

The Road Levy: Paving the Way for a Better Future!

In 2010 we must decide on a new Community Action Plan to repair our roads and infrastructure. As you are aware, every five years, residents are asked to renew the City's Road Levy that provides critical funding for the continuing revitalization and maintenance of our city's streets, sewers and infrastructure. In March, South Euclid residents must again vote on the Road Levy renewal.

Because of your support and vision, between 2004-2009 we have invested over \$8 million to repair our streets! This is a major accomplishment – and you – our committed residents – are the reason why we have been so successful! However, even with this major investment - we recognize that our job is far from over and that there are many more streets that are in need of major structural improvements and repairs.

The challenge we face during this economic downturn is: how can we move forward to repair as many of our most critical roads in the short-term, while instituting initiatives that look to the future and the long-term maintenance and rehabilitation of our roads, sewers and infrastructure?

The City of South Euclid has over 66.5 miles of roadways valued at almost \$192 million. The current Road Levy provides approximately \$587,000 a year for road reconstruction. However, in 2002 Mayor Kocevar and City Council approved a Road Repair Loan to accelerate the reconstruction of severely deteriorated streets that had been long neglected. As a result, each year approximately \$336,000 from the Road Levy must be utilized to pay off the loan, leaving only \$251,000 to spend on actual road repair each year. The City utilizes additional General Fund dollars to provide approximately \$1 million a year for street and road repair projects. In addition, the County & the State have turned over all County & State Roads and bridges to the City to maintain - even though the City does not own them.

The process for deciding street repair is based on an Ohio Department of Transportation rating system that is updated yearly. Decisions are also based on project cost and the availability of matching grant dollars from other sources. Each spring, the public service director and city engineer inspect every street within the City to ascertain the condition of our roadways. Based on the inspection, the street is assigned a coded rating from 1 (Critical) to 5 (Excellent). The factors considered in assigning a rating include the age and condition of the surface, riding quality, frequency of repairs, integrity of street curbs, structural condition of the pavement, and, especially on concrete streets, the condition of the pavement joints. In addition, the amount of traffic on the street is taken into consideration based on reports from the Police Department's Traffic Commissioner.

Our current road improvement program has resulted in significant progress since 2004. However, as an inner-ring suburb, we have the oldest streets, sewers and underlying infrastructure – some over 100 years old and, as a result, we are "playing" catch-up every year to maintain streets currently in good condition and find creative ways to reconstruct those streets in critical need of repair.

In Ohio, cities are dependent primarily on income tax and some property tax revenues to provide services for our residents. Unfortunately, as a result of the housing crisis and economic recession, these revenue resources have been reduced. In addition, the Road Levy initially approved by the voters was a 3-millage Levy. However, because of economic conditions, it is now 1.22 mills.

The positive livability of our community is not guaranteed – which is why we need to work together to find ways to move forward in a positive direction. As a result, between now and March, we will be having community discussions to gain citizen input and determine how we should move forward in planning our future road improvement programs. Below are some options for your consideration:

- **Option #1:** Renew the Current 1.22 millage Levy that will continue to provide approximately \$575,000 a year. This option currently costs each homeowner \$122 a year.
- **Option #2:** Replacement with a 2.00 millage Levy that will provide approximately \$845,000 a year. This option will cost an additional \$82 a year.
- **Option #3:** Replacement with a 2.50 millage Levy that will provide approximately \$1,056,985 a year. This option will cost an additional \$128 a year.

We realize that these are tough and lean economic times for many of residents, our city and our region, and the loss of funds due to the recession and foreclosure crisis have made it difficult just to keep pace. However, we cannot become complacent. The continuing revitalization and maintenance of our infrastructure is one of the most important factors contributing to the health and vitality of our community. These repairs serve to beautify streets, increase property values, maintain safety and serve as a catalyst for neighborhood and home revitalization projects.

Further information regarding our road programs, including the 2009 Street Ratings, can be found on our website at www.cityofsoutheuclid.com. We look forward to hearing your feedback and ideas about how South Euclid should move forward with the Road Levy in March and we thank you in advance for taking the time to offer your opinion and input.