

Gary V Gottschalk December 18, 1944 thru September 12, 2025

There are no words that describe the enormity of his brain, intelligence and ability to develop a vision to transform Oakwood Village into a beautiful, recreational, financial power house and see it through to completion.

I first met Mayor Gottschalk in 1956. He was one of several kids growing up on Richmond and Robertdale Roads on Oakwood Village's panhandle. His father and mother **Vernon and Elsie Gottschalk** built their house. His father was at that time in charge of the Bedford YMCA. My first real contact came riding on the School Bus with the McRitchies, Cuppages, and Skidels. During winter he along with many others played on the hills and slopes of Hathorne Valley Country Club Golf course. We had snowball fights, tobogganing, moonlight night skiing, creek ice skating and just having fun.

Gary even at a young age truly knew how to enjoy life to its fullest. He was a great golfer and on Hawthorne Club closed Mondays during the summer he played for free on a world class golf course.

After high school we both went our separate ways. He graduated a year after me and received an all paid full scholarship to Case Western Reserve in Physics. I really lost contact with him after high school. In 1989 I was elected to the Bedford School Board. I heard he was in Saudi Arabia.

In 1991 he came back from his experience in Saudi Arabia. He told me he was going to run for mayor and I of course agreed to support him. He won the election by a very slim margin, but immediately came to me and discussed his vision to make Oakwood Village a thriving community. He heard of my involvement on Oakwood Planning Commission and council. At this time, I was a member of the Bedford school board and he said he needed school board approval for real estate abatements to attract new business and create jobs. I convinced Dr. Dowdouris this was a good idea and then went back to Gary and told him of the approval, but also that the

school board wanted to share in the new city income tax. He agreed to this. This arrangement brought in additional millions of dollars and the board went for 14 years without a new operating levy. This was the first agreement of this type of arranged partnership in the United States.

He worked hard and smart to keep major businesses like Petitti's and Northern Haserot along with attracting many new companies like Thermo-Fischer Scientific, View Ray, Geis and many more. He worked to raise new funding sources and reduced the tax burden on all.

He also organized one of the safest communities and worked with Glenwillow and Walton Hills to combine cooperation and development of police and fire protection. He also had built roundabout with a water feature on Richmond and Pettibone Roads that eliminated the huge mile long traffic jams. He helped further the development of Oakwood's Park and worked with Mt. Zion and Bishop Macon to make a thriving institution along with Mount Zion Circle!

He widened Broadway in front of Sam's and Levin's to maximize traffic flow and control. Tore down abandoned buildings and beautified with walking paths across Oakwood including having Wendy's reengineer the looks of their fast food restaurant. He helped design the Meadows with parks, special trees and ponds and only approved housing with stone or brick frontings. He brought entertainment during the summers that brought people from all over the Cleveland area and put Oakwood Village on the map. He work hand and glove with Bedford school system and during the summer provided advanced educational programs and recreational programs for our children

Gary provided municipal stability form 1991 until the day he died on September 12, 2025, 34 years! I talked with him early in the morning and his thoughts were still on what could make Oakwood Village great. He left a legacy of stability, beauty, fun and safety. God Bless Mayor Gary!