



Sharonville

Retains, Grows and Attracts

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Photography provided by The City of Sharonville

On any given weekday, the population of Sharonville swells from about 13,500 to 39,000 due to an influx of people employed by a diverse array of businesses booming in this bustling burg.



Chris Xeil Lyons, economic development director

"We have a lot of people to keep happy," says a smiling Chris Xeil Lyons, the city's director of economic development.

It is the exemplary effort put forth by her department along with city government officials and city service providers (think police, fire and streets) that helps maintain the growth and business-friendly conviviality earning Sharonville the moniker City of Progress.

And what a progressive path it has been, according to Lyons, who joined Sharonville's team about four years ago, overseeing a swift rebound from the country's economic recession. As liaison between city government and local businesses, Lyons has been instrumental in keeping a collective economic development eye focused on jobs and investments.

Lyons' three-fold goal: retain businesses, grow these businesses and attract new businesses.

"Sharonville is second to none in location," says Lyons. "Our Interstate 75, 275 and 71 connectivity offers access to a diverse and educated workforce. It's easy for employers to find the employees they need."

That's due in part to the fact that Sharonville is home to Great Oaks Technical Schools and Career Development

Campus, the largest career and technical education district in the United States. In addition, the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State Technical College, Xavier University and many other colleges and vocational schools are a convenient 30-minute drive from Sharonville. Collaboration between Sharonville, Great Oaks and Cincinnati State ensures that any business can count on specialized training, certification, continuing education and customized services for its workforce.

The city's accessibility, skilled workforce and professional services have played a role in developing a strong manufacturing base, Lyons says. Sharonville has generated significant investments from the automotive, pharmaceutical and soap industries that has resulted in a diverse and sound manufacturing sector that continues to grow at a steady pace.

The Ford Motor Co., and the United Auto Workers union reached a new agreement in November that will lead to a \$900 million investment in the Sharonville Transmission Plant. Ford is the city's largest employer, with nearly 1,700 hourly union employees.

"This new agreement tempers any fears of a plant closure and solidifies Ford's commitment to our city for many years to come," Lyons says.

In addition to manufacturing, Sharonville boasts excellent retail development possibilities and is also a renowned incubator of corporate office space.

Make that world-class office space.

"We have both Class A space leasing available at premium rates, as well as smaller office facilities," Lyons says of the city's more than 14 million square feet of commercial space. "The city's business centers and office parks boast all the amenities and aesthetics of a big city – big windows, natural lighting, wood floors, Wi-Fi – without the hassles of having to navigate a huge downtown."



Sharonville's economic development and revitalization accomplishments, as well as their business-friendly approach, recently resulted in the city being named one of the best places in Ohio to start a business by Nerdwallet.com.

While Sharonville has worked hard to earn recognition as a regional destination for new business and opportunity, retaining a number of successful, long-established companies has also been an important tenet of the city's strategy.

"Sharonville wants to retain folks that are here, and have been here a long time, like Ford Motor Company and General Mills," says Mayor Kevin Hardman. "We also know, however, that we have to have diversity in the business sector – not just old and new, but small and big, medical, industrial and commercial. That is how we remain successful despite the economic dips and curves that occur in all industries. They balance each other out."

In addition to Sharonville's excellent location and diverse business foundation, its tax structure also helps attract and keep businesses.

Clearly a huge drawing card: Sharonville is one of the few cities in Ohio that does not levy property taxes.

"As a city, we realize our success in providing services for our citizens is very dependent on the success of our business community," says Hardman. "We have been very lucky over the last 30 some years, having survived on the earnings tax we produced as a city. We live within our means.

"Other cities may say, 'We want XXX,' so they figure out a way to get the money for XXX. We, on the other hand, have elected officials who say, 'This is how much money we have, and this is how much we can do with it.'"

It is a philosophy that has paid off handsomely.

"Sharonville works diligently to provide strong police and fire departments," Lyons says. "In fact, we have some of the most respected firefighters and police officers in the region. We know those are things businesses need."

A fine-tuned Public Works Department is also critical

to residents and business owners alike.

"If the businesses can't get their employees to work safely on a snow day, and the business fails, then there is no money for anyone," Lyons says. "So we make it economically feasible to work in our city. We look at what incentives we can provide to companies to locate, or relocate here, and thrive."

Lyons admits that Sharonville's economic growth has faced its share of challenges. Those have not been insurmountable, however, and have been conquered with the city's creative, can-do spirit.

One of these challenges is lack of land. "We have very little vacant land inventory and a significant amount of older buildings," she says. "Our biggest challenge is to find creative, economical ways to redevelop these functionally obsolete properties and give them new life. We work closely with our prospects, identify their needs and find ways to help the projects come to fruition.

Gorilla Glue is a perfect example. The family-owned company, which manufactures adhesives, moisturizers and tools, outgrew its headquarters in Madisonville. Their search expanded to several counties in Southwest Ohio and even Indiana. JobsOhio and the Ohio Tax Credit Authority awarded the company an incentive for staying in Ohio.

Sharonville worked tirelessly and creatively as possible, putting together a host of its own incentives. That diligence paid off when Gorilla Glue purchased the Gateway 75 building in city, a million-square-foot-plus facility. The project will create 320 new jobs and more than \$23 million in capital investment.

West Chester Protective Gear relocated to the Gateway 75 building in 2014 and occupies a quarter of the facility. They transformed the industrial building into a mix of corporate office and warehouse space. They have committed to creating 131 new jobs in the city.

"Gateway 75 will soon boast more than 450 jobs and a \$25.35 million payroll," Lyons says.



There are many more examples:

- The 19,500-square-foot warehouse on about five acres at 2490 Commerce Boulevard that was purchased for \$1.4 million by Cleanfuel Ohio Properties, LLC. The site will soon be the region's first public compressed natural gas fueling station.
- McGohan Brabender, Inc., an employee benefits firm based in Dayton, relocated its Cincinnati headquarters. They recently moved into a 10,000-square-foot office at Summit Woods I. The company signed a seven-year lease for the Class A office space, citing its proximity to its existing office, available space to expand and its easy access from I-275 as reasons for selecting its new location.
- John R. Jurgensen Co., founded in 1934, is building a three-story state-of-the-art facility on its current location at 11641 Mosteller Road. A third-generation family-owned business, the highway and commercial company is the 34th largest private company in Greater Cincinnati.
- ADSCO is building a 13,420-square-foot headquarters facility at 11400 Enterprise Drive. The company's sales grew 22 percent in 2015. Owner Charles Folzenlogen says it was important to stay in Sharonville while relocating because of its convenience to the markets the company serves. ADSCO supplies automotive dealers and service shops with marketing and tools.
- Semco Outdoor Natural Stone & Landscape Supply, based in Perryville, Mo., with locations in Kansas City and Columbus, is an expanding family-owned company that will open its newest facility this year on 16 acres at the northwest corner of I-75 and I-275, creating 15 new jobs. Semco Outdoor Cincinnati, located at 11864 Chesterdale Road, offers the largest selection of outdoor living products in Greater Cincinnati.
- Cincinnati Sub Zero, which recently celebrated its 75th anniversary, is undergoing a major expansion. The company, a leading provider of temperature management equipment that serves the medical and industrial industries, has expanded its original Mosteller Road location six times.



- Shoptech recently moved into Summit Woods Business Park. The larger space will help accommodate their growing operations. Shoptech develops and sells shop control system software to job shops, machine shops and other manufacturers. Shoptech has about 110 local employees and has plans to hire several more over the next few years.
- Park 42 Partners recently acquired Park 42. The property had been in bank-limbo for several years and was having a difficult time trying to market to new prospects. The new owners are making a significant investment to the 285,000 square-foot facility.

An integral member of the economic growth team has been the Community Development Department, formerly known as the Planning Department. The renaming was purposeful, according to Hardman, because it symbolizes the combination of a multitude of activities and responsibilities.

The department is charged with the task of facilitating and sustaining a coordinated and collaborative effort of public and private interests for the betterment of residents and businesses.

Community Development consists of the offices of Planning, Zoning, Residential and Non-Residential Construction, Code Enforcement, Property Maintenance, Flood Plain Management and Storm Water District Administration.

“Mayor Hardman and the Sharonville City Council are certainly pro-business,” adds Lyons. “Our economic development efforts have the full support of our mayor, and we are fortunate to have a city administration that is responsive, accountable and approachable. Our top-notch Community Development Department facilitates economic growth through fast turnaround in issuing building permits, and gladly walks each new business through necessary zoning changes and variances.”

Hardman and Lyons praise the Sharonville Chamber of Commerce as a great partner. The chamber provides value to businesses through network, benefits, education and marketing opportunities.

For information on business opportunities in Sharonville, you can reach Chris Xeil Lyons at 513.563.1144 or by email at clyons@cityofsharonville.com.