

ANNUAL REPORT
Craig A. Stough, Mayor
2013

Quality of life issues have always been important to us in Sylvania and the reason why many families and businesses choose to come to Sylvania. Sylvania has excellent schools and a vibrant Lourdes University. Sylvania is recognized around northwest Ohio for terrific recreation programs and venues serving all age groups. Our neighborhoods are safe and well maintained, we have beautiful parks, and our public services are efficiently delivered. We have excellent health care facilities at the growing Flower Hospital campus and at Regency Health Care. We have an active Senior Center. And we have maintained a friendly environment for business and job growth, attracting new jobs and investment.

Sylvania has a lot to offer and is a great place to live, work and raise a family. My thanks to all who work every day to make Sylvania a great place, and I look forward to even greater things to come.

Sylvania Attracting New Business

Sylvania is a great location for business and new business activity in Sylvania increased in 2013. New business means new job opportunities for our residents and new income tax revenue to help support City services for our residents. There was more construction and ribbon cuttings in Sylvania in 2013 than since before the recession years began in 2008.

Flower Hospital and Promedica are the largest employers in Sylvania, and they continue to improve their facilities each year. When the hospital was first built in the 1970's, a second tower mirroring the existing eight story tower was envisioned. The third floor of that second tower was constructed in 2013.

Promedica has also made a major property investment in Sylvania, buying the old Churchill's store and Starlite Plaza. They are considering plans for a new medical office building/care facility employing hundreds of medical employees. Also, a new Lake Park facility to replace the existing building is being planned for the Flower Hospital campus.

Earlier in the year, ribbon cuttings were held for Interrupt Marketing and for NOIC. Interrupt Marketing is a new business in Sylvania employing about twenty-five in the remodeled Maplewood Marketplace downtown. NOIC is expanding and has opened a second office location on the north side of Monroe Street along the North Branch of Ten Mile Creek.

Lily Whitestone opened a store downtown and the old Irv's Autoparts store was remodeled for new retail and office space, with T.K. Lane's opened in November. With more new businesses and restaurants downtown, Sylvania is becoming a bigger retail destination.

New business also continues to open in Sylvania in commercial areas away from the downtown. Peace, Love and Pottery recently opened west of McCord Road on Sylvania Avenue. A ribbon cutting for Office Image at 5800 Monroe Street was held in September.

A gala ribbon cutting was held November 4th for the Paul Mitchell School at 5549 Monroe Street. The school occupies 13,000 S.F. of commercial space. The school employs 30 staff members and offers training for hundreds of students. Sylvania was chosen because of the high traffic volume along Monroe Street and the many Paul Mitchell product users in the area.

Sylvania continues to be a great location for business. Sylvania is where their customers are. As the economy continues to improve, we will continue working to make Sylvania a great destination for business.

A Busy Year in Sylvania

Sylvania is always a great place to be, and 2013 was no exception with lots of activities and programs for residents and visitors to enjoy:

Thursday, May 9th – Spring Downtown Delights as organized by the Downtown Sylvania Association in downtown Sylvania.

Saturday, May 11th – S.C.A.T. 24 hour relay fundraiser at Timberstone Junior High.

Sunday, May 18th – Downtown Sylvania Car Show as organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

Monday, May 27th – Memorial Day Parade through downtown Sylvania to Veterans Memorial Field for Memorial Day Service.

Saturday, June 1st and Sunday, June 2nd – Maple and Main Art Show in downtown Sylvania as organized by The Chamber of Commerce and Sylvania Arts Commission.

Sunday, June 9th – Race for Recovery Triathlon starting at Tam O'Shanter.

Thursday, June 13th – Movie Night in downtown Sylvania as organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

Saturday, June 15th – Sylvania Cup Vintage Base Ball Tournament at Pacesetter Park as organized by the Sylvania Great Black Swamp Frogs Base Ball Club.

Wednesday, July 3rd – Sylvania Independence Day Fireworks at Centennial Terrace organized by the Sylvania Area Joint Recreation District.

Saturday, July 7th – Sylvania Criterium Bicycle Race near Burnham Park.

Saturday, July 13th – Sylvania Riverball Race in Harroun Park to benefit the Sylvania Conservation Corps.

Week of July 15th – Marathon LPGA Golf Tournament at Highland Meadows Golf Club.

Thursday, July 18th – Taking it to the Streets – Welcome Marathon LPGA event in downtown Sylvania as organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

Friday, July 26th and Saturday, July 27th – Pizza Palooza at Centennial Terrace as organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

Thursday, August 8th – Movie Night in downtown Sylvania as organized by the Chamber of Commerce.

Sunday, August 11th – Sylvania Triathlon/Duathlon staged out of Olander Park and Tam O'Shanter by Jim Donaldson and Elite Endeavors.

Saturday, September 14th – Almost Oktoberfest in Downtown Sylvania/SOMO District. This was a new event in downtown Sylvania and was a great event with many in attendance.

Sunday, September 22nd – Fossil Fest at the Historical Village. This was a great activity for families and young fossil hunters.

Sunday, October 20th – Fall Festival and Parade in Downtown Sylvania. We again hosted several official visitors from Woodstock, Ontario, our Canadian Sister City. Representatives of Sylvania traveled north to Woodstock, Ontario for their annual Santa Claus Parade on Saturday, November 16th.

Thursday, November 14th – Downtown Delights in Downtown Sylvania on Main Street. This night started the holiday shopping season in downtown Sylvania.

Saturday, December 7th – Holiday Happenings in Downtown Sylvania on Main Street. Santa arrived at 4:45 p.m. and the official Holiday Tree lighting took place.

Personnel Changes

The City of Sylvania has for years benefited from many hardworking and loyal employees willing to work a variety of tasks as needed to make municipal government run efficiently and responsively. Many have worked for the City thirty years or more and reached retirement age.

Recent changes to the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) lead to the retirement of many of these long-term employees before the end of 2012. The City workers involved included many work areas of the City: clerk of council, utilities, zoning, finance, court and police dispatching.

The retirements allowed the City to evaluate and update its organizational structure and staffing requirements. Some positions were combined, while other positions were eliminated. The effect of these changes meant fewer people working for the City than in 1996 when I became Mayor. No reductions in services to our residents are planned as a result of these retirements and the reduction in personnel.

The fewer number of employees for 2013 allowed the City to reduce budgeted General Fund expenditures by 6.1% from 2012. Losses of revenue from the State of Ohio, lower property tax values and lower investment income have required lower spending to balance the budget without increasing tax rates.

The many long-term employees who have retired served the City well and will be missed for their hard work, loyalty and institutional knowledge. New employees were selected to add new skills, ideas and vitality to the City workforce.

New Finance Director Toby Schroyer also served as City Treasurer and also performed some human resource responsibilities. Sharon Bucher combined Clerk of Council duties with her previous financial responsibilities. Joe Shaw was hired as the Deputy Director of Public Services.

Labor Agreements Approved

The City of Sylvania has reached three year collective bargaining agreements with the four collective bargaining organizations representing many City of Sylvania employees. The agreements are all similar and include a 1% per year wage increase, a \$600 annual lump sum payment, an increase from 10% to 15% employee contribution for healthcare costs, an increase in employee copay and prescription medicine costs, and some workplace rule changes.

The four collective bargaining organizations are:

1. **Sylvania Municipal Employees Association** – affiliated with American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employee Local 3468. This organization represents 24 employees which includes all full time laborers, public works servicemen, maintenance workers and construction inspectors in the Division of Utilities, Division of Streets, Division of Parks and Forestry and Division of Vehicle Maintenance.
2. **Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge No. 129** - represents 26 police officers.
3. **Sylvania Police Command Officer's Association** - represents 6 police sergeants.
4. **Sylvania Police Telecommunicators** – represents 6 police dispatchers.

I thank the four collective bargaining organizations representing City employees and city administrators for effective and fair negotiating this year. All of us in the City of Sylvania benefit from their ability to successfully negotiate and settle, avoiding the rigors, expense and divisiveness of the later stages of collective bargaining.

Curbside Recycling Changes

The City of Sylvania's curbside recycling program switched from the open blue tubs to larger covered carts. The change was in response to problems with recyclables blowing around neighborhoods on windy collection days, and also allowed switching to an every other week collection schedule in order to reduce expenses.

Each household received a new 95 gallon covered recycling cart, or a smaller 65 gallon covered cart if requested when offered in February. Both size carts have wheels for moving it to and from the street.

The new carts were delivered to homes by Republic Services, the City's recycling collection contractor, between April 15th and April 20th. Beginning the week of April 22nd, all curbside recycling collection was by automated truck and only recyclables placed in the new covered carts will be collected. Automated arms lift and dump the carts into the truck without the driver leaving the truck cab.

Recycling collection then occurred every other week on the regular refuse collection day, in lieu of the previous weekly collection schedule. The materials that can be recycled was unchanged – aluminum and metal cans, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles, newspapers, magazines, paper bags and shredded office paper.

Garbage collection was unchanged and continued weekly using resident's existing containers. The green waste recycling schedule also remained unchanged.

Sylvania City Council approved new three year contracts with Republic Services for both garbage collection and curbside recycling. The covered recycling carts will be evaluated at the end of the contract for efficiency and effectiveness. The possible use of covered carts for automated weekly trash collection will also be considered.

Community Reinvestment Areas

Sylvania City Council expanded and enhanced several existing community reinvestment areas, or CRA's, originally created in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

CRA's encourage investment and improvements, either remodeling or new construction of residential, commercial or mixed use properties by exempting the value of the improvements to the property from property taxes for a number of years. At the expiration of the CRA abatement term, the improvements are included in the valuation for the calculation of property taxes. The legislation creating the City's eight CRA's provided for an abatement term of six years for improvement to any type of property.

The new legislation extended the period of tax exemption up to the fifteen years as allowed by the Ohio Revised Code, with varying time periods based upon the type of property being improved:

- One or two unit residential properties up to 10 years with an investment of at least \$3,000;
- Multi-family dwellings of three or more unit residential properties up to 12 years with an investment of at least \$10,000;
- Commercial or industrial properties up to 10 years (no minimum investment required);
- Mixed use properties up to 15 years (no minimum investment required).

The CRA's amended to include extended tax exemption periods are CRA No. 1 on Monroe Street east of Summit Street which includes the SOMO property, CRA No. 6 on Monroe Street was expanded to include Starlite Plaza, the Country Square offices surrounding residential areas, and CRA No. 8 was merged with CRA No. 2 and further expanded to include more historic neighborhoods north and west of downtown Sylvania.

Zoning Code Changes

City Council also studied and made changes to three sections of the Sylvania's Zoning Code. Changes are made periodically to address new concerns or issues from our residents and property owners about the requirements of the Code.

The first issue was the storage of recreational vehicles and boats on residential property. A previous length limitation of 19' for on-site storage of RV's and boats was removed from the Code a few years ago when the Code was updated and City Council acknowledged these types of vehicles have generally become larger over time.

The City occasionally receives complaints from neighbors about these large vehicles being stored in side yards very close to their property lines. Sometimes the complaints can be resolved by discussing the neighbor's concerns with the vehicle owners. However, City Council added a new requirement based on vehicle length establishing the distance that boats and RV's must now be kept from a property line for safety and maintenance access purposes.

A second issue concerned the use of lighting tubes to highlight or outline buildings, as ProMedica has done at Flower Hospital and their other facilities in the Toledo area. City Council added a new zoning code regulation restricting the use of lighting tubes in residentially zoned areas or areas facing residentially zoned property.

Adding the lighting tube restriction is not retroactive and the lights at Flower Hospital were grandfathered under the regulations in place when they were installed.

A third Zoning Code issue under consideration by City Council concerns temporary sign regulations. When the Code was updated a few years ago, regulations were put in place to limit the time period temporary signs could be displayed without applying for a permit. In 2012, a Sylvania resident filed a federal lawsuit against the City alleging the regulations limited his freedom of speech by restricting the time of display for a political candidate's sign. As a result of the lawsuit, City Council considered and ended up removing the time limits for temporary signs from the Code.

New Police Cars

The City of Sylvania placed five new marked police patrol vehicles into service during May. Three new Ford Interceptor sedans and two new Ford Interceptor SUVs were ordered in the fall of 2012. Four more sedans were ordered in fall 2013 to complete the replacement of the remaining 2009 Ford Crown Victoria police vehicles in early 2014.

Years ago, the City had to replace police patrol vehicles every two years to handle the wear and tear of police patrol. More recently, increased vehicle durability allowed the City vehicle maintenance department to keep vehicles on the road for three years.

The current 2009 Ford Crown Victorias have served longer – four years for the vehicles replaced this year and five years for the vehicles planned for replacement in 2014. All had over 100,000 miles of mostly city driving when traded.

The best two of the 2009 vehicles were kept for use by the City's two School Resource Officers. The current command officer's vehicle was also kept and transferred to the Volunteers on Patrol Unit, and received new decals designating it as a Citizen Patrol vehicle.

The City of Sylvania's cost for the five new vehicles purchased in 2013, including equipment, was \$184,445.00 after deducting the value of trade-ins and \$25,000.00 from the Federal Equitable Sharing Fund. The vehicles were bought using Ohio's state term contract pricing program and delivered through the State's vendor in Van Wert, Ohio.

Ford no longer manufactures Crown Victorias, and the switch to the new Interceptors requires the purchase of new equipment to fit the new vehicles. The police officers also designed a new graphics decal package for the vehicles. Existing radios and computers were transferred into the new vehicles.

Sylvania Welcomed Marathon LPGA

The City of Sylvania welcomed the participants, families and fans of the Ladies Professional Golf Association back to Highland Meadows Golf Club here in Sylvania. With a new tournament name and sponsor, Marathon, we once again had the excitement and national attention of an LPGA Championship in our community.

This year's tournament was held July 18th through 21st with pro-am events scheduled earlier in the week. The LPGA brings thousands of fans and media representatives into Sylvania. Our local restaurants, shops, and hotel benefit from the many visitors to our community. Even though the crowds at times can lead to congestion on our roads, the tournament also greatly benefits local charities serving Sylvania and Lucas County.

An exciting downtown Sylvania celebration welcomed tournament visitors to our community on Thursday, July 18th from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Main Street was closed to vehicles from Monroe Street north to the historic village. There was entertainment, music, a car show, children's activities and food vendors. Everyone was welcome and encouraged to attend. My thanks to the Sylvania Area Chamber of Commerce for organizing this downtown Sylvania event.

Highland Meadows Golf Club and the many volunteers and sponsors that make the LPGA tournament a success every year also deserve our thanks. The members of Highland Meadows have hosted the LPGA since 1990 and the course and facilities are always in great shape. Local residents and golf fans donate thousands of hours for hole marshalling and the many jobs that must be done well for a successful tournament.

Sylvania prides itself on being a great place to live, work and raise a family, and the LPGA Tournament helps enliven and enrich the lives of our residents every year. The tournament brings the excitement of national attention to our community. Our residents are treated to competitive golf at the highest level. And our young people see first-hand from world class athletes that hard work and practice can lead to success.

Water Tank Construction Complete

The City of Sylvania's new elevated water tank was completed and placed into service in late 2013. The last steps were for Toledo Edison to complete electrical service connections, and to sanitize and fill the inside of the new steel tank with water. Construction of the new two million gallon elevated water tank started early 2012.

The elevation of the water tank was designed to be the same as the existing water tower located in Burnham Park in order to stabilize the water system pressure. The new water tower is 125' high and is similar in height and size to the Lucas County water tower behind Timberstone Junior High School. The concrete support column is 56' in diameter with a painted steel water tank on top that is 95' in diameter. As a part of the project, the driveway and parking lot serving both the water tower and Fossil Park were improved with asphalt paving.

The water is actually pumped up into the tank by pressure created at the water pumping station located at South Main Street and Brint Road. The elevated water storage tanks fill up during the night when usage is low, and drain down during daytime hours of higher usage. Usage is especially high during summer lawn watering months and fire fighting.

The new elevated water tank is the first increase in water storage capacity for the Sylvania water system since the Burnham Park water tower was built in 1965, when Sylvania began purchasing water from Toledo. The two million gallon capacity of the new water tank provides enough water to meet the higher water flow demands of our now much larger water system, especially during dry summer months, as well as to provide a larger water reserve for firefighting and other emergencies.

The \$2,920,702.00 engineering and construction costs were paid in part by a \$487,800 grant and \$487,800 interest free loan from the Ohio Public Works Commission. The remaining cost was paid by proceeds of an earlier municipal bond sale.

Sylvania Is A Great Place To Be!

Sylvania is a great place to be! We have excellent schools, great recreation programs and venues, desirable neighborhoods and housing stock, excellent healthcare services, an active senior center, solid infrastructure and efficient city services. Sylvania's quality of life continues to be among the highest in the region, and quality of life is the main reason people and businesses choose to come to Sylvania.

For Sylvania to remain competitive with other communities, however, we must maintain and continue improving all that the community has to offer. The City of Sylvania is nearly built-out with little undeveloped land, and is no longer an outer ring community. To remain competitive we must redevelop old sites, maintain our infrastructure and continue to improve our city services and make them more efficient. The City must also continue to improve its "curb appeal" appearance to visitors and potential residents and businesses.

To that end, the City of Sylvania has undertaken a number of initiatives. To improve the appearance of our neighborhoods we are continuing our neighborhood street repaving program with no assessments to property owners. The Monroe Street corridor and downtown have been improved with new way finding signs, more flowers along the streets and on bridges, and street light repairs and improvements. Sign codes are being enforced to encourage the removal of old or oversized signage.

City infrastructure was improved with the completion of the new 2 million gallon water tower near Centennial Terrace, constructed with funding help from the State of Ohio. New intersection improvements are planned and will be built at the McCord/Brint and King/Brint intersections in 2014. Safe routes to school improvements were completed with new crossing signals, pavement markings and sidewalks, and safety training will be given in the schools in Spring, 2014.

Land for new development has been created east of the downtown hotel by clearing old buildings. Funding and right-of-way are being pursued for extending the River Trail through the Flower Hospital campus, under US 23 and providing a safe and scenic walking/bicycle connection east to Monroe Street.

The City budget reflects both the increased business activity in Sylvania and the more efficient delivery of city services. Income tax receipts were up over 5% in 2013. The 2014 Operating Budget projects a \$228,000 surplus in 2014 with no services cut, employees laid off or taxes raised.

All in all, the future looks bright for Sylvania! Sylvania is still a great place for families and business!