

# Polish Village in Parma may expand into a whole old world

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By **Bob Sandrick, Sun News**



**Councilwoman Debbie Lime**

**PARMA** When the city designated part of Ridge Road as Polish Village in April, the name didn't seem inclusive enough to some.

After all, there are Italian, Middle-Eastern and Chinese businesses — not just Polish ones — along this section of Ridge between Pearl Road and Thornton Drive.

That is why area businesses and residents have added a second moniker to the exact same area. They call it Old World Parma.

Those working and living there hope the OWP brand name will promote economic development, fill empty storefronts and keep existing businesses healthy along Ridge.

On Oct. 29, OWP businesses and residents will have an inaugural event they believe will be fun for children and beneficial to their stores.

The event is called Treat & Greet. From 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., children in costume can trick-or-treat in OWP businesses. About 30 businesses will participate.

Children will receive candy and snacks, but that's not all.

For example, P. Jay's Pizza will hand out gift certificates for personal pan pizzas and Ericka's Hair Styling will paint faces.

Also, OWP businesses will give "passports" to families. Kids will get a stamp on their passport if they spot a letter in the phrase "Old World Parma" inside a business — and they don't have to buy anything.

Once a family receives 10 stamps from any 10 businesses, it can enter its passport in a drawing for gift certificates and prizes.

"The event is our way of getting people into the stores where business owners can showcase their businesses and try to get people to come back," said Councilwoman Debbie Lime.

It was Lime, whose Ward 2 contains Polish Village-OWP, who worked with area businesses and residents to hatch OWP.

The idea was to duplicate commercial neighborhood developments they had seen in other cities.

For example, LakewoodAlive has focused on the revitalization of downtown Lakewood.

"If those communities can do this, why can't we?" Lime said.

Lime is concerned about the Ridge area, which she said contains about 135 businesses along nine-tenths of a mile. She said the street has about four or five vacant storefronts.

"That's not a lot but I want to make sure we don't get an overabundance of them," Lime said.

In April, Lime organized a meeting with about 40 Ridge businesses. They came up with the OWP name as a way to reflect their diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

For example, OWP contains Colozza's Bakery, which is Italian, Sitto's Pita & Salads, which is Lebanese, and Grandma Helen's Kitchen, which is eastern European.

Of course there are also Polish businesses like Little Polish Diner.

"You can go down Ridge Road and find a mish-mash of every nationality," Lime said.

Lime had a second meeting with OWP businesses earlier this month. About 14 additional businesses that were not at the initial meeting attended.

Residents in the area are also involved in the OWP effort. They have formed a committee that will help organize promotional events.

“They (residents) realize that Ridge Road needs a shot of adrenaline and some uplifting,” Lime said.

Lime said OWP will soon look more appealing. Signs will mark the entrances of OWP. The city will install new benches and trash cans.

Also, there will be a mural of Parma, Italy on the Colozza building. It will be similar to the murals of Ukraine in Ukrainian Village on State Road.

In addition, Lime is working with Erik Tollerup, the city’s director of community services and economic development, on replacing deteriorating wood around the trees on Ridge.

Meanwhile, OWP businesses and residents are setting up a Facebook page that will link to Facebook pages of individual OWP businesses.

The links will allow businesses to promote their events on the OWP Facebook page.

OWP is also designing an interactive website. It will send electronic newsletters announcing business promotions to other businesses and residents.

At the end of five years, Lime hopes to establish OWP as a non-profit organization with an office and one or two staff members.

“My philosophy is good neighbors make great neighborhoods,” Lime said. “That’s what I’m trying to achieve.”