The Ohio University Foundation today announced it has entered into a lease agreement for $1.2 million for a home and surrounding property, which will serve as the Ohio University presidential residence. The previous residence, located at 29 Park Place, is undergoing assessment for both environmental remediation and necessary structural repairs. President Roderick J. McDavis and First Lady Deborah A. McDavis had previously been temporarily relocated to the Ohio University Inn, but will now reside in the home on 31 Coventry Lane in the Sycamore Hills Sub-Division in Athens. The home is located approximately 2.5 miles from the Athens Campus, is located on 2.86 acres. The two-level residence has 4,586 square feet (which includes a finished basement) and contains 4 bedrooms and 3 baths. The agreement includes an option to buy, which would be contingent on approval from the Foundation Board of Trustees.

Q: When was this decision made?

The residence at 29 Park Place has been a topic of conversation for the Ohio University Board of Trustees dating back to March 2014, when trustees discussed the fact that the center of the Athens Campus had shifted with the construction of the Baker University Center and the renovation of the building that is now the Walter International Education Center, among other changes to the Park Place landscape. With this shift, trustees said it did not seem appropriate that the presidential residence be located on Park Place.

At their most recent meeting this month on March 12-13, 2015, trustees authorized Vice President for Finance and Administration Stephen Golding to find suitable housing for the presidential residence.

Q: Why did the Ohio University Foundation enter into this agreement?

The president’s residence is not just a home for the OHIO president and his family. It serves as a facility that hosts many events, visits and activities for alumni outreach and donor relations. Since this is one of the president and first lady’s primary duties and the Ohio University Foundation directly benefits from the philanthropy of alumni and donors, the Foundation Board viewed this as an opportunity for investment.

If the Foundation exercises the option to purchase the residence, it would do so using unrestricted working capital.

Q: How much more does it cost for the president to live somewhere else?

The University will enter into a contract with the Ohio University Foundation to maintain the President’s Residence and it is anticipated that the existing budget will cover all the operating cost of the new residence. This budget model remains the same as before, when 29 Park Place served as the residence. The existing budget for the 29 Park Place is $125,208, which includes staff salary and benefits, and operational expenses.
Q: Why the decision to relocate the president and first lady -- why not just house the president somewhere else temporarily until 29 Park Place is fixed?

Ohio University is obligated to provide the president and his family a residence, in accordance with his employment agreement.

Trustee Chair David Brightbill said “the decision to relocate the President and First Lady is not about a temporary fix to a current situation, but rather an investment that provides the University and the Foundation with a number of very interesting possibilities and opportunities for the future development of the campus and our goal for increased donor and alumni development activities on campus.”

“The decision by the foundation to pursue a lease-to-buy agreement is not about the current president but about the recruitment of future presidents. In recent years, the Board has closely monitored the condition of 29 Park Place, studied trends at other institutions relating to residential requirements of presidents, and anticipated that updating housing policies would be needed to better suit the president and the University,” said Brightbill. “The bat incursion has merely accelerated a decision-making process that was already underway. By freeing up a centrally-located facility for academic or student support usage, 29 Park Place will better serve the objectives of our Campus Master Planning process.”

Due to the changing landscape of the Park Place area over the last several years, the residence at 29 Park Place may no longer be suitable as the presidential residence. The home has served as the official residence since President John C. Baker first resided there in 1952. The official uses of the home have evolved and grown in scope since that time, with official functions directly connected to alumni outreach and donor relations in support of the Ohio University Foundation.

The home at 29 Park Place, recently valued at $931,120 has a good amount of usable space and is centrally located to main campus, making it ideal for a number of potential academic and student support uses. No decisions have been finalized about the future of 29 Park Place. It is important to note that any unit or college that may utilize that space will be responsible for making the necessary renovations or repairs to the building to make it suitable for future use. The building would also be maintained from the budget of the unit or college that might assume occupancy of it.

Q: What were the requirements used to find this residence?

Both short-term and long-term requirements were considered in the search for a new residence.

In the short-term, a home with single-level access to the master suite, kitchen and living area were necessary, due to the first lady’s recovery from a recent surgery.

In the long-term, it was necessary to find a dwelling that could support large gatherings, host campus social and business activities and serve as a space to foster alumni outreach and donor relations. The residence and property must offer appropriate safety measures to the president and his family.

The Board of Trustees also required the new property be in Athens to allow the president to continue a close connection with the Athens Campus.
The University worked with Athens-area real estate brokers to determine the best options given these requirements.

**Q:** Will any improvements need to be made to the property for security or other reasons?  
There will be modest upgrades in security and IT to insure the residence is safe and connected to campus.

**Q:** When will President McDavis and the first lady move in?  
Up until today, Mrs. McDavis was temporarily residing at the Ohio University Inn and President McDavis was staying with her as his schedule allowed, so they will be relocating to the new home as soon as possible. They are understandably eager to settle in to a traditional home setting once again.