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**OAKWOOD, Ga. (December 19, 2014) - From the Mayor of Oakwood**

## **2014 – A Year in Review**

On behalf of the Oakwood City Council and staff, I am pleased to report that the "State of Oakwood" has never been better. As the economy continues to recover, we've experienced redevelopment along our Mundy Mill Rd (SR 53) corridor and steady investment and job creation in our industrial area. In fact, our commercial/industrial tax base has now grown to 86% and we have more jobs than population. With just the recent expansion of King's Hawaiian Bakery and the renovation of the "old Sam's Club" as Northeast Georgia Health System's Corporate Plaza, we anticipate an additional 800 jobs over the next year couple of years.

### **"Triple Bottom Line"**

Although economic development has long been our priority, during 2014, our City embraced the "**triple bottom line**" concept where we strive for a balance between "**economic development**", "**environmental stewardship**" and "**community**" in all that we do.

With **economic development**, we base our strategy on land availability, transportation and sewer infrastructure, sound development standards, and partnerships. Our goals are simple: (1) create and retain jobs, (2) maintain a strong tax base, (3) provide quality of life for our citizens, and (4) keep our dollars local. The continuing success of Oakwood South Industrial Park, Tanners Creek Business Park, and Mundy Mill Rd businesses has maintained Oakwood as one of the strongest economic engines for Hall County and the region. With the growing impact of the University of North Georgia/Lanier Technical College campus and plenty of prime property still available on the Thurmon Tanner Parkway and Winder Highway, we expect our momentum to continue in 2015.

For **environmental stewardship** in 2014, we implemented our Oakwood Green Initiative which included *Oakwood Project Paperless*, community appearance improvements, and energy performance on City-owned facilities. One of this year's most successful initiatives was *Oakwood Project Paperless* which resulted in paperless meetings, use of the "cloud" for files management, 23% reduction in office supply expenses, and elimination of enough file storage space to allow us to relocate the Police Department to City Hall. As for our community appearance improvements, we started a special items pickup program for large household items, contracted with GDOT for City crews to assume the right of way maintenance (mowing and litter control) on State routes in the City, completed our Exit 16 Gateway landscape project, implemented an abandoned/vacant structure abatement program, and adopted the first "Complete Streets" policy in Hall County. Our pavement management program, centered on asphalt material

reclamation and reuse, resulted in over 90% of our roadways rated as "good" to "very good". Our program is now a model for other communities throughout the nation. The implementation of last year's energy audit recommendations resulted in a 27% reduction in energy costs on City of Oakwood facilities. We re-invested the savings by installing motion switches in City Hall and LED parking lot lighting to further reduce our energy cost.

Near to my heart are the successful hometown events that bring us closer together as a **community**. From City Government Day to our Annual Community/Stream Clean-up, Secret Santa Car Show (raised \$5000 for needy families), and our Christmas Celebration, this year's gatherings created that "sense of place" we so desire for our City. We look forward to even greater community events next year.

### **A Look Ahead to 2015**

As we move forward to 2015, we've adopted the following goals to guide Oakwood on the road to excellence: (1) maintain the highest level of services, (2) continue our economic development strategy, (3) continue to enhance community appearance and environmental stewardship efforts, (4) identify and address tax inequity--especially the County Fire Tax inequity--for City property owners, and (5) continue our sewer projects. Plainly stated, we will stay on our current track and continue the work we've started.

After over 40 years as Mayor, I take great pride in our community's past success, but I'm confident that our greatest days still lie ahead -- beginning with 2015.

*Mayor Lamar Scroggs*