

High-tech streetlights debut in Farmington Hills

BY DANIEL DUGGAN
CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

After Ron Harwood spent more than 10 years inventing a high-tech streetlighting system, it was used publicly on a wireless network for the first time Friday.

And, appropriately, it's in his own neighborhood.

The city of Farmington Hills switched on the system with a media event, as eight streetlights outfitted with Intellistreets went live along 10 Mile near Orchard Lake Road.

"This is something that, for me, has been a lot of years in the making," said Harwood, principal and creative director for Farmington Hills-based **Illuminating Concepts**. "Where else to see this than in Farmington Hills?"

With Intellistreets, Harwood brings wireless control to streetlights, combined with the ability to display images or words instantly on an LED display fitted on the light pole, along with music or recorded messages from speakers also embedded in each pole.

The concept has potential for

making downtowns livelier with lights and music. But the streetlights also could be used for safety and efficiency, with greater control available for the times that lights are on or off. The system also collects data, such as foot traffic, and is controlled from a central network.

The concept has been used without the wireless control, at **Greenfield Village** in Dearborn and destinations such as **Branson Landing** in Branson, Mo.

Farmington Hills' system is being built for roughly \$60,000. Of that, \$30,000 comes from a **U.S. Department of Energy** grant deployed by the city of Farmington Hills. Harwood handled the balance.

"This is a win-win endeavor for Farmington Hills," Farmington Hills Mayor Jerry Ellis said in a press release. "The city has the opportunity to invest federal grant money locally, we get to be home of the world premier of amazingly advanced technology, and we get to help a company right here in Farmington Hills showcase their innovation to the world."

Harwood said the installation will be used for sales as well. Rep-

resentatives from the cities of Pittsburgh and Chicago plan to visit soon to see the system in action. He expects sales of Intellistreets to pick up now that a full system has been installed, noting that several contracts are close to being signed.

Since starting the development of Intellistreets, Harwood has hired an additional 12 full-time employees to bring the company's head count to 50.

Illuminating Concepts has built a name for itself by designing custom LED lighting displays for amusement parks, casinos and other large-scale uses. In 2010 it completed its work as executive lighting designer for the 19 million-square-foot **CityCenter** project in Las Vegas, where Illuminating Concepts coordinated work with all of the contractors handling lighting projects.

Intellistreets represents the company's next step, Harwood said.

"It exemplifies our history and the way we solve problems," he said. "This is a product that speaks to our core customer."

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Ron Harwood, Illuminating Concepts

Ficano: Deputy exec's fate is political challenge

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Two weeks ago, Siblani invited Ficano to meet with Arab-American leaders at **Habib's Cuisine**, a restaurant in Dearborn, to discuss the ongoing severance scandal. Ficano wasn't available, Siblani said, so Elder came instead.

"The community was debating what was happening in Wayne County and were concerned that this issue was going to turn into an Arab issue," said Siblani, who is

this point is not in best interest of the community or the county."

Still, Siblani said, Elder's fate remains of concern to the community — and how Ficano treats Elder will be watched.

"If Ficano fired Azzam, I think he has to say why he's doing it," Siblani said. "If he's firing him because of this particular incident, I strongly believe 30 days suspension is heavy-handed for sloppy

very disappointed. But if Azzam has done something wrong, he needs to tell us, and everyone in the county, and everyone involved."

Siblani said he doesn't believe Ficano is the kind of person to place blame where it's not warranted.

"He is a person who has been sincere, and his relationship with the Arab community has been

Arab-American community, very frequently a guest speaker at annual dinners or fundraising events," Stockton said. "There's an old art form involved in how you handle this. If you have a key person from the community and you have to get rid of that person, you hire someone else from the community ... you remove them but very quickly replace them with someone else, so the damage is

Insurance: Report critiques market

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that there were 615,970 lives insured in the small group market segment in 2009," Priority said in a letter to OFIR. "We believe this is understated by as many as 400,00 enrollees," who primarily are insured by Blue Cross through chambers and associations.

Priority's Gene Cronin, associate vice president of product and market development, said Priority Health's market share growth appears inflated because OFIR did not count the 400,000 enrollees.

Cronin suggested that because of OFIR's mathematical error, the conclusion that Michigan has sufficient competition is flawed.

Another factor leading Priority and other health insurers in Michigan to question OFIR's conclusion is the lawsuit filed last year against Blue Cross for alleged price-fixing.

Last October, federal and state law officials charged that Blue Cross illegally pressured 22 of the state's 131 hospitals to sign improper "most favored nation" contracts that required some hospitals to charge higher prices to competing health insurers.

Blue Cross has called the federal lawsuit against it flawed and misguided.

But federal and state officials have said that Blue Cross' most-