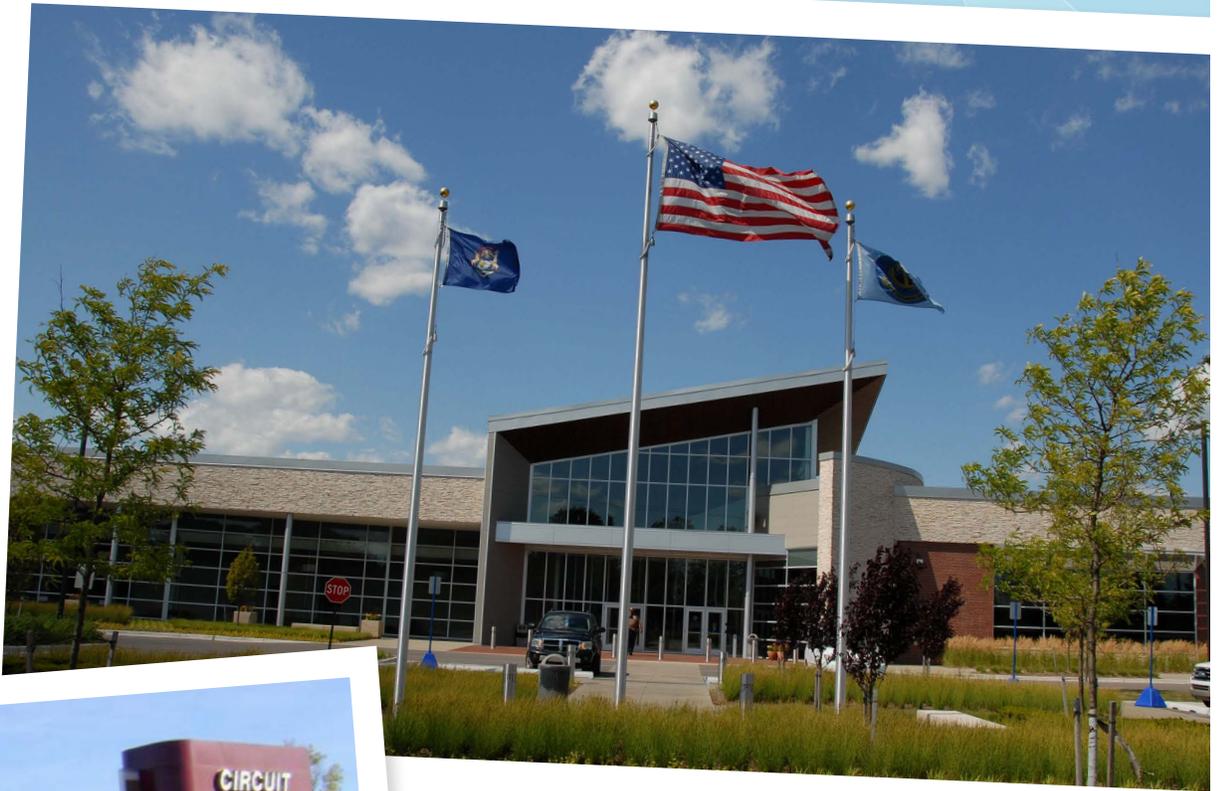


Michigan Municipal League

Westland City Hall Big Box Retrofit



Westland, Michigan



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PROJECT DETAILS:

NAME:

Westland City Hall
Big Box Retrofit

PROJECT START

DATE: 2012

LOCATION:

Westland, Michigan

THE GIST:

Finding a cost-effective solution to Westland's outdated, dysfunctional, dangerous city hall building.

THE CHALLENGE:

Westland's 1960s-era city hall had faced serious structural issues for years due to an extremely high water table under the building. In addition, city hall was no longer large enough to house all the necessary departments. Westland's challenge was to find a way to address the problems of its hazardous, dysfunctional city hall in the most cost-effective manner for its residents.

OVERVIEW:

Westland's city hall was originally built in 1964 to house the Nankin Township Water Commission. When Westland became a city in 1966, the 13,000 square-foot building was converted into the administration offices for the new city. Over the years, the high water table under the building created serious, costly structural issues. The basement frequently flooded and substantial erosion of the sub soil was causing the building to sink.

The city also faced the problem of insufficient office space for the additional departments needed to serve the growing community. Eventually, the city began operating out of buildings on five different city sites. This situation was inconvenient for residents and a potential deterrent to developers and companies considering doing business with the city.

Although prior administrations had considered how to address the building's structural and space problems, in 2012 all the right factors came together



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to bring about a solution. With city officials united behind the effort, the city hired Plante Moran CRESA to evaluate its needs and provide them with estimates on different building options. The analysis revealed that it would cost about \$15 million to renovate the existing city hall or \$15 million to erect a new building from the ground up.

That's when a third option came into play: an empty big box store adjacent to the regional Westland Shopping Center in the city's "shop and dine" area. It's location in the city's TIFA district made it even more attractive as the city would be able to use TIFA funds to purchase and renovate the building rather than assess a millage on residents. City officials were able to negotiate an attractive sales price for the long-vacant Circuit City store. Combined with the cost to retrofit the building, the final price tag was \$12.1 million, considerably less than the other two options. Following months of meetings with city staff and residents regarding the building's design and function, and 12 months of construction, the new city hall opened for business on Sept. 26, 2014. The 64,000 square-foot city hall now houses all city departments in one modern, attractive, energy-efficient building.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- City hall is now a one-stop shop for city services, a boon to staff and residents as well as companies and developers doing business with the city.
- A vacant big box store has been transformed into a modern, attractive facility. In the process, approximately 64,000 square feet of building demolition debris was saved from being sent to a landfill.
- The city's investment has served as a catalyst for economic development. About \$10 million in new investment has occurred in Westland since the retrofit project began. Many of the developments are incorporating some of city hall's modern architectural elements and sustainable landscaping features.
- The building has created a new sense of community pride among residents, many of whom are responding to the city's investment by reinvesting in their own homes.
- Employee morale and productivity went up as soon as city staff moved into the new building.
- The new city hall includes a state-of-the-art banquet facility that is now a popular venue for everything from weddings to community meetings.

PARTICIPATION:

City leaders engaged a wide group of supporters and planners to help with the project, including:

- Residents
- City staff
- Local business owners
- Circuit City building owner
- Private architecture and design firm
- Private engineering firm



BUDGET:

Building: \$1.6 million
Retrofitting: \$10.5 million
TOTAL: \$12.1 million

FUNDING:

The building was purchased and retrofitted with funds from the city's TIFA, so it was not necessary to assess a millage.

HOW-TO:

1. Build consensus

Hold a variety of informational meetings with city council, city staff, and residents. Westland held community visioning sessions in several locations around the city to explain the need for a new city hall, the TIFA, and the available building options. They encouraged questions and feedback on not only the necessity of a new building, but also its design and function.

2. Conduct a needs analysis

Seek professional help in determining the type and quantity of space needed to adequately provide all the necessary city services. Westland hired Plante & Moran CRESA, which determined that they needed 36,000 square feet of office space.

3. Assess your options

Get professional guidance on available options for meeting the city's office space needs as well as the accompanying costs. Westland contracted with Plante Moran CRESA, which presented them with cost estimates for renovating the existing building or building a new one.

4. Consider your funding sources

Keeping costs low for residents is an important consideration in any community. Westland searched for a site in its TIFA district so the project could be paid for with



TIFA funds without increasing taxes on residents. They also extended their TIFA to make sure all the necessary projects were included.

5. Develop sustainability

The costs don't end when construction is complete, so make sustainability an important part of the plan. Westland incorporated a variety of energy-efficient, sustainable features into the new city hall to help keep the operating budget low. Energy-efficient windows provide lots of natural light, lights power off when a room is not in use, carpeting was installed as replaceable squares, and a highly-efficient boiler-chiller keeps rooms at just the right temperature. Sustainability extends outside as well with low maintenance foliage.

6. Stay on track

Establish a mechanism to keep the project on time and on budget. Westland created a City Hall Advisory Committee, comprised of the mayor, deputy mayor, city council president, planning director, economic development director, and the TIFA chair. The committee was charged with monitoring the project's budget and timetable.

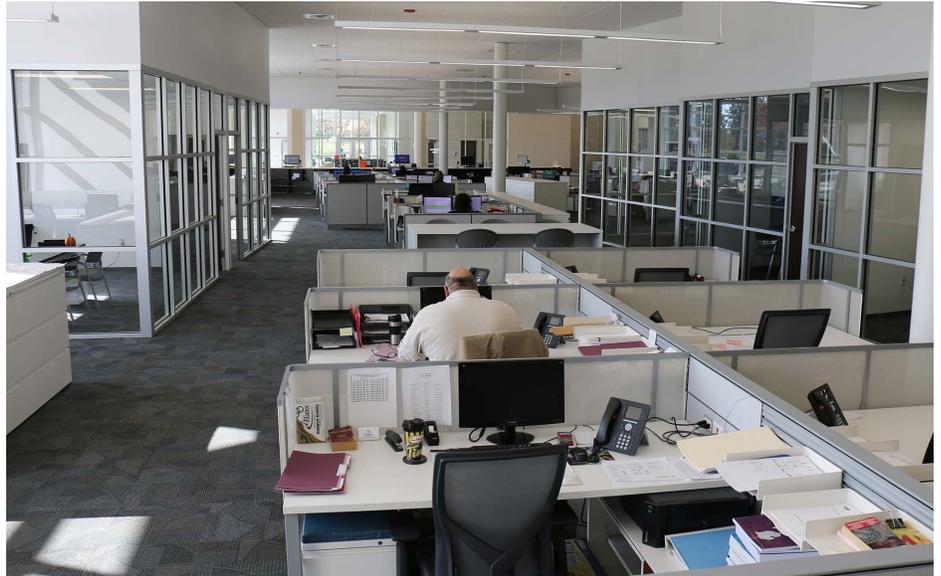
LESSONS LEARNED:

➤ Be open and honest

For 20 years, the old city hall had serious structural issues, but the city masked how bad the problems really were in an effort to make the best of a challenging situation. If Westland residents had been more aware of how critical the building's problems were, it would have been easier to turn the tide of public sentiment.

➤ Community buy-in is essential

Community visioning sessions cultivated the support of the Westland community, which made the project move along much more smoothly. The two-way communication in those sessions also helped ensure that residents would be proud of their new city hall.



➤ **City council support is equally important**

Lots of meetings and discussions with the Westland City Council helped build consensus on the need for a new city hall, as well as its features and functionality. The vote to move ahead with the project was unanimous.

➤ **Advance planning is key**

Taking the time to involve all city departments in a thorough needs analysis helped avoid building shortcomings down the road. Based on that input, the city was able to plan for adequate space, work environment features, and technology that was adaptable for future growth. It's also essential to consider how the building can best serve the needs of residents and provide adequate security.

➤ **Assemble a good team**

Keeping a project on time and on budget is largely dependent on putting together a good team of professionals. Westland spent a lot of time selecting key people—such as the architect and construction manager—to help them get the job done right.

SIMILAR PROJECTS:

- Berkley's Rust Belt Market

CONTACT THE EXPERT:

William Wild, Mayor, City of Westland
Mayor@CityofWestland.com

EXTERNAL RESEARCH:

- *Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs*, by Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamsoner.

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Building 21st century communities

Experts from around the world—in academic, business, and public sectors alike—agree that investing in communities is a critical element to long-term economic development in the 21st century. Michigan's future depends on its ability to attract and retain knowledge-based workers. Central to attracting this priceless commodity is place. Research proves that successful 21st century communities effectively leverage the assets summarized in this brochure. Learn more and stay engaged at mml.org.

Who we are...

The Michigan Municipal League is dedicated to making Michigan's communities better by thoughtfully innovating programs, energetically connecting ideas and people, actively serving members with resources and services, and passionately inspiring positive change for Michigan's greatest centers of potential: its communities.

What we know...

Never before have so many diverse interests, from academic researchers to the business community to government leaders, shared a single conclusion: Michigan's future depends on its ability to attract knowledge-based workers. And what is central to attracting this priceless commodity? Place, specifically vibrant 21st century communities.



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