

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Craig A. Stough 1/28/2021

"City of Sylvania Update"

The Sylvania Rotary Club has invited me to give an update of the City of Sylvania at their February 4th luncheon, and I would like to share the same information with you.

Sylvania is a great place to be! We have excellent educational opportunities, great recreation programs and venues, desirable neighborhoods and housing stock, excellent healthcare services, a vibrant downtown, an active senior center, two new libraries, solid infrastructure and efficient city services.

This has been a challenging year for our Sylvania Schools, but as we get past COVID-19 and our children are back in school full time, our schools will remain a draw to bring and keep families in Sylvania. We are also fortunate to be a college town with Lourdes University sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis.

Even with the current COVID-19 pandemic, Sylvania's quality of life continues to be among the highest in the region. Many people and families are looking to improve their home environment where they are spending more time, and Sylvania is benefitting as more people want to move to Sylvania, increasing Sylvania home sales and raising Sylvania home values.

In order to remain competitive with newer outer ring communities, we have ongoing programs to improve all those great amenities Sylvania has to offer and continue to attract people to our community. We keep our streets paved, our utilities up to date and our services efficient and responsive. Over the last four years approximately \$28.6 million in grant funds have been awarded to the City of Sylvania to help finance various current and future infrastructure projects.

The City of Sylvania is also working to identify and redevelop old or underutilized sites in our community. New construction on redevelopment land that was created beginning a decade ago by clearing old buildings east of the downtown hotel will be completed this year. The SOMO Flats development will have 206 luxury apartments with indoor parking below, in total a \$36 million investment. The first units in the west building will be ready for occupancy this year.

In addition, two new residential developments are under construction on McCord Road and on Alexis Road. Also, a five building 252 unit adult apartment complex was approved last year and may begin construction this year behind the Sylvania Avenue Kroger store.

A wonderful synergy of the Sylvania Area Chamber of Commerce, Sylvania Arts Commission, Redbird Downtown Sylvania Association and Heritage Sylvania continues to make for a vibrant downtown and attract new business and community activity. We have an Art Festival, a Fall Festival, a holiday celebration, parades, a weekly summertime Farmers Market and Art Walks the first Friday of each month, and we look forward to all those events restarting as the pandemic comes under control.

Sylvania's DORA, or Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area, allowing alcohol outside downtown on Main Street, has been a great success, and is being studied by City Council for expansion. Other communities are trying to emulate Sylvania's success by forming their own DORA's. Special thanks to the Sylvania Area Chamber of Commerce for their work and investment in the beautiful second phase decorative lighting over Main Street.

The City of Sylvania is also nearing completion of its updated Downtown Masterplan. The city has done these visioning exercises every ten years for the last 40 years. Previous studies lead to many of the improvements and new investment downtown. This update has great ideas to continue the growth and improvement of our downtown, and continue to bring new investment.

Sylvania City Council approved a 25% rate reduction for water customers in Sylvania for 2020, and that rate remains unchanged for 2021. After years of work and negotiation with Toledo, a Regional Water Commission was formed to equalize and stabilize water rates, and we continue to meet regularly as part of that commission. We are also meeting with Lucas County officials for improvements at the Lucas County Waste Water Recovery Facility in Waterville.

The 2021 City Operating Budget is balanced with no services cut, no employees laid off and no taxes raised. Operations are always reviewed to make them more efficient, reduce overtime and extend equipment life. After years of steady increases, income tax receipts were down about 4% last year due to the pandemic, but lost dollars were made up by CARES Act funding received from the federal government.

All in all, the future looks bright for Sylvania! We look forward to the pandemic ending and life returning to normal. Sylvania continues to be a great place for families and business!

