



January 6, 2008

Dear Ypsilanti Neighbors and Friends:

The year 2007 was a challenging one for Ypsilanti. The state economy declined, many businesses reduced staff or downsized, and mortgage foreclosures almost doubled from 2006. Despite these problems, city council, staff, and residents had successes during the year in business development, historic preservation, and regional cooperation efforts. Below is a partial list of these successes that will help the city of Ypsilanti to be attractive and sustainable in 2008 and beyond:

Walgreen's breaks ground

The corner of Michigan Avenue and Prospect was the site of a vacant business and property owned by SOS family services. The property was bundled together and sold in a package deal that provides money for SOS to carry out their mission of helping needy families, places Walgreen's near downtown, and puts new property on the tax rolls. This is a winner for everyone.

Depot Town Community Development Corporation formed

Riverside and Frog Island Parks will be operated by the Depot Town CDC, which is an offshoot of the Depot Town Association. The DTA has thirty years of experience running community projects like the ElvisFest. The DTCDC will build on this experience to plan events and provide improvements and maintenance to both parks. DTCDC projects will require city recreation commission and city council approval. The city looks forward to projects that beautify both parks, draw people, and keep our city a thriving festival showplace.

Eastern Leaders Group created

Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw County, officials from the city of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, Superior Township, Augusta Township, and private business people have formed a group dedicated to spurring economic growth in the eastern part of Washtenaw County. The first project is a small business incubator slated to be located in downtown Ypsilanti. Called Spark East, this effort will provide office space and assistance for small fledgling companies. The ELG is an impressive group of individuals in both the public and private sector who are working together with a regional focus to better the eastern part of Washtenaw County. Stay tuned as things progress on Spark East.

Starkweather house sold for restoration

Over the years city council has saved historic structures in Ypsilanti by transferring them to responsible owners who have brought them back to their glory. Starting in the 1970s, the old city hall, the old fire station, the Ladies' Library, the Gilbert mansion, and the Towner House were saved after city council transferred them to responsible owners.

Recently the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and the Starkweather house have been transferred from the city to private owners. The Ypsilanti Historical Museum houses the newly renovated stained glass window from the front of the Ladies' Library and many other impressive exhibits of Ypsilanti history. The Starkweather house was the home of Elijah McCoy and a stop for the Underground Railroad. Ypsilanti preservationist and restoration contractor Ron Rupert now owns the house and will begin renovations in 2008. This is another in a long list of historic preservation victories for Ypsilanti.

Regional police authority study group formed

For over a year, city manager Ed Koryzno and police chief Matt Harshberger have been attending meetings with Superior, Ann Arbor, Northfield, Salem, Augusta, and York townships to explore creating a regional police authority. The consulting firm Vichow, Krause, and Co. will present a proposal to the study group for a regional police authority in January 2008. The firm has helped municipalities in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois form regional public safety organizations. The study will include a comparative cost analysis of current services and recommend a police authority organizational structure tailored to our region that would result in a high quality of service and reduced costs.

The city and the townships will evaluate the study. If city council decides to go ahead with the regional police authority, the issue will go to a vote of the people (the authority would require a supporting property tax millage). Most likely, city council would reduce the general fund millage by the amount required for the regional police authority so that taxpayers would see no increase in property taxes. In any event, the regional police authority won't become a reality until the end of 2009 or later.

Regional fire district considered

Fire Chief Jon Ichesco is discussing creation of a regional fire district with the city of Ann Arbor and Ann Arbor and Pittsfield townships. A regional fire district would not alter the structure of the Ypsilanti fire department. All fire departments would pool their resources to create a strong regional fire district. City council can enact a regional fire district by resolution. No ordinance or tax changes are required. City council looks forward to further progress on the fire district from Chief Ichesco.

Ypsilanti 2020 Task Force appointed

Early this year city council appointed the Ypsilanti 2020 Task Force. The Task Force is charged with developing long-range planning to ensure that Ypsilanti is a viable and attractive community in the year 2020. The group is investigating state funding initiatives, spurring business development, encouraging affordable transportation, partnering with EMU and U-M, and enhancing regional recreation. The Task Force is integral to planning for Ypsilanti's future and was asked to participate in the Eastern Leaders Group.

New city staff hired

April McGrath joined us in 2007 as assistant city manager. April has been a great addition with her human resources and contract negotiation experience. She is currently negotiating contracts with the city unions.

In the city clerk's office, Frances McMullan was appointed clerk by city council. Ed Golembiewski has joined her in the office as deputy clerk. Their combined elections experience resulted in trouble-free elections in August and November of 2007. We look forward to continued smooth operations in the clerk's office in 2008.

I commend city manager Ed Koryzno and the city staff for their hard work and dedication to making the city of Ypsilanti a great place to live. As we look forward to the challenges of the budget process and keeping Ypsilanti attractive and sustainable by working with our regional partners, I encourage you to share your ideas and comments with city council and me. You can contact me at (734) 277-5446 or e-mail me at mayor@cityofypsilanti.com.

With best regards,
Paul Schreiber
Mayor, [City of Ypsilanti](http://www.cityofypsilanti.com)