

the review

July/August 2012

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

“**THE SOLUTIONS
EXIST WITHIN
THE CITIES
THEMSELVES.**”

—**HARVEY HOLLINS III**
Director of the Michigan
Office of Urban and
Metropolitan Initiatives

What can this man do for
MICHIGAN
COMMUNITIES?

**2012
CONVENTION
PREVIEW**

**DOWNTOWN
MUSKEGON'S
RENEWAL**

**REPURPOSED
CITY HALL IN
FERRYSBURG**

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Harvey Hollins III is Governor Snyder's appointee to head the newly created Michigan Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives. He is standing on a rooftop in downtown Kalamazoo, one of the satellite office locations.



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The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. Our goals are to aid them in creating desirable and unique places through legislative and judicial advocacy; to provide educational opportunities for elected and appointed officials; and to assist municipal leaders in administering community services. Our mission is that of a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.

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The Review accepts display advertising. Business card-size ads are published in a special section called Municipal Marketplace.

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Subscriptions

\$24 per year for six issues. Payable in advance by check, money order, Visa/MasterCard/American Express. Make checks payable to Michigan Municipal League. Phone 734-669-6371; fax 734-669-4223 or mail new subscription requests & checks to the Michigan Municipal League, P.O. Box 7409, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7409.

The Review (ISSN 0026-2331) is published bi-monthly by the Michigan Municipal League, 1675 Green Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2530. Periodicals postage is paid at Ann Arbor MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE REVIEW, 1675 Green Rd, ANN ARBOR MI 48105-2530.



Please recycle this magazine

Redevelopment: Everything Old Is New Again

*Don't throw the past away
You might need it some rainy day
Dreams can come true again
When everything old is new again*

We might not have Hugh Jackman tap dancing across the state in a top hat and tails...but Michigan does have some promising ideas and initiatives that are helping our local communities to redevelop, revitalize, and reenergize for the 21st century. That's what this issue of *The Review* is all about.

It starts with our cover story on Harvey Hollins, the head of the newly created Michigan Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives. Through a network of satellite offices, Hollins will facilitate and nurture local and regional economic initiatives that contribute to job growth and help revitalize our urban areas. The League is excited to see where those efforts will lead, and what role they will play in bringing our cities back to full and vibrant life.

When we talk about reinventing our cities for the future, we aren't suggesting you toss out the old for the new. Quite the opposite. The best kind of sustainable growth embraces the past as the valuable bedrock and raw material for building the future. Adaptive reuse is all about looking deeper into what already exists and seeing it with fresh eyes, to find new ways to reuse and revitalize a community's existing assets.

Once we see that vacant commercial center, contaminated industrial site, or historic structure as an asset instead of a negative, the possibilities are endless. Those greyfields and brownfields are fertile ground for building the quality places that attract people and their businesses.

But first and foremost, *places must serve people*. The urban planners of the past knew that, and they designed their buildings and streets accordingly. They built neighborhoods for walking, with parks and schools nearby. Stores were designed to add character to a downtown, and to entice pedestrians to linger and come inside—not windowless boxes whose only purpose is to move shoppers and inventory in and out the parking lot and door.

Thankfully, the bones of those old ideas still exist. It's up to us to rediscover them, and rebuild on a more human scale. That's when cities become communities. And communities are *alive*. But we need the support of visionary leaders at the state and federal level.

Late last year, the League scored a hard-won victory with the governor's creation of the Community Revitalization Program and Business Development Program. Together the two

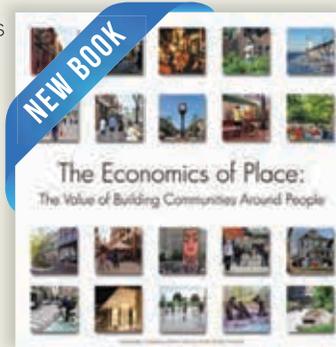
programs promised to replace the repealed brownfield, historic, and MEGA tax credits. We had hoped that the state would continue these important redevelopment strategies. The governor once again proposed \$100 million for the 2012-13 fiscal year, and proposed to move the money from one-time to recurring yearly, but both the House and Senate cut this fund when considering their appropriations bills—just one year after they were created. We are hopeful that the governor will prevail in final negotiations with the House and Senate when budgets are finalized.

Sure, that kind of slash-and-burn approach to budgeting cleans up the bottom line. But it can also leave a barren landscape of greyfields and brownfields. We're not going to let that happen. Redevelopment is a grassroots effort that begins in our own backyards, as more and more people realize the power of placemaking. The vision of new urbanism has become a guiding force here in Michigan. And our local leaders can play a key role in keeping the momentum going.

We'll show you how at the League's 2012 Convention, "The Tools of Placemaking," October 3-5 on Mackinac Island. We think it's the perfect place to talk about building a sustainable future on the core values of the past. Come join us, and be a part of the new Michigan that's straight ahead in plain sight—once we've opened our eyes. 

The Economics of Place

We believe that our communities are at the core of our state's economic turnaround, and that "place" is the huge economic driver. In 2011, the League published *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, available at Amazon.com and economicsofplace.com.



Daniel P. Gilmartin

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Federal Policies

Work Against Mixed-Use and

Encourage Sprawl

By John Norquist

Scale, building type, and financing are the ingredients of a housing market that serve the varied needs of citizens. When federal programs are built around specialized concerns, they can obstruct the beneficial complexity of urban places. Financial requirements that dictate a separation of use or discourage rent-based housing work against the interests of diverse urban areas and the people who live in them. They also severely limit the ability to bring homes, schools, stores, offices, and other important destinations within walking distance—a pattern shown to yield dramatic benefits in energy efficiency, public health, household transportation costs, and environmental impact.

Federal Restrictions on Mixed-Use

Federal housing policy disadvantages urban living by favoring home ownership over renting through subsidized mortgage programs (Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Federal Housing Authority) and by allowing tax deductions on mortgage interest. Also, Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) capital subsidy for rental housing obstructs mixed-use development, including housing and retail, by prohibiting

more than 20 percent of the imputed value of a project to be non-residential. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac impose similar restrictions on owner-occupied housing. Potential buyers in a new four-story building with three floors of housing and shops on the ground floor would find it difficult or even impossible to secure mortgage financing because rules at Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac bar the mortgage giants from involvement in buildings where non-retail uses exceed 20 percent. Likewise, developers of either for-sale housing under Fannie and Freddie or rental housing under HUD find it nearly impossible to get financing from banks, almost all of whom mimic and impose the federal restrictions on mixed-use.

Anti-Urban Bias

Midwest cities have especially suffered from federal and state programs and local policies that undermine urbanism and population density while subsidizing and encouraging decentralization—often referred to as sprawl. For example, the interstate highway program subsidizes grade-separated highways that facilitate fast long distance travel by motor vehicle. In densely populated cities, roads are expensive,

At Left, an infill project in Montgomery, AL, features housing in buildings that are more than 20 percent dedicated to retail or commercial uses. Rules at Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and HUD discriminate against such projects.

weaken property value, and disrupt the efficiency of existing street networks. The large grade separated highway undermines one of the fundamental assets of cities—location efficiency. If two people hold similar jobs and one person walks across the street to work and the other drives 25 miles, their value to the economy is the same, but their cost is not. The government rewards the longer, energy-consuming trip with a large subsidy and ignores the value of the short walk. Federal policy should support economic value without disadvantaging compact, energy-efficient, transit-served urban development.

Billions of dollars being spent on infrastructure across the nation provides an opportunity to plan for a better America, but politics-as-usual favors sprawl over city. This anti-urban bias of national policies must end.

Nathaniel Baum-Snow, an economist at Brown University, has documented that each new federally funded “highway passing through a central city reduces its population by about 18 percent.” Subsidizing transportation decreases the advantage of living close together in cities. The clear and often-stated goal of federal transportation policy is to reduce congestion. This narrowly focused objective clashes with the very purpose of cities as a gathering spot for commerce and cultural interaction.

Problems with Separate Use Zoning

Another example of a policy that undermines urbanism is the application of strictly separated use zoning to cities. The federal government started promoting such zoning in 1931 in an Executive Order issued by President Herbert Hoover. Hoover felt that U.S. cities, like those in Europe, were crowded and dirty and needed to spread out and separate commerce from housing. Although his order was more exhortatory than mandatory, its underlying intent remains embedded in many federally created policies and programs, including the two huge federal guaranteed secondary mortgage markets, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, as well as HUD’s capital subsidy program for multi-family rental housing. Separate use zoning has undermined the value of existing neighborhoods and had the effect of mandating new development be separated into pods with housing, retail, and office uses strictly separated. This confounds efforts to build a traditional Main Street with apartments built above storefronts.

Many federal and state policies have encouraged sprawl and undermined urbanism. But market and demographic forces have begun to favor urban places. As household sizes shrink, demand increases for urban forms such as apartments and town houses. Young adults prefer urban living, seeking greater social and job opportunities. Urbanism is more popular, so now would seem to be a good time to change rules and policies that discourage it.

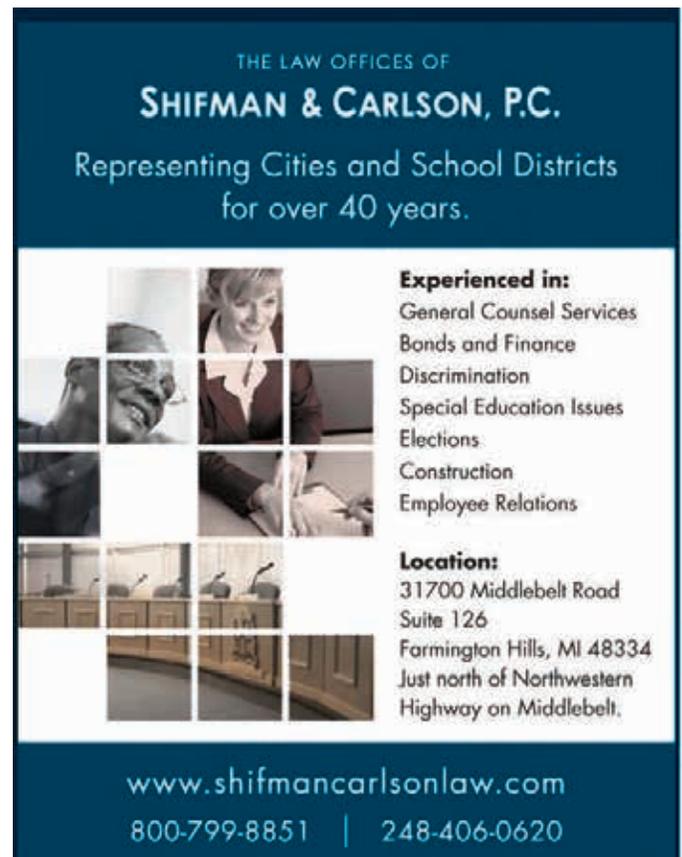
Milwaukee Example

In Milwaukee, as mayor from 1988 to 2004, I set out to reform coding and zoning to encourage mixed-uses in commercial and retail corridors. The code reforms adopted in Milwaukee “legalized” urban forms, like apartments or offices above shops. Also, setback requirements for buildings were adjusted to encourage construction of buildings along sidewalks and closer to streets. In newer portions of the city, setbacks from streets had been set as deep as 100 feet, often with no provision for sidewalks.

More successful cities will, in turn, also help America. More compact, complete, and well-connected development will save energy and add efficiency to the American economy. Urbanism also brings social benefits to communities. As it says in our charter preamble, “The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society’s built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.” 

John Norquist is the president of the Congress for the New Urbanism and has taught courses in urban planning and development.

Excerpted from Norquist’s chapter in the League’s book, *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, available on Amazon.com.



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By Mark Nickita, AIA



THE NEW

Placemaking

Rethinking Corridors with Adaptive Re-Use Projects

Whether in a downtown, an industrial or manufacturing district, or a commercial corridor, large vacancies and abandonment have become a common reality in real estate markets in almost every American city. There is increasing interest in the intensification of existing communities, traditional core cities, and inner-ring suburbs, which have an established infrastructure, plentiful resources, and are well located. This is especially true when the cost of a long-distance commute is becoming a factor in lifestyle decisions due to the increased price of gas. Often municipalities, land owners, and developers overlook the potential of existing buildings and underutilized parcels, especially as a means to create the all important sense of place. Many of these areas have little hope of reestablishing their former uses and occupancies with the same kind of tenants.

By repositioning them, municipalities can guide new development that can transform outdated and inefficient structures into fresh and exciting places. A plan for repositioning an outdated district through alternative zoning, an overlay of existing zoning, or a plan encouraging mixed-use and flexible zoning, all can be transformative tools that can have an extensive impact.

TRANSFORMING VACANT SPACE ALONG A SUBURBAN CORRIDOR

In most American cities and inner suburbs, there are numerous empty buildings along commercial and industrial vehicle-oriented corridors. In some cases, too many to count—dozens of buildings with hundreds of thousands of square feet with little chance of filling them anytime soon. In many cases, municipalities and building owners are hoping to refill this space with the same types of uses that have been in demand



A repositioned building or group of buildings, once established, can become the basis of a vibrant and thriving district or area and a significant asset to adjacent areas and neighborhoods.

for the past many decades. That is, unfortunately, an unlikely prospect. Are we to watch them sit? Are we hoping to fill them with something else? Will they be demolished with the hopes of a new structure to be built? Maybe all of the above will occur, but there will likely be a demand for something very different. Flexible space is valuable, flexible zoning is important, and location and walkability all play a key role in providing value to these structures.

Along heavily traveled highway corridors, there are great challenges regarding potential reuses of the structures. They often include an office area, high ceilings and open rough industrial spaces, or large interior open space structures, often adjacent to large parking areas. Unfortunately, they also lack “curb appeal,” amenities, or walkability—because they are in single-use areas and are often without sidewalks. Can they be successfully re-utilized and repositioned to accommodate the needs of the contemporary business world and changing lifestyles? The answer is yes, but not without a real transformation. The vision for the future and a buy-in from municipalities and the development community can lead to a prosperous future for these “placeless” places.

CITYWIDE EFFICIENCY STRATEGIES—FILLING IN DEVELOPMENT VERSUS BUILDING OUT

The Detroit region has many of these outmoded commercial and industrial corridors—all of which lack a cohesive vision. There have been some initiatives to change the face and fate of these corridors through reuse and repositioning. Gratiot Avenue in Clinton Township is a classic example. Miles of highway structures, mostly built between 1950 and 1980, have seen better days. The one-story structures of various sizes work independently of each other with limited sidewalk connections and a mish-mash of parking configurations. A path for repositioning structures and intensifying uses along the corridor comes with a recently completed vision plan that identifies incremental solutions that can lead to creating a place where one does not exist. The vision plan includes flexibility in zoning, parking, height, use, and scale variations. Also included is an emphasis on walkability and an increase in accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles while building on the existing assets of the corridor.

Another example of corridor rethinking is along Woodward Avenue in Ferndale. Many years ago, city leaders observed opportunities for more intensified development along the commercial corridor that runs directly through the center of the city. They looked at ways to encourage existing buildings to upgrade and new buildings to be built. An example of a typical underutilized structure that was designed to incorporate the city’s revised ordinances is the recently vacant 1930s,



The Trio Building in Ferndale is being transformed by adding three floors on top of the existing two and creating a mixed-use project.

two-story Trio Building. The building is being transformed by adding three floors on top of the existing two floors and creating a mixed-use project with retail, office, and residential. The new floors were designed to be built as a lightweight structure and to be placed on top of the original two-story building. Additionally, a green roof was designed as an amenity for the building residents and for efficient water filtration and run-off. This project is an example of how the revised zoning led the development community to rethink the underutilized existing structures in a completely different manner. The new zoning embraces flexible and diverse uses that include office, market-rate residential, senior housing, institutional, medical, and recreational—much of which can be innovatively accommodated within redeveloped existing buildings.

Unused or underutilized properties often require a complete rethinking in order to determine a strategy that can create a path towards productivity.

Additionally, overall corridor transformations are being pursued along metro Detroit's Eight Mile Boulevard and north Woodward Avenue. An Eight Mile framework plan, completed within the last couple of years, illustrates guidelines for walkability and physical enhancements for 27 miles of the corridor. The plan identifies initiatives that encourage the coordination of 17 municipalities to work toward a unified vision, benefitting them each individually as well as the overall region. In regards to Woodward Avenue, elected officials and other civic leaders in five communities along the corridor are currently engaged in a dialogue that will see the repositioning of underutilized structures and infrastructure into a highly efficient and sustainable "linear city." This strategy envisions a new "place" that is multiple miles in length with numerous nodes along the way, all using the existing structures in a fresh and innovative way. The new North Woodward Avenue will incorporate alternative transit options, enhanced non-motorized and pedestrian infrastructure, more mixes of uses, and higher density than the low scale, vacant land scenario that has been its identity for over half a century. It is a model of cooperation and the intensification of physical assets that may become a prototype for corridor development throughout the state.

WHERE ARE WE GOING WITH DEVELOPMENT?

With the development and construction industry still in turmoil, the future of suburban growth and development is in a nebulous state. The credit market, or the ability to fund projects, has become one of the industry's biggest challenges. Projects must be smaller, incremental, and have a strong demand before they can get the required backing for developers to pull the trigger. It is clear that efficient development is the



Top: The existing site presents a bleak parking lot along the storefront. Bottom: A walkable storefront is created by revising the façade through awnings and banners.

path to the future, and sustainability is best achieved when utilizing existing buildings. With sensitivity to people-oriented development, new places can be established from a foundation of repositioning these structures in unlikely situations and locations. With certain initiatives in place, making abandoned and underutilized buildings into contributing elements that enhance a municipality is not only possible, but has the potential to establish amazing places that are truly worth caring about for the long term.

IMPORTANT ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

- Think outside the box—what you did in the past will likely not work in the future.
- Flexibility is key—allow for flexible, spatially diverse options for the users, and be flexible in phasing and growth strategies.
- Mixed-use approaches will provide the best potential for leasing and build a stronger viability and use.
- Get on the same page—multiple involved parties should be in sync with each other—municipalities, owners, users, leasing agents, etc. 

Mark Nickita, AIA, is the mayor of Birmingham and president of Archive DS. You may contact him at 313-963-6687 or marknarchive@yahoo.com.

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State

By Katherine Czarnecki

Redevelopment Programs

There seems to be confusion surrounding Michigan's brownfield program. The state of Michigan, through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), remains committed to returning contaminated, blighted, and underutilized sites to productivity. The only thing that's changed is the way we go about doing it.

Brownfields are defined as properties that are contaminated, blighted, or functionally obsolete. These sites can be found in cities with long histories of heavy industry or large-scale manufacturing activity, and also in small towns and rural areas.

Up until December 31, 2011, Michigan had the Brownfield Michigan Business Tax (MBT) credit program which provided tax credits ranging from 12.5 percent to 20 percent (in certain cases) on eligible investment. Eligible investment



Mackenzie's Bakery in Kalamazoo was the first site to be redeveloped along the riverfront and was the start of the "River's Edge" redevelopment which includes many new funky, eclectic businesses.

expenses included demolition, construction, restoration, renovation, site improvements, and the addition of new or used machinery, equipment, and fixtures.

New Programs

Since the MBT is no longer in place, does this mean the MEDC abandoned the use of incentives and tax credits? Certainly not. On December 13, 2011, Governor Snyder signed into law a five-bill package creating two new economic development and community revitalization programs. This new legislation

provides \$100 million in incentives for highly competitive projects in Michigan. The Michigan Business Development and Michigan Community Revitalization Programs replace the state's previous MEGA, brownfield, and historic tax credit programs that were eliminated under business tax restructuring legislation.

Under this legislation, the Michigan Community Revitalization Program (CRP) is a new incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF), in cooperation with the MEDC. It is designed to promote community revitalization that will accelerate private



investment in areas of historical declining values, contribute to Michigan's reinvention as a vital, job generating state, foster redevelopment of functionally obsolete or historic properties, reduce blight, and protect the natural resources of this state.

The program is also designed to provide grants, loans, or other economic assistance for eligible investment projects in Michigan. Similar to the Brownfield MBT Credit program, no funds will be disbursed until the project is verified as complete.

Program Similarities

There are other similarities between the old program and the new. Project support is also driven by a percentage of the eligible investment. With CRP, eligible investment includes any alteration, construction, improvement, demolition or rehabilitation of buildings; site improvement; addition of machinery, equipment or fixtures; and any architectural, engineering, surveying and similar professional fees for a project, but not certain soft costs of the eligible investment as determined by the MSF.

CRP support will not exceed 25 percent of the total eligible investment for a single project, and in no event exceed a total of \$10 million for loan agreements or \$1 million for grant agreements. Any grant or loan under the program will be performance based. Grants and loans will include flexible terms and conditions and may be assignable upon approval of the MSF.

The same eligibility on the actual site is still the same, however, and the project site must be a brownfield or a historic resource. Another similarity is the focus on downtowns and commercial cores. Program guidelines specify items considered for MSF support: the importance of the project to the local community; the applicant's financial need for the incentive; the extent of reuse of vacant buildings and reuse of historical buildings and redevelopment of blighted property; the level and extent of environmental contamination; creation of jobs and others.



Mason's Run in Monroe is one of the largest new urbanism projects constructed on an urban brownfield site in the nation.

Program Differences

The program is very focused on assisting in the creation of "places" that will help strengthen our urban and rural cores. One of the main differences between the Brownfield MBT credit program and CRP is that the latter can be used anywhere in the state—projects located in a community the size of Detroit could have the same impact as a project in a smaller community like Portland. CRP is intended to be flexible and tailored to each individual projects' needs, allowing us to make the most effective use of scarce resources.

For more information, visit michiganadvantage.org/MCRPP for program guidelines and a sample application. To be considered for CRP funding, please contact your Community Assistance Team specialist michiganadvantage.org/CAT. The CATeam is dedicated to helping Michigan communities, large and small, urban and rural. Our mission is to strengthen communities by ensuring access to economic development services and programs that cultivate sustainable projects that will build a strong foundation for the future of Michigan. 

Katherine Czarnecki is community development manager for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. You may reach her at 517-241-4950 or czarneckik@michigan.org.

Redevelopment Ready Communities Program

The Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) Program supports Michigan communities to become development ready, competitive, and "open for business." RRC is a strategic tool leading change in the development culture for communities. It encourages local units of government to adopt innovative strategies and efficient processes which build confidence among businesses and developers. RRC provides guidance to communities on making places that will attract people and economic growth.

The RRC approach better prepares communities to entice and attract investment. The program measures and then certifies communities that integrate transparency, predictability, and efficiency into their daily practices with the goal of realizing a community-supported vision that is inviting to investors. The overall process is guided by a set of best practices that help communities implement proactive strategies to redevelopment and find new uses for outdated and underutilized buildings and properties.

Developers want to save time and money—it's their primary concern when they decide to develop in an area. Local governments can positively impact an investor's bottom line with effective, streamlined, and transparent development practices, administrative procedures, and zoning regulations. And with aggressive reinvestment goals, a realistic action plan, and shovel-ready sites, communities can help jumpstart the market by moving projects faster and more frequently. RRC assists communities in enhancing these strategies.

When a community becomes a certified Redevelopment Ready Community, it signals that it has effective development practices such as clear development procedures, a community-supported redevelopment vision, an open and predictable review process, and many more compelling sites for developers to locate their latest projects. Is your community redevelopment ready?

For more information, visit michiganadvantage.org/RRC.

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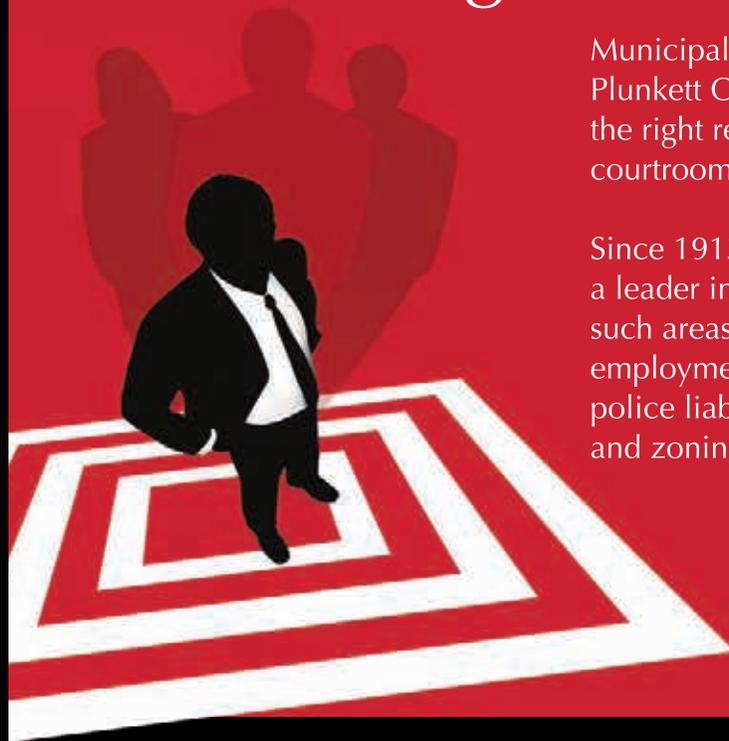




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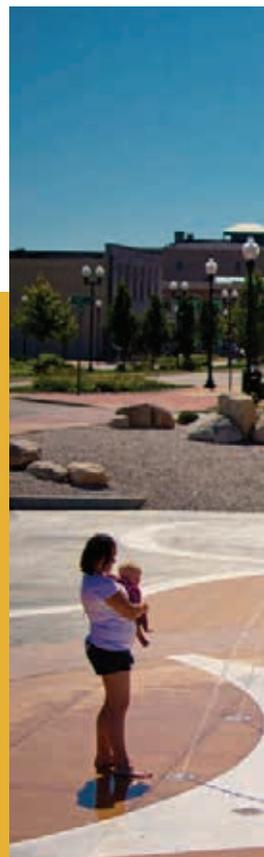
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Closed Downtown Mall Now Dynamic Center of City

The “Lumber Queen of the World,” as Muskegon was known in the late 1800s, needed to re-imagine its future for the 21st century and allow the community to reconnect to its downtown roots. The city began to develop a vision for downtown that not only looked at the property, but what the property could be, and how it would be connected to other components within the core city. According to City Manager Bryon Mazade, “We had to find a way to get control of the properties that were chained off and boarded up in order to implement the vision of the community.”

Imagine Muskegon

In cooperation with the city in 2002, the Community Foundation for Muskegon County, the Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Paul C. Johnson Foundation formed the Downtown Muskegon Development Corporation (DMDC). The DMDC purchased the vacant mall area with the intention of facilitating the redevelopment of a new, revitalized central business district. They removed the chains around the parking lots and made them available for community use again, which begged the question—what now?





Arise, thou Muskegon, thou queen of the harbors,
Arise in thy glory and claim thy estate;
No longer thy saw mills sing loud in thy arbors,
Yet echoes an anthem more sure and more great
—Douglas Malloch



Muskegon,
pop. 38,401



The formation of the DMDC encouraged several different groups within the community to interact and provided a financial vehicle for enacting the renewal process. The DMDC and members of the community came together to share ideas of what they envisioned for their downtown. This public visioning workshop, named “Imagine Muskegon,” identified two major needs:

- 1) A need to create dynamic, social public spaces in an inviting urban context to attract people to the downtown area; and
- 2) A need to create a sense of place with enhanced circulation and the inclusion of relevant public art, community identity elements, and outdoor event/performance areas.

Concepts were developed in a second, more detailed study by Fleis & VandenBrink Engineering (F&V) to envision a downtown Muskegon which would be vibrant, community-focused, and an attraction for the community and the region. Design concepts included restoration of the original Main Street and side streets with wide, walkable sidewalks, bike facilities, on-street parking, street lights, landscaping, and plenty of street furniture.

Included within the concepts were designated areas for public art and culturally significant gathering areas and features. The DMDC recognized that putting up public art not only attracts visitors, it also encourages donors, while being a less expensive alternative to constructing a new building. Every downtown revitalization effort they studied included interactive art elements.

Public Art is Critical to Attracting Donors

“One of the first directives of the DMDC was to create a public art committee,” recalls Chris McGuigan, Director of the Community Foundation. “This committee was given the job of creating the designs, the nice touches. We have an unbelievable art museum and we also knew that cool downtowns have art that you could interact with. Looking back, I didn’t fully appreciate—I don’t think anybody did—that including public

“When people talk about the downtown, it is primarily to say two things: One, ‘It’s so beautiful.’ And two, ‘What courage it took.’”

— Chris McGuigan, Director of the Community Foundation

art in your downtown attracts people and donors. People love that—it’s just more fun!”

At the heart of downtown, reaching skyward from the center of a roundabout, a stainless steel structure rises to a crown of silvery waves, wings, and an upstretched arm. The sculpture—by internationally renowned sculptor Richard Hunt—brings to life the poem that inspired the name of the sculpture, “Muskegon, Together Rising.”

Restoring the Queen

This project exemplifies a successful private/public partnership that was instrumental in bringing the “Imagine Muskegon” visions to life. While major infrastructure improvements were funded by Michigan’s Community Revitalization program, neither the city nor the DMDC had the funds to create the public spaces with benches, planters, public art, stages, and rain gardens. “Projects of this scale and diversity are only possible through many agencies and organizations of the private and public sectors working together,” said Mazade. “The community was asked to take ownership of the development of the promenade through private donations, and they delivered.”

F&V assisted in the professional design to redevelop the primary street grid, adding walkability and “safe streets” improvements. A landscaped boulevard on the main historic



Left: Chamber Square Rain Garden. Right: Third Street Commons outdoor “soapbox” performance venue.

street and a roundabout at a principal city center intersection were incorporated into the plan. The roundabout was strategically placed adjacent to the city's historic Frauenthal Performance Center and main hotel at Third Street. It became the focus for new development with the "Muskegon Rising" sculpture, new Chamber of Commerce headquarters, new office building, and the Baker College Culinary Institute.

The area, now known as the Third Street Commons, includes decorative concrete paving, a performance stage, outdoor seating, and an outdoor "soapbox" performance venue with a stage and site furniture. Elements like the Chamber Square Rain Garden, which collects the rainwater from the roof drains, add a functional green space to the urban design.

Another design feature in the public space for downtown was developed with children in mind. Recently completed on the former Federal Square site sits Alcoa Celebration Square. This wide public space is anchored by the relocated and restored fish, birds, and stars of "Ascension" by James Clover and framed by huge geometric, integrally colored blocks for people to sit on. The centerpiece of the square is a water park with a spray fountain that was designed with several sustainable methods, including recirculating water. It creates "white noise barriers" to surrounding noise pollution as well as natural air filters and conditioners. The square offers not only the dancing water of the fountain and the interaction of playful children, but room to roam, relax, socialize, and people-watch.

Chris McGuigan says community feedback has been positive. "So they recognize that this is a big change." Indeed, with the combined efforts of the city, the DMDC, F&V, and local citizens, the downtown area has become a vibrant and active epicenter that continues to grow and evolve today. Like Richard Hunt's iconic sculpture, the city of Muskegon is rising! 

Jennifer Kriscunas is a marketing coordinator at Fleis & VandenBrink Engineering, Inc.

For project information, contact Fleis & VandenBrink project managers Don DeVries, PE, at 616-977-1000 or ddevries@fveng.com or Harry Wierenga, RLA, at harryw@fveng.com.

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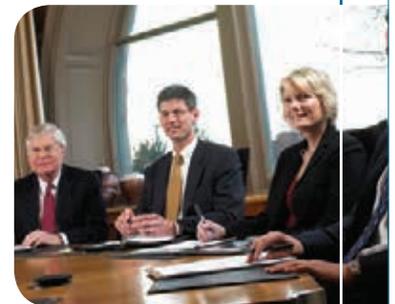


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What Can This Man Do for MICHIGAN?

By Elizabeth Shaw



HARVEY HOLLINS III

Hollins served as Wayne State University's (WSU) Vice President for Government and Community Affairs for seven years. Before joining WSU, he was the Michigan Government Affairs Representative for the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Previously, he served as a fiscal analyst for the Michigan House of Representatives. Hollins is a member of various boards and committees related to urban planning, education, and economic development. He holds a BA from Kalamazoo College and a master of public policy from the University of Michigan.

M meet Harvey Hollins III, director of the newly created Michigan Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives. Hollins will be a principal adviser to Governor Snyder, charged with the complex task of revitalizing the economies of Michigan's major urban centers.

"Michigan's cities are Michigan's future," declared Governor Snyder. "Their diversity and vitality have always fueled our state's greatness. But the issues facing our urban centers are often unique and complex. This initiative will primarily focus on their economic development needs such as business attraction, entrepreneurial startups, and public transit. That's why I selected Harvey Hollins as our point man on this initiative. Harvey's understanding of urban core needs, coupled with his belief in the power of partnerships and his proven ability to work with a broad range of stakeholders, will help our cities

become centers where people want to live, work, and prosper."

So what does Hollins say he can do for Michigan's cities? His mission, he explains, is simply to facilitate conversations that produce solutions to make it easier for the cities themselves to do what needs to be done. "The solutions exist within the cities themselves," said Hollins. "What we're trying to do is to create a mechanism for these solutions to bubble up and coalesce statewide. There are cross-cutting issues that exist in all these cities that have not been articulated in a collaborative manner."

From his central base in Detroit, Hollins will oversee a hand-picked crew of associate directors in strategically placed satellite offices in Kalamazoo, Flint, and Grand Rapids, with a possible fourth to focus on the Detroit area. Each of those officials—two had been named as of this writing—will have strong personal and professional ties to their respective areas.

Continued on page 27

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During last year's Convention, we introduced the idea of building Michigan's future through building a sense of place. Since that time, the concept of placemaking has become a fundamental part of the public dialogue about long-term sustainable growth and prosperity.

That conversation took a step further at our 2012 Capital Conference this spring by illustrating how the power of politics can help or hinder local placemaking efforts.

Now we'll give you the tools you need to bring placemaking home to your community.

This fall on Mackinac Island, we're gathering together some world-class experts from the nonprofit, business, and public sectors. They're ready to fill your municipal toolbox with creative solutions for challenges of every scale, and communities of every size.

SCHEDULED SPEAKERS



Clarence E. Anthony
President & CEO, Anthony
Government Solutions, Inc.
Leading Local, Thinking Global



Jennifer H. Goulet
President & CEO, ArtServe Michigan
Economic Impact of the Arts



Charles "Chuck" L. Marohn
Executive Director, Strong Towns
Physical Design & Sustainability



Josh McManus
Lead Inventor, Little Things Labs
Civic Engagement

HOW CAN I REGISTER?

Online

Visit convention.mml.org to register online. If you need to set up a League account, log on to My League at www.mml.org. My League is your secure, interactive online League account. It's available to all members and nonmembers, with a quick and easy sign-up process.

Via Payment with Check

In order to reduce the amount of printed paper and increase member privacy, the League no longer accepts credit card payments on printable registration forms for League events. Visit convention.mml.org to download and print a faxable registration form. Complete and fax to 734-669-4223, then mail with check payable to: Michigan Municipal League PO Box 7409 Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7409.

POST-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS

Friday, October 5

This year the League is offering post-Convention workshops in an effort to help you save on additional travel costs. These workshops are available for an additional fee on Friday, October 5.

Learning to Lobby: Local Officials' Role in Lansing

1:00-4:00 pm

This training for elected officials, both new and seasoned, will focus on the legislative issues in Lansing and Washington that the League is involved with and the background of those issues, including revenue sharing, transportation funding, PA 312, and more. Elected officials will also discover the League's role in policymaking, legislative lobbying, and how each League member can get involved. The workshop will also teach elected officials the protocol for visiting the Capitol to testify on an issue on behalf of their communities.

Working with the Media

1:00-4:00 pm

Do your local media outlets only seem to give negative reports? Do you wish you had more control over what your constituents hear about you and your community? Should you ever say "no comment" or go "off the record?" If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this training is for you. This training will cover developing positive relationships with media outlets, how to represent yourself as a public leader, and the impact of social media.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Public Office: How to Get it Right Before You Get it Wrong

1:00-4:00 pm

Don't panic! This workshop covers everything a public figure needs to know to avoid the perils and pitfalls of due process and parliamentary procedure. You will receive an overview of laws, charters, ordinances, governing councils, boards, and commissions. Other topics covered include conducting meetings and hearings, the Open Meetings Act, consequences of improper actions, civil liability, and defining your duties.

Where's the Money? How to Tap into Private Sector Funding for Municipal Projects

1:00-4:00 pm

In this workshop, Dr. Beverly A. Browning, a Michigan native and long-time League workshop presenter will review web funding databases to reveal private sector funders that award grants to units of municipal government. She'll show you projects that foundations and corporations have supported financially in Michigan and the Great Lakes region. Dr. Browning will also lead the audience in writing private sector funding requests. So come prepared; have an idea of what types of non-infrastructure projects you want to see funded in your community, and bring lots of writing paper and a pen! This information-filled workshop will end with door prize drawings (prizes donated by eCivis, Inc. and John Wiley & Sons Publishing).

AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

/// Wednesday, October 3, 2012 ///

9:00 am-5:00 pm	Registration Hours
9:00 am	Board of Trustees Meeting
11:00 am-12:00 pm	Annual Business Meeting
12:00 pm	MWIMG Lunch
2:00-3:45 pm	Welcoming General Session Parade of Flags Community Excellence Awards
4:15-5:30 pm	Vendor Breakout Sessions
8:00 pm	Foundation Boat Cruise

/// Thursday, October 4, 2012 ///

7:30 am-5:00 pm	Registration Hours
7:30-8:30 am	MAM Breakfast
8:00 am-3:00 pm	In-KNOW-Vate
8:30-10:50 am	General Session
10:45 am-3:15 pm	Silent Auction Bidding
11:00 am-12:15 pm	Breakout Sessions
12:30 pm	Networking Lunch
12:30 pm	EOA Board Meeting & Lunch
2:00-3:00 pm	MLGMA Colloquium General Session
3:30-4:45 pm	Vendor Breakout Sessions
6:00-8:30 pm	Reception and Annual Awards Banquet
8:30 pm	Afterglow

/// Friday, October 5, 2012 ///

8:30-10:00 am	Closing Breakfast & General Session Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup" Winner Announced
10:00-11:00 am	Governance Committee Meeting
11:00 am-12:00 pm	MBC-LEO Meeting
1:00-4:00 pm	Post-Convention Workshops

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FOUNDATION ONLINE & SILENT AUCTION

Contribute to the silent auction by bidding or donating an item. This annual event presents a great opportunity to bring home unique gifts representing communities across Michigan, or you can highlight your community, local businesses, and local talent by donating an item. We will again offer the online feature to our auction process. You will have the option to contribute and bid for donated items online prior to the live actual silent auction event. For more information on donating an item, call Deborah Walton-Medley at 734-669-6370.

Funds raised through the MML Foundation's auctions help support the League's mission to enhance and develop leadership in local government.

COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD You Be the Judge!

Wednesday, October 3, 2:00 pm

Join us in this good-natured competition and cheer for Michigan's best. See the Community Excellence Award regional finalists unveil their winning presentations.

You are the official judges. Your votes alone will decide which community takes home the Cup. After the general session, cast your vote at the official Community Excellence Award Voting Booth.

Don't miss the Cup Presentation Breakfast on Friday, October 5, where you can enjoy breakfast with new friends and be part of the sixth annual Community Excellence Award Cup Presentation.



Foundation Boat Cruise

Wednesday, October 3, 8:00 pm

Location: Arnold Cruise Line

The cruise ship will depart for the Mackinac Bridge at 8:00 pm. Your ticket (a portion of which is a tax deductible contribution to the Foundation) includes snacks, beer/wine/soda, and entertainment. Space is limited, so you are urged to reserve your spot when you register for Convention, using online registration or the registration form. Tickets are \$30 and must be purchased in advance. For more information, please contact Deborah Walton-Medley at 734-669-6370.

In-KNOW-vate

Thursday, October 4, 8:00 am-3:00 pm

Join Rob Ferrari, League's Director of Digital Strategy, in the Convention's technology hub to discuss innovative ideas to utilize social networking to enhance civic engagement and cloud computing to support community operations.

SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

Sponsoring the Annual Convention provides you with a unique opportunity to communicate with professionals from local government. Event attendees are typically high-level decision makers representing Michigan municipalities, and many participants are repeat attendees who know each other. This creates a relaxed and informal atmosphere with the right settings for meeting new people.

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Host Hotel – Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island

Phone: 800-334-7263

Grand Hotel Housing Reservation Process

Housing reservations will only be accepted for those who have registered for Convention. After registering for Convention, a confirmation email will be sent to you within 48 hours. The confirmation email will contain your registration information, your personalized housing registration code, and a link to the housing registration form. The hotel requires that you provide this housing registration form with your personalized code in order to make reservations at the Grand Hotel during the League's Annual Convention. A deposit of one night's daily rate is required at the time of reservation.

Grand Hotel Housing Rates

Standard – \$199 per person (double), \$323 per person (single)

Deluxe – \$229 per person (double), \$383 per person (single)

Group room rate cutoff is August 31, 2012.

Room rate includes breakfast and dinner, as well as lunch on October 4 and 5, 2012. Rates do not include \$7.50 baggage handling fee, 6% Michigan Sales Tax, 19.5% Service Charge, and 2% Mackinac Island Occupancy Tax.

Additional Travel Information

Arnold Ferry – \$18 Roundtrip ferry ride. Parking is free daily for self-park outside lot. Valet parking is \$5. Valet parking and inside lot is \$15.

Carriage Taxi – Rates range between \$4.75-\$7.25 per person depending on destination on Mackinac Island.



The office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives will provide a direct line of communication between local leaders and state policymakers.

Mayor's Summit

On April 12, more than 20 mayors and local officials from cities across Michigan met at the League's Capital Office as part of the Governor's Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives. Attendees included Battle Creek City Manager Ken Tsuchiyama, Bay City Mayor Christopher Shannon, Dearborn Mayor Jack O'Reilly Jr., Detroit Director of Government Relations Kizzi Montgomery, Flint Mayor Dayne Walling, Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell, Hamtramck Mayor and League Board President Karen Majewski, Highland Park Mayor DeAndre Windom, Jackson Mayor Martin Griffin, Kalamazoo City Manager Ken Collard, Kalamazoo Vice Mayor Hannah McKinney, Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero, Muskegon City Manager Bryon Mazade, Royal Oak City Manager Donald Johnson, Saginaw Mayor Greg Branch, Saginaw City Manager Darnell Earley, and Southfield Mayor Brenda Lawrence. Harvey Hollins, director of the new initiative, noted that this was the second in a series of meetings with mayors and local officials. He intends to get on the road and have regional conversations with mayors from around the state.

Governor Snyder talks with Michigan mayors at the League's Lansing office in April.

"All the interviews for the associate directors were done in panel form with the leadership in those communities. I want the communities to feel this is a good fit, not that the state is coming in and saying this is who you'll work with," said Hollins. "With each one, we've asked what they know and understand about the challenges and assets of the area they'll be working in. Can someone there say 'I know this person'? Have they geared themselves to bring value to the table when they get there?"

The original staffing plan did not include an associate director for Detroit but that's likely to change, Hollins said. "My staff is not necessarily done. Detroit is the heavy lift and is taking a lot of time since it's obviously our biggest city, and all the cities around Detroit have their own challenges, too. So, we may need another person who can touch base with them and directly report to me."

Flint Mayor Dayne Walling is optimistic about what the new office could mean for his city, which has struggled to reinvent itself in the post-Buick City age. "The initiative is focused on the right issue: jobs," said Walling. "It can bring together strategies for economic development, transportation, housing, education, and public safety in a way that is effective."

"Collaboration" is the keystone for how the new initiative will work, with Hollins' staff acting as catalysts and facilitators for the best practices and innovative strategies developed in each urban center. "In too many parts of the

state, neighboring cities don't operate with a regional mindset. Except for the rare meeting, these conversations are few and far between," said Hollins. "We're trying to create a table where they can sit down together."

Walling agreed. "Michigan has the right assets for a robust economy in this global world but we have been divided city versus county and eastside versus westside," said Walling. "This new initiative can bring together everyone who wants to see Michigan succeed."

The office will also provide a direct line of communication between local leaders and state policy makers. "One objective is to pull together stakeholder groups in these cities that connect directly to the governor's office so we can have real dialogue, and find solutions that begin to create policies that move cities in a better direction," said Hollins. "We want to empower them to be better advocates of their own issues but also to have that conduit to the governor's office."

The intent is to create a lasting process for long-term solutions, Hollins said. "When the administration eventually changes and there's change in the legislative body, any top-down-driven initiative will get changed too. If we can grow this thing organically from the ground up, we can establish a lasting mechanism for direct access to a governor," he said. "The League's role is critical in this, too. It has a history of working with the municipalities. They know the players on the ground."

Battle Creek Mayor Susan Baldwin said the urban focus is a key strategy for success. "It's a recognition on the part of the governor that cities are the economic engine of Michigan, that this is where the core of our businesses are, where our population centers are," said Baldwin. "This initiative is going to help our cities back to greatness."

Both mayors say they're confident in Snyder's choice to fill the job. "Harvey Hollins has the right experience and the attitude to work with leaders on both sides of the aisle and across the state that do not always see it as being in their interest to invest in urban areas and





Hollins and Governor Snyder with Michigan Office of Urban Metropolitan Initiatives Associate Directors Brian Larkin and Erika Rosebrook.

ERIKA ROSEBROOK
Associate Director, Grand Rapids Office

Rosebrook holds a BA from the University of Chicago and a master of public administration from Harvard. Originally from Greenville, MI, she currently resides in East Grand Rapids. As Assistant Ottawa County Administrator, she increased local officials', employees', and residents' access to services and information through technology and creative communication strategies. While with Kent County, she coordinated land acquisition and environmental activities for the award-winning Millennium Park. As a survey research analyst, she created and implemented a vocational rehabilitation program for individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and welfare work requirements.

BRIAN LARKIN
Associate Director, Flint Office

Larkin was born in Flint and graduated from Flint Northern High School. He received his BA from Morehouse College, and his master of science in planning from Florida State University. While at the Genesee County Land Bank, Larkin coordinated a vacant land management program of 1,500+ properties. He also worked on the community-city partnership 'Keep Genesee County Beautiful.' He served on the advisory committee to the Crim Fitness Foundation's Healthy Kids Healthy Communities Initiative and the North Flint Redevelopment Corporations Board of Directors.

regional development," said Walling. "He's professional and approachable. When he's listening to you he's truly listening," said Baldwin. "I also see him get excited about ideas that cities bring to him. He really engages in the discussion. That's a key piece to this office: good staff that pays attention."

So will he succeed in the task ahead? On this particular day, Hollins is gazing out on his hometown from a rooftop in downtown Kalamazoo. And based on the view from here, the future looks bright. "When I was growing up, downtown was pretty much stagnant. But coming back

and seeing what's new...the medical school going in...the cool restaurants...I go downtown and it's like I've never been there...It's exciting to see this city come back," he said. "I'm really glad the governor has the vision he has and the boldness to execute the vision to focus on urban centers. That's the good news: working for a guy who gets it." 

Elizabeth Shaw is communications coordinator for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6318 or eshaw@mml.org.

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Retrofitting Suburbia

through Corridor Improvement Districts

Michigan's strip commercial corridors are showing evidence of decline. Our abundant stock of vacant commercial storefronts, empty swaths of parking lots, and overgrown landscaping are no secret. Communities mull the challenges of revitalization and how to repurpose and reprogram these commercial corridors; after all, they were once thriving places to incubate new

have in Michigan to utilize the Corridor Improvement Authority Act to help effect change. Act 280 of 2005 is more than legislation, it is an opportunity for local leaders, business owners, and residents to invest tax increment revenues back into the area of the community where they were generated, and to rely on citizen stakeholders to prioritize those revenues for revitalization. This is small government at its best.

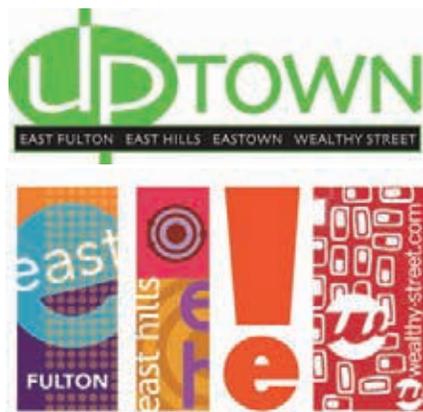
are concerned that constituents may think it will raise taxes, or worse, detract from the general fund. Tax increment financing is not a tax increase nor is it a new tax. The base value (or existing tax base) remains with the taxing jurisdictions. Tax increment revenue generated by growth in value does not go to the general fund to be spent throughout the municipality, county, or other taxing jurisdiction—it returns to the place where it was generated, that portion of the community with the established Corridor Improvement District.

Aside from the economic reinvestment in the district, a Corridor Improvement Authority Board of Directors (the board appointed to oversee the CID) becomes an organized entity coalescing ideas, mobilizing and advocating interests, and effecting change. The authority sets its budget, works to market the district, plans and hosts events, and collaborates with other business districts. Some worry about local fiefdoms; however, the board is appointed by the local government, and the local elected officials are also responsible for approving the CID's budget. These checks and balances ensure that the CID and the municipality

Rationale for Corridor Improvement Districts

Corridor Improvement Districts (CIDs) bring community officials together with local stakeholders to invest in suburban and neighborhood revitalization. Talented, experienced, and knowledgeable local stakeholders match revitalization projects with self-defined priorities and overcome local obstacles to investment. The pace, projects, and priorities are locally derived and locally managed. Putting the onus of revitalization into the hands of business and property owners means there is skin-in-the-game. This is where change happens.

Local leaders tend to shy away from tax increment financing because they



business. While the needs are great in these corridors, the opportunities are equally compelling.

After watching the 2010 TEDx Atlanta video of making a case for retro-fitting suburbia, I realized the opportunity we

are working collectively toward revitalization. Other benefits include the CIDs ability to bond, purchase, manage and sell properties, and enter into inter-governmental agreements with adjacent municipalities.

Basic Elements of a CID

The first step in determining whether a CID is possible in your community is to verify that the target area complies with the following statutory requirements:

- Located adjacent to or within 500 feet of a collector or arterial road
- Contains at least five acres or 10 contiguous parcels
- More than 1/2 of the ground floor area is commercial in character
- Past uses are residential, commercial, or industrial
- Served with water or sewer
- Zoned to allow mixed-use and high density residential
- Has been in existence for the last 30 years

Once general boundaries are identified, community outreach and involvement should begin in earnest. Ideally, the local stakeholders take the initiative towards revitalizing their community.

However, the local government can also take a leadership role by ensuring statutory requirements are met and all interested parties are represented during the planning and approval process, and by providing assessing records

essential for projecting future tax increment capture and anticipated growth rates. Key stakeholders to involve include:

- Any entity that would forego incremental revenue increases
- Property owners and business owners leasing property
- Homeowners/residents
- Nonprofit entities involved in community development, housing, and revitalization
- Legal counsel
- Community officials (elected and appointed)
- Business and neighborhood associations
- Press/media
- Potential funders/donors
- Potential developers or developers active in the community

The time and effort it takes to galvanize support, educate affected property owners, involve taxing jurisdictions, coordinate with local government, and com-

Continued on page 32

Williams & Works, Inc

Williams & Works, Inc. is an employee-owned Michigan corporation providing professional planning, engineering, and surveying services to communities throughout Michigan. The planning professionals serve a broad range of communities, from rural townships to large cities and villages. Beyond planning and preparing policy and implementation tools, our planners are also experienced in the day-to-day application of zoning and land use requirements. With a thorough understanding of public and private sector economic development goals, we are able to work with communities to attract new industry, redevelop downtown business areas, and secure funding from state and federal sources to support job growth.



business alliance program



A mobile tour helped members of the Uptown CIA board determine projects to accomplish with TIF revenues.

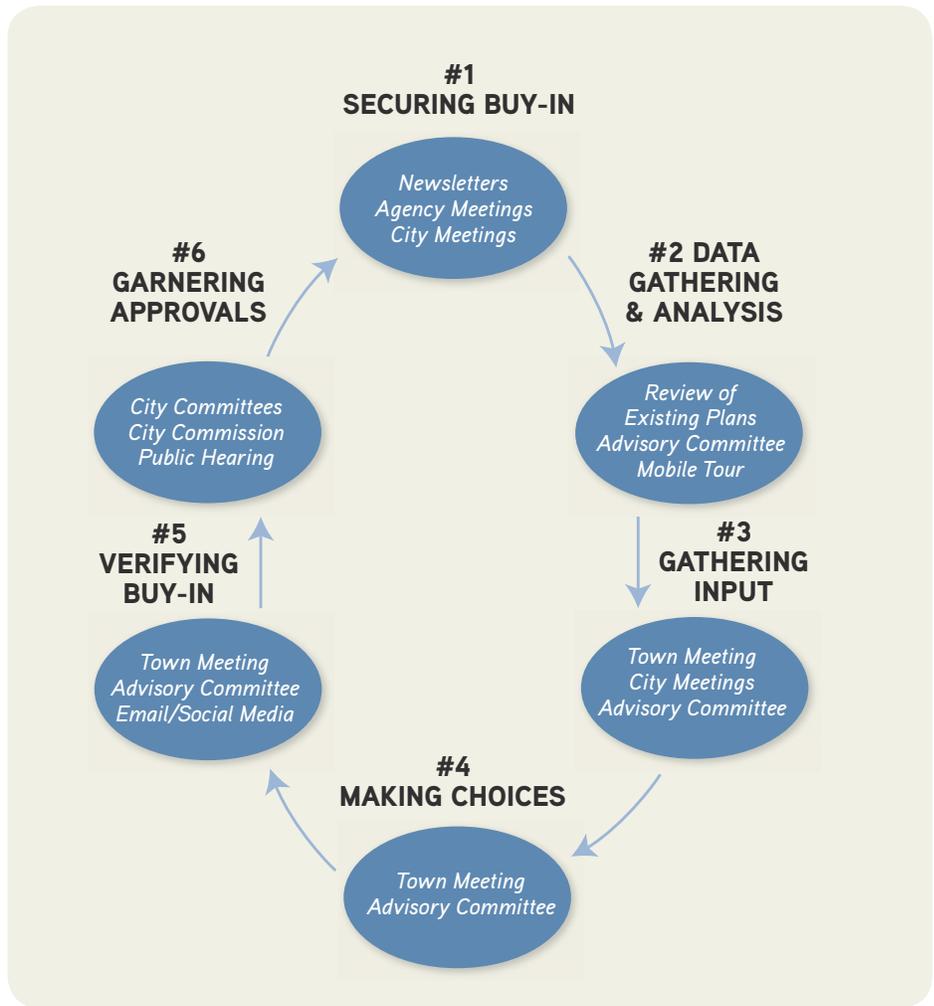
plete the required development and tax increment financing plans can be daunting. To maintain momentum, business owners might consider collaborating with a local nonprofit to serve as a fiduciary, enabling them to apply for grants from local community foundations and corporations to hire a consultant. An outside consultant, someone other than a local official, resident or business-owner, provides the taxing jurisdictions and property owners a neutral voice, one they could trust to explain the nuance of tax increment financing in a clear and concise manner. This approach allows local stakeholders to devote their time “in the field” building support, answering questions, and ensuring broad outreach for the revitalization effort.



Uptown CID

When we worked with the city of Grand Rapids and neighborhood stakeholders to form the Uptown Corridor Improvement District, the role of community planners was reinforced. As consultants we were responsible for organizing a mobile tour with stakeholders to determine projects to accomplish with TIF revenues, hosting a community consensus-building event where projects were refined and prioritized, and for writing the Development and Tax Increment Financing Plans. Ultimately, the public involvement we facilitated resulted in a development plan comprised of projects which were truly locally generated based on the resident, business owner, and property owner’s immediate and long-term needs.

Forming the Uptown Corridor Improvement District was not without its chal-



What Is a Corridor Improvement Authority?

A Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) is a tax increment financing (TIF) tool to promote economic development. It allows TIF to be used for commercial and economic growth in commercial districts in cities, villages and townships. Local units can use taxes arising from increased property values through TIF to pay for improvements to commercial areas along arterial or collector streets and roads. It allows communities that already have Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) to extend similar benefits to aging commercial corridors outside the DDA district or that extend through more than one municipality.

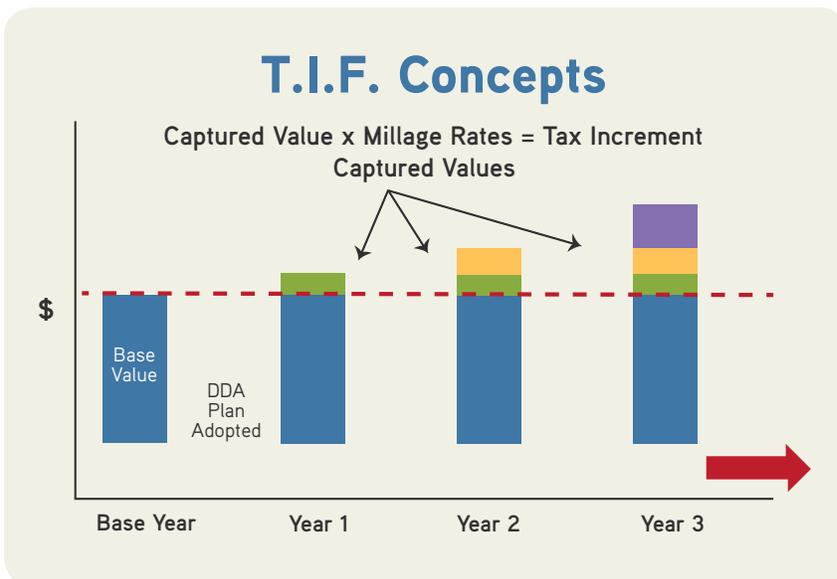
Corridor improvements may include improvements to the land, as well as constructing, rehabilitating, preserving, equipping or maintaining buildings within the development district for public or private use. These improvements may be financed initially through bonding, which may be repaid from the enhanced property tax revenue stream, special assessments and fees.

allenges and lessons learned. As with any community-based development work, volunteer effort is necessary. Local officials should reach out to community leaders for support to make sure the process is streamlined and dynamic, educational and participatory. The process requires a group of local stakeholders, working in concert, advocating for their corridor and setting a robust vision for revitalization.

With decreasing property values, and the aging of these corridors, establishing a CID provides a foundation for community organizing and a vehicle for reinvestment. Many believe property values have hit a low point in our communities. By establishing the CID now, there is an improved potential for increased values and greater tax increment. While the increment may be modest initially, the CIA board can be strategic about its investments, making certain they are highly visible, affordable, and easy to implement. To borrow a line from Fred Kent of Project for Public

Spaces, "lighter, cheaper, quicker" brings the greatest benefit to place-making through suburban revitalization. Our commercial corridors can continue to thrive, so long as we allow them to evolve and change through community-based solutions implemented with community-generated revenues. 

Lynée L. Wells, AICP, is a community planner and project manager for Williams & Works. You may contact her at 616-224-1500 or wells@williams-works.com.



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Repurposing

a Vacant School into City Hall

By Rene Rosencrantz Wheaton

You don't have to look far to find an empty school building in the state of Michigan. Many communities are dealing with empty buildings that have been vacated by school districts because of shrinking enrollment, growing operation costs, and other concerns. While those buildings can be a detriment to a community, attracting squatters and vandalism, they don't have to be.

The city of Ferrysburg turned an empty school into a community asset by transforming it into city hall and a satellite police office. "Ferrysburg Elementary was part of Grand Haven Public Schools and it was closed due to declining enrollment," Craig Bessinger, Ferrysburg City Manager said. The school was situated in a central location in Ferrysburg, making it an attractive spot for city hall. "A few years back, there was an economic development task force that put together a strategic plan," Bessinger said. "One of the items in that plan was to possibly buy the 13-acre parcel of the school if it were ever to come up for sale."

In its old city hall location, a former church, Ferrysburg was running out of room to efficiently take care of city business. "We were short on space, it wasn't centrally located, and it couldn't be easily located by our residents," said Mayor Dan Ruter. The Ferrysburg Elementary location was so attractive because it offered loads of space and was centrally located, helping to join the city's two business districts. "When it became available, we bought it pretty quickly," Ruter said. The city purchased the school for \$900,000.

Redeveloping the school into a new city hall wasn't necessarily the plan right from the start. There was talk of demolishing the school and building a new city hall. "It was up for debate," said Jeffery Stilles, the former mayor. "We had a company come in and give us the rundown of cost using different scenarios, from building new to just giving the building a facelift." The process was all taking place when the



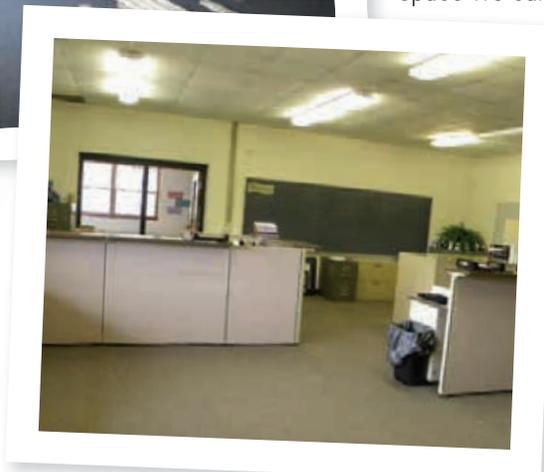
There was a lot of community involvement in the building updates and rehabilitation, including councilmember Rebecca Hopp painting the exterior and employees from the Ottawa Conservation District planting a butterfly garden.



Rock five, a large rock from the former city hall building, was moved to the new location. A number of residents asked for this "landmark" to be relocated. Dick's Towing in Grand Haven donated their time and equipment to move the rock.



In the future, if the opportunity presents itself, the city will build a new city hall on the front of the building, while maintaining some of the assets of the current building, such as the gym. “There’s still a lot of value in the building, and we have found the gym to be a great place for social events. It is a space we can rent out and use ourselves, too,” Stilles said.



country’s stimulus plan was at its strongest, and there was hope that a completely new facility would be a possibility. “There were some on the council in favor of leveling the place, and others that wanted to preserve its history,” said Mayor Ruitor. “With the stimulus plan, the federal government was looking for shovel-ready projects, but the costs were still too high even with some federal funding.”

Costs to tear down the school and construct a new city hall on the site were estimated at \$3.5 million. By choosing instead to repurpose the existing building, the city was able to renovate at a cost of \$92,153.

Prior to starting the project, councilmembers and city officials visited the city of Norton Shores, where a school was successfully redeveloped into city hall. “It was good for us to see the Norton Shores project and how the city was able to modify a school building for its uses,” said Stilles. “I think it is definitely something other communities should consider. School buildings are typically well built and this wasn’t a huge undertaking for us. It has worked out very well.”

The changes to the building weren’t drastic—classrooms were transformed into offices, conference rooms, and city council chambers. The building basically received a facelift with new carpet, paint, windows, ceiling tiles, air conditioning units, and audio video equipment.

Grand Haven Public Schools had kept the school in tip-top condition and had already installed new computer lines, so that saved us a lot on cost,” Bessinger said. Built in the 1950s, there are some drawbacks to the facility, including an aging boiler, but all in all Bessinger said the move has been an economically smart one for the city.



In fact, Ferrysburg has been able to rent out much of the space it doesn’t use for city business, bringing in approximately \$75,000 in rental income per year. The redeveloped school offers Ferrysburg 32,000 square feet, with 10,000 of that being leased to Ottawa County Community Mental Health. Other tenants include a preschool and daycare, and a basketball clinic. Also a bonus, the old city hall location has been leased out to a local dance studio, so that building isn’t sitting empty either.

“I find it enjoyable to hear our residents reminiscence about the time they spent here as students, when they come in to take care of business,” said Bessinger. 

Rene Rosencrantz Wheaton is a freelance writer. You may contact her at 810-444-3827.

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GUIDO AND SINCLAIR AWARDS

The Guido and Sinclair awards are two of the top honors given to individuals by the Michigan Municipal League. The 2012 deadline to submit nominees for the awards is **August 1, 2012** with the winners being recognized during the Michigan Municipal League's Annual Convention October 3-5 on Mackinac Island. Award details:

THE MICHAEL A. GUIDO LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD



What: Created in memory of Dearborn Mayor Michael Guido to honor a chief elected official who personifies professionalism and leadership, and is dedicated to the citizens in their community and advocates on their behalf in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

Eligibility: To be considered, nominee must be a current chief elected official from a Michigan Municipal League member community who has demonstrated excellence in leadership and shown perseverance in making a difference in his/her community for a sustained period of time.

THE JIM SINCLAIR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARD



What: Created in memory of Rogers City Councilmember Jim Sinclair to celebrate a person dedicated to public service who has shown a passion and commitment to the League, enthusiastically supporting its mission and promoting its purpose.

Eligibility: To be considered, nominees must be affiliated with the League in the capacity of a municipal official, municipal staff, a League staff member, or an active participant in the League's mission; and be active in furthering the cause of educating elected officials so that communities may benefit from the education and experience that their elected officials have gained.

Nominations must be received at League headquarters by **August 1, 2012**. To download a nomination form and related materials visit www.mml.org/awards.

When is a person in “actual physical control” of a vehicle?

FACTS:

Brittney Lynn Longeway (defendant) and friends went to a martini bar in Plymouth on the evening of March 7, 2010 and parked in the city parking deck located behind the bar. As she and her friends were leaving, the doorman alerted a city police officer that he had observed the defendant and her friends arrive earlier in the evening and that the car had struck a concrete barrier. He indicated that as they were leaving the bar, they appeared to be drunk. The police officer observed the defendant start the car, apply the brakes to the running vehicle, shift the vehicle into reverse, then shift the vehicle back into park. The tires did not move. When the officer approached the vehicle, it was still running. The defendant indicated they were not leaving because they were looking for her friend’s jacket.

The defendant was charged with the OWI (operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated) statute. The facts were not in dispute; however, the defendant claimed that she was not operating the vehicle since the car had not moved.

The statute (MCL 257.625(1)) states:

A person, whether licensed or not, shall not operate a vehicle upon a highway or other place open to the general public or generally accessible to motor vehicles, including an area designated for the parking of vehicles, within this State if the person is operating while intoxicated.

MCL 257.35a defines “operate” as follows:

“Operate” or “operating” means being in actual physical control of a vehicle regardless of whether or not the person is licensed under this act as an operator or chauffeur.

This column highlights a recent judicial decision or Michigan Municipal League Legal Defense Fund case that impacts municipalities. The information in this column should not be considered a legal opinion or to constitute legal advice.

Sue Jeffers is a legal consultant to the League. You may reach her at sjeffers@mml.org.

QUESTION 1:

Was the defendant, under the facts in this case, operating a vehicle for purposes of MCL 257.35a?

Answer according to the district court:

Yes. The court ruled that the defendant was operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

Answer according to the circuit court:

No. The court reversed the decision of the district court and ordered that the charges be dismissed. The circuit court relied upon a Michigan Supreme Court decision, *People v Wood*, 450 Mich 399, and found that since the vehicle had not “moved,” defendant was not “operating” the vehicle. In *People v Wood*, the Supreme Court defined “operating” as follows: “Once a person using a motor vehicle as a motor vehicle has put the vehicle in motion, or in a position posing a significant risk of causing a collision, such a person continues to operate it until the vehicle is returned to a position posing no such risk.” The circuit court found that since the car never moved and was parked legally, the car was not in a position posing a significant risk of causing a collision.

Answer according to the court of appeals:

Yes. The court of appeals reversed the decision of the circuit court and reinstated the decision of the district court. The court of appeals stated that the circuit court misapplied the case of *People v Wood* to the facts of this case. According to the court of appeals, the case of *People v Wood* is most generally cited as authority in cases involving sleeping or unconscious drivers. In this case, the driver was sitting inside a stationary vehicle and engaging in operational activities such as starting the engine and changing gears. The court found that the defendant was operating the vehicle because she had “actual physical control” of the vehicle and that a simple reading of the statute was all that was necessary in analyzing the case.

People of the City of Plymouth v Brittney Lynn Longeway, No. 300493 (2012). (This is a published decision.)

Lofts on Ludington

New Urbanism in a Traditional
Downtown Neighborhood



Escanaba,
pop. 12,616



This story is a good one for all the right reasons. It begins well, ends well, and contains challenges, tragedy, and perseverance. The Richter Brewery building isn't fancy—it's one of those fine architectural structures you notice whether you're local or from out of town. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, the Richter Brewery Company built the brewery in 1901, with the addition of an office building in 1915. After promising beginnings, the brewery was closed due to Prohibition (the challenge), and sold in 1925 to the Delta Brewery Company, which manufactured non-alcoholic beverages until Prohibition's end, and once again brewed beer until bankruptcy closed its doors in 1940 (the tragedy). The brewery building carries the Delta moniker, while the adjacent office building carries the original Richter name.

Primarily vacant over the years and growing ever more forlorn, it was Escanaba's homegrown designer Matt Sviland who in 2008 harnessed his talent to the brewery's potential, and with unassailable passion developed a vision to repurpose the Escanaba landmark.

Principles on New Urbanism

The Lofts on Ludington project demonstrates many of the positives of "the new urbanism" discipline of city planning and design, complemented by the redevelopment of an historical building, in a small city with traditional neighborhood design. (For more on new urbanism, visit newurbanism.org). This project is a mixed-used redevelopment that preserves and highlights many aspects of the original Richter Brewery's historic charm and significance, sealing its place as a nostalgic and beloved landmark, and enhancing Escanaba's downtown in many respects.

Mixed Use and Income

Two hallmarks of new urbanism at work here are the mix of both residential and commercial uses in the same building, along with tenants of mixed income. Of the 15 apartments, eight are designated as affordable housing, while the remainder command market rate. This is important, as too many communities have developed neighborhoods segregated by income. And what a sweet retreat these lofts are! Ceilings are 12-18 feet high, walls are exposed brick, and the historically accurate windows are energy efficient. The interior bricks are sandblasted so smooth they appear as clean as if they were freshly plucked from the Lake Michigan surf, a few blocks away. Stairs are recycled floor joists of virgin Douglas fir, the floors are stained concrete, and some units offer outdoor living space. Sviland handled the sandblasting, staining, and color choices throughout. His passion, dedication, and talent truly shine.



The three street-level commercial units facing Ludington include Salon West and Spa providing hair styling, manicures, pedicures, and massages in an upscale relaxed atmosphere, to which you may have your lunch or treats delivered by nearby Stone's Deli (yum); Pink Sugar Co., a unique and trendy women's and children's clothing and gift shop; and the services and works of the talented Holly Nicholson-Nylund Photography. All three businesses generate daytime traffic in complement to one another.

Safety and Walkability

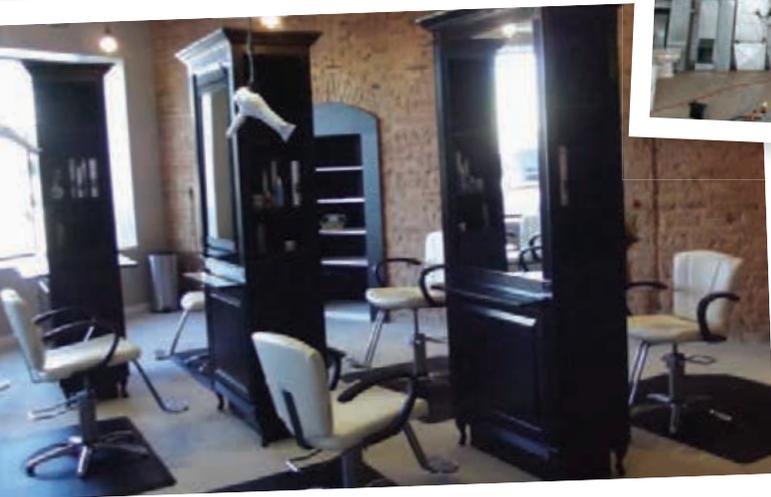
Another hallmark of new urbanism—this mixed-use space provides a 24/7 presence due to the differing hours of business traffic and residents. Business is active when residents are out and about. Residents in turn, provide the "lighted window" effect, which is arguably the most effective safety feature of any downtown neighborhood, whether the presence is real or perceived.

Another key component of new urbanism in this project is walkability. We hear a lot about it, but let's examine this a moment. The Lofts commercial space is a walkable destination



Escanaba's homegrown designer Matt Sviland repurposed a downtown landmark to include residential and commercial use, with eight units designated as affordable housing.

The street level commercial units include a salon and spa, a clothing store and gift shop, and a photography studio.



“The preservation of historic buildings and archaeological sites is key to maintaining a sense of place in our state,” Governor Snyder stated. “This year’s recipients understand the power of historic places to attract business and tourists and the difference they make in our communities.”

The Svilands, as first-time developers, were delighted with the award, which was literally won with sweat equity and a dedication far greater than they anticipated. They graciously thanked the Escanaba city administration for support, as well as First Bank, the community, and the various state and federal agencies that helped make the project happen.

Other 2012 award recipients include: Union Building in Calumet; Adams and Masonic Temple Buildings in Sault Ste. Marie; Boyne City Water Works Building; Lansing Artillery National Guard Armory; and Michigan Medical Society Building in East Lansing. 

Caroline Weber Kennedy is manager of field operations for the League. You may contact her at 906-428-0100 or ckennedy@mml.org.

for many in Escanaba’s traditional neighborhoods, while residents of the Lofts can walk to restaurants, entertainment venues, a grocery store, and many other necessities and amenities. The Lofts are about a dozen blocks from the Bonafis Fine Arts Center, other civic and government services, and Escanaba’s picturesque harbor, public beach, and park lands. Walkable urban places are in high demand by both of America’s largest generations—the Baby Boomers (83 million) and the Millennials (78 million). Walkability decreases dependence on automobiles and foreign oil, while correspondingly increasing the affordability of the living location; it extends independence for the aging population and promotes independence and responsibility among adolescents. Walking contributes to the health of all, as well as generating activity and social interaction among all segments of the population within the community.

All of these factors contribute to the success of business owners, the quality of life for residents, and the overall well being of the community.



2012 Governor’s Award for Historic Preservation

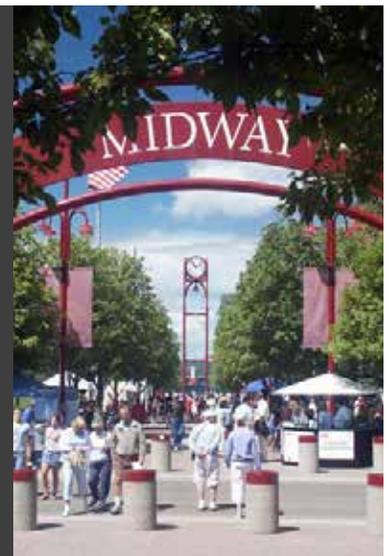
Owners Beth and Matt Sviland of Swanee, Inc., and their architect, Barry Polzin Architects of Marquette, were recognized in a ceremony at the state Capitol for the

Lofts on Ludington project, as one of six projects receiving the 2012 Governor’s Award for Historic Preservation.

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NEW LEAGUE SERVICE:

NATURAL GAS PURCHASING PROGRAM

By Anthony Minghine

As you may have heard, the League is starting a natural gas purchasing program for our members.

League to Negotiate Lower Prices for Members

The goal of this exciting new program is to combine our members' collective natural gas usage and use it to negotiate more favorable rates than they would each be able to achieve on their own. For many years, Michigan users of natural gas have been able to select an alternative supplier to provide the actual commodity, and the distribution of that commodity remains with the current utility provider. Many may already be using an alternative natural gas provider. This program will take that approach to the next level by negotiating directly with suppliers on behalf of the participants.

No New Infrastructure or Investment Required

Participating in the gas program will not require any new infrastructure or investment on your part. Our goal will be to negotiate with multiple suppliers to address our geographic challenges, and members can sign up. We are excited about the timing of the launch. Natural gas prices are historically low, and we believe the savings potential is fairly high.

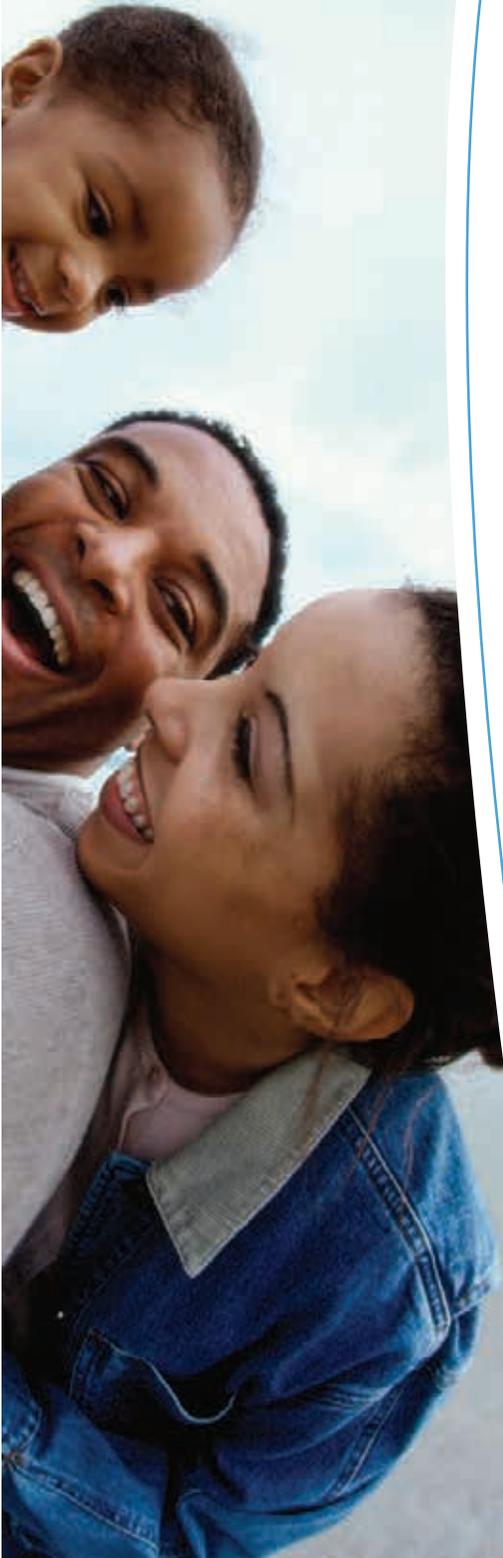
How Do We Participate?

In the near future, interested members will need to state their intent to participate and supply the League with some basic information. We will be looking for data on usage, number and location of meters, name of your local utility provider, and other information we need to get the best pricing. We are anticipating that members will need to commit to participate for a defined period—most likely a year—for the purchase of their natural gas. This is necessary for us to be able to effectively negotiate, and the commitment is similar to what most other alternative providers require.

The League is extremely excited about this new opportunity. So much of what we do is based upon the collective power and strength of our members, and this program is no different. We are proud to be able to offer this service, and look forward to working with you to make it a success.

Members should watch our website mml.org, and/or their email for further information. 

Anthony Minghine is the associate executive director and COO of the League. You may reach him at 734-669-6360 or aminghine@mml.org



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So Glad You Asked: Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP)

Q: I heard there were more changes to EVIP. What happened?

A: April 26, 2012, the state Legislature made significant changes to the requirements placed upon local units to receive the third portion of EVIP. House Bill 5189, enrolled on May 1, 2012 as PA 107, is a supplemental appropriations bill, and it made two major changes:

1. The deadline for certification for the third portion of EVIP was changed to June 1, 2012 (from May 1, 2012.)
2. A second method for certification was added; compliance with PA 152 (the law that requires local units to provide health benefits in accordance with a hard cap/80-20/opt-out provisions.)

The direct language is as follows, available in its entirety at legislature.mi.gov:

(A) Any eligible city, village, or township that offers medical benefits to its employees or elected public officials shall certify to the department of treasury by June 1, 2012 that it is in compliance with the publicly funded health insurance contribution act, 2011 PA 152, MCL 15.561 to 15.569. Dental and vision coverages are not considered medical benefits. The department shall develop a certification process and method for cities, villages, and townships to follow.

(B) Any city, village, or township that does not offer medical benefits to its employees or elected public officials shall certify to the department of treasury by June 1, 2012 that it does not offer medical benefits to its employees or elected public officials. Dental and vision coverages are not considered medical benefits. The department shall develop a certification process and method for cities, villages, and townships to follow.

Q: Who is eligible for EVIP, anyway?

A: Each city, village, or township that received a FY 2010 statutory payment greater than \$4,500 is eligible but must fulfill specific requirements to qualify for payments. Visit our EVIP resource page at mml.org or the department of treasury at michigan.gov (local government services/revenue sharing pages.)

Q: Originally the third part of EVIP about employee compensation required certification of intent to change retirement programs and health care premium sharing. Does the new option to comply with PA 152 in order to qualify for EVIP, only apply to the health care component of EVIP?

A: No! Under the new law, compliance with PA 152 (including opting out) satisfies Part 3 of EVIP. If you comply with PA 152—by adhering to the hard caps, or electing a 20 percent cost share through majority vote of council, or by opting-out altogether through 2/3 vote of council—you qualify for the 3rd leg of EVIP (assuming you are an eligible unit of government).

Q: EVIP requires that new hires pay 20 percent of health care premiums. How can you opt out of PA 152 and still comply with EVIP?

A: PA 152 provides the option for a local unit to exempt itself, or “opt-out” of requirements of the law by 2/3 vote of the council (where the mayor is both chief executive and chief administrator, his/her approval of the exemption is also required.) Opting out of PA 152 is complying with PA 152, therefore local units that opted out meet the requirements of the third part of EVIP. The new Treasury EVIP certification form includes an “opt-out” box. Visit michigan.gov to view the form.

Q: PA 152 states that the state will release figures annually related to the hard cap amounts to adjust for inflation. When will this happen?

A: PA 152 specifies, “By October 1 of each year after 2011 the state treasurer shall adjust the maximum payment permitted... based on the change in the medical care component of the United States consumer price index for the most recent 12-month period...” The League will aggressively communicate the state’s adjustments through our Inside 208 blog, the legislative Link e-newsletter, our website, and other means.

The League’s Information Service provides member officials with answers to questions on a vast array of municipal topics. Send your municipal inquiries to info@mml.org, or call 1-800-653-2483.

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In 2010, after a heartbreaking summer with four drowning deaths, the Marquette city commission appointed a Waterfront Safety Task Force to develop a comprehensive waterfront safety initiative. From the largest institutions to individual citizens, the community embraced and supported the task force. The goals of the task force are education/awareness; on-beach support; off-shore support; and emergency response. Marquette General Hospital, Northern Michigan University (NMU), the Marquette Area Public School System, and our Convention and Visitor's Bureau provided both human resources and financial support for education/awareness. Whether hotel/motel brochures, internet-based information, lesson plans, signage ideas, classroom delivery, or other media, the task force could not have done this without them.

On-beach support included new lifeguard stands, life-saving stations, flag pole warning systems, buoys, signage, and life jacket loaner stations. Local service clubs provided the bulk of the financial support. The rescue stations were part of an Eagle Scout project accomplished through volunteer labor, and financed through service clubs, churches, and NMU.

Off-shore support was handled by local boaters, the Power Squadron (a boating safety organization), and the US Coast Guard. Weather spotting and emergency assistance plans were drawn up and executed. Knowledgeable boaters also served on the task force, sharing a tremendous amount of local nautical expertise. In addition, recreationists such as surfers and wind surfers, along with Dr. Ron Kinnunen of the Michigan Sea Grant Office, were able to point out all of the dangerous rip current and channel current areas along our eleven miles of shoreline.



All local emergency response agencies were involved in planning and exercising water emergencies. The city fire department, city police dive team, county sheriff dive team, Marquette EMS, coast guard, and lifeguards integrated under the incident command system and operated through our county 911 dispatch center.

The ambition of the waterfront safety project could easily have been thwarted by a lack of funds. Happily, the whole community came through with a level of commitment and support that was remarkable. The Marquette waterfront safety initiative is a great story of community success. 