



Lakewood: A vibrant, diverse, affordable community

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By

Lakewood is a vibrant, diverse community located on the shore of Lake Erie between Cleveland and Rocky River.

The 5.6-square-mile city is home to 52,000 people, with 40 percent of the population between the ages of 20 and 40 years, said Mayor Mike Summers.

Convenient location

Many residents are attracted by Lakewood's proximity to downtown Cleveland, which is a 10- to 15-minute drive away. Summers recalled a time that he drove to a Cleveland Indians ballgame. "I left my driveway and was in my seat at the ballpark 10 minutes later."

Lakewood is accessible to major highways, interstates, and Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. An RTA bus runs along Clifton Boulevard to downtown Cleveland. The RTA rapid transit has a stop at West 117th Street.

Businessman Craig Christ cut his drive time considerably when he moved to Lakewood's Gold Coast, an apartment-rich area that runs along Edgewater Drive and Lake Avenue. As president/chief executive officer and managing member of a diverse group of companies, he was spending much more time than he liked commuting between his home in Bath to his office. He decided to give up the 5,700 square-foot house and rent an apartment.

Now the drive to his office "is 17.6 miles, one way. It's not stop-and-go traffic. It's smooth sailing, all of the way. It's a beautiful drive."

Rentals

"Lakewood is a phenomenal renter's market," said Mayor Summers. "We have a variety of apartment styles at a variety of price point, from a half of a house to the 18th floor of a high-rise or a four-story walkup."

Lakewood has 15,000 one- and two-family dwellings, 326 three-family dwellings, and 982 multi-family dwellings of four or more units, Mayor Summers said. The city has a total of 16,100 rental units; that's 53 percent of Lakewood's properties.

Lake views

Christ had three criteria when he began looking for an apartment.

"I wanted a lake view, a cityscape, and the sounds of crashing water."

His penthouse at the Shoreham Apartments on Edgewater Drive met all of the requirements.



Built in 1961, the Shoreham was ahead of its time in including "an underground parking deck with a rooftop lawn. It's where we play football, and it has a pool that overlooks the lake."

John Sanders lives at Lake Shore Towers, which was originally built in 1926 as a luxury hotel on Edgewater Drive. Now an apartment community for residents who are 55 and over, the building offers "a panoramic view of the lake. It's a different view every day. I can watch the ships go by, as well as the ducks, sea gulls, fox, and deer. At night, the sky and the lake is purple. The waves can be as high as eight to 10 feet when a storm is coming in."

A city with a pulse

Sanders, who moved to Lakewood four years ago from Cleveland's east side, said, "Anyone who is looking for a diverse city with eclectic interests would like Lakewood. I was looking for a place to live where there were things to do. There is a lot to do here, and you don't have to drive long distances to do them. Everything is within walking distance or a short drive away."

A football coach earlier in his career, he competes in the Senior Olympics. He works out at the track at Lakewood High School, often goes to the Metroparks, and sometimes walks to Edgewater Park.

"Lakewood has 150 miles of parkland," said Mayor Summers. "The Metroparks offers miles and miles of trails and roads. We even have a dog park in the Metroparks."

Affordability

Carol Hunt-Mulready moved to Lakewood in 1985 "because it was so affordable." She rented the second floor of a double house with her husband. Three years later they bought a house on Webb Road that was built in 1913.

A few years ago they talked about moving to a bigger house. They looked in several suburbs but decided that they "liked Lakewood a lot better. We love Lakewood. It's really a practical place to live for our lifestyle."

Walkability

"Lakewood residents can park their cars after work on Friday and not have to drive them again until Monday morning," said Mayor Summers. "They can walk or ride a bike to the post office, grocery store, or restaurant."

"You don't have to go out of the city to shop," said Sanders. "There are a lot of little stores, dry cleaners, a Giant Eagle, and a farmer's market at Kauffman Park." He also goes to the Lakewood Earth And Food (LEAF) market on Wednesday nights at Lakewood Public Library for local produce and honey.

Hunt-Mulready also appreciates the walkability of Lakewood. She doesn't like the pollution aspects of driving a car and prefers to shop locally. She often rides her bike for shopping.

"I am very green-minded. I feel like I'm doing my part by living in a community that is very walkable."

Tom O'Dougherty moved to Lakewood in 1985 after college. Now married with two children, he also owns two doubles that he rents out.

"I love the feel and the pulse of the city," he said.

He, too, talked about the city's "walkability factor. We can walk to restaurants, grocery stores, and our church. We often walk to Lakewood Park," which has a walkway down to the lake."

Diversity

Christ has lived in many places, including New York City, Moscow, and Iran. What really attracted him to Lakewood "was the diversity of the population."

The city has "a mixed population of various income levels, from people who live in houses on the lake to government-supported families," said Hunt-Mulready. "More than 30 languages are spoken by the students in the Lakewood City Schools. Many are Middle Eastern, Asian, and Eastern European."

Neighborhood schools

Lakewood City Schools operates on the premise that students should be able to walk to schools that are in their neighborhoods, said Mayor Summers. The high school is located in the middle of town, about a 1.5-mile walk at most for any student. The school system does not have school busing.

"I love Lakewood schools!" said Hunt-Mulready. "They have excellent programs to serve children of varying educational needs, from students who are developmentally handicapped to the academically talented. All of the children receive extra-special treatment to help them succeed at their level."

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