

## Chapter 5: Market Analysis

This chapter is excerpted entirely from **LandUse USA's report done for the City in May, 2012.**

### Introduction

The City of Sylvania is striving to strengthen its downtown core by a) completing this Downtown Market Strategy that identifies retail gaps and opportunities; b) preparing a Downtown Plan that identifies opportunities for more retail space and improved parking; c) addressing quality of life choices and amenities with designation of a Cultural, Historic, and Arts district; and d) attracting more residents, employers, and visitors with redevelopment projects along Monroe Street (i.e., the SOMO Project.)

This report presents specific strategy recommendations for retail, entertainment, and residential growth through the next five years for the City. It is designed to be succinct with a focus on strategy recommendations; and it also includes a comprehensive appendix of materials that support the work. The narrative is easiest to follow if the appendix is studied as a companion to the report. This document is also part of a tool kit together with the new City's Downtown Plan currently being prepared by Poggemeyer Design Group and Land Design Studio.

Our study of the City of Sylvania, Lucas County, and surrounding communities has included the following steps, with considerable supporting documentation in the Technical Report.

- Community opinion survey with an open-ended questionnaire and about 150 respondents.
- Participation in several meetings with the Sylvania Downtown Association.
- Review of prior work, particularly downtown planning documents prepared by Poggemeyer Design Group and Land Design Studio.
- Detailed field analysis, research and inventories of business supply and commercial vacancies.
- Macro-level supply-demand analysis with an overview for Lucas County and the Toledo MSA.
- Micro-level supply-demand analysis with details for the City and surrounding communities.
- Import-export analysis with a focus on retail expenditures.
- Housing assessment to gauge the upside opportunity for new product choices in the downtown.
- Economic and demographic analysis of employment and household characteristics.

Based on the results of this work and supported by our experience with similar types of communities throughout the Upper Midwest, we have formulated a number of recommendations that are detailed in the following sections of this report.

### Market Overview

The City of Sylvania is a relatively small community of less than 20,000 residents, but its small size is offset by a number of other demographic, regional, and locational

advantages. It is an outer-ring community and part of the Toledo 4-County Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which has a much larger population of over 600,000 residents.

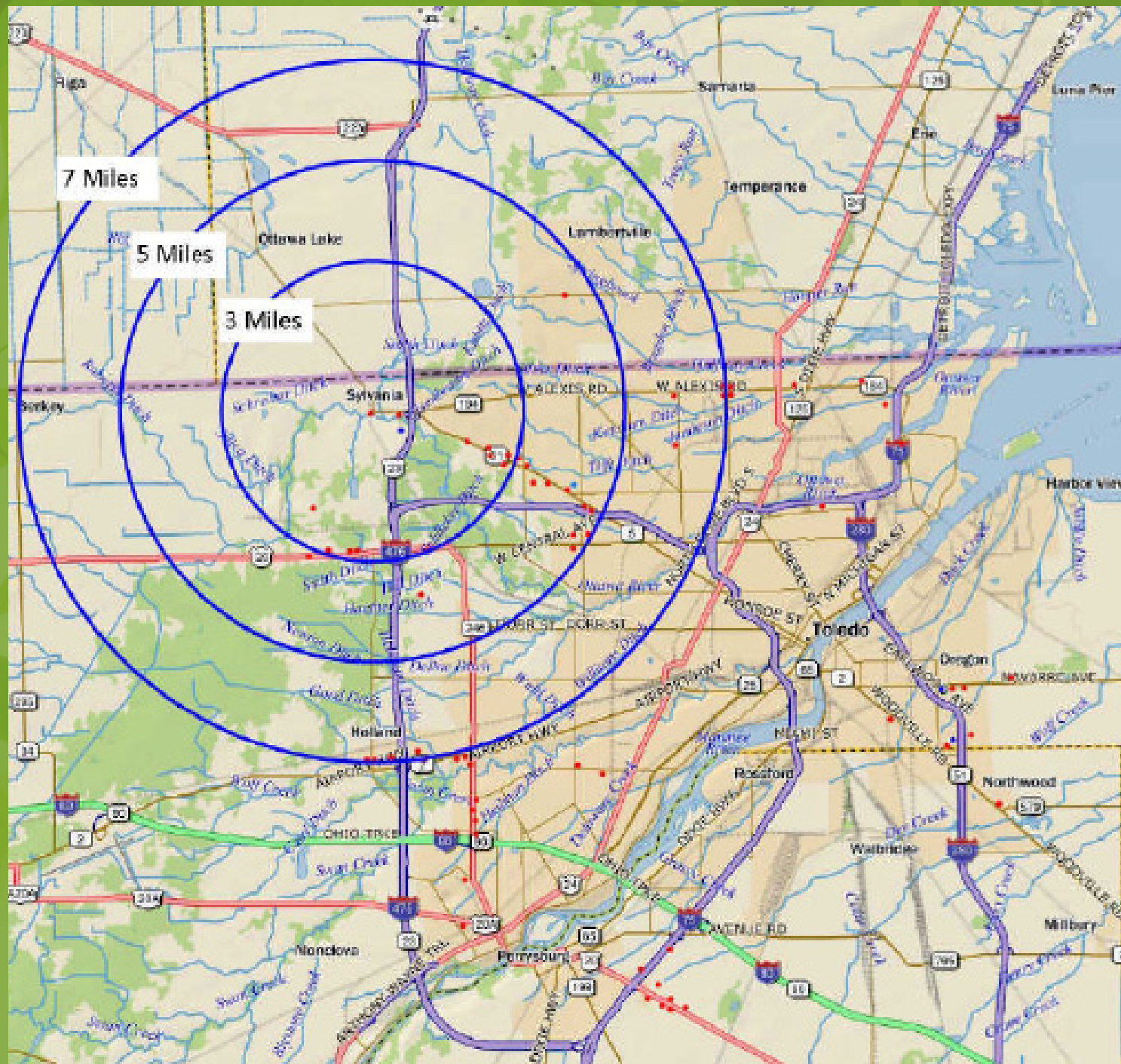
The pattern of urban development from Toledo into Sylvania is interrupted in only a few places by the Ottawa River/Ten Mile Creek watershed; Interstate 475; and Highway 23. From a regional perspective, The City of Sylvania is physically proximate to the Toledo urban area, and good regional accessibility is provided by a number of transportation connectors like Monroe Street, Alexis Road, Holland-Sylvania Road, Sylvania Avenue, and Central Avenue.

The City of Sylvania benefits from a number of regional amenities, including the Flower Hospital, and Lourdes University (Franciscan). It is within 4 miles of the market's premier and largest shopping mall (Westfield/Franklin Park Shopping Center); about 7 miles from the University of Toledo; and 9 miles from Downtown Toledo. Relative to the MSA, Sylvania benefits from low unemployment; high income profiles; high home ownership; and low residential vacancy rates. These and other variables are described in greater detail within the Technical Report (the companion piece to this document.)

Downtown Sylvania is less than 1 mile west of Highway 23, and less than 1 mile south of the Ohio-Michigan

**“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”**

- Will Rogers

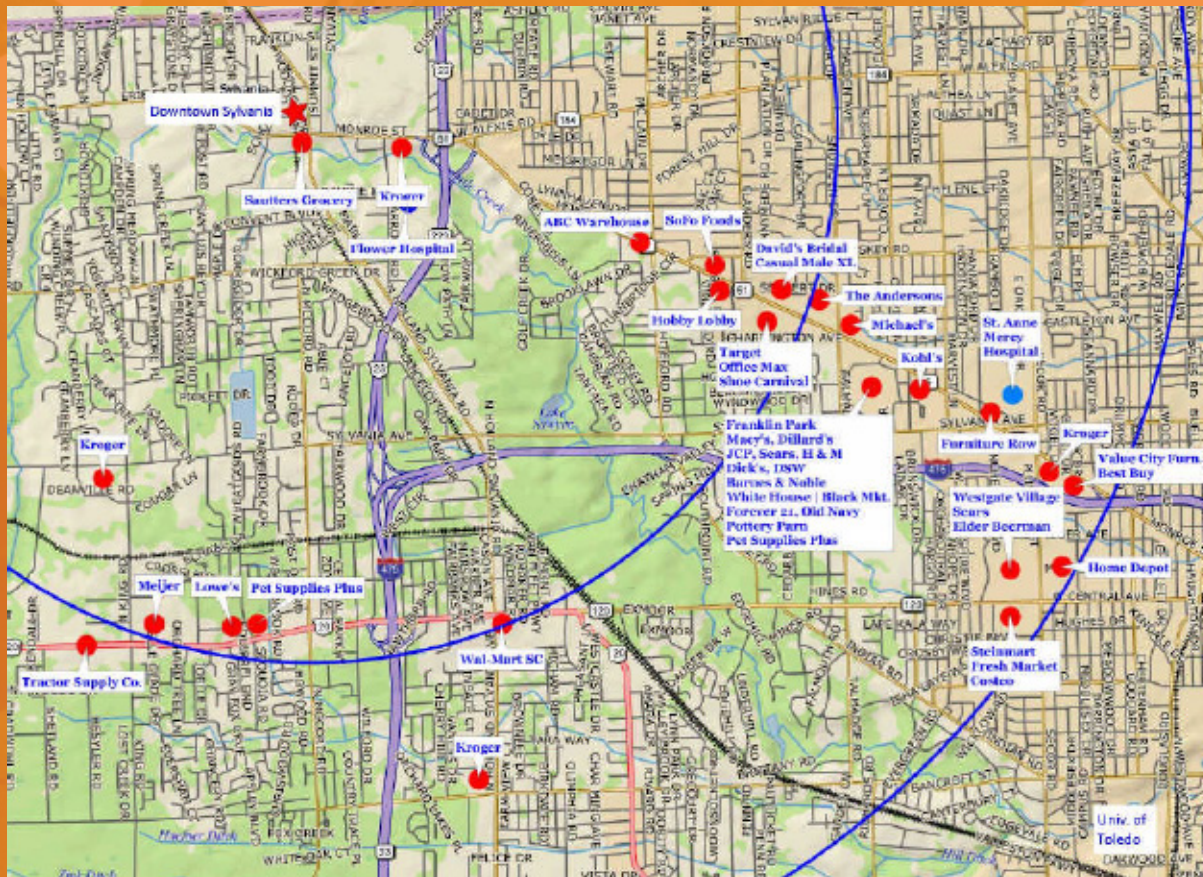


Inset 1. The City of Sylvania relative to the Toledo MSA. Red dots indicate bid-box retailers; blue dot indicate regional hospitals.

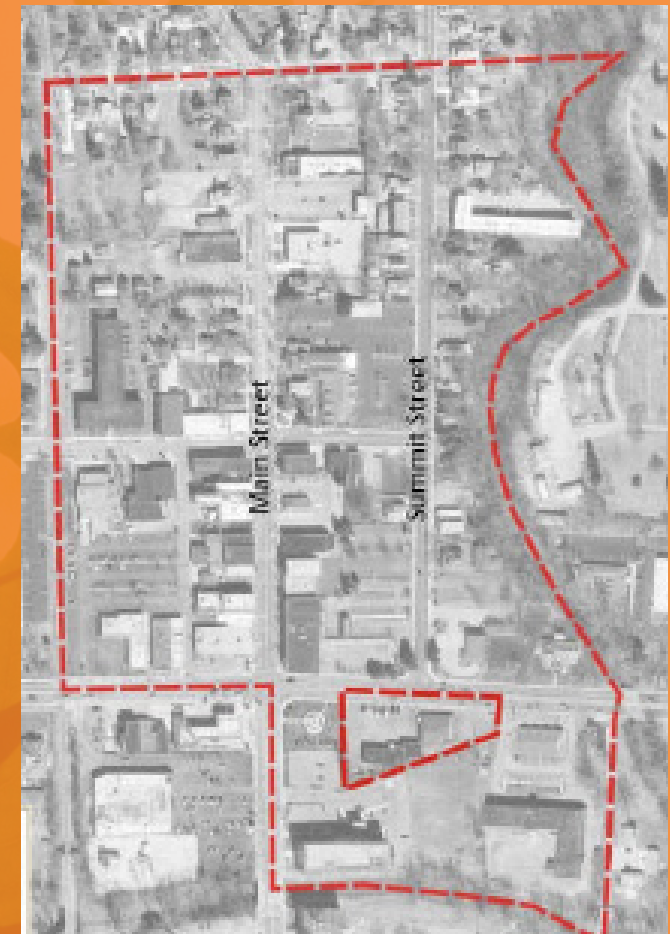


state border. The downtown has moderate traffic counts that approach 13,000, but counts are approaching 22,000 near Highway 23, and near the Westfield/Franklin Park shopping area; and exceed 40,000 along the Highway 23 corridor. The two insets below show the clusters of national retailers along Monroe Street; and an aerial photograph of downtown Sylvania.

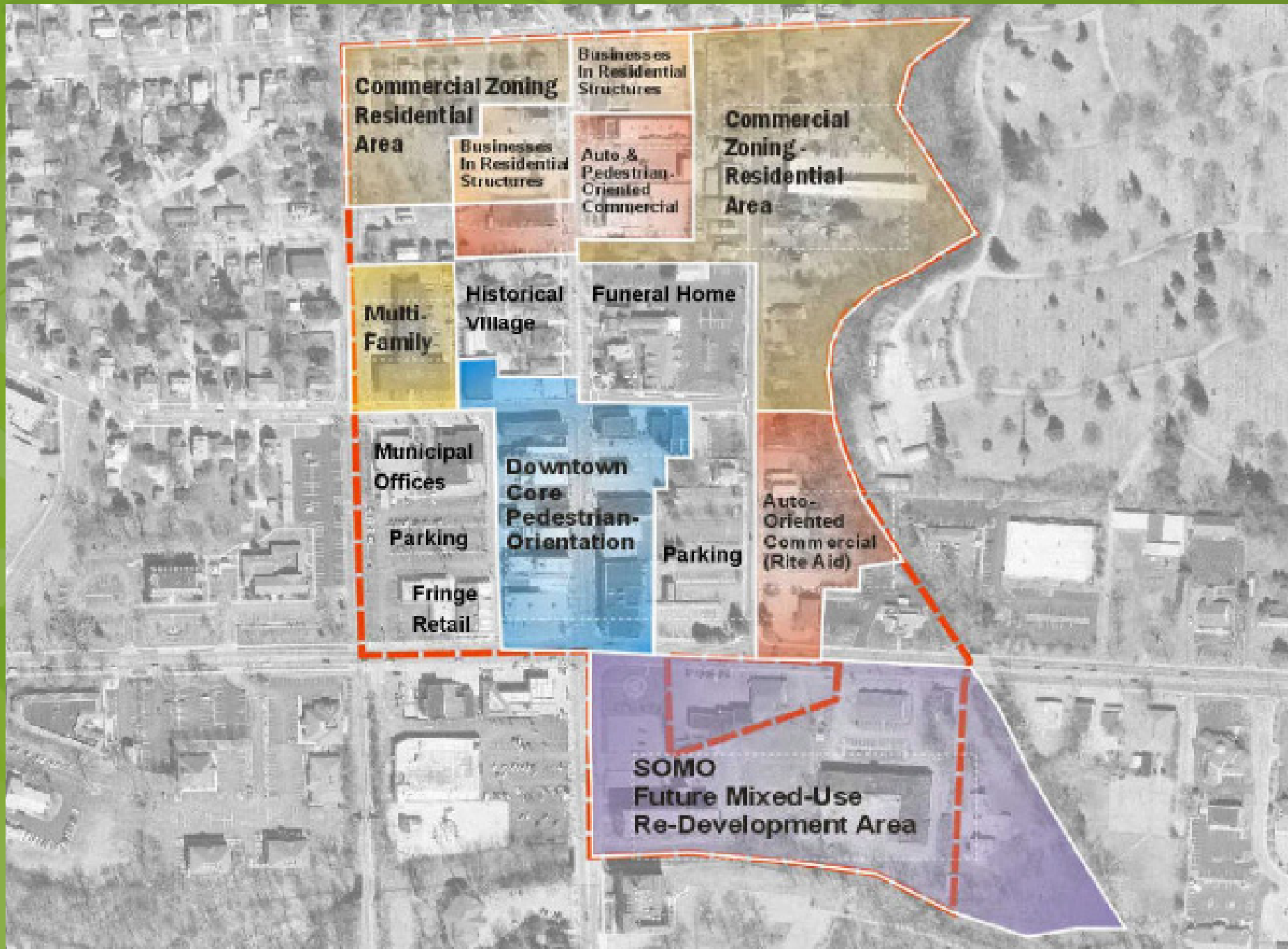
Today, Downtown Sylvania includes several distinct components, including a) downtown core; b) fringe retail; c) historical village; d) businesses in residential structures; e) auto-oriented commercial; f) SOMO redevelopment area; g) commercial zoning in residential areas; h) multi-family uses; and i) municipal offices and services. Each of these is shown in Inset 4, below.



Inset 2. Downtown Sylvania relative to the distribution of national chain and big-box retail.



Inset 3. Aerial photograph of downtown Sylvania, showing the retail core along Main St.



Inset 4. Existing land uses within Downtown Sylvania, Ohio.



Downtown Sylvania is faced with a number of limitations as described below. Most of these will be addressed by Poggemeyer Design Group and Land Design Studio in preparation of the downtown plan. Others may be more difficult to overcome.

The downtown Main Street is perpendicular to Monroe Street, which is the main connector from Highway 23 and the Westfield/Franklin Park shopping area. Main Street is a secondary and local connector rather than a major thoroughfare.

Given its perpendicular orientation, Main Street is not immediately visible to approaching traffic along Monroe Street.

There is a small amount of retail space within the downtown core, which makes it difficult to achieve critical mass and synergies needed to attract retail tenants and shoppers, and makes it difficult to compete with larger shopping destinations.

Along the second block (north of Maplewood Avenue) the buildings are more fragmented with inconsistent design, use (apartments), and set-backs. This contributes to the perception that the overall downtown retail environment is small.

The downtown also has a number of specific advantages that can be leveraged to overcome the disadvantages described in the prior section:

The city has already implemented some way-finding along Monroe Street and has signs identifying its historical village. Way-finding within the downtown core will probably be added as part of the overall downtown planning effort.

The majority of existing tenants are appropriately filling traditional retail categories, and non-retail services are relatively few.

The district has a number of vacancies that need to be filled but could also be viewed as “opportunities” and real estate choices for prospective merchants. The City has the authority to refine ordinances if needed to ensure that recent vacancies are filled by traditional retail.

On-street parallel parking is available on both sides of Main Street along its entire length, plus behind the stores.

Along the first block (between Monroe Street and Maplewood Avenue), the downtown core is mostly contiguous and compact with a little fragmentation. It is generally well-balanced and compact, and frames both sides of the street.

Some building fragmentation within the downtown core does exist, and specifically on both sides of an Edward Jones business. Together with an adjacent office building, this could represent an opportunity to add new retail space and achieve higher densities through infill.

Many of the buildings are two levels in scale, embrace Main Street, and help convey a sense of place and arrival.

The city’s leaders, residents, businesses, and stakeholders recognize the downtown as a valuable asset and are prepared to undertake necessary tasks to ensure its long-terms success.

Although the downtown core is just one block long, there are additional shopping choices available within the historical village, fringe retail areas, and auto-oriented commercial areas. A key challenge is knitting in these uses with the downtown core to convey a larger shopping area.

The vibrancy of Sylvania’s traditional downtown district has recently become diluted by a high vacancy rate (about 20%) as a result of new store closings. A few of the store closings might be a reflection of the recent recession, but others can be attributed to unique circumstances among business owners. Until very recently, the vacancy rate was closer to 10%, which is better than average for most small downtowns during the recent economic recession (2008-2010.)

A potential risk for Downtown Sylvania is that the property owners might try to sign leases with non-retail types of services. If this happens, it would undermine the traditional and unique shopping environment. The best way to avoid this scenario is to adopt a vision in the master plan and to adopt zoning ordinance that regulate the types of uses

If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.”

- Milton Berle

allowed in the downtown. The City of Sylvania is already managing this risk through its current zoning ordinances, with some measure of success.

Ideally, future non-retail types of businesses and services will occupy upper-level space above the street-front retail, reserving the later for traditional and discovery types of retail. This is an important and perhaps easiest step toward increasing the amount of street-front real estate that is available to retail tenants, while literally turning the lights on upstairs with other types of businesses.

Geographically, the majority of recommendations presented in this report are specific to the downtown core, historical village, fringe retail, auto & pedestrian-oriented commercial areas; and corresponding parking fields. The critical pivot-point is the intersection of Main and Monroe Streets. Any new developments designed to add retail space should strive to be as close as possible to that intersection and the downtown core.

### Optimal Retail Mix

Assuming that the vacancy rate among existing retail space is reduced and that some entertainment venues are added, then there is market support for the addition of new space through redevelopment, revitalization, modification, expansion, infill, and the addition of new buildings. More retail space would help the downtown achieve critical mass and synergies; and create a larger environment that is contiguous and impactful. Specific recommendations on

the types of business are provided in the following section of this report.

The optimal retail strategy calls for 22,500 square feet of conventional retail space, plus 35,000 square feet of space for the creative arts, entertainment venues, a bed-and-breakfast, and complementary professional space. Together, these two general categories total 57,500 square feet.

Near-term, the greatest needs and opportunities are in the retail and entertainment categories. Retail is a priority over entertainment because it has the ability to generate the most jobs, sales and tax revenues. However, entertainment venues are also needed to diversify the mix of choices for visitors while enhancing the quality of life for residents; and to justify the addition of new retail space in the downtown district.

For perspective, we have estimated that there are 14 vacancies in the downtown area, which collectively represent less than 15,000 square feet. This means that long-term, and supported by a sound downtown plan, the downtown could physically expand by adding +45,000 square feet of new brick-and-mortar real estate, including facilities for a) a community theater; b) a cinema; and c) creative arts studios and professionals.

These recommendations acknowledge that Sylvania already has the Franciscan Center at Lourdes University, which includes a theater with seating capacity for 850 spectators (the center also has meeting rooms, a gymnasium, and The

Commons banquet hall.) To be clearly differentiated, the community theater recommended for Downtown Sylvania would have a city rather than a university affiliation; and would be smaller with more intimate with seating for 250 to 300 patrons.

A community theater might also include: a) a movable stage and flex-space for dance recitals, receptions, and public gatherings; d) a non-denominational chapel for weddings and related ceremonies; e) a kitchen for catering; and/or f) production equipment. In-line space could be included to accommodate complementary tenants, such as a photographer; event planner; caterer; dance instructor; production company; and/or arts foundation.

The community theater is not necessarily recommended as municipal revenue-generator and could actually be expensive to sustain economically. However, it is would still meet regional market demand and is recommended as an economic catalyst to generate the support for other revenue generators, including both retail and cultural arts venues.

If a theater, cinema, or similar type of venue is not incorporated into the mix, then there would be little support for adding new retail space in the downtown and most of the retail opportunities could simply fill the existing vacancies. To reiterate – if the City of Sylvania’s stakeholders want to strengthen the downtown by adding new retail space, then that vision would be economically viable only if meaningful entertainment venues are included in the plan.



Recruitment of new businesses should focus on traditional, discovery types of shops within the existing traditional downtown, or the two-block district along both sides of Main Street, from Monroe Street north to Erie Street. The first priority is on a mix of discovery, traditional types of retail, including : a) hobby and craft stores; b) clothing, apparel, and accessories; c) consumable goods; d) lifestyle supplies; and e) artisan supplies.

The biggest market gap is in unique niches under the apparel, clothing, and accessories categories; and filling up to 5,700 square feet of retail space. The general women's apparel category is already well-served in the downtown and at the Westfield/Franklin Park shopping area; but niche categories are relatively under-served. Downtown Sylvania already has several boutiques stores (Harmony Shoppe, Lacy C, Limelite Boutique, Juni, and V Concept), and collectively they provide the underlying synergy needed to support complementary stores:

<b>Clothing Categories</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Youthful trends .....	1,200
Bridal shop, suit tailor .....	1,200
Maternity boutique .....	900
Infant boutique.....	900
Women's shoe boutique .....	500
Men's shoe designer, cobbler .....	500
Bags, belts, haberdashery.....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>5,700</b>

Although clothing represents the biggest opportunity, unique craft stores are also supportable and may appear first, in an organic fashion. The best opportunities are for a fiber and yarn mill with quilting supplies; potter's guild and studio; beading supplies with classroom space; and scrapbook supplies with a classroom. As with clothing, this category's success will depend on clustering of at least two stores that provide some collective synergy to improve their geographic draw.

A single craft boutique would struggle without support from complementary types of businesses. However, by clustering, complementary types of businesses can achieve a critical mass that draws shoppers from farther way, motivates them to stay longer; generates cross-shopping activity; brings larger groups; encourages more frequent visits... and generates more expenditures.

The same principals apply to other categories like lifestyle stores, which for Sylvania could include a pet boutique with novelty toys and treats; a hobby stores with miniatures, models, and doll houses; a store with flags, kites, birdhouses, yard décor; and an electronics store with photography supplies, games, and/or toys.

<b>Hobby and Craft Stores</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Fiber, yarn mill, quilting classes.....	900
Potter's guild, classroom facility .....	900
Beading supplies, classroom facility .....	500
Scrapbook supplies, classroom space .....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>2,800</b>

The craft stores above are likely to appear organically and could be complemented by other lifestyle and artisan stores that are more likely to take some time and more diligent recruitment efforts:

<b>Lifestyle Supplies</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Pet boutique, novelty toys, treats .....	500
Miniatures, models, doll houses.....	500
Electronics, photography .....	500
Electronics, toys for tots.....	500
Flags, kites, banners, wind catchers .....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>2,500</b>

<b>Artisan Supplies</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Theatrical costumes, supplies.....	900
Artisan supplies, paint supplies .....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>1,400</b>

There is also a market opportunity for unique stores providing consumable products and limited service eateries, with recommendations provided below. Full-service restaurants may also be supportable but should be planned for the SOMO site rather than the downtown core.

“Most successful men have not achieved their distinction by having some new talent or opportunity presented to them. They have developed the opportunity that was at hand.”

- Bruce Marton

<b>Eateries and Consumables</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Authentic Hispanic eatery, tamales .....	1,200
Louisiana style Cajun, bayou grill.....	1,200
Euro meat market, sausages, cheeses.....	500
Polish, German, European gifts .....	500
Middle Eastern spice, tea exchange .....	500
Made-in-Ohio winery, brew supplies .....	500
Handmade ice cream, fudge, candy, etc. ....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>4,900</b>

The small store sizes reflect a combination of space constraints within the existing downtown and limited land where new retail space could be developed – which are complicated by parking fields, lot lines, and ownership. The small store sizes also reflect the goal of offering diverse choices with unique but smaller boutique stores. This is supported by a current national trend of boutique stores becoming more efficient and therefore smaller, and the ability to run a small business through the internet while supplementing sales with online transactions. (To this end, every single store should have a website; and many should also be able to process transactions online.)

Assuming that all opportunities are filled in these categories, they would require 17,300 square feet of retail space, which is slightly higher than the space available among all current vacancies. Theoretically, this means that more retail space would not be necessary to accommodate these uses. In practice however, more real estate choices among modern facilities would help Sylvania attract not only these stores,

but also entertainment venues; studios in the creative arts category; related professionals; and even some home furnishings stores.

Consistent with this objective, there is also a clear opportunity and need in the market to add a unique mix of entertainment venues, including professional businesses supporting the creative arts industry; plus a bed-and-breakfast. Entertainment venues could include a community theater, playhouse, and multi-purpose facility with up to 10,000 square feet; plus a two-plex drafthouse cinema with up to 12,000 square feet. (A drafthouse cinema is an upscale trend where menu service is provided in a leisurely setting; and pre-movie advertisements and previews are eliminated from the program.)

Although we are addressing the entertainment category after the retail category, it is by no means less important. Again, unless space can be provided for the theater and cinema (complemented by a meaningful cluster of artisans, galleries, studios, and related types of professional businesses), there would be little demand for the addition of new retail space in downtown Sylvania. Here is a summary of the opportunity and need:

<b>Creative Arts</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Hands-on ceramic studio, kilns .....	1,500
Art galleries, artisan incubator, retail.....	2,000
Kitchen, studio incubator, workspace.....	2,000
Dance studio, classes.....	2,000
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>7,500</b>

<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Community theater, playhouse .....	10,000
Two-plex drafthouse cinema .....	12,000
Sound recording studio .....	500
Production video, sound operations .....	500
Promoters of performing arts, dance .....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>23,500</b>

After some new businesses in the retail and entertainment categories become established, and after they have succeeded in expanding the downtown’s regional draw, then the opportunity will also grow for a cluster of retailers in the home furnishings category. Again, a single furniture store is far more likely to struggle and fail; whereas a cluster of complementary stores can achieve a critical mass and synergy that encourages shopper activity and generates the sales needed to sustain the category.

<b>Home Furnishings</b>	<b>Sq. Ft.</b>
Furniture – Scandinavian Design .....	1,200
Furniture – modern concepts .....	1,200
Furnishings – modern, retro décor .....	900
Furnishings – rustic, urban edge .....	900
Furnishings – chef’s cupboard .....	500
Lawn and garden décor .....	500
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>5,200</b>

There is also a market-wide opportunity for niche stores in the home improvement category, plus import rugs. However, these types of uses are more likely to choose





Inset 5. Examples of modern building formats for adding new retail space in downtowns.



Inset 6. Concepts for independent, boutique types of retail recommended for Downtown Sylvania.



Inset 7. Concepts for independent, boutique types of entertainment and cultural arts venues recommended for Sylvania.

a location along Central Avenue (near Lowe's or Home Depot), so we have taken a pragmatic approach in excluding them from the strategy for downtown Sylvania.

### Qualitative Perspective

The City of Sylvania benefits from a favorable income profile and its downtown is relatively accessible to affluent households living in other upscale communities throughout the Toledo MSA. Accordingly, we highly recommend that some of the new retailers offer unique, higher-end and upscale merchandise, which will help the downtown pull shoppers from throughout the region as well as locally.

For example, a new furniture store should offer modern and Scandinavian designs with quality craftsmanship rather than just sofas and dinettes that would be redundant in the market. A shoe store would offer specialty brands that are difficult to find elsewhere in Toledo, except online from stores in Chicago, Indianapolis, or New York. Clothing stores are focused on upscale, specialty niches, including bridal, maternity, and infant boutiques. The quality of any new construction to accommodate the addition of new retail space should be consistent with these objectives.

The strategy calls for a mix of "boutique" like stores, and the term warrants some clarification. As used for Downtown Sylvania, the term is intended to convey a) relatively small store size compared to conventional chain stores; b) niche merchandise categories and specialty items that are rarely found in chain stores; c) good breadth or diversity of items within each store; and d) narrow depth or quantity of each item within each store.



For example, a boutique apparel store might sell hats and mittens, but the product would be clearly distinct. They might be made in Ohio of locally farmed organic wool; hand-knitted made by non-profit charities; and designed to appeal to youths. Each item would be unique, and there might be only a few choices within each color palate or size. They are truly unique, and once gone might not be replenished.

The term “boutique” is not deliberately used to establish as high-price strategy in Downtown Sylvania. Unfortunately, the merchandising strategies of smaller boutique stores also means that they are buying products in smaller volumes and often negotiating one-time purchases from specialty suppliers. This usually means that small merchants are also paying higher prices per piece, and these higher costs are almost always passed down to the consumer.

In comparison, discount stores like Wal-Mart and Target negotiate contracts with their suppliers with longer terms and a larger number of items in bulk, that are then distributed to hundreds thousands of stores across the nation. By doing so, they are also able to negotiate significantly lower prices per item, and these savings are shared with the consumer to build brand loyalty and drive higher sales.

The disadvantages of low-pricing strategies among big-box stores may include: a) fewer niche items that are truly unique; b) lower levels of customer service; c) need to navigate large parking fields that are not “walkable,” and

d) redundancies between similar store formats that dilute the overall shopping experience. To compete, downtowns and boutique stores must offer the following: a) unique and niche products; b) high levels of customer service; c) convenient parking; and d) environments that are enjoyable and entertaining.

Some of Sylvania’s stakeholders have communicated a concern for the current high prices among some of the existing merchants, and a concern that the recommended strategy will exacerbate high prices. This in turn might make merchandise among downtown merchants unattainable for households with relatively moderate incomes, forcing them to leave their local market for value shopping.

To clarify, the strategy does call for a focus on boutique stores with unique, niche, and quality merchandise, but does not explicitly call for high prices. Some of the shops could offer a range of products across a broad spectrum of prices, appealing to both high-income and moderate-income households. Others might certainly target premier shoppers from throughout the Greater Toledo area, attracting visitors who in turn would contribute +10% to +40% higher sales for other conveniences, particularly eateries and gasoline stations.

The overall goal for each retailer should include a) leveraging synergies with existing and complementary businesses; b) having a geographically large trade area with local sales bolstered by visitor traffic; b) achieving the highest sales

possible; c) optimizing net earnings and profits; and d) being economically sustainable long-term. Achieving high sales and profitability requires a carefully balanced strategy of a) affordable prices for household basics supported by large volumes of merchandise turn-over; or b) relatively higher prices on unique products that with lower volumes of merchandise turn-over. The former is more likely to result in product redundancies between similar types of stores and usually has a smaller trade area. In comparison, the latter is more likely to result in a truly unique shopping environment with a unique product mix, and also has a larger trade area.

It is recommended that each and every store incentivize shopping among both local and visiting shoppers by providing: a) novelty but functional items in the \$10, \$15, \$20, and \$30 dollar range, and complementing the mix of unique products; b) “gift with purchase” programs; c) regular rotation of merchandise, window displays, sales, and special promotions; d) special store events like free classes, demonstrations, and other social venues; e) cross-marketing coupons for complementary stores; f) a “Sylvania Silverback” program where \$20 cash can be exchanged for silver-colored tokens redeemable for \$25 worth of downtown merchandise and services (a 20% savings); and g) customer loyalty programs where Sylvania Silverbacks are awarded for every \$100 spent, or for every 10th visit (10% savings.)

“Listen to the musn’ts child. Listen to the don’ts. Listen to the shouldn’t haves, the impossible, the wont’s. Listen to the never haves, then listen close to me. Anything can happen child. Anything can be.”

- Shel Silverstein

### Candidates for Relocation

Among the recommended strategies for Sylvania is the need to recruit some existing businesses and cottage industries to fill commercial space in the downtown. Most of these businesses have chosen locations along Central Avenue, Monroe Street and Sylvania Avenue, and usually where they benefit from shopper traffic generated by big-box retailers. A few are cottage industries in residential areas and essentially lacking a storefront, and other are recent closings but could be viable in some other format and in a vibrant downtown setting. All represent ideal candidates for traditional downtown environments.

### Candidates for Relocation, Recruitment

- SonFlower Quilts & Gifts Sylvania Ave.
- Uptown Fibers Yarn (closed )Monroe St.
- For the Love of Art Sylvania Ave.
- Rogueworks Art Supplies Alexis Ave.
- Meant to Bead Central Ave.
- Skrappaper Central Ave.
- Polish Pride Gift Store Allen Rd.
- Champman Art Gallery residential
- Mother Tree Gallery, Photos residential
- Cool Media Productions Central Ave.
- Yankee Doodle Flags, Kites Holland-Sylvania
- Studio Shoppe Clothing Sylvania Ave.
- Tiger Lebanese Bakery Central Ave.
- Spice Bazaar Holland-Sylvania
- Reddy Food & Spices Central Ave.

- Rock Garden Jewelry reopen
- The Vineyard; wines reopen
- Nabalee/Monnette’s Market reopen

The purpose of recruitment among existing businesses is to cluster complementary uses together in a pedestrian and historic setting; and strengthening the downtown core while avoiding problems associated with market saturation and future store closings. We would rather relocate existing businesses than simply add new competition. Relocation is sometimes recommended as the first course of action. However, even if none of these existing stores are interested or able to relocate, the categories are still a good fit for downtown Sylvania.



### Repurposing Existing Space

We have prepared a list of the few non-retail businesses and services currently located along downtown Sylvania’s Main Street and that are currently occupying traditional retail tenant spaces. Under an optimal scenario, these businesses would be occupying non-retail, upper-level space in the downtown; spaces along perpendicular streets; and/or new professional space in the SOMO project.

Regardless, they are valued businesses and employers, and retention should be weighed together with the objective of optimizing the availability and use of retail space in the downtown core. Again, the overall objective is one of business retention while optimizing the use of available



Inset 7. Monasmith Insurance (left image); and Brueshaber Insurance (right) are ideal spaces for traditional retail.



space; and enabling synergies and critical mass among complementary types of businesses. When confronted with these challenges, many communities choose to adopt a “grandfather” clause that regulates the types of acceptable uses of facilities only after the existing business closes or relocates.

Candidates for Relocation out of Traditional Retail Tenant Spaces, Currently Located in Downtown Sylvania:

- Monasmith Insurance
- Homewatch Caregivers
- Brueshaber Insurance
- Edward Jones Financial
- Care4You2 STNA Classes
- 5658 Main Street tenants (street level)

Compared to many other downtowns throughout the Upper Midwest, there are relatively few non-retail businesses occupying traditional tenant space in

downtown Sylvania. Even so, these few cases warrant some discussion. With its location in the downtown core and flanked by other retail space, the space currently occupied by Monasmith Insurance would be the most attractive to just about any type of traditional retail tenant. Brueshaber Insurance and the Care4You2 businesses are in the Haymarket, which is an auto-oriented commercial project located one block north of the downtown core.



**Inset 8.** Edward Jones (left image) contributes to retail fragmentation and could be repurposed for traditional retail. The 5658 Main St. building (right image) could be modified into retail space with large bay windows.



Inset 10. City-owned apartment buildings in downtown Sylvania that could be re-purposed. Artist rendering by Land Design Studio; 2012.



Current



Artist Rendering



Inset 9. Examples of retail solutions for small urban spaces like historical villages.

It is recommended that the downtown plan strive to incorporate new retail space by either modifying, revitalizing, or expanding existing facilities (while keeping historic preservation as a top priority.) Efforts should begin in the downtown core and progress north to Erie Street and/or east to Summit Street; and should involve street-front space that would appeal to a mix of both retail and cultural arts venues. The first phase of new retail space should have direct visibility and frontage onto Main Street. Subsequent stages might also add retail space with frontage along Summit Street, and preferably as close as possible to Monroe Street and Maplewood Avenue.

The Edward Jones' facility (Inset 8, left) is attractive and bridges the retail-to-office building style. However, the non-retail use and surrounding parking field contribute to fragmentation and dissuades pedestrians from walking from the downtown core north to the Haymarket, so a retail use would be preferred. The parking fields on both sides of the Edward Jones building and adjacent to the 5658 Main Street Building would also be ideal locations for retail infill.

The adjacent 5658 Main Street building (Inset 8, right) currently has an office format due to its small windows, but its location in the downtown core makes it a good candidate for reformatting into retail space on the street level with large bay windows. Both of the buildings in Inset 8 are ideal

candidates for adding retail space by adapting existing facilities, but will undoubtedly depend on interest and willingness among their current owners to collaborate on the initiative.

After all real estate options are exhausted in the downtown core then it may be necessary to consider retail infill within the historical village commercial area. Again, the emphasis is on the development of compact retail space in a walkable environment but clear visibility to Main Street.

Also on the topic of re-purposing existing facilities, there are also apartments on the west side of Main Street that the City of Sylvania owns. They are located within the commercial district and the street-level space could be used for boutique shops, similar to the concept below as sketched by Land Design Studio. This is just one of several examples where residential units within the downtown could be reformatted.

We also recommend that sufficient land be secured and prepared to accommodate construction of a multi-purpose facility that could accommodate a community theater, playhouse, and/or cinema, with creative arts studios and professional space above. A few acres would probably be sufficient to accommodate the facility and some vertical parking. It could be located anywhere within a one-block walking distance from the downtown core, although ideally it would front onto either Main Street with a back entrance



off Summit Street.

### Marketing Recommendations

The downtown and SOMO projects could be advertised collectively to share the benefits of marketing dollars while filling existing vacancies along both Monroe and Main Streets. Marketing could include a combination of the following:

- Word-of-mouth advertising with an emphasis on positive, optimistic and consistent messaging by volunteers. It is advisable to have a clear mission statement prepared for volunteers, who then rehearse and spread the message throughout the community.
- Media advertising, including writing media releases for both local and regional newspapers. A dedicated city staff person or qualified volunteer should write a monthly media release and proactively distribute it by email to the region's newspapers. The newspapers are usually willing to post news releases that are already written for them.
- Highway advertising with attractive billboards, preferably supported by two wood posts rather than a single metal pylon. Electronic billboards can also be helpful.
- Facilitation of public meetings and workshops to announce the project and solicit input from local stakeholders, leaders, businesses, and resident shoppers.
- Phone calls and personalized visits to potential tenants, including existing stores identified for potential relocation; entrepreneurs and cottage industries; and even businesses in Perrysburg that might be interested in opening a second

location.

- One of the top recommendations is that an independent website be created for the Sylvania Downtown Association (a page on the City's main website is not a sufficient substitution.) The new website should have its own pages for: About Us | Downtown Plan | SOMO Project | Available Space | Incentives | Resources | Contact Us. There are many good online tools available that can be used to create new websites for as little as \$500 (five hundred dollars), with annual maintenance fees as low as \$1,500 (see <http://www.register.com>).
- We also recommend that the Sylvania Downtown Association judiciously review its list of current and prospective downtown events, and focus on only a few events each year. Time, volunteers, energy, and other resources should be channeled on planning and marketing of only a few highly effective and significant events.
- It is also recommended that volunteers be organized into four sub-committees consistent with the National Main Street Center's Four-Point Approach, including 1. Organization; 2. Promotion; 3. Design; and 4. Economic Restructuring. Efforts should be channeled toward the following tasks, in order of priority:

### Marketing Strategy Recommendations

- Use this Market Strategy as a toolbox to identify and recruit retail and cultural arts venues that can fill existing vacancies.
- If needed, meet with the Sylvania Area Community Improvement Corporation to clarify shared and unique goals and agendas; and to seek ways to collaborate and

share resources.

- Develop and design the recommended website using an online tool, such as [www.register.com](http://www.register.com).
- Prepare a detailed inventory of all vacant and available space to post online, including property address; adjacent uses; broker or owner contact information; size of the space; asking price or rent; etc.
- Write monthly or quarterly news releases and email them to all local and regional newspapers. Include an announcement searching for local real estate developers, and businesses to fill vacancies.
- Prepare a mission statement that can be consistently communicated throughout the community.
- Continue facilitating periodic lunch-and-learn meetings; public presentations; open houses, and other venues to recruit active volunteers.
- Periodically test website links to ensure that they are working effectively (correct the link from the city's website to the Sylvania Area Community Improvement Corporation.)
- Create brief, one-paragraph job descriptions for specific volunteer tasks, such as "business recruitment"; "website design"; "event planning"; "media releases"; etc.
- Plan and market a few good events each year; and judiciously review and simplify the total number of events so resources can be re-channeled toward these other tasks.

"The future, according to some scientists, will be exactly like the past, only far more expensive." - John Sladek



## Discover & ReImagine