alleviating congestion, it helps our safety forces by providing access to both sides of the tracks without delay. In 2007 we will be adding street lighting to the overpass as many residents have requested. We are also working with ODOT in trying to reduce the speed limit in that area and make it consistent.

Other major infrastructure improvements during 2006 included paving of Route 83 from City border to City border and the total reconstruction and improvement of

the Root Road/Lorain intersection. That project alone cost almost \$1,000,000. We lowered the profile of Lorain Road, added turning lanes and replaced the traffic lights with energy efficient lighting and with safety force activated devices that allow police and fire to control the lights. These lights also have battery back up to keep them working during power outages. As we improve other intersections such as Bagley/Lorain or Sugar Ridge/Rt83, this will be the template. To install energy efficient lighting with safety force controls. And as part of that project, we added a turning lane at Chestnut Ridge and Lear Nagle that has helped traffic flow at that intersection tremendously.

We also completed the East Center Ridge Road sewer project and the Westerly Sanitary Sewer Assessments. We have continued work on our City-wide GIS mapping system which will help next year on our Water Infrastructure GIS mapping requirements.

In December North Ridgeville was the big winner at the Smart Growth Community Excellence Awards Program. Sponsored by the Smart Growth Education Foundation, North Ridgeville was selected from cities in the 15 county region they serve, for their Community Excellence Award based on our commitment for responsibly planning for future growth and the City's master plan.

The business community here today should be particularly interested in that we have paid attention to roads in our industrial parks. We replaced concrete pads and repaved Mills Industrial Parkway last year, a tremendous improvement. Taylor Industrial Parkway repaving has been funded, the engineering is done (or close to it) and it will be paved early in 2007.

Let's discuss our land acquisition activities in 2006 of which there were several. Beginning late in 2005 we acquired a house on Race Road as part of the East Center Ridge Road sewer project. Rather than fight our way through a nasty eminent domain suit to acquire access through the property for a house that was already for sale, we reached an agreement with the owner to purchase the house. The contractor used it during the project. Now that the project is done and the property restored, the house is for sale if anyone is interested. We also were required to purchase 2 small slivers of land at the SW and NE corners of Route 83 and Center Ridge Road so we could complete the paving projects. The turning lanes over the years had encroached onto the private property and the State would

not complete the paving until we owned the property. Similarly, to complete the Root/Lorain intersection project we had to purchase small sections on all 4 corners. Each of these purchases was made amicably and within a few hundred dollars of the appraisals.

On Jaycox we completed a property swap with the owner of some of the apartment buildings in the Forest Park, Mildred and Albert area. Dr. Geigerich owned a house that was the last remaining piece preventing the City from having the ability to connect Jaycox to Route 83 sometime in the future. In exchange for that property, which he was required to clear, we ceded a small amount of timber adjacent to his property. This year we will be opening up a connection from Jaycox to the short section of Mildred between Forest Park and Albert. Forest Park is a private street. Making this short connection will give the City better access to the entire area and relieve some of the traffic and congestion from Forest Park and Forest Wood Drive.

We acquired almost 4 acres of land adjacent to the French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant. This gives us additional land for future expansion as well as acting as a buffer between the plant and residential property being developed.

We also acquired a small parcel at the end of Westfield Drive that was owned by the State of Ohio. It is our intention to trade this property to a developer in return for his installation of a sanitary sewer that will allow us to remove our existing package plant at the end of Westfield. That plant is in dire need of substantial rehabilitation. By working with the developer in this private/public partnership, the City will realize approximately \$400,000 in savings, not counting the revenues we receive by selling the plant assets.

In November, we reached a settlement with Mr. Coen for the property at the Southwest corner of Rt 83 and Center Ridge Road, PREVIOUSLY known as the old gas station! It's now gone! In early December the structure was torn down and removed. Since at least 1997, and perhaps as far back as 1994 which was the last paid water bill we could find, that location has been an eyesore and thorn in the side of most, if not all, of our residents. In the 3 years I have been Mayor, that corner has been the topic of more comments than anything else in the City-even widening Center Ridge Road. What are we going to do with it? I would like to see a clock tower that fits in with our Heritage Preservation District.

And our last acquisition for the year was the telephone building at the corner of Maddock and Center Ridge Road. Early in the year, we let the phone company know we were interested in acquiring the building to use for office space in the future. We had an architectural firm, RWLandig complete a feasibility study of the cost, structural integrity, renovation costs, code compliance, and so forth. Mr. Landig's review indicated that to erect an identical new structure, without land, would cost \$134.40/square foot. His estimated cost for renovation of the building including purchase of the 2.1 acres would be \$98.16/square foot, substantially less and he summarized his study with the statement that "It is RWL Architects Inc. opinion upon reviewing the renovation costs, land purchase, appraisal costs/comparisons that our conclusion is to recommend to the Administration to pursue and purchase the facility to accommodate the City's needs for space as well as future potential growth." In December we closed on the building, giving us substantial room for growth and expansion at costs well below what a new building would cost.

Some of the other accomplishments in 2006 include updating our computerized U-bill systems for utility and tax payments, a new kiosk in City Hall to assist our residents in obtaining information, new paving and covered dugouts at Shady Drive complex, a new parking lot and informational sign at the Office of Older Adults (paid for with recycle grant money, thank you very much), we finally connected the lakes at South Central Park, a new drainage system at Frontier Park to help with the NRYFL and many other items of a smaller nature.

Our police department continues to do an outstanding job and we added 2 new patrolmen in 2006. We hope to add 2 more in 2007. Unfortunately, we lost 2 officers temporarily due to military obligations. Ptlm. Matt Downing spent all of 2006 on active duty, where he is a Master Chief Petty Officer in the US Navy, the highest enlisted grade in the Navy. He was assigned to the 1st BN/25th Marines in Iraq, where Matt was injured by a grenade blast. Matt is doing fine and will be returning to police duty this year.

Ptlm. Jason Dancy was also gone part of 2006. He is a 2nd LT in the US Army where he served as an MP at Ft. Leonard Wood Missouri, a base I am intimately familiar with. I spent several years of my life there one summer.

We are also back to full strength in our K-9 unit with 2 dogs now, Sinta and Duke. Sinta found drugs in a car stopped by our officers on his first day at work.

As most of you know, I do arraignments. We had an individual in jail for stealing cigars from Sheetz. The guy had missed his Mayors Court appearance because he was in jail elsewhere at the time. It was right before Xmas and I felt sorry for the guy, so I lectured him severely, suspended his sentence and released him. I was sure I scared him so badly, we wouldn't ever see him again. The police released him at 11:32 a.m. At 11:47 a.m., he hit the BP at Center Ridge stealing cigars! He was caught almost immediately. He hadn't even put the laces back in his shoes, saving our officers some time rebooking him.

I would like to expand a little on the Office of Older Adults. The Senior Center as it is known continues to expand its programs and services to the seniors in North Ridgeville and the surrounding townships of Carlisle, Columbia, Eaton, Grafton and LaGrange. Our Transportation services grew tremendously with service expanded from 4 to 5 days/week. The Senior Center experienced an overall growth of over 20% attendance at its many functions. The Meals-On-Wheels program increased its number of deliveries by 25%. We now deliver over 50 meals per day, compared to 36-38 in 2005, or an annual increase from just fewer than 10,000 to slightly over 13,000 Meals on Wheels delivered in 2006. Using Community Development Block Grant funds we expanded our parking lot area at the Senior Center which was sorely needed.

A little side story, just last week, we had an incident in the kitchen at the Senior Center. The new ceiling installed just last year – fell in! The weight of the new panels caused the fasteners holding the ceiling up to pull out. No one was injured and the contractor, at his cost, replaced the grid yesterday and everything is back to normal. But when the ceiling did fall, there was a group of 5 seniors playing pinochle at a table about 15' away. They never moved. They never left their seats. They played through the whole thing. Now, that's commitment.

Let's now review the City's finances. The City's finances are stable and improving. City income tax collections (which represent the single largest revenue source) increased by 7% in 2006 to \$7,500,000 following a 10% increase in 2005. The assessed value of all taxable property in the City increased by 14% or \$84 million to over \$671 million. The estimated value of building permits issued by

the City in 2006 was nearly \$67 million and the building department collected over \$1.1million in fees and permit revenue. The City realized over \$1.2 million in federal, state or county grant revenue in 2006 which included over 60% of the funding for State Route 83 resurfacing and 60% of the Lorain/Root Road intersection project. The City's general fund carryover will approximate \$1.4 million, favorably the largest carryover in recent years. While their remains numerous projects within the City, our goal has been to live within our financial needs by leveraging City funds to obtain outside funding sources.

With our improving cash flow in 2006, the auditor and I, along with our bond counsel and bond underwriter, visited Moody's Investor Services in New York. The City's last bond issue in 2003 resulted in a bond rating of A2 with a negative outlook. Our most recent bond issue in 2006 resulted in our general bond rating being raised to A1, the highest the City rating has ever been, saving us thousands of dollars in interest and insurance on the new bonds. Moody's stated, "The A1 rating reflects the city's satisfactory financial operations with steadily growing reserves, a wealthy tax base that is expected to continue to grow at a solid rate given successful development efforts, and manageable debt burden." We successfully sold \$13.8 million in bonds. Along with providing the permanent funding for the westerly sewer project and the Center Ridge Road project, we were able to place short term financing for a large part of our vehicle fleet. During the recent years of tight finances, we did not replace vehicles and many of our cars for example, had over 200,000 miles on them. We also replaced a fire engine that was over 20 years old and in terrible shape, with a new 100' ladder/first response truck. We now have a ladder/first response truck at both fire houses, along with modern rescue squad vehicles with back ups. In fact, as a result of a \$40,000 donation from St. Johns Westshore Hospital, all of our rescue squad vehicles are now equipped with 12 lead heart Life Paks that give the physician at the hospital substantially more information regarding the patient, before the paramedics administer treatment and before the squad gets to the hospital. This alone is a significant improvement in our Fire Department's ability to save and treat heart attack victims. We also added 2 new trucks to our Service Department that were sorely needed. To demonstrate how badly we needed trucks, in February last year during a snow storm, one of our trucks caught fire and was destroyed. That left us with only 13 trucks in the entire department that we could use for snow plowing, and we have 14 snow plow routes. We replaced that truck on an emergency basis,

but for several weeks until it arrived, we dreaded another big snow, which fortunately did not happen. On a side note, shortly thereafter we were advised one of our drivers thought he had dropped a huge pile of salt on Case Road, and backed up to smooth it out. He hit a bump, and thinking it was the pile of salt, he pulled up and got a running start. This time when he hit the “bump”, it didn’t seem right. When he got out and looked, he realized he had backed into a young lady in a BMW SUV, ---twice---, with a running start even. Fortunately, no one was hurt and insurance took care of the damages. The young lady in the BMW said, she was angry when he first hit her, but when he pulled up and got a running start, then she got scared! The employee has been appropriately retrained.

It remains our objective to increase our annual general fund carry over to 25% of our General Fund annual expenditures, which is critical to a good bond rating. “Moody’s believes that healthy reserve levels are critical to the city’s satisfactory credit profile. Given the city’s demonstrated ability to weather economically challenging periods and improved economic development that are key for continued growth in income tax collections, Moody’s expects healthy financial operations going forward.” This is good news for the City.

Additional good news is that we were just notified last week that for the 6th consecutive year the City has received the “Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting”. This comes on top of an award from the Ohio State Auditor this past year that recognized our audits as being among the top 4% of audits in the State of Ohio. Quoting from the letter we received from the Government Finance Officers Association, “The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.” Congratulations and thank you to Chris Costin and his staff for once again qualifying for this prestigious award.

In 2007, even though the housing market has slowed down somewhat, we still anticipate an increase in income tax revenues of at least 3-4% or about \$300,000. Further statutory re-alignment of the Local Government Funds, due to a shift in the County population will give North Ridgeville an additional \$218,000 in LGF. Therefore, for 2007 I believe we will be able to fund all of our tax supported

accounts at least to our minimum needs while maintaining a positive cash flow and growth in our reserve or carry over. This is also, indeed, very good news for our residents.

Speaking of the housing market, let me bring you up to date on all of our new residents. In 2005 we issued 539 New Dwelling Permits and 20 new Condo permits. This year, in 2006, we issued 337 New Dwelling Permits and 14 Condo permits, a combined total of 351, a substantial drop off. Yet, that is close to our 4th largest year ever, 2002, with a combined total of 354. So building is still very robust in North Ridgeville. Based upon the 21 developments currently underway, along with new applications still coming in to Planning, I anticipate construction to continue at a comparable level in 2007. Although this brings its own growing pains with more streets to be maintained, sometimes resentment from long time neighboring properties and increased service calls, our municipal income tax revenues were up 7% in 2006.

An additional source of revenue anticipated for 2007 is from our reimbursement of ambulance costs from private insurance carriers and Medicare. Let me stress that any fees that residents would pay, such as deductibles or co-pays, or if they do not have insurance at all, are deemed to have been paid by their taxes. We project an additional \$400,000 to be collected through these billings. By ordinance, we have reserved 25% of the funds to be set aside for Fire Department operations. Let me repeat so we are clear. Residents will not have to pay any out of pocket expenses for ambulance runs. We will only collect from insurance carriers and Medicare, where the coverage is already in place and in fact, paid for. These steps, along with others mentioned above, such as the change in the LGF and increased income tax revenues, have enabled us improve our cash flow and reserves without any new tax levies or changes in our income tax. Although we still have challenges in many areas, I do not anticipate any new levies or income tax changes in the coming year.

Let's talk about some of the infrastructure improvements on the horizon for 2007.

As I mentioned earlier, we will be paving Taylor Industrial Parkway this year. We will also be installing some street lighting in that area, especially around 10 Point O Gymnastics which sees a lot of evening traffic with families and children. This year's Ohio Public Works Commission project will be the Lorain Road

Reconstruction Phase 2 project, repaving Lorain Road from the overpass to Root Road. This is a \$672,000 project for which we received a grant of \$310,000 from the OPWC.

We will also be doing a storm sewer replacement project on Behm Road to alleviate some flooding problems in that area. The Mills Road bridge just east of Lear Nagle will be totally replaced. This is a co-operative effort between Avon, North Ridgeville and the Lorain County Engineers Office with each of us paying \$25,000 and OPWC paying \$275,000. Water lines will be replaced on Deborah & Paula.

We will be installing new traffic signals and widening at Sugar Ridge/Avon Belden intersection and at Lorain Road/ Bagley Road intersection. These projects are estimated at \$220,000 and \$230,000 respectively.

Other possible 2007 projects, depending on available funding, that are being discussed and considered are Center Ridge/Stoney Ridge Signalization, Boulder Drive Bridge replacement, Shady Drive/Westfield Sanitary Sewer, Dyke Road sewer and Mildred Street Extension to Jaycox. As you can readily see, we are serious about improving our infrastructure and making our available dollars stretch as far as possible.

All of this is in addition to our normal secondary street paving, bridge inspection program and full depth concrete repairs where possible.

And let's talk a little bit about our economic development prospects for 2007. First, I want to point out that in 2006 we registered 35 new businesses in our income tax department, several of whom are with us today. Let me mention just a few of them. These include, among others, ABC Rental, Petey's Filling Station and Gourme' Restaurant (2 tremendous remodeling projects), Contour Tool, a manufacturing firm now based in Taylor Woods, Brew & Brew, a remodeling of the Mills Creek Marathon station, Mancuso & Associates, Sherwin-Williams and Total Joint Rehabilitation, Inc. In 2007, we would like to intensify our efforts in 2 areas, 1) to attract more light industry and, 2) to concentrate more on the Lorain Road area, specifically the Staubach property. To help in this effort, the City entered into a contract with Ostendorf Morris Public Sector Solutions to provide Economic Development assistance in these areas. OM is one of the world's largest

real estate consulting firms with 248 offices in 51 countries. Tom Jelepis, Managing Director, is here with us today. Tom is the ex-mayor of Bay Village. It is our intent that they will provide a new skill set that will help us to market North Ridgeville in a way to attract desirable businesses, and to make those contacts and connections to those businesses.

Business opportunities already taking place in 2007 include the Fiesta Jalapena Mexican Restaurant, Café Aroma, Brewkeepers, an exciting new venture where you can go and make your own beer, (of course as Mayor, I am required to visit and test each of these establishments to make sure they are acceptable to all our residents), Cleveland Clinic is building a facility on Lorain Road, Wolffe Brothers Distributors on Taylor Woods, a potential recreational complex on our flyash site on Cook Road, and Pizza Pan Pizza Corporate Headquarters and Zannoni Distributing are building a new building on Bliss Parkway. A good start on the New Year.

We have a couple other initiatives that we will need your help on in 2007. First, we are forming a stakeholder group to explore our needs for wireless broadband communications, popularly known as WiFi or wireless networking. The group will explore the many options for designing, building, funding and maintaining a municipal wireless broadband system. This system could connect city buildings, pump stations and other facilities and also give police full voice, data and video service to and from the cruisers. A full system could make low or no cost Internet service available to residents and businesses within the City. Many high tech businesses today demand this type of service, if they are to consider locating in your community.

Also this year, we will be establishing a Cable Service Commission, similar to Planning or Zoning Commissions. Currently we are going through the arduous renewal process with Time Warner regarding our Cable service. For a year we have been holding hearings, stakeholder meetings and discussing what we as a community desire in our system to meet the requirements of the informal renewal process. Time Warner just recently sent us their renewal proposal and we have rejected it almost in its entirety. We will now enter what is known as the formal renewal process. This will give us the ability to consider replacing Time Warner, which frankly, is unlikely to happen, but, it does put them on notice that the City is serious. The commission will allow us to consider and address complaints

regarding the service, including enforcement ability including fining the company which we cannot now do. We have had many complaints and are very dissatisfied with the current service, the current cable programming and the overall transition to Time Warner. We intend to turn up the heat to get a renewal contract that is fair and equitable to our residents and provides the kind of service that Time Warner has promised and that we deserve.

You will also see Super Joe Charbonneau, who will be running our City baseball/softball program this year. Financially, it is our goal that Joe will pay his own way through clinics and advertising sales, for example, signs on the outfield fences. Any of you businesses that are interested, please let me know and I will put you in contact with Joe. Joe will heighten the level of play, through training of both players and coaches and improve the overall quality of the program and we are excited about his involvement with the program.

You won't see the old gas station, you won't see the old trailer court and soon, you won't see some of the buildings at the old shopping center. I talked to the developers on Monday, and they are getting their bid packages ready to go. I anticipate seeing some demolition beginning in late spring. Construction is planned to occur in 3 phases, beginning with restaurants, possibly a bank, and 93,000 square feet of retail towards the front of the property this year.

This administration will continue working towards elimination of the eyesores in the City, addressing flooding and infrastructure issues in the City and attracting new businesses, both commercial and industrial. I believe in the last 3 years we have made tremendous progress towards achieving my stated vision of a City which we are all proud to live in, which is attractive to visitors and is affordable to all. Recently a local newspaper had a cartoon with a lady looking out her window and saying, and I quote, "No Marge, the sun doesn't rise in the West...It's the expanding North Ridgeville Community Pride Shining through." I'm proud of North Ridgeville and what we have here, and I pledge to continue to work with the Chamber, our employees and residents to make it even better. Thank you all for the last 3 years. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your Mayor and I hope to do so for several more years. I stand here today to report that the State of the City is good! We're on a roll, let's keep it going.

Thank you.

