

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

January/February 2011

Small Communities **THINKING BIG**

“ We want to be a community where people come downtown frequently to go to the local stores, hang out, and walk around. ”

—DAVE POST
Hillman Village Manager

GOVERNING BETTER IN THE CLOUDS

**2011 CAPITAL
CONFERENCE**
PROMO INSIDE!

CHARLEVOIX
THE BEAUTIFUL

**BREAKING THE
CODE IN FREMONT**

CLARE'S COPS &
DOUGHNUTS



WHAT IS **21c3**
ANYWAY? p. 6



the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 84, Number 1

Better Communities. Better Michigan.

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 non-profit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.

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Small Communities: Putting Big Ideas into Action

Bigger isn't always better. Just ask any of our member communities with a population under six figures. In fact, the vast majority of Michigan's cities and villages have less than 5,000 residents—and of the approximate 30 percent above that mark, only a handful have more than 50,000 residents.

So, if you think the guiding principles of the League's Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3) initiative are only for "big cities," think again. Research shows that—regardless of a community's size—people want to live and work in places where they can find the eight core assets: physical design/walkability, green initiatives, cultural economic development, entrepreneurship, multiculturalism, messaging & technology, transit, and education. As the world changes around us, even the smallest communities need to think about building a future based on those principles—or risk becoming obsolete to their own population.

That's why we're focusing this issue of *The Review* on small communities (population of 5,000 and under) putting big ideas into action. For instance, take a look at our story on the Harbor Beach Maritime Festival. In a community of 1.5 square miles and less than 2,000 people, leaders created a true "sense of place" that's impacted the entire Thumb region.

You'll also read about Fremont's use of form-based codes to redesign its community; Hillman's walkability plan; an ingenious look at entrepreneurship in Clare; St. Ignace's Transportation Center; the U.P. hub for place-based education; Charlevoix's green initiatives; and the historic contribution of Vandalia and Cassopolis to the Underground Railroad.

Whether we're talking about a village of 500 people or an urban center that's 50,000 strong, building vibrant, livable communities for the 21st century is at the heart of the League's mission. That's why we put our shoulder to the wheel in Lansing every day, promoting legislative initiatives directly related to 21c3 issues.

We shaped Complete Streets legislation to provide communities with the tools to understand the Complete Streets concept—and the leverage to bring the state and county to the table when developing road projects.

We're working to move a 15-bill package to update many of our state's economic development statutes to recognize transit-oriented projects as drivers of economic development.

We partnered with other state-wide organizations to host public forums around the state promoting the expansion of passenger rail in Michigan.

We were behind recently introduced legislation to provide \$100 million for high-speed and local rail projects. Quick action in the Michigan House will be crucial now that the federal gov-

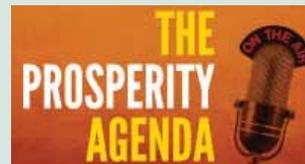
ernment has awarded Michigan over \$160 million in matching funds for high-speed rail development.

We worked closely with Rep. Ed Clemente, a 2010 League Legislator of the Year, on HB 6243 to allow for Educational Opportunity Districts in communities with higher education institutions. These new Town-Gown DDAs will help communities partner with higher education institutions, engaging students and faculty to foster economic development and attract people and jobs to the community. We expect the Senate to consider this bill in the upcoming lame duck session.

League advocacy is a whole lot more than idle talk. When it comes to building 21st century communities, we're a key player in the negotiations in Lansing for every one of you, big and small. 

THE PROSPERITY AGENDA RADIO SHOW

The Michigan Municipal League is taking its message to one of the largest radio stations in the Midwest—News/Talk 760 WJR. Throughout 2011, League Director & CEO Dan Gilmartin will host the "Michigan Prosperity Agenda" radio show that challenges listeners to help make Michigan a better place to live, work, and play by creating vibrant and prosperous local communities.



The show is sponsored by the League and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and is scheduled to air at 7 pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month. We encourage all our members and friends to tune in for each show. For those outside the WJR listening audience, you can hear segments of the show at mml.org by clicking on the Prosperity Agenda logo you see here.

Daniel P. Gilmartin
League executive director and CEO
734-669-6302, dpg@mml.org



By Colleen Layton

Small Communities in the 21st Century

Charming streets like this can draw people to your downtown—place making is an integral part of the Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3).

Take a moment to think about a small community that you have visited in the past or perhaps the one in which you reside. What images and words come to mind? Welcoming, charming, safe, socially connected, a simpler time, peaceful? These might be some of your thoughts, but others might say, “struggling, disconnected, and out-of touch.” These paradoxical descriptions often co-exist in small communities, and illustrate some of the challenges they face in the 21st century.

The world is changing fundamentally, and technology is driving new economic realities that are challenging small communities to stay viable in today’s very different world. Small communities, especially rural ones, have been hit hard in the last decade; some of the barriers they face often seem insurmountable. For example, retaining economic viability in the face of globalization; retaining a cultural identity and character in a changing world; and developing long-



term sustainability are just a few of the challenges that small communities face. But they also have advantages over their much larger siblings—they have the ability to adapt to change

more easily, with fewer layers of bureaucracy. Opportunities abound for local officials to engage their citizens in informal dialogues on the future of their community. How often have you heard, “there is no better time for opportunity than during a crisis?”

THINK REGIONALLY

The health of smaller communities is dependent on the vitality and strength of our larger core cities. Thinking regionally is a critical component of economic development. With economies measured at the regional level, not at the state or local levels, it is important to think of your community as part of a greater whole. Highlight your community’s uniqueness, but also reach out and initiate new regional partnerships that will allow you to better leverage your assets. Understand the importance of interrelationships between urban and rural communities. There are numerous examples of clusters of communities around the state working together to spur economic activity by creating places where people want to be. Some range from the very simple to more in-depth, intricate collaboration that can take years to realize. A great example of the former is Artmap, an online interactive map that guides tourists to art galleries, art studios, and performance arts studios in communities throughout the Upper Peninsula. Examples of the latter include the

Iron Ore Heritage Trail, an ultimately 48-mile recreational trail, which will connect visitors to historic landmarks, museums, mines, and historic downtowns. Another example is the Grand Vision, a highly collaborative investment among local leaders, citizens, and business owners to create a viable, sustainable future for the northwestern region of the lower peninsula of our state.

THE CENTER FOR 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITIES

For the past several years, the League has been working tirelessly on several initiatives, both at the legislative and educational levels, to put our communities at the forefront of Michigan’s economic turnaround. Through our Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3), we focus on eight key assets (see side bar) that are critical to a community or region and that will create the kinds of places in which people want to live. These assets are easily scaleable to any size community or region. With 70 percent of Michigan’s cities and villages 5,000 or less in population, small communities play a very important role in Michigan’s overall economic health.

LEAD AND ENGAGE

No matter the size of your community, it is important to be open to new ways of doing things. But it will take a new kind

THE CENTER FOR 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITIES (21C3)

The League identified eight essential assets that make communities vibrant places in the 21st century. Research continues to show that “place-making” matters more than ever, as an increasingly mobile workforce seeks out neighborhoods before finding jobs and opening up businesses. Our purpose is to help local officials identify, develop, and implement strategies that will grow and strengthen Michigan’s communities in the coming decades.

Physical Design & Walkability

Whether your community is big or small, it is important to create a physical fabric that promotes social connections where people can live, work, shop, and play.

Green Initiatives

“Thinking green” is a critical asset of any viable community. It impacts natural resources, quality of life, and the financial bottom line.

Cultural Economic Development (CED)

Arts and culture should be a part of any long-term economic development strategy for sustainability. CED plays a big role in developing and preserving a community’s identity and uniqueness.

Entrepreneurship

In the new economy, we need to focus on growing jobs in our communities by ones and twos for long-term sustainability.

Multiculturalism

Our global economy is fueled by the talent and ingenuity of people from around the world. Welcoming those from different backgrounds and disciplines can result in a whole new level of innovation.

Messaging & Technology

Technology allows people to connect and collaborate like never before. Communities have a powerful opportunity to connect and engage with their citizenry and beyond.



Transit

People are choosing where they want to live, play and work in communities that embrace all modes of transportation—walking, biking and public transit.

Education

Our educational institutions are key to growing a knowledge-based state. Leveraging these institutional resources is critical.

To read more about the League’s 21c3 Initiative, visit mml.org.





Small communities can embrace cultural economic development and entrepreneurship, two assets in the Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3).

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of leadership, one that challenges conventional thinking and facilitates a process to create a broader vision, like never before. You are no longer just competing with a neighboring community, but with other states and even places around the world. Whether you are an agricultural, tourist, or small urban community, it is important to think about how you want to be defined. There are myriad examples of small communities that have become synonymous with a particular festival or unique product. Think Lexington, and the music of Bach plays in your ear; think Cedar Springs and the warm image of Red Flannel is conjured up; think Mesick and the image of morel mushrooms sprout up—and the list could go on.

Don't be afraid to be bold, visionary leaders. Engage your citizens and stakeholders in conversations about the future of the community. Use social networking tools to solicit feedback because that is where the discussions are taking place. Don't be defenders of the status quo. Many communities have focused on creating sustainable futures by preserving and celebrating their past. Others have redefined their future by rethinking and reimagining themselves. However you reposition your community for 21st century challenges, there has never been a better time to do so. 

Colleen Layton is director of policy development for the League. She may be reached at 734-669-6320 or clayton@mml.org.



Photos from the Cops & Doughnuts Facebook page.

COPS & DOUGHNUTS

BOOKS ON STARTING A BUSINESS PROBABLY DON'T ADVISE YOU TO WRITE YOUR BUSINESS PLAN ON A PIZZA BOX, BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE MEN BEHIND THE COPS AND DOUGHNUTS CLARE CITY BAKERY DID.

By Rene Rosencrantz Wheaton
21c3 Asset: Entrepreneurship

You see, as the name indicates, the owners behind the bakery are actually police officers. Content in their jobs, the officers had no intention of opening a bakery until they learned that the Clare City Bakery—a staple in Clare's downtown since 1896—was about to close its doors.

"Three of us were sitting around eating pizza and talking about the fact that the bakery was going to close and one of us said, "Why don't we buy it," said Alan White, one of nine officers who decided to buy the historic business rather than see it close.

The move has made news nationwide and the bakery is a hit with the locals and beyond. Cops & Doughnuts is a great example of the League's entrepreneurship asset in its Center for 21st Century Communities initiative. Municipalities that focus only on attracting large manufacturers or big box retailers overlook the positive impact that entrepreneurs and small businesses, like the Cops & Doughnuts, can have on local communities. That's not a mistake City Manager Ken Hibl will make; he's seen firsthand the impact a small business can have.



Opening day at Clare's Cops & Doughnuts bakery.

Cops & Doughnuts inherited the former bakery's recipes, and also came up with this specialty: 'the squealer'—a maple-frosted doughnut with two strips of bacon on top.



"I can't say enough about Cops & Doughnuts," Hibl said. "Like a lot of communities in Michigan, the current economy has hit us hard and it meant a lot that those guys got together to keep the bakery open."

A business plan written on a pizza box sounds a little crazy, but even crazier was the time frame with which the officers were dealing.

"We only had three weeks to make this thing happen," said Officer Alan White, the vice president of Cops & Doughnuts. "We had this crazy plan and it turned out every member of our department, nine of us total, were interested in doing it. Part of the thinking was that split nine ways there wouldn't be as much to lose if things went wrong."

Initially, officers were simply trying to keep the bakery open, but it didn't take long for them to see that they had a hit on their hands. "Something really magical happened," White said. "People really responded to the story. We had press from all over. We were featured on *Good Morning America* and Fox News. It's just a good story."

"I can't say enough about Cops & Doughnuts. Like a lot of communities in Michigan, the current economy has hit us hard and it meant a lot that those guys got together to keep the bakery open."



Sure, it's a good story, but Cops & Doughnuts peddles some good doughnuts, too.

"We got the bakery's recipes as part of the purchase agreement but we've added our own flair to them," White said. "We immediately made our cookies 50 percent bigger. We also have some unique doughnuts like the squealer, which is a maple frosted doughnut with two strips of bacon on top."

The cookies aren't the only things that have grown since Clare's finest took over the bakery; the business has expanded to include more employees, from one when they bought the place to 14 now, a number that swells to 20 during the summer.

The officers have also expanded beyond the bakery business, buying the storefront next to the bakery to sell Cops

& Doughnuts merchandise which includes T-shirts with sayings like, "Hand Cuffs and Cream Puffs," "Fighting Crime One Doughnut at a Time" and " D.W.I. Doughnuts Were Involved." T-shirts are available online at www.copsdoughnuts.com.

Cops & Doughnuts also has its own fragrance line, recently started selling fudge, and has a coffee line that will be carried by 35 grocery stores in five different states by December 1.

All the officers involved in Cops & Doughnuts are still full-time police officers. White said the character traits that serve them well as police officers also helps make them successful entrepreneurs.

"We're a little like a bull in a china shop when it comes to entrepreneurship," White said. "I think sometimes people are too hesitant. We don't argue things in committee for three months. If someone has a good idea, we try it."

The officers' ideas continue to garner attention. Cops & Doughnuts recently received an Innovation Award from the Michigan Main Street Center. And while the accolades are great, White said the officers behind Cops & Doughnuts are just glad they were able to save the bakery and provide the community with additional jobs. They are excited to see what happens next. "It has definitely been a roller coaster ride," White said. 



All nine members of the Clare police department were involved in saving the Clare bakery.



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

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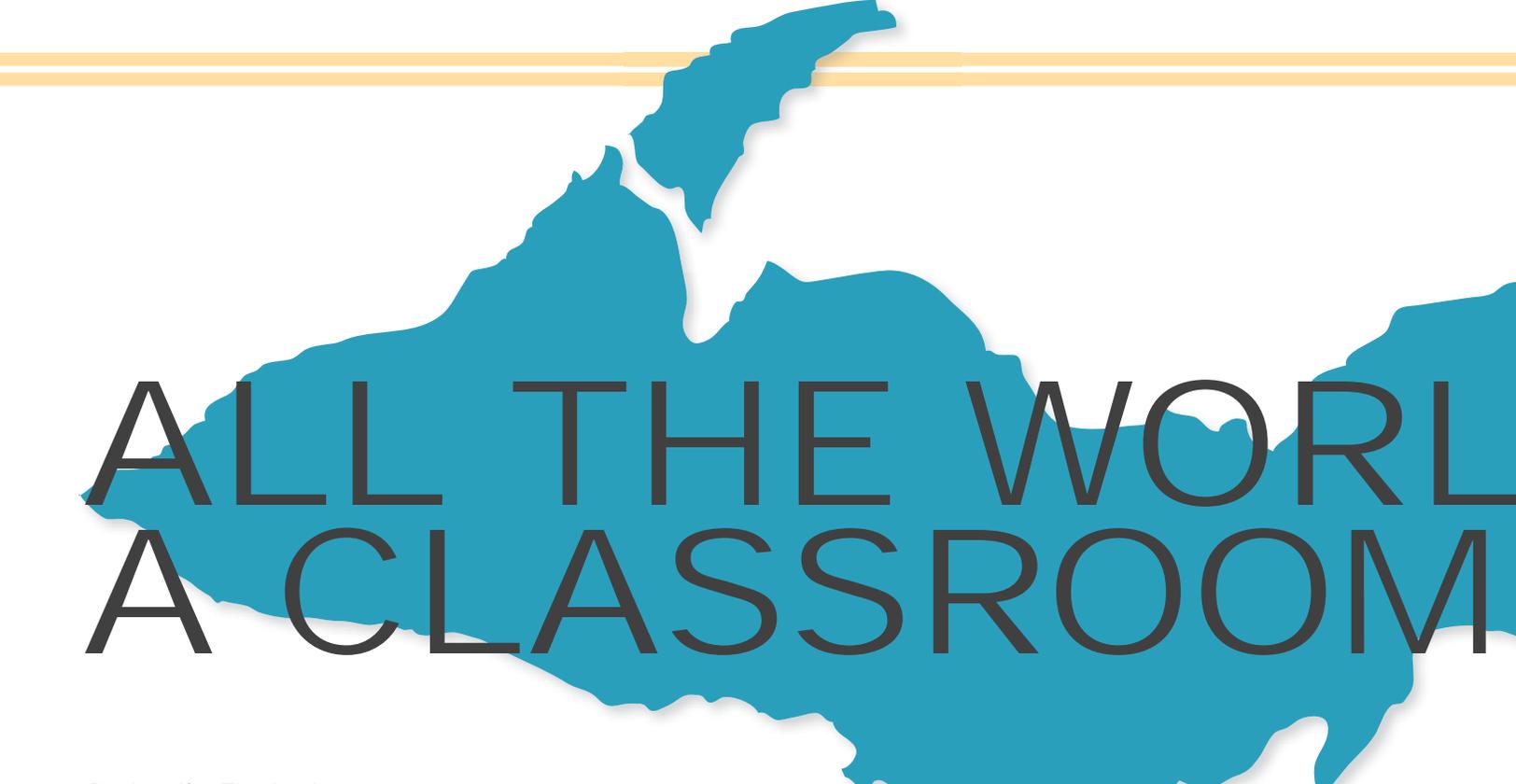
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ALL THE WORLD A CLASSROOM

By Jennifer Eberbach

21c3 Asset: Education

K-12 students in small communities across Michigan's western Upper Peninsula are "outspoken" stewards of their environment.

What better childhood lesson is there than to teach kids "your actions matter?" Environmental stewardship projects throughout Copper Country in the western Upper Peninsula are teaching this lesson to young students.

Lake Perrault near Painesdale, MI was trashed from one too many parties on the beach. Broken glass hidden in the sand made it hard for residents to enjoy their local trout lake, until a group of stewards emerged and turned it all around. In the last three years, Jeffers High School students and some middle school students have cleaned up the lake, built trails, created interpretive signage, monitored the water, and surveyed the wildlife at Lake Perrault and the adjacent Robert T. Brown Nature Sanctuary—just two miles away from their school.

LAKE SUPERIOR STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

Jeffers High School's stewards and other school-community teams are coordinated by the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative (LSSI) each year. LSSI is one of eight 'place-based' education hubs in Michigan established by the statewide Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) (see article in the November/December issue of *The Review*). Since launching in 2007, the effort has gotten K-12 students all over Michigan out in their local environments during the school day, learning the curriculum.

LSSI's regional reach covers small communities (mostly 5,000 people or less) spread out across a vast swath of the western U.P. It currently supports 15 school-community teams in the Houghton, Hancock, Adams Township, Chassell

Township, L'Anse, Copper doles out who are coordinating projects an extension of

Calumet, Baraga, Lake Linden, and City areas. The program mini grants to teachers dinating community-based that use the local environment as the classroom.

"In science class, for example, students learn about the water cycle. The best way to do that, in my mind, is to take them out to see their local watershed and teach them how the water cycle works in the watershed of the Great Lakes," says LSSI Program Director Shawn Oppliger.

Teachers (and sometimes students) come up with ideas for local environmental stewardship projects and apply for funding from LSSI. However, they could not do it without the help of community partners. Villages and townships have partnered with schools. Nature preserve land owners like the Keweenaw Land Trust have given student access to natural resources. University programs like MSU Extension have gotten involved, and numerous businesses and organizations serving the western U.P. have contributed their expertise as well.

NATIVE AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP

A cultural asset available to K-12 students in the Baraga and L'Anse area is the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. C.J. Sullivan Elementary School in L'Anse has partnered with the Native American reservation, as well as other community partners, to build and maintain nature trails and study wildlife around Lightfoot Bay and nearby areas. The collaboration acknowledges the large Native American student population who attend the school and the benefit of having a community resource like the reservation around to learn from.

“When kids TAKE OWNERSHIP of the works they’ve done, they become outspoken advocates for STEWARDSHIP.”

—LSSI Program Director Shawn Oppliger

D'S



Community work day at the Calumet Laurium and Keweenaw Elementary community garden.

STUDENTS AND SENIORS COMMUNITY GARDENS

Building community gardens on school property is a popular type of project that multiple LSSI teachers and community partners have coordinated. Calumet Laurium and Keweenaw Elementary (CLK) in Calumet teamed with Hughes Organic Farm, grocery store Pat’s Food, after-school program Great Explorations, and MSU Extension to install raised vegetable beds outside of the school. Young students in Calumet are helping senior citizens to grow their own community plots in the

school’s gardens and collecting oral histories from older residents about the plentiful Depression Era community gardens that once populated the area.

“Calumet is a mining town that had huge community gardens in the 1920s and 30s. Students are out collecting oral histories now before [that generation] passes away. It is an extension of environmental stewardship that connects kids to both the past and present and helps them learn to appreciate the knowledge that is out there for them to learn about local history,” she explains.

In addition to stewardship projects for students, LSSI also offers professional development and support to teachers. Summer institutes, workshops, grant writing help, and other types of help are available throughout the year. For example, “A lot of teachers have been interested in school gardens, so we decided they would benefit from a series of workshops on how to do it,” Oppliger explains.

GREAT LAKES STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE’S REACH

LSSI is a program administered by the Western U.P. Center for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education, one of 33

Place-based education immerses students in what is local—the environment, culture, heritage and art of a specific place—and uses those unique characteristics of a community as the basis for the study of language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, and art.

—Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative



state funded centers in Michigan. When GLSI formed in 2007, they designated the Western U.P. Center as one of their 'place-based' education hubs. Oppliger thinks it was a good choice for a hub because "we've been doing related environmental education, since 2000. We serve two intermediate school districts and the 19 school districts in them, in five counties. We already had a good relationship with the schools and knew a lot of the teachers. We were well known in our schools for professional teacher development and the services that we do," she explains.

When "the kids take ownership of the works they've done," Oppliger is particularly pleased. "They become outspoken advocates for stewardship" that can teach a lesson to the rest of us, she says. Really, who wants to throw litter on a beach that the kids just spent time cleaning up? 

Jennifer Eberbach is a freelance journalist and professional copywriter. You may contact her at 734-929-2964 or visit her online at www.jenthewriter.info.

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CATCHING THE WAVE

ANNUAL FESTIVAL GIVES ECONOMIC BOOST TO HARBOR BEACH

By Elizabeth Shaw

*21c3 Asset: Cultural
Economic Development*



IT could have been just another jet-ski race. Instead, the Harbor Beach Maritime Festival has swelled far beyond the Lake Huron waves in its 10-year history, and now includes everything from bocce ball tournaments on the beach to pet parades, car shows, and a 5k run. In the process, the local economy has reaped the benefits brought by thousands of visitors flocking to Michigan's Thumb each year for the five-day family event.

The positive effects aren't confined to the bottom line from a single week's investment of time and money. Events like these can draw a community together, creating an image and identity that really puts a place "on the map" for tourists and prospective residents alike. It's a great example of how cultural economic development works to help build strong, vibrant communities—one of the guiding principles of the League's Center for 21st Century Communities.





Jet ski racing made Harbor Beach a destination; but creative and hard-working residents created the small city's sense of place.

“Because we’ve been working at this for 10 years now, people from all over now mark us on their calendars for the second full week in July,” said Mayor Thomas Wood. “They make Harbor Beach a destination because they’ve come to understand this is the place to be on that weekend.”

BUILDING A SENSE OF PLACE

It all started from a shared vision to create a true “sense of place” for the small city, by building on the strength of what was already there. They didn’t have to look any further than the community’s own namesake: a beautiful harbor three miles wide, overlooked by a picturesque historic lighthouse on the harbor entrance’s great wall.

“funds and bought a stage and placed it down on the beach, and said this is where all our bands will be,” said Mayor Pro Tem Al Kleinknecht, another of the festival’s founders.

After adding live music, the planning expanded to include a wide range of family-friendly activities: arts and crafts, car shows, food vendors, raffles, contests, displays, and fireworks. The list grows each year; the only limit is the creativity and energy of the participants themselves.

“If the weather’s good, you’ve got people dancing in the sand, people hanging out talking on the pier,” said Semp. “The fireworks are amazing. People are scattered all over town. Whether at the marina to the north or on the wastewater retention basin or down on the beach, the viewing is unbelievable.”

“ THE FESTIVAL STARTED FROM A SHARED VISION TO CREATE A TRUE 'SENSE OF PLACE' FOR THE SMALL CITY, BY BUILDING ON THE STRENGTH OF WHAT WAS ALREADY THERE. ”

“It was a few people having an idea that we have a body of water here that has been seen for years as the greatest community harbor...that it just is a natural resource that we need to share,” said Maritime Festival Committee member Pam Semp.

THE FESTIVAL

It made perfect sense to build the free celebration around that resource, centered on the popular water sport of jet-ski racing. But the festival committee knew even world-class jet-ski racing wasn’t enough for what they had in mind. “Right at the beginning, we knew we needed something to entertain everyone, so we on the Maritime Festival Committee raised some

Now billed as “one of the world’s largest personal watercraft events in the world’s greatest manmade harbor,” the festival has actually boosted the jet-ski competition itself to a scale typically only seen in bigger venues.

“You’ve got world-class jet-ski racing going on in Parker, Arizona; Myrtle Beach; Nashville, Tennessee...and Harbor Beach, Michigan is the premium site on their tour,” said Kleinknecht. “We have the biggest attendance, more races, racers from all over the country and Canada. We even have them from Australia.”

Highlight

From gift shops to the local pizzeria, nearly every business in town has climbed on board the festival bandwagon, promoting and participating in a myriad of ways.

MERCHANTS FEEL THE LOVE

“When you do something in your community, you’d like to have it affect not only yourself positively. When we contribute, it contributes to the whole,” said Semp, herself a local businesswoman who owns the Corner Store. “And when you give, you get it back and you get it back tenfold. It helps the merchants and gives them something to look forward to, because the town is packed with people who come from all over and get to see Harbor Beach and how great it is.”

In fact, none of it would be possible without the sponsors, who pick up the brunt of the annual \$25,000 price tag—from local businesses to nonprofits including the Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, American Legion and the local athletic association, fire department and hospital auxiliary.

The community found a new reason to celebrate this past year, when it was finally able to take possession of the local historic landmark that is the visual embodiment of the lakefront community’s identity: the Harbor Beach Lighthouse.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Built in 1885, the beacon stands 54 feet above the waves of Lake Huron, placed on the northern side of the harbor entrance to guide ships safely home. In 2004, the lighthouse was deemed excess by the U.S. Coast Guard and offered at no cost to eligible entities under the provisions of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. After years of negotiations, an acceptable agreement was finally worked out between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment and the Michigan Lighthouse Alliance. In June of 2010, the Harbor Beach Lighthouse was formally transferred to the city of Harbor Beach during ceremonies at the Great Lakes Lighthouse Preservation Conference.

But some might say the Harbor Beach Maritime Festival is just as bright a beacon, lighting the way to this vibrant community on Lake Huron’s shore.

“It really is a community event. Participation is the only thing that makes it go, and it just goes on and on and on, but it won’t go without all those entities,” said Semp. “In doing that, it exposes our area to more people to possibly invest, to come live here, to bring business and to bring jobs here. It makes us thrive.” 

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

MORE?

Harbor Beach Maritime Festival website
www.harborbeach.com/maritime

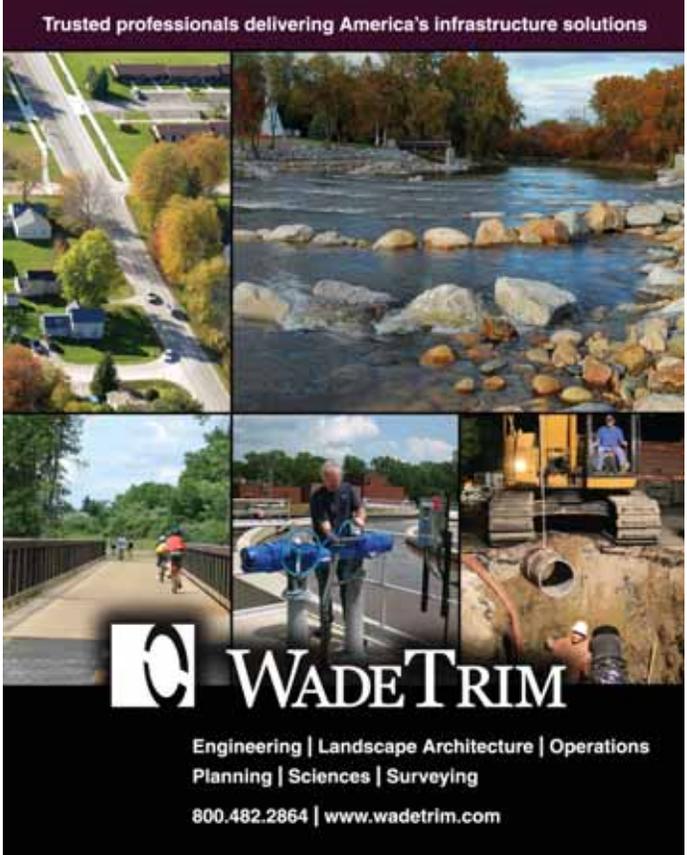
Harbor Beach Maritime Festival Facebook page
www.facebook.com/HBmaritime?ref=ts

Harbor Beach Maritime Festival video
www.harborbeachmi.org/maritimevideo



Harbor Beach’s Maritime Festival was the 2010 Region 5 Winner in the Community Excellence Award “Race for the Cup.” The CEAs are the League’s most prestigious community awards. They are decided upon by peers both at the regional level and at the Convention, where one of seven finalists is selected as the Cup winner.

To find out more about the CEAs, go to mml.org/awards/cea.html.



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Sanctuary & Deliverance

Compiled by Kim Cekola | 21c3 Asset: Multiculturalism

Unless you're from Southwest Michigan, you probably haven't heard of Vandalia and Cassopolis. Would it surprise you to learn that these two Cass County villages were important locations on the Underground Railroad, and instrumental in getting 1,500 escaped slaves to safety and freedom in Canada? Not only that, but Quaker abolitionists helped freed slaves get established by arranging for them to clear and work 5- and 10-acre plots, leading to one of the largest African-American settlements in the U.S.

Cass County is laying claim to its place in history as a force on the Underground Railroad. Area abolitionists sacrificed their safety to aid slaves escaping from slavery, and helped build a community with free blacks who migrated to the area. Today, the racial makeup of Vandalia is 47.55 percent African American, and Cassopolis is 32.59 percent African American. With its history of welcoming and integrating freed slaves, Cass County pioneered the concept of diversity. The Underground Railroad Society of Cass County is bringing much-deserved attention to this time in history. Here is their story.

The Underground Railroad in Cass County

The Underground Railroad in Cass County operated through cooperation, respect, and mutual trust among Quakers, free blacks, and other abolitionists. The interdependency of these groups created a unique environment that "helped minimize racism, promote cooperation between the races,

and create an African-American community unique to the North."

Several Quaker families migrated from Wayne, IN to Cass County and formed 'The Young's Prairie Anti-Slavery Meeting of Quakers' in 1843. They created the "Quaker Line" of Underground Railroad, and Cass County became a place of refuge for fugitives from all over the South. The village of Vandalia was unique—two main branches of the Underground Railroad, the "Quaker Line" and the "Illinois Line," met there.

“ The history of this area, especially this little village, impacted this entire country. ”

Carol Bainbridge of the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County told the *Cassopolis Vigilant*, "Everyone asks, 'where's Vandalia?' I tell them that Vandalia may be a little village but it has a huge, huge, important history. The history of this area, especially this little village, impacted this entire country." (*The Cassopolis Vigilant*, July 15, 2010)

The Underground Railroad was a network of "stations" (homes, carriage houses, barns, etc.) owned by Quaker abolitionists as well as freed black men and women and other sympathizers. The journey to Canada was long and difficult—fugitives traveled at night to avoid being seen and were given refuge at safe locations during daylight hours. Between 1842

Sanctuary and Deliverance depicts four scenes in the Kentucky Raid: slaves crossing the Ohio River at night; Kentucky raiders attempted to recapture the family; the mob of white farmers, Quakers, and free blacks who blocked the raiders; and the Cass County Courthouse where the raiders were detained, giving the escaped slaves time to make their way to freedom in Canada.





(Top) The Cass County Courthouse.

(Bottom) The Bonine House was a stop on the Underground Railroad—the Carriage House on the property sheltered many fugitive slaves.



MORE

Underground Railroad Society of Cass County, Michigan:
www.urscc.org

Cassopolis mural:
www.kentuckyraidmural.blogspot.com



and 1847, a colony of fugitives developed, residing in small cabins on Quaker-owned land. The settlement, called “Ramptown” for the wild ramp onions growing there, as well as other Quaker homes, were targets of the infamous “Kentucky Raid” of 1847.

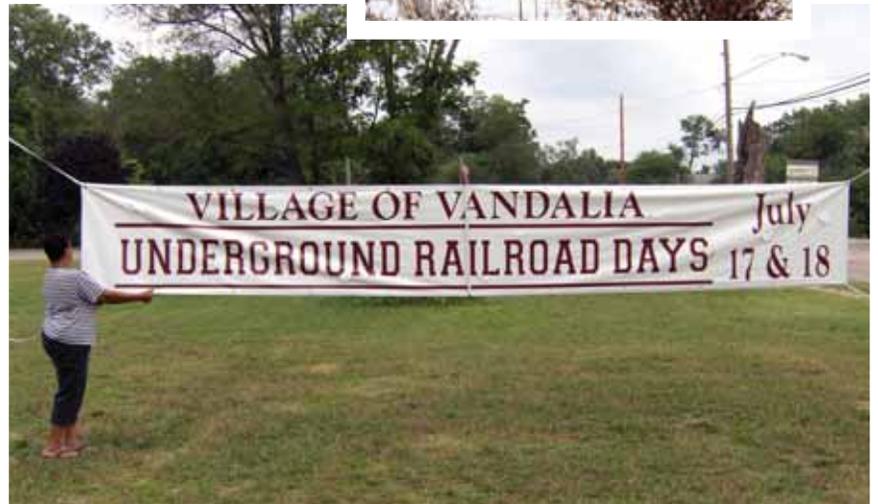
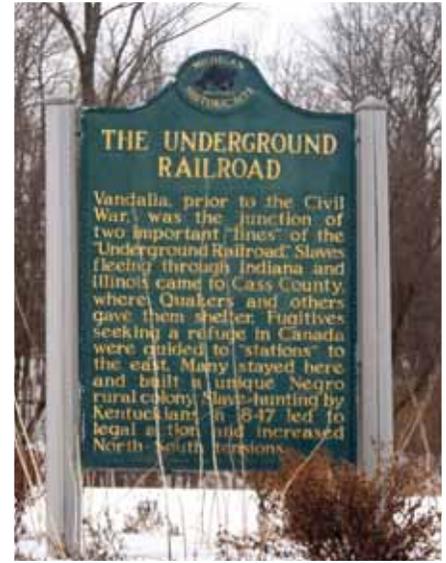
The Kentucky Raid of 1847

In the spring of 1847, 12 slaves left Boone and Kenton counties in Kentucky and made their way north, finding sanctuary in Cass County. Soon after, slave hunters from Kentucky arrived in an attempt to capture them. Violence was narrowly avoided and the slave owners were persuaded to settle the matter lawfully, in court. At the Cass County Courthouse, what transpired was history: the slave owners were charged with trespassing, kidnapping, and assault. The judge detained the Kentucky slavecatchers, allowing the fugitive slaves to escape to Canada. Backlash against the historic case, the first in which a black man testified against a white man in a court of law, led to

the passage of a much more stringent Fugitive Slave Act and ultimately, the start of the Civil War.

Sanctuary and Deliverance in Cassopolis

Inspired by their unique place in history, the Minority Coalition of Cass County put together a 60 foot outdoor mural project to tell the story of the Kentucky Raid. Located on a building in downtown Cassopolis, the mural, called Sanctuary and Deliverance, depicts the historic clash leading up to the Civil War and freedom for all slaves. The mural was unveiled on October 23, 2010. Deanda Johnson, regional coordinator for the National Underground Railroad, told the onlookers, “It’s an important historical event that had national implications. You guys played a part in the starting of the Civil War.” (*South Bend Tribune*, October 28, 2010). The mural was funded by a \$15,000



grant from the Michigan Humanities Council. Cassopolis artist and Minority Coalition member Ruth Andrews designed the mural.

Underground Railroad Days in Vandalia

To celebrate the village's heritage, Vandalia Public Works Director Bill Ayers conceived the celebration "Underground Railroad Days" in Vandalia. The Underground Railroad Society of Cass County (URSCC) anchored several tents that told the story of the Underground Railroad in Vandalia and the surrounding area. The Minority Coalition of Cass County provided information on the Sanctuary and Deliverance mural in Cassopolis, and the URSCC guided tours of Underground Railroad sites up and down M-60. The tours were packed—people were amazed at the stories of Ramptown, the Kentucky Raid, and the courage and compassion of the Quakers and African Americans who participated. Tragically, Bill Ayers passed away before the July event occurred; the village commemorated the beloved employee with a stone memorial.

Clockwise from top left: Steven Bogue was a 'conductor' on the Underground Railroad. The Bogue House was a safe place for escaped slaves to rest while making their way to Canada; The Underground Railroad historic marker in Vandalia; The Vandalia Underground Railroad days kicked off in July 2010. Village President Beverly Young is pictured.

Then and Now

Many African-American families were free long before migration to Cass County, and have documented their history. They founded an anti-slavery society and engaged in anti-slavery activism, playing a pivotal role in the Underground Railroad and the Kentucky Raid. Descendants of these families still reside in the area.

"Categorically, people do not know their history," Cathy LaPointe, also a member of the URSCC, remarked to the *Cassopolis Vigilant* (July 15, 2010). "There's a real legacy of freedom. But people don't know about it. They don't talk about it in schools. People should be proud of what happened here." 

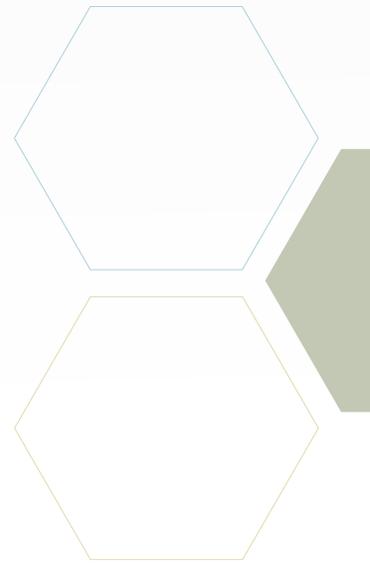
Kim Cekola is research specialist and publications editor for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6321 or kcekola@mml.org.



SOURCES

Underground Railroad Society of Cass County Michigan
Marty Kaszar, Project Director, Kentucky Raid Mural Project

Cassopolis
pop. 1,740
Vandalia
pop. 429



Breaking the Code

Fremont frees up its zoning

The city of Fremont set out to make some real changes to the physical environment of the city. In 2005, it created a downtown redevelopment plan through the Blueprint for Michigan Downtown program and has worked ever since to implement it. One of the recommendations in Fremont's Blueprint plan was to add some pizzazz to the downtown. The city has done so by implementing a rental rehabilitation program, a façade grant program, and a façade revolving loan program. The city now has something to boast about—decorative downtown banners, an extensive flower program, new downtown signage, as well as its new city-wide way-finding signage.

Mayor Rynberg explains, "All these programs made significant positive changes in our city's streetscape; but we also wanted to promote changes to the built environment city-wide, which required major changes to our zoning code."

Further, he says, "We needed to create a new zoning code that promotes a style of development which would retain the historic character of our residential neighborhoods and downtown business core while preserving rural areas that may be threatened by conventional development."

By Michele Ribant

21c3 Asset: Physical Design & Walkability



The previous ordinance adopted, in 1982, was outdated and conventional. The uses were segregated, which contributed to urban sprawl within the small city of approximately 4,500 residents. Fremont, like many communities, was not happy with the results of development under the conventional code. The code did not promote practical ways to grow smarter. It was quite obvious the city had to adopt a new zoning ordinance to achieve the desired changes in the overall built environment. The thought was, if the city adopted a form-based zoning code, which was prescriptive in that it specifically outlined what is required of new design, it would achieve the look in community design, both residential and commercial, that was desired. Therefore, in 2005, the city contracted with LSL Planning to facilitate the development of a new zoning code.

City officials wanted to make sure their vision of the community matched the citizens of the community, so before the

and dimensional requirements, whereas form-based zoning focuses more on building form and how it relates to the public streetscape. In Fremont's new code, the commercial and residential districts are form-based, whereas some of the districts, such as the Industrial District, are better suited for development under the traditional yet updated regulations.

The elements of Fremont's form-based regulations that have produced desired results are as follows:

- The streetscape has been defined by the building placement fronted along required sidewalks with minimal, if any, parking in the front yard.
- Mandatory façade elements (e.g., base panel) are required on commercial buildings that help retain or create historic character.
- Building façades facing public streets have a minimum and maximum percentage of window and door openings.

“ The old code contributed to urban sprawl...[and] did not promote practical ways to grow smarter. ”

creation of the new zoning ordinance began, a charrette was conducted. It was clear from the results of the charrette that the community wanted a zoning code that did the following in order to create their vision for Fremont of “rural sophistication with historic character:”

- Creates and preserves places that are pedestrian-friendly
- Promotes mixed-uses
- Pays attention to integrating the public realm with the private realm in order to create a “sense of place”
- Focuses on creating site design and building form that retains the historic character of the community in both residential and commercial areas

City staff also wanted to do the following:

- Simplify the code itself by using more graphics and less text
- Create a set of definitions that spell out the code's technical terms
- Make the development review process easier for developers so they know exactly what is expected

The challenge was to develop regulations that bring to life the community's vision, and the form-based zoning code seemed the way to do that. After a two and a half year process, in October 2007, the city adopted a hybrid form-based code.

A hybrid code combines elements of form-based zoning and conventional zoning. Conventional zoning focuses on use

- Building lines state exactly where the front of the building is required to be placed instead of stating minimum setbacks.
- Building heights have a maximum and a minimum requirement in the Downtown Main District.
- In the Downtown Main District, regulations are in place to promote retail uses on the first floor and residential or office uses on the second floor.
- In residential districts, there are requirements for front porches or stoops and sidewalks.
- Building materials are regulated in commercial and residential form-based districts.
- The code has minimum and maximum parking requirements in commercial districts.

The Fremont Planning Commission has fine-tuned the code since its adoption. If the same request is made on different projects for deviations to the form-based elements of the code, the issue is reviewed, which has resulted in zoning ordinance amendments. The planning commission

FREMONT'S HYBRID CODE

A hybrid code combines elements of form-based zoning and conventional zoning. Conventional zoning focuses on use and dimensional requirements, whereas form-based zoning focuses more on building form and how it relates to the public streetscape.



Clockwise from left: Spanky's Pizza demonstrates Fremont's regulation of building materials through form-based codes; the movie store is typical of a pre-form-based code building; whereas the Newaygo County Credit Union typifies what the city hoped to achieve by requiring sidewalks and parking in the rear as opposed to the front of buildings.

strives to adopt regulations that promote the 10 tenets of *Smart Growth*, which are the community's goals as outlined in the Fremont Community Joint Comprehensive and Growth Management Plan.

In terms of the success of the hybrid form-based zoning ordinance, Mayor Rynberg states, "While the average citizen may be skeptical regarding the role zoning plays in creating the look or feel they like in the community, the city has received many compliments on the quality of new development, which is in large part due to the regulations in the new code." Mayor Rynberg contends that city officials, including the planning commission, are charged with ensuring the community's vision for Fremont's built environment is realized. Rynberg states that his hope is that the citizens enjoy the higher quality of life that goes along with the implementation of the community vision. 

Michele Ribant is the director of neighborhood & economic development and zoning administrator for the city of Fremont. You may reach her at 231-924-2101 x118 or mribant@cityoffremont.net.

MORE?

City website: www.cityoffremont.net/web/index.asp

Fremont's Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/pages/City-of-Fremont-Michigan/139439003701?ref=nf

LSL Planning Form-Based Codes:
www.lslplanning.com/services/fbc.html

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it takes A VILLAGE

By Matt Bach

*21c3 Asset: Physical
Design & Walkability*



Hillman
pop. 685

A BRIEF LOOK AT HILLMAN'S WALKABLE COMMUNITY PLAN

ABOUT: Formed in 2007, the plan sprung from the village's long-term strategic plan and residents' desire for a more walkable community.

GOALS: To make the community more pedestrian-friendly and provide safer walking routes to schools.

BASICS: The plan will be implemented in four phases, and includes developing a multi-use path that goes to the high school, along the Thunder Bay River, and extending the existing bike and nature trails to nearby parks and business areas.

COSTS/FUNDING: Dollars spent so far: \$5-\$6 million this past summer alone; \$400,000 in village funds and the rest from state and federal sources (including the Natural Resources Trust Fund, and MDOT Transportation Enhancement Funds); Amount needed for future projects: \$510,000

“For a **SMALL COMMUNITY**, we have a very **AGGRESSIVE** village council, and we’re very progressive with our ideas. **WE TAKE CHANCES AND RISKS.**”

—Hillman Trustee Wil Funk



Hillman’s Wil Funk and Dave Post stand in front of the solar-powered Brush Creek Mill in downtown Hillman. The village’s walkability plan calls for a pedestrian path to feed into the Mill, which also is a community center.

Hillman Village Manager David Post and Village Trustee Wil Funk stand on the newly rebuilt gateway to their community and beam with pride.

The \$2.5 million reconstructed Thunder Bay River Bridge, completed this summer in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation, replaced a deteriorating structure built in the early 1920s. The work was part of a larger strategic plan that's been years in the making. The bridge, with its Hillman-esque rolling hill-style arches (also seen on village letterhead, signs, and business cards), represents yet another feature in community leaders' constant desire to improve their village of 685 residents.



The previous Thunder Bay River bridge, constructed in the 1920s.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

True to small-town local government at its best, the bridge design was selected by residents, accomplished by placing dots on favored designs at a public meeting, Post said. Residents even picked the bronze color used on the new street lamps downtown; and the fence, garbage receptacles, and benches in the village pocket parks. He explained having community input is important for any project, but especially for a project as large as the one happening in Hillman.

"The things we were able to accomplish this year started with our multi-year strategic plan," Post said. "Getting the bridge replaced and removing the electric lines from the street was part of the plan to make the village more walkable and pleasant looking. It's taken a long time to get to this point."

HILLMAN HITS SIX OF THE EIGHT ASSETS

Despite hard economic times, Hillman is proof that communities of all shapes and sizes can move forward in creating many of the eight assets the League has identified as making for vibrant communities (see text box on p. 7).

The impressive work being done in Hillman resembles a 21c3 to-do list:

☑ **Green Initiatives:** The village installed solar panels on the Brush Creek Mill, generating enough power to keep the building heated and air-conditioned with little or no help from energy companies. The community-initiated mill also has a working waterwheel out of a scene from "Little House on the Prairie," and was built to serve as a community cultural center. It is now the site of weddings, community festivals, and organization meetings.

☑ **Messaging & Technology:** The village is moving all telephone and electrical lines either underground or to back alleys off main street. They've also partnered with Merit Network Inc., to install fiber optic cable; the fiber optic communication hub will vastly improve technology in the village and surrounding area (see article on p. 31). "When Merit is done, this state

is going to have one of the top fiber backbones in the U.S. We're going to have a technology backbone like you wouldn't believe," Post said.

☑ **Cultural Economic Development:** The village hosts events that bring people into the community and boost the local economy, such as Applefest in October, VJ Day in August, and the Mill River Days during 4th of July weekend.

☑ **Entrepreneurship:** Hillman has a unique revolving loan fund that gives large and small loans, spurring construction of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses. It has been used to start up the Hillman Printing and Graphic Design, and Village Spice and Pantry, which in turn has helped the local economy. "We have more jobs in the village than people living in the village," Post explained, adding many workers come into the village from surrounding areas.

☑ **Education:** The Hillman Library is in the process of expanding, and will have a larger computer lab; expanded education department; additional reading, audio, and video materials; and more family programming.

THE PLAN FOR MAKING HILLMAN WALKABLE

Post keeps a map on a wall in village hall showing the implementation phases of the trail system. So far, about 1.5 miles are in place, the bulk of which was completed this past summer. Getting a walking path from the village to the high school located on the outskirts of the village in Hillman Township is the next goal in the plan.

"I would just love to get a path out to the high school for the kids," said Funk



Village Manager Dave Post with the map of Hillman's walkability plan, which will be implemented in four phases.

of the Hillman village council.

“Even before we had the plan, we would see a lot of people walking in town, but getting from one place to another wasn’t always easy,” Post said. “We have a lot of senior citizens who like to walk, so we wanted to create places for them to do it.



We want to be a community where people come into town frequently to go to the local stores, hang out, and walk around.”

But Post and Funk also believe the four-phase walkable plan, when complete, will help foster new businesses and a better economy for the village and the area.

This summer’s “bridge project” involved more than a bridge. It was a major renovation of the downtown including new storm sewers, sidewalks, and street lighting. “We did about \$5 million worth of improvements this year,” Post said, adding “about \$400,000 came from village funds and the rest from state and federal sources. It’s one of the nicest streetscapes you’ll see around. We were especially pleased with the work of MDOT on the bridge.” “I’m hoping it attracts more business in Hillman,” Funk said. “We’ve already had a big influx of people over the summer just to look at what we’ve done with the bridge, sidewalks, and light posts.

MDOT officials said they were also happy with how the bridge project turned out.

“It was very rewarding to work on reconstruction projects such as these,” said Kevin Schaedig, a development engineer for MDOT. “The transformation of this corridor is remarkable. This project is a great example of how state and local agencies can partner for the benefit of all.”

PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

You may be asking, “I thought we were in a recession—how is Hillman able to do all this?” When it comes to improving their community—“being progressive,” “risk taking,” and even being a bit “aggressive” are words often used by Hillman leaders.

Under the new walkability plan, getting from place to place in downtown Hillman will be much easier.

“For a small community, we have a very aggressive village council, and we’re very progressive with our ideas.” Funk said. “We take chances and risks.”

Funk attributes much of the success to Post, village manager since 1995, and Post’s leadership role in the state. Post recently completed a three-year term on the Michigan Municipal League Board of Trustees, and has been involved in state-wide municipal issues for years.

“What really helps us is that we’re an incorporated village and we have our own village manager—it really opens doors for us,” Funk said. “I’ve been on the council for 13 years and we’ve seen a lot of improvement in the village over that time.”

“Dave really knows what’s going on in terms of grants and other available funding,” Funk said, during a recent interview in Post’s office. “That helps make a lot of these projects possible. Being with the League has helped Dave stay informed on what’s going on in the state and what’s available to us as a community. Plus, his involvement gets our name out there more.”

Post quickly adds, “It also helps having a very engaged, progressive village council. Our council has been very supportive when it comes to getting things done. There’s an expectation in the community that something needs to happen every year.” 

Matt Bach is communications director for the League. You may reach him at 734-669-6317 or mbach@mml.org.



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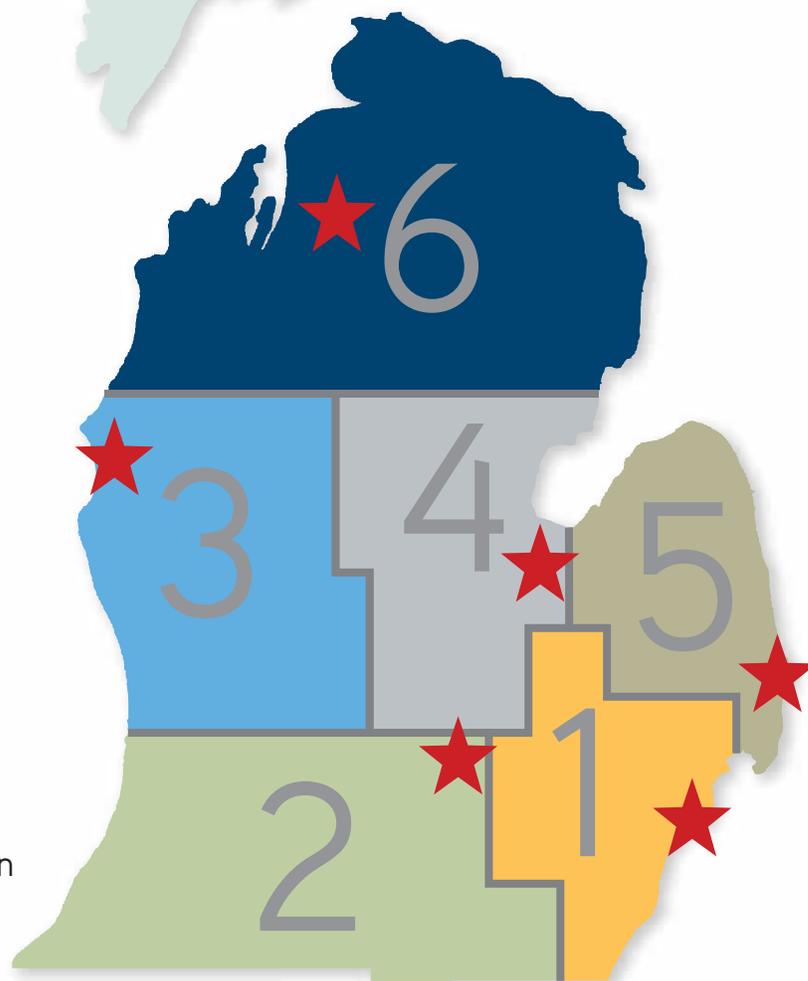
Enter the Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup" by making a presentation at your regional seminar. The seven regional winners go on to compete at the League's Annual Convention!



On April 5, 2011, the League is providing a free opportunity to get together with other members from your region at your Regional Roundtables. This session will take place immediately prior to the Welcoming General Session at Capital Conference, from 3:30-4:30 pm, in Lansing. Don't miss this chance to participate in community updates, hear a hot topic speaker, and more!

2011 Regional Seminars

- Region 1 - **May 6**, Hamtramck
- Region 2 - **May 20**, East Lansing
- Region 3 - **May 11**, Ludington
- Region 4 - **June 1**, Saginaw
- Region 5 - **May 18**, Marine City
- Region 6 - **May 4**, Kalkaska
- Region 7 - **May 25-27**, Houghton

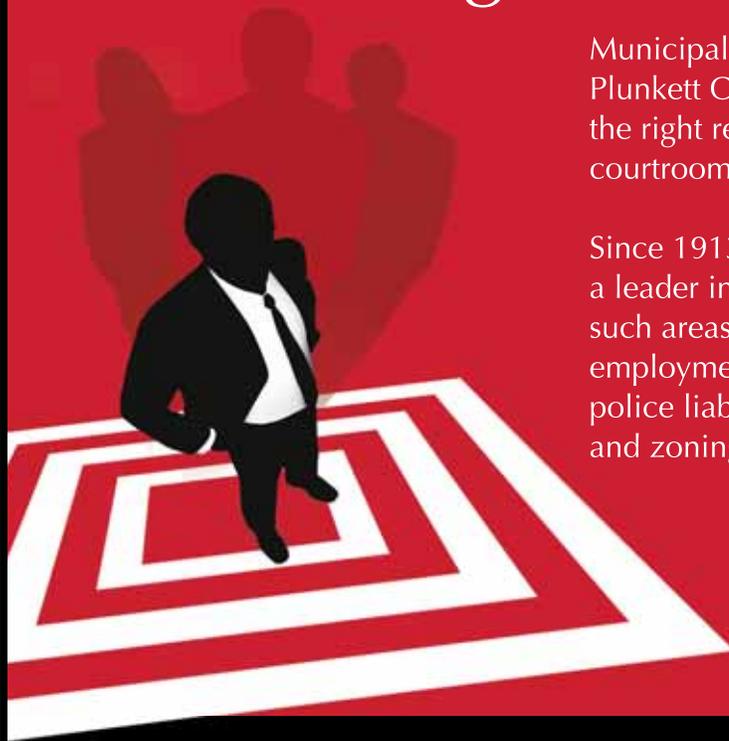




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All Aboard On Broadband

By Greg Monroe

21c3 Asset: Messaging & Technology

On a crisp morning in early April, a group of Boyne City officials gathered outside city hall and prepared to board a specially chartered Charlevoix County Transit Bus. They had come together to mark the beginning of a much-anticipated project to create broadband infrastructure that will enhance the quality of life in their community and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic growth long into the future.



Boyne City officials prepare to embark on a fiber optic survey tour.

new technology and information, successful communities will need to provide their residents with broadband access in

the workplace, at home, and in their anchor institutions (schools, libraries, healthcare, high education, public safety, and local government).

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, commonly known as the “Stimulus Package,” contained a \$7.2 billion investment in broadband infrastructure for communities across the nation. The ARRA investment presented an unprecedented opportunity to address broadband shortfalls throughout Michigan. Like Boyne City, many small communities in Michigan still do not have adequate access to affordable, high-speed

Among them was Pete Empie, construction manager for Merit Network’s REACH-3MC Broadband Stimulus Project. Empie and city officials were surveying a path that new fiber-optic cable will take in the Boyne City area.

Boyne City is one of over one hundred communities located along the fiber path that stretches across Michigan’s Lower and Upper Peninsulas. And the route the group drove in April is just one small portion of a tremendous 2,287-mile network extension Merit will construct over the next three years.

Background

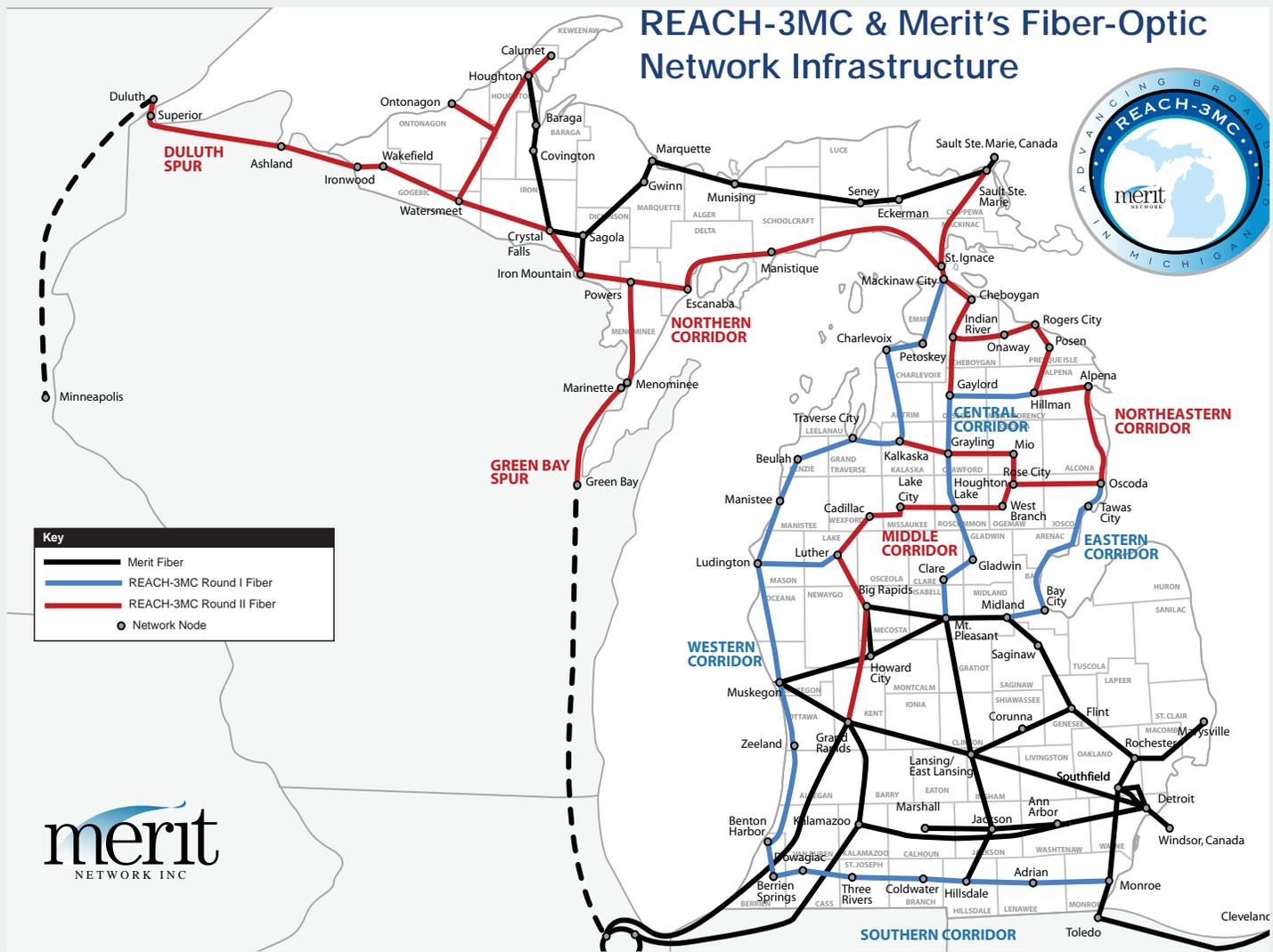
Broadband is especially vital in Michigan. As Michigan seeks to transition from a manufacturing economy to one that is based on

broadband. Merit Network submitted and received two grant proposals to fund their REACH-3MC project (Rural, Education, Anchor, Community and Health care-Michigan Middle Mile Collaborative).

A Comprehensive Community Approach

REACH-3MC was designed with a comprehensive community approach in mind. Through REACH-3MC, Merit will connect community anchor institutions to its existing high-performance network in Michigan. In addition to aiding communities by connecting key institutions that provide service to the public like schools, public safety, and local government, the project’s visionaries wanted it to benefit all sectors of society. The goal

REACH-3MC & Merit's Fiber-Optic Network Infrastructure



of the fiber-optic infrastructure project is to improve Internet access for over 1 million households, 55,000 businesses and over 1,000 community anchor institutions in Michigan.

As a “middle mile” project, the aim of REACH-3MC is not to directly connect every home and business in the network service area, but to build “backhaul” into a region. Local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will then have the opportunity to use this infrastructure to provide faster, cheaper, and reliable service.

What Will This Look Like in Your Community?

Each and every area REACH-3MC touches will resemble something different. The Merit approach can take many forms—we work with communities to accommodate their individual needs. To better understand the possibilities for your community, here are a few stories of communities that work with Merit currently, and how the REACH-3MC project will add to growing success stories.

In the village of Hillman, Merit is working with local representatives to create a complete and robust fiber infrastructure. Merit has already connected the Community Mental Health office in Hillman to its counterpart in Alpena, and will continue to work to connect more community anchor institutions. Merit has supported the Allband Communications Cooperative in the Hillman and northeastern Michigan area for quite some time. Allband is one local ISP that will leverage the REACH-3MC infrastructure. Homes and businesses in Hillman can expect improved service.

In Norway, a community near the Wisconsin border in the U.P., Merit is working with Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District to leverage the REACH-3MC infrastructure. When it is completed, the schools of Norway, Forest Park, and West Iron will be tied to the schools of neighboring Iron Mountain and Escanaba, and more importantly the students will have access

For more information about REACH-3MC, please visit:

www.merit.edu/meritformichigan

For more information about Merit, please visit: www.merit.edu

REACH-3MC is akin to I-75, a Merit spokesperson said. We’re not going to build a road to everybody’s house, but we’ll build a big pipe and work with ISP companies so that they can pull from that pipe. Merit will connect community anchor institutions to that pipe because of their unique needs. Local ISPs will supply the on-ramps for homes and businesses.

to new learning opportunities nationwide and across the globe through Merit and REACH-3MC infrastructure.

Rogers City will also see the benefits of 21st century broadband. Merit has engaged area schools, multiple health care facilities, and local government and will provide the opportunity for them to connect to Merit's network with REACH-3MC infrastructure. This will provide them with the same or better resources than counterpart organizations anywhere else in the nation. REACH-3MC can be a vehicle to spur economic development in Rogers City, a particular value-add to tourism, and provide 21st century network infrastructure to their current businesses and workforce.

Economic Development

Businesses considering relocation to Michigan will no longer face difficult choices. Michigan has always had incredible physical beauty, but a lack of modern infrastructure has sometimes deterred potential companies from operating here. With the completion of REACH-3MC, prospective companies will not be forced to decide between setting and resources. Our state will have pristine nature *and* leading-edge modern business infrastructure.

REACH-3MC will tie communities throughout Michigan with infrastructure that stretches worldwide and at state-of-the-art speeds that allow for the most advanced transfer of data. Speeds offered on the REACH-3MC network will be as high as 1 Gbps (gigabits per second) to 10 Gbps. The fiber is future-proof in the sense that even those speeds can be increased with a one-time upgrade in electronics. The 21st century infrastructure will help municipalities market themselves to prospective businesses and help cities and villages retain their current businesses and workforce.



Greg Monroe is grants, development & communications specialist for Merit Network, Inc. You may reach him at 734-527-5733 or gjmonroe@merit.edu.



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The city of Charlevoix, in partnership with WATCH, Inc., a local environmental advocacy group, implemented an "Idle-Free Charlevoix" campaign encouraging motorists to turn off engines while waiting for drawbridge.

Charlevoix the Beautiful (*& the Green*)

By Luke Forrest
21c3 Asset: Green Initiatives

Plentiful natural resources, from beaches to rivers to woodlands, have earned the city of Charlevoix and the surrounding area the nickname "Charlevoix the Beautiful." The city's elected officials, staff and residents collectively understand that maintaining this beauty takes vision, planning, and hard work. As City Manager Rob Straebel describes it, stewardship of natural resources is "an organizational value, something that our city stands for and will continue to promote." This value led the city to be the first community to accept the Michigan Green Communities Challenge, a joint program between the Michigan Municipal League, the Michigan Bureau of Energy Systems, the Michigan Association of Counties, and the Michigan Townships Association. The challenge was created to recognize

and support communities taking steps towards environmental sustainability. Charlevoix's achievements since enrolling in the Challenge and receiving an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) show that a relatively small investment of grant dollars, technical assistance, and staff time can catalyze a broader conversation about a community's environmental impact.

Green Communities Challenge

The decision to enroll in the Challenge, thereby making a public commitment to environmental conservation efforts, led Straebel and the city council to initiate a city-wide Green Team. The Team consists



Left: Heating improvements at the wastewater treatment plant.
Right: Fuel efficient EMS rescue vehicles.

of city department heads and one representative of the general public. While the administration's initial focus was increasing energy efficiency, the community's priorities about a broader range of environmental issues quickly became part of the conversation. Straebel believes

“elevation of those goals have excited our department heads and created more awareness city-wide.”

EECBG—Greening Municipal Operations

The Green Team elected to focus its initial efforts on the development and implementation of an energy improvement plan because it offered the greatest potential for grant funding and short-term improvements in municipal operations. After a comprehensive audit of municipal facilities by a private contractor, Charlevoix targeted three buildings for improvements: city hall, the water treatment plant, and the wastewater treatment plant. Upgrades to the lighting, heating, and ventilation systems in those buildings, funded partially by a \$50,000 EECBG award through the Michigan Economic Recovery Office and the Bureau of Energy Systems, will save an estimated \$13,000 annually. According to Straebel, the city’s investment in these projects has been very well-received by residents. “The economics of the projects make for an easy argument,” he said. “We’re projecting great return on our investments. They will pay for themselves within two or three years, at which point the energy cost savings will have a positive impact on the city budget.”

More Green Projects

Despite limited staff and financial resources, Charlevoix hasn’t stopped there. It has engaged in several ongoing air and water quality initiatives, including “Idle-Free Charlevoix,” which encourages motorists to turn off their engines while waiting at the drawbridge on US Highway 31 (see sidebar). WATCH, Inc. is a local non-profit environmental organization that spearheaded this effort and estimates it is saving 33 gallons of gas per day, along with all the associated air and water pollutants. The city is also working with neighboring Charlevoix Township to develop a non-motorized trail system between Lake Charlevoix, the third-largest inland lake in the state, and Lake Michigan. It purchased small electric vehicles for



City Manager Rob Straebel with Charlevoix’s new LED street lights.

marina patrol and operations, and is developing a recycling program for its downtown. “Our work is certainly not complete,” Straebel said, “but we’re making great strides.”

Although being a small city creates challenges in terms of capacity to address this wide range of issues, Straebel also believes it gives his city some advantages in managing its environmental impact. “We have a smaller physical area to monitor. It’s easy to communicate within our organization and we can react quickly.” He credits “great department heads who think outside the box” with creating a culture of collaboration and comprehensive ways of thinking. Those ways of thinking include a concern for future generations. Environmental conservation is a shared priority of Charlevoix’s residents, elected officials, and staff—enabling the city to be a leader among Michigan’s Green Communities. 

Luke Forrest is the League’s Center for 21st Century Communities project coordinator. You may reach him at 734-669-6323 or lforrest@mml.org.



Summary of

Charlevoix Green Team’s Goals:

- 1) Revise master plan and recreation plan to address issues such as alternative transportation, environmentally friendly infrastructure, and recruitment of alternative energy industries.
- 2) Implement energy improvement plan for municipal operations.
- 3) Develop a comprehensive recycling and hazardous waste program for residents and businesses.
- 4) Transition to Light Emitting Diodes (LED) for street lights and traffic lights.
- 5) Include Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building principles in new government buildings.
- 6) Expand recycling program at city facilities.
- 7) Expand use of recycled office paper.
- 8) Increase fuel-efficiency and reduce emissions associated with city vehicle fleet.
- 9) Adopt policies to encourage biking and walking.
- 10) Implement both tree removal/trimming and tree planting policies.
- 11) Establish anti-idling policy for city vehicles.
- 12) Expand participation in Green Team.
- 13) Create a comprehensive water quality protection program through regulations, infrastructure improvements, and education.
- 14) Implement an incentive program to replace older air conditioning and refrigeration units.
- 15) Study alternative energy generation options, such as wind and solar.
- 16) Identify and increase protection of sensitive land areas adjacent to water bodies.
- 17) Develop a strategic water conservation education plan.
- 18) Create proper storage for pesticide and fertilizer.

Get on the Bus!

St. Ignace Transit Hub to Move Community Forward

21c3 Asset: Transit

The city of St. Ignace recently and actively engaged in a significant collaborative endeavor focused on one of the eight key asset areas for communities of all sizes to develop—public transit. The new Indian Trails bus depot is prominently and conveniently located just north of the Mackinac Bridge off I-75. This project is not as humble as may appear upon first blush.

Geography

Interstate 75 traverses our nation from the frosty Sault Ste. Marie Canadian border to the steamy southern Atlantic shores of Florida. Both the northern and southern terminus are historical port cities, linking to major rail service, which literally cross-hatches our country, physically mapping its historical economic development from east to west.

I-75 connects the states of Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida, serving the key cities of Flint, Detroit, Toledo, Dayton, Cincinnati, Lexington, Knoxville, Atlanta, Macon, Tampa, and Miami. St. Ignace itself is a Michigan port city providing cargo, commercial, and recreation functions, as well as currently being best known for ferry service to the international destination site of Mackinac Island, which hosts *three-quarters of a million visitors annually*.

History

Arguably one of the regions oldest settlements, archeological research suggests the original inhabitants of the St. Ignace area were seasonal (much like today)! The native Anishinabeg (meaning simply “people”), migrated annually to fish, hunt, and raise crops. Later, St. Ignace became home to missionaries, fur

traders, explorers and soldiers. The port served not only the fur trade, but grew to make significant economic contributions to the nation through commercial fishing, the lumber industry, and iron production. Prior to construction of the Mighty Mac, eight car ferries serviced the Mackinac Straits. Now there are more than four million bridge crossings a year.

Service Today

The Indian Trails bus service now connects the Upper and Lower Peninsula bus routes through its new hub in St. Ignace. Although the connection previously existed, it did not have its own terminal. Indian Trails began service 100 years ago in Owosso, Michigan and remains a third generational family-owned business based there today. From its humble local beginnings, Indian Trails now provides Michigan residents with service into the Midwest’s primary hubs of both Milwaukee and Chicago, from which individuals can reach any destination via continued bus service, passenger rail and/or air.

Designed to meet increasing demands for public transit combined with the needs of the aging population (50 may be the new 40, but accept it, we’ll be 60 soon enough), the Indian Trails service is nothing like the rattle-trap buses of old. Designed for passenger comfort, these buses feature flight amenities, such as individually directed lighting, climate control, and color DVD monitors, along with free Wi-Fi where available—all with cushier, roomier seating than planes (speaking of planes, Indian Trails now offers the Michigan Flyer bus—several daily round-trips from East Lansing, Jackson, and Ann Arbor to Detroit Metro).



Highlight

St. Ignace's transit hub was the 2010 Region 7 Winner in the Community Excellence Award “Race for the Cup.” The CEAs are the League’s most prestigious community awards. They are decided upon by peers both at the regional level and at the Convention, where one of seven finalists is selected as the Cup winner.

To find out more about the CEAs, go to mml.org/awards/cea.html.



St. Ignace Mayor Paul Grondin (left) and City Manager Eric Dodson (right).

Collaborative Charrette

The collaborative effort of the new depot consisted of these primary players: the feds, the state, the city, Robert Cole Construction, DLZ (architecture), Indian Trails Inc., and the community. Collaborative efforts can be either a dream come true or a nightmare, often beginning with the latter and hopefully ending with the former. The federally funded building is owned by the city but dedicated to transportation use through a 20-year agreement. The bus lines are state funded, but Indian Trails holds the contract to provide the service. Not surprising to local officials reading this, some St. Ignace residents voiced the not-in-my-backyard sentiment. Also not surprising, Indian Trails wanted a no-frills, low-maintenance building—while city officials desired a glorious gateway to the U.P., “more along the lines of the Taj Mahal,” jests City Manager Eric Dodson. A jest sure, but one that aptly illustrates the distance between starting points of the group’s involved parties. What to do with such disparity? The group employed the charrette process—defined as a quick way to generate design solutions, integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of people.

Results

After 12 hours of charrette-mode, DLZ architect Tony Bair was able to create a design incorporating both the city’s desire for aesthetics with the low-maintenance desires of Indian Trails. The \$1.7 million federal/state project includes a three-bedroom facility with kitchen and TV lounge, laundry, and private showers for bus drivers, as well as a waiting area with restrooms and vending for passengers. Amtrak rail tickets can be purchased at the depot as well. Now, from key points statewide, Michigan residents can connect via



Indian Trails wanted a no-frills, low-maintenance building; the city wanted something more like the Taj Mahal. They met somewhere in the middle. The center has three bedrooms, a kitchen and TV lounge, laundry, and private showers for bus drivers, and a waiting area with restrooms and vending for passengers.





The St. Ignace Indian Trails Transportation Center now connects upper and lower peninsula bus routes.

public transportation to virtually anywhere in the country.

Further, as Michigan and other Great Lake states work to position themselves to economically develop port cities for short-sea shipping and enhanced tourism opportunities such as cruise lines, St. Ignace will be a step ahead of the game. Dodson happily reports no citizen complaints since the depot's opening in September 2009. Just as importantly for St. Ignace, the new hub provides a freshly upgraded welcome to visitors and the more than 4,000 seasonal workers of Mackinac Island and St. Ignace, who arrive and depart annually, much like the Anishinabeg, tens of thousands of years past. 

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



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Governing Better in the Clouds



By Anthony Minghine and Bill Luse

You might be surprised to learn that local governments in Michigan are embracing cutting-edge technology that will transform operations and save money in the long term. It's called cloud computing, and it's widely established in corporate America. The Michigan Municipal League is partnering with IBM to develop a next generation information technology platform to better connect our local governments and encourage information sharing. The result will be a more collaborative, efficient, and transparent government that spends less on the systems vital to providing services. We're bringing this advanced technology to our state because Michigan can no longer tackle 21st century challenges with outdated tools and techniques.

Cloud computing takes intergovernmental cooperation into the digital age—platforms are remote data centers that can store, integrate, and analyze vast amounts of information. In a cloud environment, computer software and hardware are combined and centrally managed, creating a single system that is accessible on demand through secure Web programs. You may not realize it, but if you store your photos and videos online you are already using cloud computing.

Cloud computing is a smart long-term investment. Darrell West, a technology policy expert from the Brookings Institution estimates that government agencies that have transitioned to cloud computing have saved between 25-50 percent on their IT operations. At a time when government budgets are extremely tight and every dollar counts, these savings really add up.

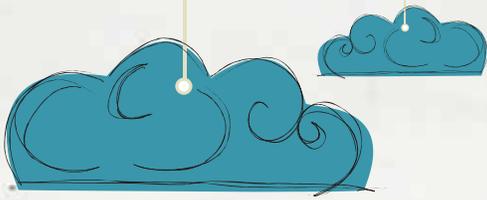
A recent survey by the nonprofit Public Technology Institute found that 45 percent of local governments are already using some form of cloud computing, and an additional 19 percent plan to adopt some form of the technology within the next year. It's time we catch up.

The partnership between IBM and the League will allow League members to take advantage of IBM's experience in managing the complex, sensitive information of some of the world's largest businesses and governments. The partnership will also enable IBM experts to collaborate with municipal workers who understand the unique challenges of local government, and customize IT services accordingly. And it will improve the way local governments in Michigan—whether on a city-to-city level or a city-to-state level—work together to meet the needs of our constituents.

The cloud environment will make it easier to replace obsolete systems and integrate existing software—helping local government IT systems embrace the digital era. Most departments in Michigan can barely afford the costs of keeping their existing IT systems running, let alone adopt new technologies. The new IBM platform will enable local agencies to subscribe to essential applications as à la carte services, rather than paying out-of-pocket for costly hardware, software, and IT support. For example, savings could be found in the property tax process, which spans multiple departments, including building, assessment, tax, and finance. Each department typically maintains its own applications, and information sharing is frequently manual. With the IBM platform, information will flow between the applications, and much of the manual work will be eliminated.



League CFO and Associate Executive Director Anthony Minghine preparing a statement on the League's partnership with IBM to develop a next generation information technology platform to better connect Michigan's local governments and encourage information sharing.



The cloud will support the infrastructure, manage operations, and automatically handle upgrades—all at an affordable cost. More importantly it will make resources available to small and medium-sized governments that may previously have been out of reach.

In addition, cloud computing will help local governments in Michigan more efficiently process streams of paperwork. In most municipalities, information is often entered manually and there is no centralized data hub. For example, municipal departments typically have to transform their data by hand into a form that the finance department and its software program can accept and understand. Whether it is the planning and zoning fees collected by the building department, or the water and sewer rates paid to the utility office, technology is inhibiting rather

than enabling efficient government. The smooth integration of information in a cloud environment will enable municipalities to focus more energy and resources on innovation and improved services.

This new technology will also increase the ability of local governments to input and evaluate data. This means that municipalities will be able to achieve fast, accurate, and actionable insights about trends that are developing in our communities. For example, the platform can benefit other municipal functions such as public safety by integrating police, fire, and court applications to provide faster and more accurate access to appropriate information. Linking with clerk and assessor applications will give emergency responders pertinent details about home schematics, registered weapons, and pets.

It's no secret that our member cities and villages are struggling to do more with less revenue and fewer employees. Even during this time of unprecedented challenges, we continue to focus on the future. We're working together to find new and smarter ways to make the essential

investments that improve the quality of our service to the community today and tomorrow. Cloud computing promises to deliver smarter government at a lower cost, and we can't afford to wait. 



Anthony Minghine (left) is the associate executive director and chief operating officer for the League. Bill Luse (right) is IBM's senior state executive for Michigan.

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What is the Legal Effect of a Michigan Attorney General Opinion?

From time to time, the Michigan Attorney General issues an opinion in response to a question raised, most frequently, by a legislator. The opinion is published and distributed among legal, governmental, and political circles. The opinion may be well reasoned and persuasive. As such, those who believe that the analysis and outcome of the opinion will help support a given position will cite the opinion as evidence and authority for their position.

It then becomes important to ask—what effect does a Michigan Attorney General opinion (OAG) have on Michigan local units of government and, for that matter, on state agencies and the courts? The questions generally raised are the following:

1. What authority does the Attorney General have to issue an opinion?
2. Is an OAG binding on Michigan courts?
3. What legal effect does an OAG have on Michigan state agencies?
4. What legal effect does an OAG have on local governmental bodies?
5. Does an OAG have the effect of law unless overturned by a court?

Before we begin addressing the questions, it's necessary to take a step back and answer a preliminary question: **Who gets to decide these questions?** This one is easy. As with all questions of constitutional and statutory interpretation, the Michigan Supreme Court is the final arbiter. Article VI of the Michigan Constitution vests the judicial power of state in "one court of justice." As a result, many of our questions will be answered by specific Michigan Supreme Court decisions.



1. What authority does the Attorney General have to issue an opinion?

MCL 14.32 is clear that the Legislature has authorized that it is "the duty of the attorney general, when required, to give his opinion upon all questions of law submitted to him by the Legislature, or by either branch thereof, or by the governor, auditor general, treasurer or any other state officer. . . ."

2. Is an OAG binding on Michigan courts?

No. The Michigan Supreme Court has stated, on several occasions, that an Attorney General opinion is not binding on Michigan courts. *Frey v Dep't of Mosey and Budget*, 429 Mich 315, 338 (1987). See also, *MONY v Insurance Bureau*, 121 Mich App 386 (1982); *People v Waterman*, 137 Mich App 429, 432 (1984).

3. What legal effect does an OAG have on Michigan state agencies?

The Michigan Court of Appeals, in *Beer & Wine Ass'n v Atty General*, 142 Mich App 294, 300 (1985), cited the Michigan Supreme Court decision of *Traverse City Sch Dist v Attorney General*, 384 Mich 390 (1971) and stated: "While [attorney general] opinions do not have the force of law, and are therefore not binding on courts, they have been held to be binding on state agencies and officers." The court relied upon the language found in footnote 2 of the *Traverse City* case: "Although an opinion of the Attorney General is not a binding interpretation of law which courts must follow, it does command the allegiance of state agencies."

See comments of Michigan Supreme Court in footnotes in the following opinions: *In re Request Advisory Opinion*

2005 PA 71, 470 Mich 1, 8, n 5 (2007) and *Danse Corp v City of Madison Heights*, 466 Mich 175, 182, n 6 (2002).

4. What legal effect does an OAG have on local governmental bodies?

There is no legal effect. The statutory grant of authority to the Attorney General is limited by its language to give legal advice to members of the Legislature and the departments and agencies of state government (MCL 14.32). There is no reference to local units of government in the statute. As such, the statute itself does not give rise to the question of whether an OAG has effect upon local units of government.

5. Does an OAG have the effect of law unless overturned by a court?

Frequently, one hears that an OAG has the force or effect of law unless overturned by a court. There is simply no “provisional” or “temporary” grant of authority to an OAG either by statute or court opinion. It appears to be one of the “Legal Urban Legends” that surface when arguments regarding the impact of an Attorney General opinion are raised.

Despite the questions raised in this column, it is widely recognized that an Attorney General opinion may offer valuable insight and research on an issue discussed in the opinion. This is particularly the case for issues that affect the operation of state government. Likewise, issues pertaining to local units of government are more appropriately addressed by legal counsel retained by the local unit. 

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 associate general counsel for the League. You may contact her at sjeffers@mml.org.



Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys (MAMA) Honors Sue Jeffers



League General Counsel Bill Mathewson and Associate General Counsel Sue Jeffers.

The 2010 Distinguished Municipal Attorney Award was bestowed on three attorneys: Thomas R. Schultz, city attorney for Novi and other communities; Sue A. Jeffers, associate general counsel for the Michigan Municipal League and former Mt. Pleasant city attorney; and Jeffrey V.H. Sluggett, attorney for the municipalities of Cedar Springs, Walker, Saugatuck, Lakeview Village, and Alpine Township.

In making the announcement, Stephen K. Postema, MAMA president and Ann Arbor city attorney said, “Every year we get some excellent nominations and this year was no exception. These three attorneys are outstanding at what they do in serving Michigan’s municipalities. They have attained the highest level of professional accomplishment while serving other municipal attorneys through professional organizations like the MAMA and the International Municipal Lawyers Association.”

The Individual Awards recipients were honored at the MAMA luncheon, part of the 2010 Michigan Municipal League Annual Convention in Dearborn, September 21.

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Bidding, GLV Pay, OMA, and Master Plan Review

Q. I seem to remember that there used to be a state requirement that all purchases by a municipality over a certain dollar amount had to go out for public bid. Do you happen to have that reference?

A. Your memory serves—there used to be a statute requirement for municipalities to go out for public bids for projects over \$20,000. The requirement, however, was repealed in 1996 (PA 341).

There currently are no state requirements for bidding municipal purchases or projects—either as to amount or procedure. However, a municipality can establish public bid requirements of its own. Purchasing and bidding procedures can be set through a charter provision, ordinance, or policy. Check to see if your municipality has established a local public bid requirement. In addition, certain funding sources, e.g. grants, may make such a requirement. There are several sample purchasing policies on our website (mml.org) which you might find useful.

Q. How do we determine the compensation the council receives in our general law village?

A. The General Law Village Act provides that “The president and each trustee shall receive compensation for the performance of the duties of the office of president or trustee only as provided by ordinance. The ordinance shall specify how the compensation is determined due and paid.” (MCL 64.21, legislature.mi.gov). The ordinance needs to specify not only the dollar amount each official will receive, but also the manner in which it will be paid. Common methods include: 1) paying per meeting, 2) paying per month, or 3) paying per year. Some trustees are paid whether or not they attend village council meetings and some only if they attend the meetings—it all depends on how the ordinance is written. There are sample general law village compensation ordinances on our website at mml.org/resources/sample_docs/ordinances/glv_ordinances.htm.

For home rule villages and cities, you will need to check your charter. Some charters specify how much and when officials will be paid; other charters are like the General Law Village Act in that they specify that compensation will be set by council either by ordinance or resolution.

Q. What information does the Open Meetings Act require be posted for a meeting?

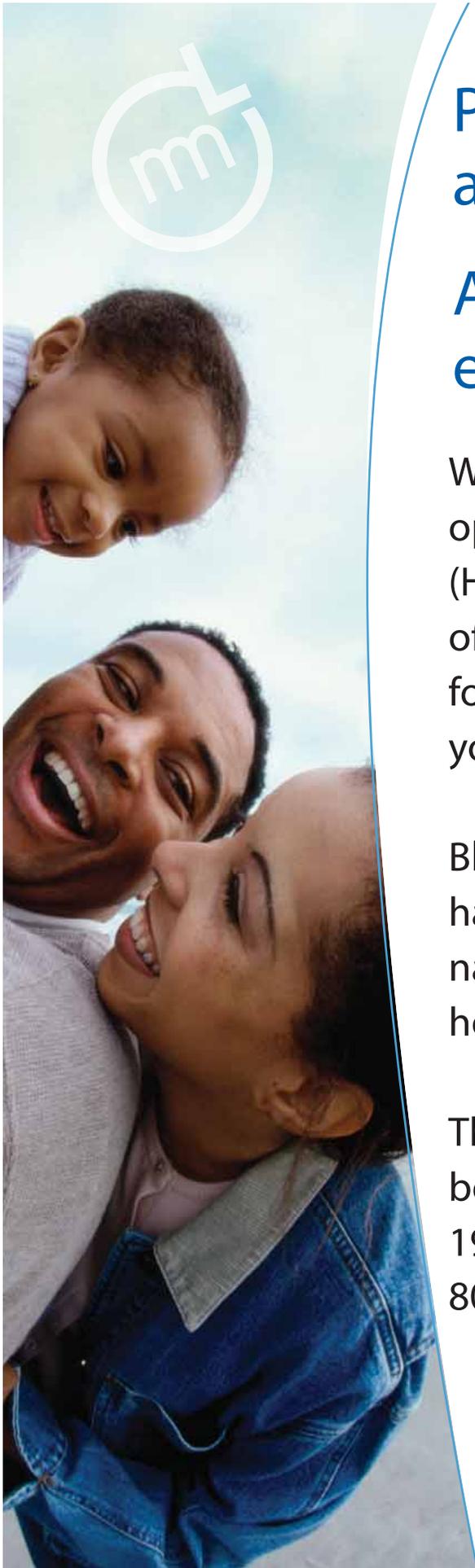
A. The Open Meetings Act (OMA) requires only that the time and place of the meeting be posted, along with the name, address, and telephone number of the public body. While the OMA does not require an agenda be posted, many municipalities do so in order to keep their citizens as informed as possible. In fact, some home rule charters require that they do so. There are several One Pager Pluses on our website dealing with Open Meetings Act questions. The basic requirements are at www.mml.org/resources/publications/one_pagers/opp_open_meetings.pdf in Open Meetings Act – Definitions and Requirements.

Q. Our planning commission recently completed the required five-year review of our master plan. The planning commissioners are not recommending any changes at this time. Does this need to be ratified by the council or is adoption by the planning commission sufficient?

A. The Planning Enabling Act indicates that if there are no changes, the review and its findings should be recorded in the proceedings of the Planning Commission (legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-125-3845). However, you will want to check to make certain there is nothing in your planning commission ordinance (the ordinance that established the planning commission) that requires the council to act on the report. 

Mary Charles is a research analyst for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6322 or mcharles@mml.org.





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Bellaire: It's a Destination



Classic "Up North." To residents and visitors alike, that's what the village of Bellaire is all about. The laid-back attitude, the sense of

fun, and the relaxed atmosphere make Bellaire a wonderful place to visit and live.

One of the village's primary goals is to preserve Bellaire's unique beauty. But what makes the village uniquely beautiful in the first place? We're located on the Chain-of-Lakes, the largest subwatershed in the Grand Traverse Bay region. We're tucked between the long hills left behind by glaciers. Plus, we have Lake Bellaire to the south, Intermediate River to the north, and Torch Lake three miles to the west—all combining to make a location that's hard to beat.

Though Bellaire may be small, we have a lot to offer. Our village is proud to be home to regionally known restaurants and food purveyors (Lulu's

Bistro, Bellaire Smokehouse), nationally known accommodations (Bellaire Bed & Breakfast, Grand Victorian), and the internationally known Short's Brewing Company.

Enticing retail shops line the downtown streets, providing an anchor for year-round attractions. Winter sports range from skiing to snowshoeing to snowmobiling. Summer is full of fishing tournaments and other water fun, culminating in the mid-August Rubber Ducky Days. The September Harvest Festival gets bigger every year, and the "Light Up the Night" celebration starts off December with fun—and Santa Claus!

The Community Hall, built by the Works Projects Administration, was dedicated in 1937 and is home to the village offices and the Bellaire Area Historical Museum. Bellaire, a former lumber town, is also home to the Antrim County Building and Courthouse. The 1905 courthouse is still active, housing the Antrim County 86th District Court.

Bellaire's own DPW and Police Department keep the streets clean and safe, and the nearby Meadow Brook Medical Care Facility provides 113 skilled nursing home beds. Close by is Shanty Creek Resort with all the golfing and skiing opportunities you could want.

Free of the hustle-bustle of expressways and big box stores, Bellaire offers a comfortable pace of living that makes breathing easy. You're welcome in Bellaire! Visit us at www.bellairemichigan.com and on Facebook. 

