

Hilliard State of the City – 2013

Don Schonhardt, Mayor

Welcome to this my tenth State of the City address. It hardly seems possible that we have been doing this now for ten years. When I looked over the themes of my past addresses, I realized how often I spoke about transformation. And when you look at the Hilliard of today, it is evident that the last ten years have brought dramatic, positive change to our City. We have invested heavily in our future by constructing new infrastructure and replacing outdated infrastructure with improvements that will serve this community for generations to come.

This year I have chosen as my theme, “Game Changer.” I have defined this term in the context of my comments tonight to be “Events which alter an organizations strategy in a way which causes it to stand out from the crowd.” Thus, a game changer alters the way something is done, thought about or made.

A game changer is that realization that creates an extreme, an advantage or an improvement that significantly differentiates an organization from others providing the same or similar services. By definition, a game changer causes change. If nothing is changed, created, improved, or transformed, then you don’t have a game changer. You simply cannot experience improvement without transformation.

Hence, the many improvements that have occurred in Hilliard have resulted in a game changer for our community, one that creates *real possibilities*. The adoption of the community comprehensive plan was perhaps one of the most significant events that helped to define our game changer moment. Game changers happen, they exist, they have life. They don’t lurk in the shadows of the ethereal and esoteric, they become *real*.

The best aspect of a *real* game changer is that it builds upon itself exponentially to create other transformational opportunities. Clearly, Hilliard has experienced significant change over the past ten years, constantly building upon each improvement to foster more enhancements and most importantly, enrichments to the quality of life for our citizenry.

As we are all aware, the past year was filled with uncertainty. We witnessed uncertainty in the economy, we witnessed the unpredictability of the weather and we witnessed incisiveness in every aspect of the political landscape. And yet, a year that started out bad and appeared destined to become worse, actually proved quite rewarding for the City of Hilliard.

We saw our efforts at job retention payoff with companies like Premium Beverage which located to Hilliard in 2007 and in 2012 invested more than \$2 million to purchase and renovate a fire damaged building on Lacon Road, thus retaining 25 jobs and adding 25 new jobs to the community.

We worked with Dish Network, whose original five year lease was due to expire in 2012, to extend their lease by an additional five years, thus retaining 400 jobs while beginning a process of hiring 100 additional new employees.

We collaborated with e-Cycle to grow their workforce in Hilliard even as they contemplated moving outside of our city. Our efforts resulted in the retention of 17 jobs but, more importantly, fostered a commitment to grow the operations side of the business in Hilliard, by adding 233 new jobs over the next 5 years.

Another example is CBIZ Medical Management Professionals located at One Mill Run. Earlier this year we received an email saying "I cannot believe it has been 5 years since we moved into Hilliard. We have been very pleased with the space and have renewed our lease for five more years". CBIZ moved to Hilliard in 2007 with a pledge of 35 new jobs. Today they employ 45 professionals at their Hilliard location.

Ten years ago we changed the way we structured our incentives to attract businesses to Hilliard. We began to include a bonus provision which automatically extended the agreed upon incentives for businesses that renewed their lease commitments in Hilliard. The companies previously mentioned have all renewed their commitment to Hilliard.

These events coupled with the quietly evolving local economy resulted in income tax growth of 7.8% in 2012. This level of growth has been unheard of for years and certainly remained unexpected through the third quarter of 2012. And yet, looking back on all we have done to advance the cause of business in our community, the quality of services, the improved and expanded infrastructure and the "no nonsense" approach of getting out of the way of business has clearly delivered the desired results.

We continue to pursue opportunities that contribute to growth in our local and regional economy. We worked for months to prepare an offer to an "anonymous" company that wanted to grow operations in Central Ohio. That company, Verizon Wireless, announced two weeks ago it was relocating its operations along with 1,500 current employees to Hilliard. But perhaps even more important, they have committed to creating an additional 500 jobs here in the City of Hilliard. This clearly benefits Hilliard, but the positive economic impact extends throughout Central Ohio.

The vision for Hilliard has remained steadfast throughout my years as Mayor. And that vision is to provide the best governmental services in the most efficient and cost effective way possible, strive to enhance a *real* "quality of life" for our residents whenever and wherever feasible and to support business by reducing the impediments to growth and profitability.

The new comprehensive plan incorporates a vision for Hilliard designed to address the evolving needs of a more urbanized society. One of the more important elements of change is the need to insure a range of housing opportunities commensurate to attracting an educated workforce needed to support present and future employers. The ever

increasing cost of energy, the need to protect the environment and the search for a more sustainable community were key factors in the development of our comprehensive plan.

Now, let me direct your attention to new development that is further changing the game in Hilliard.

You may have noticed the earthmovers on the 55-acre site at the corner of Britton Parkway and Cemetery Road. This was the site of Dana Manufacturing who fabricated heavy-duty truck axles. Dana's business began faltering around 2000 and within a few years, what was once home to one of the City's top ten employers sat vacant.

We worked closely with Mr. Frank Kass and his Continental Real Estate companies on an adaptive plan for the Dana site, which aligned with the comprehensive plan and our vision for the Hilliard of the future. The result will be an aesthetically pleasing gateway development consisting of 90,000 square feet of new office buildings – Ohio Health has already committed to about 35,000 square feet of this space and we expect to announce more medical office uses in the not to distant future. Continental will also build an 89,000 to 100,000 square foot Giant Eagle, a Get Go gas station, at least two restaurants, along with approximately 13,000 square feet of ancillary retail space. This project adds 327 new jobs and approximately \$520,000 in additional income taxes for the City.

The project will also incorporate 420 one and two bedroom Lifestyles Communities apartments including their popular Goat Tavern. These apartments are a key element in Hilliard's attractiveness to young, single professionals such as the 2,000 Verizon employees coming soon to Britton Parkway and even the 500 IBM employees slated for their new analytics operation coming to the Tuttle area. In total, this \$79 million dollar investment in our community will bring more than \$26 million dollars in new payroll to the city.

The Continental project is a game changer on many levels. First, for our small businesses it delivers new customers and adds disposable income to the local economy which will be spent throughout the community. Second, for our employers it delivers greater access to an educated labor pool. Third, for the community it delivers new quality of life amenities and options for dining, fuel, grocery shopping and access to health care. And finally, the enhanced architectural standards will help to define a gateway to the Britton Parkway corridor, an essential focus area defined within the comprehensive plan.

A significant point to note from my comments above; when commercial real estate developers evaluate sites for the location of new businesses they consider a variety of demographic characteristics. Ten years ago companies looked at locations convenient to their executives or owners residences. Today they look to locate close to their labor force, making it easier to attract new employees to their business.

Major projects such as the Continental development are game changers, since they serve as a catalyst for other developments. One such project is the proposed relocation of the McDonalds from the corner of Lyman and Cemetery to the northeast corner of Britton

and Cemetery. This relocation will in-turn, spur yet more development along this gateway corridor. By building a new connector road between Britton and Lyman, the McDonalds project will not only create a new commercial site fronting Cemetery Road, but will also open the door to attracting a new hotel on the existing McDonalds property. A new hotel not only enhances Destination Hilliard's capacity for new programming, it also adds to our ability to attract regional sporting and other entertainment events.

Later this month we expect plans to be submitted for a new 20,000 square foot medical office building in front of the Hilliard Office Preserve on Trueman Boulevard. We anticipate this project will create about 50 new jobs and add \$3 million dollars in new payroll.

Next, I would like to turn your attention to the heart of our community. . . Old Hilliard. Over the years the city has invested millions, first to alleviate the flooding problems in Old Hilliard, then to improve the streetscape followed by the construction of First Responders Park. These were all necessary building blocks to set the stage for two new significant projects, one public the other private, which will become game changers in Old Hilliard.

We have long known the key to increasing the vitality of Old Hilliard and its attractiveness to new businesses, as well as the success of its existing businesses, is people. Two projects, Hilliard's Station Park and the Landmark Lofts development will provide the missing critical component to the heart of our community . . . *real* PEOPLE!

Hilliard's Station Park, made possible in large part by the new revenues to be derived from the 2,000 new Verizon employees, will serve as a key attraction to bringing families and individuals from throughout Hilliard to spend time and money in Old Hilliard.. The Landmark Lofts project will not only redevelop the last truly blighted property in Hilliard, it will also place young professionals within walking distance of Old Hilliard, its businesses and parks.

We have also been working with the Bo Jackson Elite Sports organization to bring world-class training and sports leadership amenities to Hilliard. But we are not stopping there. We are also working with private, non-profit groups to significantly increase the number and quality of outdoor field sporting venues in Hilliard. Not only will this help to fill a need for such facilities in the community, but it will position Hilliard to attract major regional sporting events. Again, we believe this could be a game changer for local youth sports and our small businesses from the significant revenues that will be attracted to Hilliard through such sports related tourism.

Yet another potential game changer will be the court ordered sale of the Hickory Chase project. A new judge was assigned to oversee the 3-plus year court proceedings involving Hickory Chase. The past couple of years have made it increasingly evident that the only real path to clearing this incredibly complex financial and legal morass was for the courts to lead the way for a potential buyer to be able to purchase this site with a clear title. Earlier this year the new judge assigned to this case took the crucial first steps

by ordering a judicial sale of the property. If the courts are successful in moving this case forward, the property should finally be sold by mid year

The last twelve months have indeed been a game changer for the City of Hilliard. In terms of raw numbers, our economic development efforts will result in 487 jobs retained, 2,738 jobs attracted, and over \$2,000,000 in new annual income tax revenue!

As always, I remind you that income tax receipts are the primary source of revenue to the City of Hilliard. Income tax is what allows us to offer exceptional services such as public safety, parks and recreation, snow removal, leaf and brush collections and make investments in improving the quality of life for all citizens of Hilliard. Keep in mind that income tax revenue is derived from those who WORK in Hilliard and not necessarily by those who LIVE in Hilliard. If you live in Hilliard and work in another political jurisdiction such as Columbus, your income taxes are paid to the political jurisdiction where you work, not where you reside. Therefore, the employees of the businesses who chose to operate their businesses in Hilliard are the ones that provide us the *real possibilities* to enhance the quality of life offerings here in our community. So please try to buy locally whenever possible.

You have heard me talk extensively this evening about game changers. Now, I have one final game changer to present. We have worked for many years to solidify the identity of our community — to help people understand who we are and what makes our future so bright.

We have worked hard to advance our vision of a more cohesive and integrated community, one that provides *real* lifelong possibilities, attracts *real people* of all ages and gives them the resources they need to raise their families, grow their businesses and spend their entire lives here.

Hilliard is a great community, and, our plans will take us to even greater heights. But, what makes us truly great is not the new developments, our infrastructure, our parks or even our businesses. What honestly makes Hilliard *really* great is our people and their passion for our community.

We have heard over and over during our community planning process that the true nature of the people who live here is both genuine and authentic. There is no other community in central Ohio where people treat each other in such a *real* and honest manner.

So, as we move forward with all of these exciting changes, it is time to provide our community with a symbol that embodies who we are and the opportunities that lie before us.

So, tonight I would like to unveil a symbol of the heart of what makes Hilliard the special place we have come to call home — one that uniquely offers “Real people — real possibilities.”

You see here our new city logo, one that has roots in the new streetscapes in Old Hilliard, you'll see it is supported by the phrase I just mentioned. This statement tells the story of what makes us unique: our people, our attitude and the possibilities that exist that make us a great community today and into the future.

This logo will appear throughout our city as a unifying symbol of who we are and what we are about. You can see here (slideshow) some of the plans for where it will appear: at new city gateways, on development signage, on the Cemetery Road water tower and in all forms of communication.

This new logo and tagline will also become a focal point for enhanced communications initiatives to keep our current residents informed, to build community pride and to reach out to new residents and businesses that will help us achieve our vision as a lifelong community.

This is a great time to live in Hilliard. We are proud of our endless possibilities. We are proud of our authentic and real attitude. We have accomplished great things but we have only scratched the surface of what is in store for us in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to lead our community, thank you for your commitment to our community and thank you for genuinely caring about our children and the generations that will follow. Good night and God bless.