State of the City Address, 2017
City of Northwood

1/26/2017
As mayor, it is my honor and privilege to provide Northwood’s *State of the City* address for fiscal year 2017. I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to all members of City Council for their continued dedication to serving our residents and businesses. I also want to thank them for their sincere advice as we look forward to another exciting year ahead.

As we move forward, my message for 2017 is one of optimism. But this optimism cannot take shape without hard work.

The City of Northwood begins the year with a positive general fund carryover; a 20% increase in income tax collections; and, a 2% decrease in general expenses. Under the leadership of our Finance Director Ken Yant, council approved a balanced budget for 2017, and we project that our general fund revenue to improve due to the continued economic growth within the City, coupled with our devotion towards lean government.

We are positioning ourselves to live up to our moniker of “The City of Opportunity,” and we are always looking to continue streamlining our procedures to accommodate the eager and the industrious.

Northwood is in fact already the City of Opportunity for some of Wood County’s largest employers. And by the end of 2017, with Buckeye Broadband completing their new corporate headquarters on Oregon Road, we will have two of Wood County’s largest private employers as members of our community (Buckeye and Norplas).
Renewed Community

This year we will continue to develop our economic development and planning tools. Our community continues to witness an emerging pattern of growth and revitalization. Northwood has seen millions of dollars of new real property investments in both residential and commercial construction projects in 2016. We will continue to look for new areas to apply our newly-updated Community Reinvestment Area program, to provide new residents and corporate investors tax relief on new investments.

Because economic development always begins at home, City Council has placed an emphasis on neighborhood revitalization. The Administration is working diligently to implement our new vacant property ordinance. The registration is a tool to assist our community in holding property owners accountable for property that are vacant and in disrepair. City officials will also be aggressively pursuing initiatives and grant resources to improve the infrastructure and connectivity in our neighborhoods.

Robbie Barrett, was recently hired as our new Code Enforcement Officer. Officer Barrett is a former police officer, and he is working to clear long standing nuisances, alongside our planning and zoning administrator Kimberly Vaculik. I look forward to seeing the continued progress they make in the coming year. They are not able to do this alone, so if you are aware of any eyesores in your neighborhood, please make us aware of them. Improving the look of our city is vital for our long-term success, and your efforts to help improve neighborhoods will help promote the livability of Northwood, which over time will attract more residents and businesses.
Because park and recreational facilities are an important element to the community’s marketability and overall quality of life, we have started developing a plan to improve these vital assets. We have distributed a recreation survey which is currently online and printed copies are available at the municipal complex. The results of the survey will be used to assist in putting together a long-term Parks & Recreation Master Plan. This is expected to be completed in the summer of 2017, and implemented by our Parks & Recreation Board.

This spring we will introduce a program to help promote the businesses in our Central Business District (Woodville Road). Entitled the Woodville Road Renewal Grant, this incentive will provide a 50% reimbursement “rebate” of up to $20,000 in expenses to eligible property and business owners that wish to improve the exterior façades of their commercial properties.

To help improve the energy efficiency of properties in our community, the City is seeking to be part of a Special Energy Improvement District. As part of this district, owners of energy inefficient properties will be able to tap into low interest financing from the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority to improve them.

We have taken action to place contaminated properties, otherwise known as brownfields, back into productive use to generate revenue. We hope that 2017 is the year that the once-premier mall, the first of its kind in Northwest Ohio, finally has the last buildings removed. I assure you more news to come on this issue, as we are working on this very difficult issue.

Also, we cannot forget another vital area of Northwood... the Oregon Road corridor. As the city’s primary employment area, improvements to Oregon Road are being planned to better accommodate future traffic in conjunction with new development occurring in the area. We are
also looking to promote pedestrian activity with Owens Community College to the south. We are working closely with John Musteric, the newly elected Wood County Engineer, on this effort.

**Effective Safety Services**

The City’s 35-person strong Fire Department, under the leadership of Fire Chief Joel Whitmore, continues to strive to provide the City with the best fire and EMS services possible. According to their statistics, 2016 was more tranquil than 2015. We believe that this is the result of the proactive nature of our firefighters. Chief Whitmore believes that prevention is early intervention.

Our firefighters continue to conduct Home Fire Safety Assessments and install smoke detectors at no cost to our residents. They also work in the classrooms of the Northwood Local Schools to educate the students on fire prevention and safety. Our firefighters are highly certified and continue to strive to be the best in their profession. Firefighters logged 3,195 man hours of training, all while providing round-the-clock staffing of at least two personal 24-7.

The fire department continues to seek out alternative funding to enhance service without adding an additional burden on the taxpayers. To this end, the Fire Department has received grants from the Ohio Division of EMS for equipment, and from the Ohio Fire Marshal’s Office for additional training.

Our Police Department, under the direction of Chief Thomas S. Cairl, witnessed its sixth year of declining crime in the City. I believe this can be attributed to their unique and progressive community policing efforts. Our dedicated staff of 23 full-time and 4 part-time police department personal is essential to providing the quality of police services our citizens expect. As recognition
of the department’s effectiveness, it was recently certified by the State of Ohio for adopting and implementing State Standards established by the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board to strengthen Police & Community relations.

Because transparency is extremely important, anyone interested in further details can access our Dispatch Log and Police Reports by going directly to the police department’s web page at www.northwoodpolice.com. We also have a link on our web page to CrimeReports.com where citizens have free access to neighborhood level crime data in near real time.

The final piece of our safety departments is our Mayor’s Court. Clerk of Court Laura Schroeder, ensures that the court runs in an efficient and cost effective manner. To provide for timely and convenient payments, an online payment option was recently added.

**Revived City Infrastructure**

Service Director Craig Meier and City Engineer Dave Kuhn continue to ensure the functionality of our infrastructure assets. 2016 was a year of numerous projects that included resurfacing Bordeaux Rue, Brentwood Drive, Jamestown Drive, Royal Avenue, Terri Rue, Tracy Road, Venice Drive, Earl Street and Short Street. Over the next few years residents will witness improvements to Oregon Road and the improvement of the intersection at Tracy and Wales. The Service Department also oversaw the completion of vital street resurfacing and drainage projects involving Mason Street. This was a joint project with Northwest Water and Sewer to install sanitary sewer lines and resurface the road. Finally, to continue to better manage storm water and flooding, new pumps were installed at the Parc Du Langlade detention pond.
An OPWC grant application to improve the Wales/Tracy Road intersection was submitted by City Engineer Dave Kuhn in September, and the project ranked the highest in Wood County to receive funding. The improvement will take place in 2018. In the past year, Northwood received over $335,000.00 in grants to offset our road improvement costs.

Northwood residents can be assured that we will continue to provide cost-effective and quality services in 2017, and that we will continue to be vigilant towards growth and redevelopment. The path of success isn’t always a straight line, and we seldom walk it by alone. Northwood will continue pursuing partnerships with our neighboring communities for any cost saving efforts and the elimination of duplication of services that benefits everyone in the area. On behalf of myself, city council, and our employees, we hope this year is filled with abundant opportunities and prosperity for you and your families.

Respectfully,

Mayor Edward Schimmel