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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on January 9, 2012

New Oakwood councilman wants tighter-knit community

Wilson to take office today



Todd Wilson is the City of Oakwood's newest councilman.



Todd Wilson gets some help servicing a heat pump from Scott Holland. Wilson will be sworn in tonight as an Oakwood City Council member.

OAKWOOD — Todd Wilson remembers the annual Oakwood city fair, with its greased pigs, funnel cakes and cotton candy.

Another image sticks in his mind from those childhood years: people wearing T-shirts and hats bearing the message "Oakwood - a proud city."

Wilson doesn't expect the South Hall city returning to such a bucolic time. But, as the new city councilman is about to embark on a four-year term, he would like to see Oakwood eventually develop a community center as envisioned in a long-range comprehensive plan.

"Oakwood needs a place where residents can gather, fellowship and discuss politics," Wilson said. "Gainesville has the square. Oakwood needs something along that line."

Wilson, who won an uncontested race Nov. 8 to succeed Councilman Gary Anderson, is set to be sworn in at 7 tonight, when the City Council holds its monthly meeting at City Hall, 4035 Walnut Circle.

The Oakwood native said he doesn't have any huge plans about stepping onto council for the first time.

"I don't see any squeaky wheels," Wilson said during an interview last week at City Hall. "It's just one of those things where I want to come in and ... see how everything is operating, then make a slow transition to it."

Wilson said he has seized City Manager Stan Brown's advice, attending council meetings and paying attention to issues and topics of city interest.

"That's been a tremendous help," he said.

Wilson, 40, a longtime plumber, said he decided to seek office as a way to have a younger voice on the council, a group with seasoned veterans, such as Mayor Lamar Scroggs and Councilman Montie Robinson, whose tenures stretch back to the 1970s.

"I thought I might be able to come in and bring a little bit of insight," he said. "I think the youth of the community should be represented."

Wilson, whose grandfather, Bill Wilson, was on the City Council years ago, believes the city's fledgling partnership with the Georgia Mountains YMCA is one way the city will be able to attract younger people.

He also likes the idea of the city's exploring options to extend its city limits to Lake Lanier, one aspect of the 2030 comprehensive plan that also seeks to reshape downtown into an area of trails, parks, shopping and homes.

"I think that if you add a lake access to where families can picnic and enjoy the recreational side of Lake Lanier, that's a great draw," Wilson said.

Wilson believes the 2030 plan's stiffest challenge is it doesn't quite mesh with the suburban lifestyle.

"There are quite a few people who don't want to be involved and they don't want their neighbors to pop in with a casserole on Saturday," he said.

Oakwood has changed much since Wilson's years attending the fairs. The city has grown down Mundy Mill Road and Winder Highway, a network of roads has sprung up around Interstate 985 and the city has added industrial parks.

Wilson said he's pleased to see the commercial/industrial sector making up the lion's share of the tax base.

"But you want to see the residential tax base grow so that you know that people are calling (Oakwood) home and they are proud of their city," he said.