



**Annual State-of-the-City Address
by Mayor Tim Lonergan
November 2, 2016 at Oakland Park City Commission**

The past year has been an amazing time for the residents and business people who make their home in Oakland Park. Together, we've worked to improve the Quality of Life throughout the City. As we take a momentary deep breath and acknowledge some of our accomplishments and assess our progress, we focus on the lessons learned and continuing opportunities to plan for Oakland Park's positive, prosperous and successful future.

Recent enhancements include the gorgeous fountain plaza connecting Jaco Pastorius Park to our Downtown Culinary Arts District, as well as two beautiful new decorative archways that warmly welcome residents and visitors to Downtown Oakland Park. We invite everyone to join us for this Friday evening's ribbon cutting and dedication of our new Grand Plaza & "Walk Under Water" fountain feature at the south entrance to Jaco Pastorius Park.

Passion, Pride, Investment and a new Vision have transformed our Downtown Culinary Arts District and the entire City into a more attractive destination for home buyers, businesses, shoppers and people looking for a clean, fun and safe "hometown" to relax and enjoy everything life has to offer.

This hometown pride is further evidenced by the newest features of our POP -- “Proud Oakland Park” -- initiative:

- Our Oakland Park “POP Star” awards recognize residential and commercial property owners for landscape improvements and enhancing exterior appearance.
- Our “Proud to be Oakland Park Business” awards showcase businesses for branding and marketing their location as Oakland Park and prominently featuring Oakland Park in their packaging and corporate identity.

As your Mayor, I’m proud and thankful for everything we have all accomplished together over the past year. I’ve been honored to work side by side with an active and focused City Commission, City Manager’s office and City Staff along with the tremendous support of our wonderfully diverse base of residents, business owners and property owners, and community groups who share the vision of continuing to make Oakland Park a better place to live, work, play, socialize and shop.

Oakland Park’s 2016 events calendar, as well as the City Commission and CRA Agendas, were filled with a steady stream of action items and topics that serve as the impetus for much needed infrastructure /underground improvements, as well as important aesthetic/above ground Quality of Life enhancements.

Residents will be pleased to know that this month will officially commence the construction of “Quiet Zone” features along the FEC Railway crossings adjacent to North Dixie Highway. Our goal is less intrusive train whistles so the meals and sleep in our nearby neighborhoods are not interrupted.

We ended 2015 with well attended holiday events on Main Street that showcased festive holiday decorations for all faiths to enjoy and we began 2016 with the Oakland Park Local Government Academy – Class of 2016. There were 27 inquisitive, engaged and enthusiastic individuals who wanted to learn more about their City and be an active part of our future. And we are already seeing signs of their commitment, including City Advisory Board appointments and candidates for City Commission.

We should be proud of the hundreds of dedicated members of the Oakland Park Community Volunteer Corps who give their personal time and resources to help improve Oakland Park and offer a helping hand to our special needs residents. The “Adopt-A-Street” program, “Waterway Clean-ups” and well as “Lake Side Sand Pine Preserve Clean-up” are just three of many volunteer activities and opportunities where we pitch in to make our hometown haven beautiful.

I would like to make one more “Mayoral” recognition and THANK YOU to Volunteer Group of the Year Kiwanis Club of Oakland Park, Business Partner of the Year Home Depot, Youth Volunteer of the Year Karla Sibirian, and, one of my personal heroes – Volunteer of the Year Pat Crowley for their dedication to the City of Oakland Park and our residents. We are also most grateful to The Oakland Park/Wilton Manors Rotary Club, the Oakland Park Business Group, the Oakland Park Garden Club, the Friends of the Ethel M. Gordon Oakland Park Library and other groups for their outstanding service to the City.

Our City staff is to be commended for adding a second Free Tree Giveaway to our 2016 activities and developing a Tree Assistance Program to provide trees and a volunteer planting crew for some of our residents with special needs. During this year, Oakland Park expanded our tree canopy with 1,000 free trees to residents. No wonder Oakland Park was named a “Tree City, U.S.A.” for the 22nd consecutive year!

Another important milestone in our City’s efforts to “go green,” was Oakland Park becoming the home of Florida’s first honeybee micro apiary – an innovative managed bee yard that we hope other communities will follow. We also reached out to our local school students to conduct Earth Day and Arbor Day activities. And our new low-flow toilet rebate program to reduce water usage is also proving to be popular.

The Discovery Farm at Jaco Pastorius Park is up to 40 garden beds with 60 gardeners, including the installation of new raised garden beds specially-designed for people with difficulty kneeling or bending.

Oakland Park remains a fun place for young residents – as well as those of us who are young-at-heart. It was a pleasure to participate in such events as Black History Month, the Polynesian Cultural Festival, Easter Egg Hunt, Father's Day Fishing Tournament, Oakland Park's 59th Annual Youth Day Celebration, and the 12th Annual Oakland Park Oktoberfest celebration. In addition, we enjoyed a full schedule of free activities such as Moonlit Movies, Music on Main Street and the Culinary Arts Showcases which offered tantalizing tastings and delicious recipes from Oakland Park chefs.

One of the more exciting and patriotic occasions was welcoming the United States Navy to Oakland Park during the annual "Fleet Week" celebration that culminated with a charitable event hosted by Allied Kitchen & Bath and a free concert in front of City Hall by the talented Navy Band which had everyone dancing in the street.

We are pleased to provide more ways for residents and other interested parties to learn about all of the exciting things taking place all around Oakland Park. On our new website, we encourage everyone to sign up for the "Notify Me" feature to receive alerts about City events and activities. We also are seeing increased traffic & usage on our social media sites.

I would be remiss if I did not award my "Mayor's Oscar" award to everyone who participated in Oakland Park's exciting promotional video that conveys a sense of place and fills one with immense hometown pride.

This hometown pride is evident every time we cut the ribbon or celebrate a grand opening for a new Oakland Park business such as:

- Alberte's Restaurant
- Allied Kitchen & Bath Showroom
- Blue Willy's BBQ
- Funky Buddha Brewery Craft Food Counter & Kitchen
- Golden Crust
- Gordo's Grill
- Koncept Events
- La Empanada

- Middle River Animal Hospital
- Modern Dentistry
- Pash the Canine Boudoir
- Safeway
- Switchbox Coffee Roasters
- Tenth Level Tavern
- Viva Tokyo

In addition to our downtown archways, we also unveiled a stunning mural at the City's downtown Art Park. Staff is creating additional opportunities for public art with a call to artists to decorate our utility boxes.

Another long-awaited beautification enhancement was an "Extreme Makeover" of The Plaza at Prospect & Andrews. Plaza renovations include new signage, an improved parking lot, enhanced landscaping and attractive business facades. We had a wonderful ribbon cutting event over the weekend and many of the business rolled out the welcome mat to showcase their improvements and renovations.

More people are looking to move into Oakland Park and we anticipate our tax base to continue to strengthen in the years ahead with the beautiful new residential projects such as the Eastside Village townhomes on North Dixie Highway just north of Jaco Pastorius Park and Urban Village on Fifth Avenue.

But 2016 has been much more than fun and turning Oakland Park into a "Pretty City." We have focused on our tasks at hand with a strong business plan and run the City according to a careful crafted and transparent Budget.

The City of Oakland Park remains financially stable and our City Commission voted to lower our annual millage rate for third consecutive year. The annual budget also reflects a healthy unassigned fund balance for fiscal reserve.

Much of the City's financial success can be traced to staff's diligent pursuit of grant opportunities. Some of the more than \$7 million in awarded grants for current and future fiscal year projects include:

- \$1,472,266 Lloyd Estates Residential Drainage (bringing total funding to nearly \$8 million)
- \$1,100,000 Prospect Plaza Parking Lot Construction
- \$948,250 Park Lane Phase V (NW 38th Street from Powerline Road to Royal Park Drive)
- \$928,092 Andrews Avenue Roadway Improvement Project scheduled for 2018
- \$914,471 NW 10th Avenue from Park Lane to Prospect Road Roadway Improvement Project scheduled for 2019
- \$700,000 Downtown Connector to Jaco Pastorius Park Project
- \$500,000 Cultural Facilities Grant identifying Main Street at a cultural venue for the upcoming year 2017

The completion of the Park Lane West Project is the capstone in a series of beautification efforts along this important roadway from Federal Highway all the way west to Royal Palm Park.

This is a tremendous reflection on our City's management team and every City Department and Division. Oakland Park is not only attracting new residents and businesses, but we have become an attractive employer for talented public service employees and the City is continuously offering programs and training to help employees grow their careers with us.

The City recently graduated its first "POP SMART" Leadership Class designed for mid-level and new managers. The five-week training tasked the members to identify an issue or area of the City where there was room for improvement and then plan and prepare presentations to showcase their process improvements in front of the senior management team.

We believe we have helped make Oakland Park a better place to live and do business for all members of our diverse community while holding the line on taxes and continuing to offer a wide variety of free activities appealing to all ages and interests.

I am particularly proud the City continues to consider Oakland Park's residents with special needs with the aforementioned Tree Assistance Program, our Operation our Neighbor volunteer initiative and our annual participation in the Summer Food Program when children are on school break. Did you know that between Oakland Park's three Summer Food Program locations, we provided more than 5,000 free lunches and 6,000 afternoon snacks to local children?

As we look ahead to the upcoming Holiday Season, we invite everyone to join us for some new and exciting holiday events we have scheduled.

Oakland Park's Holiday Village will be open December 9 through 11 at Jaco Pastorius Park. As part of our holiday celebration, we will hold our monthly "Music on Main Street Rockin' with Santa" concert Friday, December 9th in front of City Hall and also invite everyone to enjoy both events by offering free hot cider and donuts at Jaco Pastorius Park.

Our Holiday Village will feature holiday vendors, arts & crafts, food, local entertainment and children's activities. We will also have free headline concerts at the Holiday Village on Saturday and Sunday, as well as a "Tree Decorating Contest" for local businesses and civic organizations. The decorated holiday trees will be donated to local families and Santa will be in the house for selfies and special requests.

You can expect to see our City's holiday tree, lights and decorations installed over the next few weeks and we have budgeted for year-round decorative tree lights along Oakland Park Main Street.

On behalf of our City Commission and City staff, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to every person who is involved with making Oakland Park a better place.

This was abundantly evident once again as everyone was prepared for the expected devastating impact of Hurricane Matthew. Fortunately for Oakland Park, we were spared when the hurricane made a slight shift to the north which significantly lessened the damage to South Florida.

While we can do without hurricane winds, the winds of change continue to propel Oakland Park in a positive direction with so many civic-minded stakeholders of our diverse community choosing to take an active role in shaping our future.

I am honored and humbled to have had the opportunity to represent this great city as your Mayor. Every time I look up at our City flag flying proudly in front of our civic buildings and in our parks, I am reminded of all those who have transformed and defined this City. I encourage the continued use of our City flag and the City seal that is at the heart of our flag, to help identify and unify us as a community proud of our past and prepared for our future.

As we move forward, I encourage everyone to continue to take pride in their responsibilities as an Oakland Park stakeholder. From picking up a piece of trash on the street, to planting a tree, to providing a healthy meal to a hungry child in a safe environment, to purchasing a home or opening a business, we share in this community investment and will have a far greater opportunity to thrive and prosper by working in an atmosphere built on respect, tolerance, trust and, most of all, love!

Together, we will continue to make a difference!