

the review

March/April 2010

“PRESERVING OUR PAST HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PRIORITY FOR OUR CITY...FINDING MODERN USES FOR PRIZED STRUCTURES.”

—Jim Holton

Mayor of Mt. Pleasant

Reuse & Redevelopment

FLINT
REBUILDING
BLOCKS

KALAMAZOO
TALKS
BROWNFIELD
STRATEGY

TRAVERSE CITY
AN 'INSANE'
REDEVELOPMENT

PLUS

MONROE
Back To The Future

MT. PLEASANT
Votes For Preservation

OWOSSO
'Mix'ing It Up

WHITEHALL
Contamination Conundrum

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On the Cover...

After a 40-year effort, the city of Mt. Pleasant restored the Borden Creamery, a gateway building to the downtown. Mayor Jim Holton proudly states, "It was a momentous time for Mt. Pleasant. The city was buzzing with pride—we were reinvesting in both our past and future."



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the review

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To Submit Articles

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Executive Director's Message

By Daniel P. Gilmartin

Redevelopment Leads to Revitalization

The terms “reuse” and “redevelopment” are self explanatory. The trick comes in making these words reality when improving our communities in ways that are environmentally and user friendly, aesthetically pleasing, and cost effective. Reuse and redevelopment are a key part of the “green initiative” asset in our Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3). Green initiatives are one of eight essential assets identified by the League that make communities vibrant places in the 21st century.

In the following pages, you'll find inspiring examples of communities, developers, and business people dedicated to projects and programs that incorporate reuse and redevelopment goals and tools. Our cover story focuses on a former factory in Mt. Pleasant that was given new life after several failed attempts, bringing the community together during tough times. You'll also learn how a developer and city leaders in Owosso worked collaboratively to turn two abandoned factory buildings into a viable mixed-use development. You'll read what the city of Flint is doing to transform its downtown from a factory town to a college town. In addition, of special notice is the city of Monroe's Mason Run, which has received multiple awards for redevelopment excellence, including the 2009 Brownfield Renewal Award from *Brownfield Renewal* magazine. We hope you find this issue of *The Review* as interesting and informative to read as it was for us to research and write.

The League is working hard in Lansing to ensure communities have the tools to work with developers to redevelop and reuse buildings and properties. At the Capital, we have successfully created some of the best brownfield incentives in the nation, including 20-percent credits on the state business tax for businesses in urban areas. The state needs an urban agenda that promotes urban revitalization, and the brownfield tax credits have accomplished that. These credits have a huge return on investment for communities and the state. In Detroit alone, \$280 million in state credits will leverage \$6 BILLION dollars in private investment!

The League has also been successful in passing other incentives for redevelopment and rehabilitation in core communities as well as urban non-core communities. We have worked closely with 2008 MML Legislator of the Year Senator Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) to pass downtown

THE PROSPERITY AGENDA RADIO SHOW


Program Explores How to Make a Better Michigan



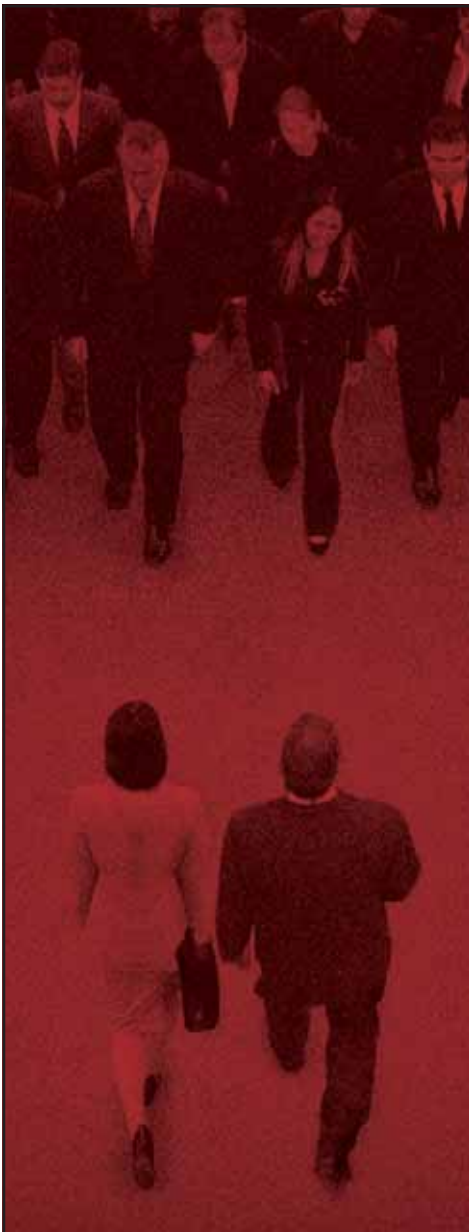
The Michigan Municipal League is taking its message to one of the largest radio stations in the Midwest—News/Talk 760 WJR. Throughout this year, League Director & CEO Dan Gilmartin will host the “Michigan Prosperity Agenda” radio show that challenges listeners to help make Michigan a better place to 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 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of every month in 2010. We encourage all our members and friends to tune in for each show. For those outside of the WJR listening audience, you can hear segments of the show at letssavemichigan.com (click on “The Prosperity Agenda” radio show) or at mml.org.

initiatives that include increased historic credits, commercial redevelopment credits, DDA loans, and other important tools for our communities.

Mark your calendars for our annual Capital Conference April 13-14, 2010, in Lansing. Experience Lansing at the height of legislative activity and prepare your community for statewide budget reform. Topics to be covered include: transportation, tax reform, and Public Act 312. The pre-conference workshops include the Michigan Green Communities Challenge, essential skills for elected officials, the latest legal issues affecting Michigan local governments, and human resources basics for the non-HR manager. We hope to see you there. 

Daniel P. Gilmartin is executive director and CEO of the League. You may contact him at 734-669-6302 or dpg@mml.org.



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The R's of Brownfields:

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

By Anne Couture

Sound familiar? The “three R’s” of recycling—reduce, reuse, and recycle—can also be applied to brownfield redevelopment. What is a brownfield? The legal definitions at the federal and various state levels may differ, but essentially brownfields are vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties whose redevelopment and reuse is challenged by the likely presence of environmental contamination, blight, or obsolescence. From large cities to small villages, almost every community has one brownfield site, be it the old corner gas station or the massive former industrial property that used to be the major employer in the area. Brownfields often include historical buildings and factories that help define the history of the community, and are often located in prominent areas.

Over the past decade, with newly energized efforts to revitalize our urban areas and develop more sustainable communities, brownfield redevelopment has become critical. Environmental cleanup, historic preservation, infrastructure, land use, and economic development all come together in one project that requires significant collaboration on the part of various “stakeholders.” Stakeholders include the community where the property is located, its governmental entity, property owners, liable parties, developers, local, state, and federal regulators, and others. Brownfield redevelopment typically involves addressing a myriad of issues, including environmental contamination, demolition, historical preservation, wetlands, infrastructure, land use, and zoning. Municipalities are often the driving force in the brownfield redevelopment process.

1 Reduce

A basic notion of recycling is reducing the amount of waste generated. A similar notion of reducing risk posed by contamination is an important component of

brownfield redevelopment. Depending on the project, issues can include reducing risk to the environment, users of the property, the surrounding community, and those who may come in contact with the contamination related to the property. Reducing risk also includes protecting innocent purchasers of contaminated property from liability for cleanup. These issues are all addressed by various elements of Michigan’s environmental cleanup program, also known as Part 201 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA).

In 1995, Michigan led the nation in brownfield redevelopment and environmental cleanup by enacting a regulatory framework, Part 201 of NREPA. The approach resulted in development of one of the most comprehensive, innovative, and effective brownfield redevelopment programs in the nation. Part 201 was followed in 1996 by the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act (Act 381), which created brownfield authorities with tax increment financing powers; the adoption of brownfield tax credits; and finally the various brownfield grant and loan programs operated by the MDEQ. These initiatives all came together to invigorate investment and revitalization of Michigan’s brownfield sites. Municipalities are central to this framework—they form brownfield redevelopment authorities, approve brownfield plans, and are eligible to apply for brownfield grants and loans at the state and federal level.

2 Reuse

Reusing obsolete or historically significant buildings is often an important component of brownfield redevelopment. Historic preservation can offer tax credits and other financial incentives to a redevelopment project. Preservation of our historical buildings and features also


allows a community to embrace its past while celebrating its future, and symbolizes a sense of place in a community.

Reuse of existing infrastructure is also a critical element of brownfield redevelopment. As communities grow and age, their infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, sanitary and storm sewers, water, utilities) also ages and becomes outmoded or decrepit. Investment and improvements in properties that are already served by public infrastructure can often be the driver of new investment in infrastructure repair and upgrade, such as streetscapes, low-impact stormwater management, street improvements, water and sewer upgrades, and burying of power lines.

3 Recycle

Finally, brownfield redevelopment can also be viewed as recycling land. Brownfield properties often sit vacant for many years, while properties outside the urban areas, such as farmland or open space, are developed at the urban (or suburban) fringe. Reuse of property through environmental improvements, investment, and revitalization of an area can be viewed as essentially recycling land, to be reused in a more sustainable manner than that which created the brownfield in the first place. Brownfield projects often incorporate “green building” elements (such as LEED and Energy Star certification), low impact stormwater design, and other sustainable features, and provide opportunities for communities to realize their land use planning goals. By recycling land that was already developed, we are saving (and sometimes creating!) precious farmland and open spaces that are so important to our quality of life.

Improving Michigan's Brownfield Framework

It has been 15 years since the enactment of Part 201. It is time for Michigan to carefully consider the process and results of its brownfield redevelopment. In today's economy, it is more critical than ever to preserve the ability to redevelop brownfield sites while streamlining the programs and processes to assure we continue with our past success. Michigan once again has the opportunity to become a national leader in the approach we take to brownfield redevelopment. Municipalities are a central player in this important effort, and their voice is critical as program changes are considered in Lansing. 

Anne Couture is the owner/founder of Couture Environmental Strategies LLC. She may be reached at 269-629-9842 or annepcouture@gmail.com.

Brownfield Legislative Update

Michigan is considering serious changes to its brownfield program...again. In a comprehensive rewrite, the Legislature and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) are looking to completely change the way brownfield properties are regulated.

Due to its vastly reduced funding and staff, the DEQ wants to change the laws to remove some of its responsibilities, such as reducing DEQ inspection requirements and removing the state guarantee that a property is cleaned up. Instead, consultants who clean up contaminated property would guarantee the cleanup, and be liable if the property is not appropriately remediated. There are also proposed changes to reporting requirements. League staff and members have been involved in these workgroups to ensure that new law won't make it harder or more costly to remediate a municipally-owned property.

The Michigan Senate introduced SB 437 (with help from the Michigan Manufacturers Association (MMA), the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, and other interested groups) to: speed up plan review and application response times from DEQ; allow greater certainty that remediation efforts comply with necessary requirements, providing closure to a project; allow for a new review panel and appeals process; and provide a number of other streamlining measures. The workgroup, hosted by Senator Jason Allen, is working with the DEQ to see where the two proposals might be coordinated.

In addition, the House and Senate will be considering League-requested legislation to allow Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities to utilize tax increment financing (TIF) dollars when voluntarily acquiring property. In a deal worked out with the MEDC (initially opposed to this legislation), brownfield authorities will be allowed to use local TIF for capture but not state education dollars (as land banks can do under current law). Also, keep an eye on the so-called “revenue” bills the Legislature is batting around. The Senate passed SB 838 cutting the amount of brownfield credits available by \$10 million. The League strongly opposed the legislation, as brownfield credits create private investment and economic development.

The DEQ and Senate proposals can be viewed on the League website at www.mml.org/advocacy/brownfields/.

KALAMAZOO'S REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT MANAGER TALKS SHOP

BY
JENNIFER ESSEBACH



Kalamazoo,
pop. 77,145

The city of Kalamazoo's brownfield redevelopment program has become renowned throughout the state. With the strong support, past and present, of the city commission, city administration, the Brownfield

Redevelopment Authority, and the public, Kalamazoo's focus on redeveloping brownfield sites, retaining businesses, and growing targeted neighborhoods, has led to the completion of more than 30 projects. "Our success is due to the support and funding of our city leaders," said Redevelopment Project Manager Marc Hatton. One of the reasons there has been so much development in Kalamazoo in recent times is that "we have acted like a land bank for over a decade now, even before that phrase was coined. We acquired targeted properties and prepared them and sold them for redevelopment, or we banked them with the hope of acquiring more property for larger projects."

Part of its success is due to the Economic Development Department's setup. "I also think it's unique to have two people with strong careers in environmental consulting as a basis for our experience to do this type of work," Hatton says of himself and Redevelopment Coordinator Eric Kemmer. "We also have people with planning and real estate backgrounds and people with straight economic backgrounds. We are still a relatively small group, but I think the talents we have as a group are unique," he says.

Another feature of Kalamazoo's brownfield redevelopment strategy is that "we write our own plans. We have one brownfield plan with many sites. I know other folks have many plans, each dedicated to one project and largely written by consultants of the developers. We take the reverse approach. Our focus is on our wider target areas instead of one development at a time," Hatton explains.

Being "proactively" involved in brownfield redevelopment creates opportunities to collect the increase in tax capture, and their approach allows the city control over zoning and planning activities in targeted areas "that give developers the canvas on which to work." For example, "as far as our River's Edge redevelopment area goes, we came in with a zoning overlay to try to steer development in a certain direction and to try and get a bit more density there," he says.

The average developer reimbursement obligation for brownfield redevelopment projects is 8.36 years, Hatton reports. "We don't just offer up 20 or 25 years," he says. Hatton also stresses that "size is relative." The city tackles many projects that run from 100s of thousands of dollars to 10s of millions. "In our minds, they are still big projects" that take advantage of marketable opportunities and match the specific needs of Kalamazoo as a unique community.

In conclusion, Hatton reports that strong partnerships and relationships with the Michigan DEQ, developers, banks, and businesses at "a local level" is one of the keys to Kalamazoo's success. Loans are not coming easily in Michigan these days,

which he says is one of the biggest “challenges;” however more brownfield redevelopment projects are currently underway and Kalamazoo is still pushing forward. Hatton attributes much of this to the relationships the department has established.

**Case Study in Economic Retention:
Catalyst Development Company 3 LLC, \$31.5 Million**

“Economic development is at a minimum about retention,” Hatton says. Miller Canfield’s Kalamazoo law office was being courted to leave the city, and though “some may view the number of employees as relatively small, we think they are significant.” The 76 positions at Miller Canfield represent the type of people “who have lunch, meetings, do some shopping, or go to dinner downtown. These kinds of things wouldn’t happen otherwise,” he says. The revamping of Catalyst Development Company 3’s properties succeeded in “retaining the business community that was already here,” according to Hatton. The construction of a larger building—with a higher taxable value—and a new parking structure, was completed in 2008. Miller Canfield’s Kalamazoo law office relocated into a 32,000-square-foot suite on the top two floors. “We’re pleased to be a part of Kalamazoo’s renaissance,” Miller Canfield Resident Director John R. Cook said in a press release. “This new building represents our commitment to the community, while the state-of-the-art facility will allow us to expand and provide services to clients around the block and around the world.”



Top: The site previously held a gas station (which left underground contamination) and an unused parking lot.

Bottom: Catalyst Development Company 3 LLC constructed a larger building and a new parking structure on what had previously been two lots. Miller Canfield’s Kalamazoo law office is now located on the top two floors.



Top: The MacKenzie’s vision was the start of redevelopment along the river, which led to a long-term plan for the area.

Bottom: Before, MacKenzie’s was a vacant lot.



**Case Study in Long-Term Growth:
MacKenzie’s Bakery, \$774,000 for Two Projects**

Hatton highlights MacKenzie’s Bakery owners John and Mary MacKenzie as “urban pioneers,” whose vision for Kalamazoo’s River’s Edge area has manifested in a number of ways. “Mr. MacKenzie came into the River’s Edge area at a time when only he and a few others had a vision that it could be something great,” he says. In large part, the MacKenzies’ initial vision for the riverfront has led it to be a target for long-term redevelopment. Since the bakery developed the vacant parcel in 1998, other unique—and you could even call them fun—businesses have popped up in the River’s Edge redevelopment, like the SmartShop Metal Arts Center. “We hope the area will create residential development, and bring in new businesses,” that will continue to transform the neighborhood into a “funky, eclectic area,” according to Hatton. MacKenzie’s added Wi-Fi and introduced freshly blended coffee from Water Street Coffee Joint. The bakery also expanded in 2007, which “indicates the long-term potential of the area. This project is our only project that has since had a second generation brownfield redevelopment at the same location, which is fairly unique,” Hatton says.

**Case Study in Brownfield Cleanup:
Spearflex Block, \$7.1 Million**

Another major aspect of Kalamazoo’s Brownfield Redevelopment Initiative (BRI) is to manage contamination or clean it up when necessary. In general, the city takes a “risk-based approach” to managing contaminated locations. In the



Top: Plazacorp Realty Advisors, Inc. purchased buildings from the city and redeveloped the Spearflex block.

Bottom: the DEQ removed the worst of the contamination.

case of the Spearflex Block, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) removed the worst of the worst," he reports. "The DEQ left us with a site where we could sell the buildings that were there, even though they were not in great condition. They were still usable." The buildings were sold to Plazacorp Realty Advisors, Inc. The company developed

them for new uses, including the Shakespeare's Pub and the Spearflex building, which is being used for office space. "If you can manage the exposures in a way that is protective of human health and the environment, you can still develop projects even though there is contamination. Ultimately, "you have to marry the site with its intended use," according to Hatton.

Case Study in Community Commitment: Borgess/Textile Systems Inc (TSI), \$5.7 million

Textile Systems Incorporated, an industrial laundry facility and subsidiary of Borgess Hospital, is a Phoenix Award winner for "community impact"—acclaim it received at the 2002 National Brownfield Conference. TSI packed up operations and moved closer to its employees when many were having issues related to commuting to and from the company that was located some distance away from where the majority of employees resided. "Much of its workforce lives near its current location," and "they have also had some great expansion, early on—much greater than they had anticipated,"




Top: Faced with labor challenges and production limitations, TSI decided to relocate to Kalamazoo because of its proximity to its workforce and markets.

Bottom: TSI chose a .92 acre city-owned brownfield property for the future site of its new facility.



Hatton says. He thinks the commitment that TSI has shown its employees has "impacted the community quite heavily," on top of benefiting the company financially.


For more information about Kalamazoo's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, the Brownfield Redevelopment Initiative (BRI), and to see a copy of the city's brownfield plan, visit kalamazoo.org and click on business then brownfields. 

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

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- March 2010 - Census forms are mailed or delivered to households
- April 1, 2010 - National Census Day
- April-July 2010 - Census takers visit non-responsive households
- December 2010 - Census Bureau delivers population information to President Obama

More information

- State of Michigan site (www.michigan.gov/som)
- Census Statistical Data site (www.michigan.gov/cgi, click on Census & Demographic data)
- U.S. Census Bureau site (2010.census.gov/2010census/)
- Nonprofits Count (www.mnaonline.org/census.asp)

For more information, contact Arnold Weinfeld, director of strategic initiatives and federal affairs for the Michigan Municipal League. He can be reached at 517-908-0304 or aweinfeld@mml.org.

New Urbanism Redevelopment

Takes Monroe Back to the Future!

By James M. Harless, PhD, CHMM

New Urbanism:

| new ur·ban·ism | *noun*

1. also known as Traditional Neighborhood Design, New Urbanism is a growing movement that recognizes walkable, human-scaled neighborhoods as the building blocks of sustainable communities and regions. They typically embody some of the spirit of older neighborhoods, and feature a range of housing types, narrower streets and sidewalks that encourage the interaction of neighbors, front porches, corner stores, and plenty of mature trees to make the place feel rooted, as though it has been there for a while. This style of development is ecologically friendly, and reduces pressures from suburban residential sprawl.

Mason Run is one of the largest New Urbanism projects constructed on an urban brownfield site in the nation. It stands as a shining example of what can be accomplished through brownfield redevelopment.





Mason Run, a sustainable residential redevelopment, is one of the largest New Urbanism projects constructed on an urban brownfield site in the nation. The development is having and will continue to have, profound economic and social impacts on the city of Monroe. The project team, including the city,

Crosswinds Communities, Soil and Materials Engineers, Inc., and others developed innovative brownfield financing strategies, creative environmental response programs, and cost-effective site preparation strategies to transform a 45-acre abandoned paper mill site owned by the city into a charming, vibrant community. The project has spanned nearly a decade and has been conducted in six phases.



350,000 square feet of excavated basements were replaced with clean fill where future homes would be built, and with cinder/ash fill where roads and parks would lie.

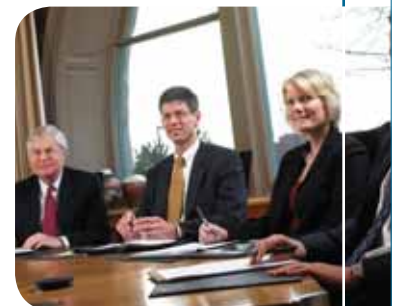
Challenges

The city and project team faced several hurdles to make the project possible. Challenges included finding more than \$7 million to finance environmental response actions needed to prepare the site for redevelopment, addressing the presence of cinder/ash fill blanketing the site, remediating contaminated soil, removing buried plant basements, tackling numerous constructability issues, and facilitating coordination with public and private stakeholders. City Manager George Brown

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reflected on the changes the project has made to the city of Monroe, “Just the removal of obsolete and blighted industrial facilities, along with the remediation activities that helped make the site suitable for reuse, has had a huge positive impact on our community.”

Sustainable Redevelopment

The city and project team worked diligently to make Mason Run an exemplary sustainable brownfield redevelopment. It is characterized by a density of approximately seven homes per acre, front porches and sidewalks to promote community, detached garages on alleys, traditional architecture reflective of the Monroe community, a mixture of home sizes and costs to foster family diversity, and community parks. In the New Urbanism tradition, more than 10 percent of the land in the development has been set aside for landscaped parkland and green space for residents and the Monroe community.

The site had historically been used for manufacturing paperboard packaging materials, a process that required large amounts of water, sewer, and electrical capacity. In fact, the existing infrastructure, including streets, sewers, water mains, and utilities were wholly adequate to support the development, saving Monroe millions of dollars in infrastructure costs.

The design process for Mason Run began with identification of the types of traditional architecture and neighborhood designs that created the fabric of the city. Community involvement began with a series of public charrettes to collect input about all aspects of the content, layout, design, etc. The predominant architectural styles found in Monroe and selected for the development include Colonial Revival, Victorian, and Craftsman.

Since many municipal development codes and ordinances have not been developed with traditional design and development in mind, a pattern book was created to establish site design and development requirements. In this way, as Mason Run has been built over time in phases, it maintains a wonderful consistency and rich architectural variety.

Innovative Solutions

The city and project team worked hand-in-hand to resolve a myriad of challenges.

- **Zoning**

Although existing master plans and zoning laws can make it difficult to develop neighborhoods where a loaf of bread and a library are just a walk away, city departments worked together to successfully overcome that obstacle. Mason Run is a Planned Unit Development whose design and construction criteria are defined in its pattern book.

- **Creative Use of Existing Materials**

Formidable physical and financial barriers to redevelopment included the presence of two feet of cinder/ash wastes covering approximately 42 acres of the site, and 350,000 square feet of buried industrial basements, pits, footings and foundations. The initial cost estimate for preparing the site was approximately \$9-\$10 million. The traditional approach of removing and disposing the waste in a landfill and replacing it with clean fill was too costly and was not considered a sustainable solution. Instead, the team designed an alternate solution to swap the cinder/ash fill for clean soil from beneath roads and parks in the development. This sustainable approach reduced environmental and human health risks, reduced resource use, and saved more than \$2.5 million in response costs, making the project economically viable!

- **Creative Brownfield Financing**

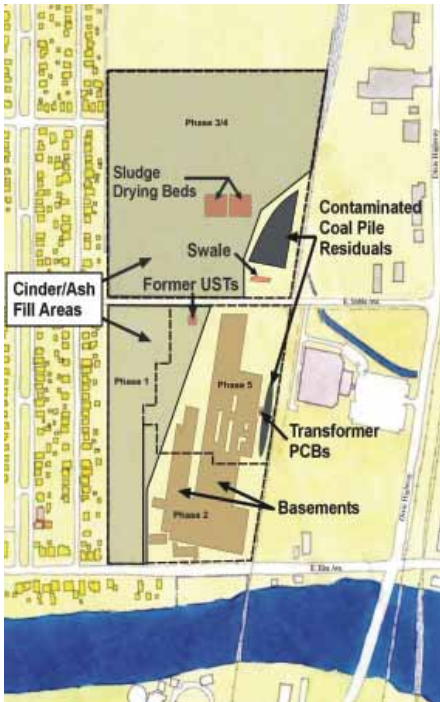
To mitigate environmental and site preparation costs, the team developed a creative funding program using multiple, leveraged brownfield financing. The team successfully acquired and managed approximately \$7.4 million in brownfield financing through federal, state, and local grants and loans. The complex financing package was structured to correspond to the five remediation/construction phases of the project. Loans will be repaid through tax increment financing; when the loans and interest from the project are repaid by the borrowers, the city will have \$2.4 million to support other brownfield projects.

Mason Run Garner Regional And National Visibility

This project demonstrates that owners of industrial, commercial, and brownfield properties can economically redevelop those properties rather than abandoning them. Mason Run has received multiple awards for redevelopment excellence, including the 2009 Brownfield Renewal Award in the Social Category from *Brownfield Renewal* magazine, a 2008 Economic Development Excellence Award from the International Economic Development Council, an Environmental Excellence Award from the Michigan Association of Environmental Professionals, and an IMPACT Award in the Redevelopment Category from CREW-Detroit.



Mason Run team members accepting the CREW-Detroit Award (l-r) Mayor C.D. “Al” Cappuccilli, James Harless (SME), City Manager George Brown, Ehrlich Crain (Crosswinds Communities), Mike Gifford (USEPA Region V), and Nicole Andriani (Crosswinds Communities).



Primary environmental concerns were management of the cinder/ash fill and material, and the buried basements. Coal residuals and soil in other areas of the site also were contaminated with hazardous substances, and some commingled residual petroleum from historic underground fuel tanks.

• Constructability Issues


During construction, the team addressed numerous constructability challenges, including the removal of fill, subsurface concrete structures, former wastewater treatment facilities, pipes, utilities, contaminated soil, and other debris. Careful planning was required to replace the excavated basements with clean fill where future homes would be built and with cinder/ash fill where roads and parks would lie. Additionally, demolition and remediation specifications required maximum reclamation/recycling of materials removed from the site to maximize the sustainability of site preparation activities. More than 50,000 tons of concrete, steel, and other materials have been recycled.

Economic Benefits

The former Consolidated Packaging Corporation property was owned by the city of Monroe and generated no tax revenues. To date, approximately 120 homes have been constructed adding needed housing stock to the community and significantly increasing the annual tax revenues to the city. The increased population in the area is also supporting service/retail development in the city. Like any residential development in the current economic climate, Mason Run is having trouble attracting home buyers. It's anticipated that once this economic slump passes, construction will rise, and the development will continue to produce significant social and economic rewards.

Redevelopment of this site is having a positive effect on property values in the adjacent established neighborhoods. Mason Run's network of tree-lined streets connects to adjacent neighborhoods, creating a seamless addition to the city fabric. "The fact that a

traditional neighborhood was developed on this site, which attracted additional homeowners who have displayed pride in their homes and neighborhood, has made a real contribution to our city's vitality," said City Manager Brown.

Mason Run stands as a shining example of what can be accomplished through brownfield redevelopment. It's a successful New Urbanism development that performs a difficult balancing act by maintaining the integrity of a walkable, human-scale neighborhood, while offering modern residential "product" and amenities. Its design is a creative solution to rebuilding a brownfield site into a charming, vibrant community. 

James M. Harless, PhD, CHMM, is vice president/principal of Soil and Materials Engineers, Inc. You may contact him at 734-454-9900 or harless@sme-usa.com.



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Essential Skills for Elected Officials

This session is not only for those recently elected, but for every elected official who wants to serve his or her municipality more effectively. This day-long session can clarify many of the questions that you have had since you assumed office, and it covers basic information about the responsibilities of your office. At this session you will be able to network with many new and experienced elected officials. Topics such as conducting meetings, the Open Meetings Act, and the Freedom of Information Act will be covered. Upon completion of the program attendees will:

1. Cite provisions of the Freedom of Information Act that regulate and set requirements for the disclosure of public records (including the exceptions and rationale for nondisclosure under certain circumstances).
2. Identify the issues affecting local government in the Michigan Legislature and understand the importance of lobbying to assure the advocacy of local government interests.
3. Schedule and conduct meetings within the guidelines of the Open Meetings Act.
4. List the tips on working with the media so that the local government message is accurately conveyed to the public.
5. Explain the laws that impact ethical standards for public officials at the state level and the reason for their importance.
6. Use the procedures and tips given to conduct an effective and time-efficient meeting.

- Check-in 8:30 am; Begin 9:00 am; Lunch; Adjourn 4:00 pm
- Speakers: A panel of experienced speakers
- Credits: CEU .6, EOA 6

Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys 24th Annual Advanced Institute

Stay current on the latest legal issues affecting Michigan local governments. Attendees will hear various presentations from several experts who will review recent court decisions and legislation, challenges being faced, strategies, and examples. The program will conclude with a Cracker Barrel panel session for which the attorneys are asked to bring their questions and their successes. This is a perfect opportunity to "meet and greet" your colleagues while you network and exchange ideas and experiences. You will leave this session with a better understanding of current legal issues and the impact they will have on the municipalities you represent.

- Check-in 8:30 am; Begin 9:00 am; Lunch; Adjourn 4:00 pm
- Speaker: A panel of experienced speakers
- Credits: CEU .6, EOA 6

Michigan Green Communities Challenge— The Workshop

All Michigan communities are eligible to complete the Michigan Green Communities Challenge, a program designed to reflect the governing body's commitment to adopt policies and programs of energy efficiency and conservation. The Challenge was created by the League and the Bureau of Energy Systems to provide a step-by-step approach to "Going Green." This workshop will offer attendees an overview of the six steps of the Challenge. Included within the steps of the Challenge are the development of a resolution, the assignment of responsibility, suggested method for tracking energy use, the analysis of what needs to be done, and an offering of more than 30 possible energy saving and conservation strategies that a community might choose to adopt.

- Check-in 12:30 pm; Begin 1:00 pm; Adjourn 4:00 pm
- Speaker: A panel of experienced speakers
- Credits: CEU .3, EOA 3

Human Resources Basics for the Non-HR Manager

Whether you employ five people or 500, all employers have obligations—and compliance requirements can be daunting! This course will give participants an overview of the laws affecting the employer-employee relationship and will provide a basic level of familiarity with a broad range of Human Resources (HR) activities.

This program is ideal for individuals who are new to the field of HR or for those who handle HR as a secondary function.

Upon completion of this course attendees will be able to:

1. Recognize state and federal employment laws and the general obligations of public sector employers.
2. Describe various HR functions and activities.
3. Promote compliance within their organization.

- Check-in 12:30 pm; Begin 1:00 pm; Adjourn 4:00 pm
- Speaker: Suneetha Giridhar, Director, Research Services, American Society of Employers
- Credits: CEU .3, EOA 3

DEVELOPER TURNS OWOSSO EYESORE INTO **COMMUNITY GEM**

By Matt Bach



Five years ago, the Owosso Casket Company and Woodard Station buildings were in shambles. Portions of ceilings and floors in the 100-plus-year-old factories were collapsed and the surrounding area was blighted—it contained the city's last gravel road, some unsightly silos, a large barbed-wire fence, and a lot of weeds.

When developer Scott Bosgraaf found the buildings for sale on Ebay in 2005, he scheduled a visit and instantly loved the promise and character of the buildings—the high ceilings, brick facade, timber construction and heavy pine beams. He had tackled and redeveloped run-down factories before, but nothing as bad as this project. Where others saw an abandoned mess that should probably be demolished, Bosgraaf saw a hidden gem that would become a mixed-use facility where people would live, eat, exercise, socialize, swim, get their hair done, grab a cup of coffee and a sandwich—all under one roof.

Bosgraaf bought the buildings and stood firm when sharing his dream of a multi-use project during a news conference held prior to the start of the renovation work. He remembers the press event well. "We had a photo op and it was raining harder inside the building than outside the building," Bosgraaf said. "I'm sure there were skeptics."

Now five years later, the \$20-plus million, multi-use project is nearing completion and it not only serves as a stimulus to the local economy and source of new jobs, but it's also a shining example of effective collaboration between a committed developer and Owosso city leaders.

"The key to the project's success was a city and state that were able and willing to work with us, and a local community that had the belief and interest in seeing us succeed," Bosgraaf said. "Without these components, none of this would ever happen."

Bosgraaf said Owosso city leaders and building planners changed over the years, but the commitment to the project by the city never wavered. To make the project possible, assistance would come through a variety of economic incentives—a Neighborhood Enterprise Zone, a Corridor Improvement Authority, Michigan business tax credits,



“Where others saw an abandoned mess that should probably be demolished, Bosgraaf saw a hidden gem that would become a mixed-use facility where people would live, eat, exercise, socialize, swim, get their hair done, grab a cup of coffee and a sandwich—all under one roof.”



Left: Before and after of Woodard Station.

Bottom: Travis Yaklin, 25, owns Guido's Coffee Lounge.



brownfield redevelopment, and historic district designation. Bosgraaf estimated that the various tools and tax incentives saved about \$5 million on the \$20 million project.

"It really is a partnership to do something like this because a city has to understand that it's OK to give up some tax revenue for a period of time so that a developer can offset some of their expenses. But when the time expires on those tax incentives, then that's all city revenue," Bosgraaf said. "The city of Owosso has been fantastic. They've done a great job keeping talent here who understand the incentives and how they work. They've gone out of their way on everything from liquor licenses to zoning and the hundreds of other things we had to do."

But the cooperation goes both ways, said Brent D. Morgan, director of economic development and neighborhood services for Owosso. "Taking all these tools and packaging them together so they can do the redevelopment is important, but you also need a proven developer like Scott Bosgraaf willing to take some risk. This project is the best display of mixed-use I've seen, especially in a trying economy," Morgan said.

The project also incorporates the many environmentally friendly measures many are seeking, including energy-savers such as a white (instead of black) roof, motion-activated lighting, and the reuse of as many materials from the original buildings as possible. Throughout Woodard Station you'll find the original timber pillars and brick from the factory days. They even turned the wooden carts from the factory into TV stands for the loft apartments. They took the old fire pipes and reused them as

legs for the bathroom sink counters. "We clearly want to save as much of the character of the building as we can, but we also wanted to bring as little to the landfill as possible," Bosgraaf said.

The project consists of two main buildings—the former Owosso Casket Company (now restored and housing Target Industries, a manufacturer of promotional materials), and Woodard Station. Woodard Station, once home to Woodard Wrought Iron Furniture, is now a multi-use facility with 48 loft apartments; 36 student housing units home to about 130 Baker College of Owosso students; Guido's coffee shop; Hair Peace Salon and Spa, Maureen Hartson Photography; shared office space; a laundry and game room; and more. Soon it will have an optometrist's office and a physical rehabilitation center being built for Memorial Healthcare of Owosso. The health facility will include a large fitness area and two therapeutic pools for use by the hospital during the day and open to students and other tenants of Woodard Station during non-business hours.

In all, the project has generated nearly 200 jobs and provided a facelift for a part of the community that desperately needed it. The unsightly gravel road that once bordered the buildings is now a nicely paved street with pedestrian-friendly lighting and sidewalks. Owners of properties around Woodard Station also have spruced up their areas. "It's really amazing what they've done over there," said Owosso City Manager Joseph Fivas. "This was an area of our community that had a significant amount of blight and this development completely changed that. It has created a place where people live and people from a three-county area come and enjoy. It has just turned into an active place."

One anchor of the project is the highly successful Wrought Iron Grill restaurant, which opened about two years ago to rave reviews and constant crowds. The restaurant has become a destination point for visitors and a place for the residents of the

Left: Maintenance worker Robert Barnum paints a wall.

Right: Pipes and wood from the original factory were used to make bathroom counters in Woodard Station apartments.




many loft apartments and student housing to dine and hang out, Morgan said.

Morgan was so impressed with the project that he became among the first residents in the loft apartments shortly after he was hired as Owosso's director of economic development in February of 2009.

Travis Yaklin was in Woodard Station a couple years ago getting his hair cut and was so inspired by what he saw that he and his wife decided to open a coffee shop and deli. Guido's opened in November of 2008. "There's nothing like this in Shiawassee County," Yaklin said. "It reminds us of downtown Chicago—that big city atmosphere. I always dreamed of opening my own business and I told my wife, 'If we're going to do something we should do it here.' "

Having a big-city feel in a small town is exactly what developer Bosgraaf was aiming for. "I live in a mixed-used

development (in Holland) and there's a demand for it," Bosgraaf said.

"People have gone back from the suburbs to mixed-use because there's excitement there. You can go to the fitness center, have coffee or dinner, get your hair done—all without leaving the building. You're kind of building your own community. That's what Woodard Station is. It has become its own community." 

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

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A Gift FROM THE PAST

*Northern Michigan Area Has New Use for
Former 'Asylum for the Insane'*

By Andrea Messinger



Old, maybe neglected, a building, a block, or an entire state hospital can be restored and recast into the world for a new purpose. There's a 125-year-old facility in Traverse City that's a living example of old becoming new again.

Reuse is not always easy—as this Traverse City example shows—but it can be inspirational and go a long way toward transforming life in communities large and small. Nostalgic, perhaps with a hint of modern romance, these sites preserve our sense of heritage and offer a chance to live in step with our ideals.

The Northern Michigan Asylum for the Insane was built in 1885. It was an elaborate, self-sufficient community producing its own heat, electricity, furniture, and food year-round. But by 1989, the rise in funding cuts and successful drug therapies turned Traverse City's largest employer into a ghost town.

For children growing up in the area, the empty grounds were sort of an enchanted place, with skyscraping willows and overgrown gardens that could captivate for hours. Schoolyard tales of haunted buildings and underground torture chambers took the game of truth-or-dare to a whole new level. To state officials, however, the hospital's crumbling infrastructure and obsolete buildings were a stark contrast to modern standards. Despite its historic significance, the property was deemed hazardous and slated for demolition. A grassroots group stopped the action and turned to the community for help. By 1993, the city of Traverse City and Garfield Township acquired the land and put the Grand Traverse Redevelopment Corporation (GTCRC) in charge of implementing a reuse program.

Then, not long after taking over the property, the GTCRC proposed getting rid of the hospital's main structure, known as Building 50, a notable landmark for many local residents. From this threat another grassroots organization emerged. The "Committee to Preserve Building 50" raised money, petitioned, and

ultimately won its campaign for a national search to identify a firm that could restore the campus and keep it open to the public.

The first developer failed and the community went back to the drawing board. Although there was a push to transform the area into an assisted living facility, local developers and planners spoke up about the demand for vibrant, mixed-use projects that would create a greater likelihood of success. In 2000, The Minervini Group applied for the job. The organization was a local team assembled by Traverse City resident and respected historic renovator and builder Ray Minervini.

"My father's intent was to preserve the area's rich history, build a true neighborhood, and give future generations something beautiful and sustainable," spokesman Raymond Minervini II said.

Concerns about a stigma associated with redeveloping a former mental institution were set aside after market research demonstrated strong interest in the project. The Minervinis worked with the community to establish



The historic front lawn of the former asylum was the site of the Second Annual Village Bocce Ball Tournament in July, drawing nearly one hundred players from the Traverse City area. Photo by Kristen Messner.



Top Left: Condominium owners Annie and Craig Okerstrom-Lang prepare appetizers during a casual dinner party for Village neighbors. Photo by Kristen Messner.

Bottom Left: The organic and naturally leavened breads from Pleasanton Brick Oven Bakery are just some of the many local goods offered at the weekly Village Farmer's Market. Photo by Kristen Messner.



"Ray is building something unique, he really wants people that are passionate about what they do and make. He purposefully built smaller units to support mixed-income tenants, and right now he's working on creating affordable rental housing," said Traverse City Planning Director Russell Soyring.

Located about a mile from downtown and right next to northern lower Michigan's largest employer, Munson Medical Center, The Village is home to a variety of physicians and other professionals. A destination for visitors and townies alike, it attracts entrepreneurs, artists, food connoisseurs, and anyone looking to enjoy the local culture.

"The Village is a strong, multi-economic and multi-generational community," Minervini II notes. "The people here are highly entrepreneurial and passionate about what they do. Twenty-somethings and 70-somethings coexist and together create a vibrant, sustainable way of life."

The feelings inspired by the modern-day shops, eateries, and professional services are perhaps amplified by the ever-present spirit of Dr. James Decker Munson, the asylum's first superintendent. A firm believer that "beauty is therapy," Munson would probably like knowing the exotic trees and plants from around the world he provided his patients still bring joy and peace to the area.

Munson also held a "work is therapy" belief. Hiking the many trails to and from buildings where farming, furniture construction, and fruit canning once gave his patients a purpose, is indeed rehabilitating. The 480-acre New York Central Park-like setting includes preserved parkland, historic arboretums and inviting hiking and biking trails.

financing through private investment and funding mechanisms, utilizing brownfield redevelopment tax credits and TIF, historic tax credits, renaissance zones, and two \$1 million grants for cleanup from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Starting in 2002, the first phase of the project was finished 11 months ahead of schedule. While major renovations continue, by 2005, the old state hospital was transformed into The Village at Grand Traverse Commons. It is now a neighborhood within a vibrant city—complete with condos, offices, shops and more. The Village is best described as old-world, historic charm meets cosmopolitan vitality.

The diversity of the community brings about an array of cultural events and activities such as live music performances, church worship, ladies nights and more. The Village's summer farmer's market was so popular it moved indoors for the winter where local growers gladly offer their greenhouse goods along with honey and jams year-round.


The development is far from complete but at almost full occupancy. The renaissance zone makes it a tax-free choice for commercial businesses and startup companies while urbanites are eager to invest in residential units.

"There isn't a lot of capital for Ray to work with, but he's taken an approach that's really appropriate. He's staying flexible and letting the marketplace decide what's next instead of planning really far ahead," Soyering said. "Sinking everything into sewer lines and infrastructure for down the road can kill a project like this." With \$42 million in private investment to date, the Village is the proud creator of more than 300 new jobs. "We're growing high-skilled jobs in ones and twos," Minervini II said.

With so much excitement around the Commons, city officials are exploring the logical next step—a transit system connecting downtown, the marina, and the area's anchor institutions, including Northwestern Michigan College and Munson Medical Center. One of the key advantages to adopting an economic development strategy that includes trends in community design like reuse and public transit is that it combats urban sprawl—the cheap, new-build construction on

the outskirts of town that isolates people, jobs, and economies. Unlike these developments, The Village shares in the qualities and characteristics that have historically made the healthiest and most vibrant neighborhoods. It is environmentally responsible, diverse and walkable with various housing options and a healthy business climate.

Dynamic initiatives like The Village at Grand Traverse Commons and other reuse projects, such as the City Opera House and State Theatre, are what set Traverse City apart for those who want their city to say something about who they are and what they believe in.

As the Minervinis like to say, Building 50 was Traverse City's white elephant; every community has a burdensome gift from the past that has potential value. To transform it into something of lasting importance for a community takes a strong grassroots organization, and one or two committed entrepreneurs working with local leaders toward a common goal. 

Andrea Messinger is legislative and communications coordinator for the League. She can be reached at 734-669-6318 or amessinger@mml.org.



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From Forgotten Factory to State-of-the-Art Building

By Julie Swidwinski



Mt. Pleasant Mayor Jim Holton

After sitting vacant for the better part of 40 years, the Borden building was a fading vestige of Mt. Pleasant's once flourishing agricultural industry. The structure—with its blighted exterior, frequent vandalism, and environmental contamination—was an eyesore to those entering the city's Central Business District. It was even tagged as a “symbol for all that is not right with the downtown” in a 2003 Hyett Palma study. After fifteen failed attempts to restore the

building, its future was bleak. However, the new millennium brought new ambitions for the building. Once its true potential was uncovered, the community quickly stepped up to save the historic Michigan treasure.

“Preserving our community's past has always been a priority for our city,” said Mt. Pleasant Mayor Jim Holton. “This is never more evident than in our downtown, which is committed to maintaining historic architecture and finding modern reuses for prized structures.”

Constructed more than 100 years ago by the Borden Condensed Milk Company, the two-story commercial Italianate structure was built on the banks of the Chippewa River. The Michigan Condensed Milk Factory, also known as the Borden Creamery, was one of the few milk factories that produced both condensed milk and butter. In its glory days, the factory processed more than 200,000 pounds of milk per year from 500 local dairy farmers. After the factory was closed in the 1960s, however, the structure saw little use.

Redevelopment of the factory proved difficult as the property was often overlooked as too small for developers with historic rehabilitation experience or too big for dreamers with minimal resources. Proposals to transform the Borden building into a community center, urban mall, university classrooms, post office, and more, came and went with little fruition.

“The stream of ideas to reuse the Borden building seemed endless,” said City Manager Kathie Grinzinger. “Over the decades, many proposals for adapting the landmark were examined, but nothing ever materialized. Finally, after 40 years had passed, it became evident that if the building was going to be saved, it needed to be done quickly.”

In early 2002, the city solicited proposals from developers willing to tackle the redevelopment of the aging industrial site. The J.E. Johnson Group of Midland presented a plan to purchase and rehabilitate the structure while maintaining its historic appeal. The assistance of numerous local and state



The Michigan Condensed Milk Factory (Borden Creamery) opens in 1908.

organizations followed, with offers of various tax credits, environmental cleanup funds, and adaptations to historic regulations.

The final piece of the funding puzzle lay in the hands of Mt. Pleasant residents. In 2005, residents approved the sale of the former city hall building, helping raise part of the \$3.5 million needed to purchase a condominium in the Borden building. This 28,000-square-foot space would house the municipal offices. Residents knew the decision would ultimately raise their taxes .6 mills. In the end, the community enthusiastically supported the rehabilitation of the historic landmark by nearly a two-to-one margin.

"It was simply a momentous time for Mt. Pleasant," Mayor Holton said. "The city was buzzing with pride because we knew that when all was said and done, the community was reinvesting in both our past and future."

Since the Borden building is listed on the National Register of Historical Places, its rehabilitation had to be precise. The building's exterior, along with key interior features, needed to match its original construction as closely as possible. The entire process was overseen by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and the local Historic District Commission.

Once cleanup and construction began in April 2007, crews faced a number of obstacles that could have halted the project. More than 20 artesian wells were discovered underground on the site that was to become a public parking lot. Tanks filled with contaminated molasses and unknown materials needed to be disposed. The brick smokestack and water tower, which served as historical landmarks to the residents, were too badly damaged for repair. Asbestos and lead paint removal delayed construction for weeks.

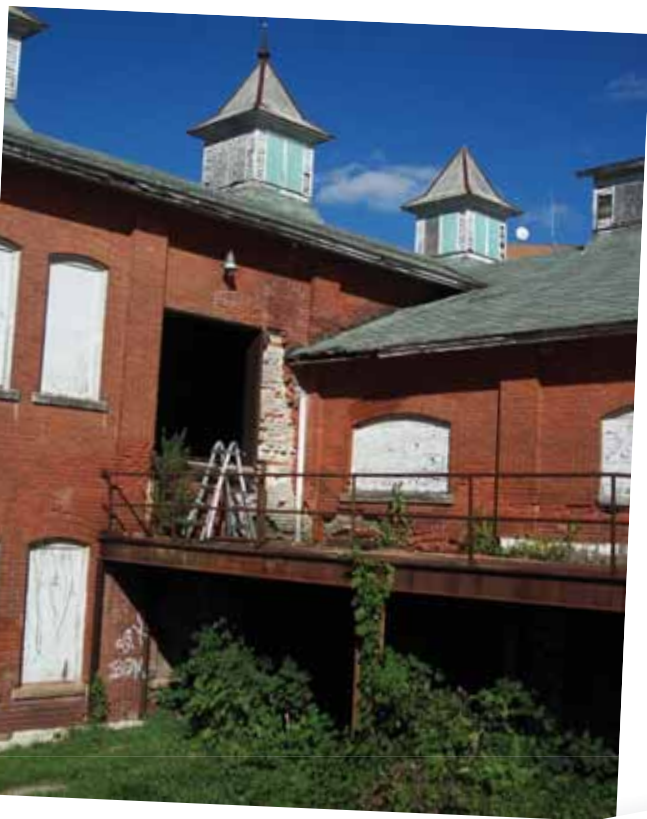
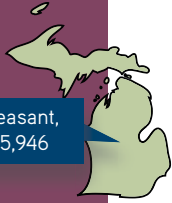
"At times it seemed like such a mess," Grinzinger said. "But we knew that this cleanup was necessary to create a safer, more vibrant community for our residents."

Using a photograph taken around 1910 as a guide, rehabilitation began brick-by-brick. Crews sifted through the building's original 400,000 bricks, reusing those they could and incorporating matching replacements where needed. Old shingles and decking on the roof were removed. Specially milled, historically accurate tongue-and-groove decking was installed and covered with new green shingles that matched the original. Hundreds of windows were constructed to match the initial design, and eight magnificent cupolas, complete with handcrafted finials, were built on-site to sit atop the building.

The Creamery restoration was a monumental undertaking of 40 years of trying and 17 attempts to pull it off. Using a photograph taken around 1910 as a guide, rehabilitation began brick-by-brick. The entire process was overseen by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and the local Historic District Commission. The project created a rallying point in the community and increased civic pride during tough times.

Photos courtesy of the city of Mt. Pleasant.

Mt. Pleasant,
pop. 25,946




Although the exterior of the building is straight from a history book, the interior was rehabilitated into state-of-the-art office space. Mt. Pleasant's municipal offices account for roughly 75 percent of the building. The city's commission chambers are located in what was the factory's boiler room that provided heat for the milk condensing process. The remainder of the structure is occupied by other tenants, resulting in an increased tax base for the city.

At the project's completion stood a structure that enhanced the Mt. Pleasant community in more ways than one. In addition to developing the city's first historic district, the project created a signature entrance to Mt. Pleasant's west side and downtown community. The rehabilitation also spurred the expansion of the city's Greg K. Baderschneider River Walk Trail; added public parking and completed the streetscape in the downtown area; and created a unique water feature that captures the flow from the discovered artesian wells. Mt. Pleasant's overall investment in the project exceeded \$7 million.

Since the building's grand opening in December 2008, the efforts of the community have not gone unnoticed. Last year, the Borden building received the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation. The project was also honored with a finalist nomination for the Michigan Municipal League's Community Excellence Award and a presidential plaque from Keep Michigan Beautiful.

The Borden building continues to make the Mt. Pleasant community proud. Not only is it a reminder of the city's rich history as the heart of central Michigan's agricultural beginnings, but the forgotten factory turned state-of-the-art structure also serves as an example of how preservation can meet the needs of the 21st century.

"We can save our past and build our future, without sprawl, strengthening our city centers," said an editorial written in the *Morning Sun*, a daily newspaper that serves central Michigan. "We can do it when the right dreams meet the right incentives—and in the Borden building project, they did." 

Julie Swidwinski is the community information coordinator for the city of Mt. Pleasant. You may reach her at 989-779-5322 or jswidwinski@mt-pleasant.org.



1907 construction ~

- Construction of the condensed milk factory began in January 1907, and was completed in less than six months.
- Approximately 40,000 cubic feet of concrete was laid in the foundation and floors.
- The foundation of the 125-foot smokestack contained more than 4,500 cubic feet of concrete and extended down to the "hard pan" (bed rock).
- Roughly 75 tons of roofing steel was used, with roof shingles made of asbestos slate. The material, when first used, was heralded for its fire retardant properties.
- The building contains four layers of brick; more than 400,000 in all.
- A large whistle was used to notify factory workers of specific times during the day: 7 am, 7:15 am, noon, 1 pm and 6 pm.
- Monday, May 15, 1908 was the first day milk was processed. At the end of the first day, 10,000 pounds of milk were processed, just a third of the overall capacity of the factory.
- A grand opening was held with an eight-piece orchestra playing. Men were charged 25 cents each to help defray the costs of the party. More than 2,500 people attended the open house.



- At the height of production, 500 milk farmers were using the factory which processed 200,000 pounds of milk per year. That's the equivalent of 228,571 cans of condensed milk, or 626 cans per day.
- The leftover condensed milk that was too thick for canning purposes was sold to make caramel candy. Some of the caramels made their way back to the factory and were given to children who came to town with their parents to deliver milk from their dairy farm.



Although the exterior is straight from a history book, the interior of the building was rehabilitated into a state-of-the-art office space. City Hall was moved to the new building, with commission chambers located in the factory's former boiler room.

Below: The finished building, photo by Tim Fitzgerald.



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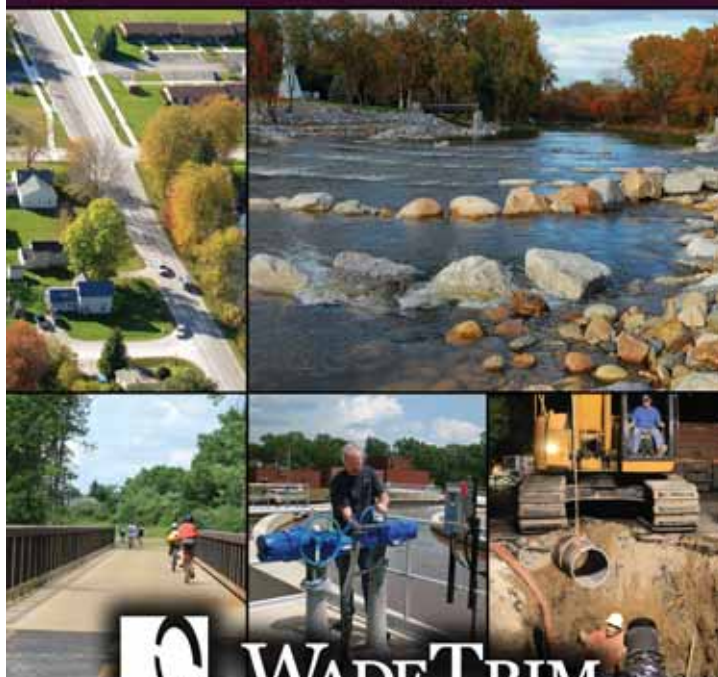
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FLINT REDEVELOPMENT BRINGS

NEW ENERGY

DOWNTOWN

By Matt Bach

The 1989 documentary film *Roger & Me* cemented Flint as the poster child for a community down on its luck. This birthplace of General Motors would often find itself the subject of national headlines on the declining auto industry and related economic woes—crime, blight, unemployment, poverty, etc.... Lately, however, Flint has been turning heads for its positive changes. It is steadily transforming from factory to college town—with the academic reputation to attract top students and businesses, and the housing demand to attract developers. Uplifting stories about Flint have recently appeared in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and other national publications. Much like the “Little Engine” children’s story, Flint is gaining a reputation as the town that could.

City leaders admit they have a ways to go, but like anything else, success has to start somewhere. Part of the turnaround is attributed to a variety of redevelopment and reuse projects in the heart of downtown. “Flint’s upgraded downtown serves as the hub of our growing higher education, health care, and financial sectors. It’s the common ground where we can all come together from across the city and county,” said Flint Mayor Dayne Walling.

As home to four institutions of higher learning—Kettering University, the University of Michigan-Flint,



Starting with a grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the group bought about a dozen buildings. Not sure what to do at first, they eventually went with the mixed-use development concept that once made Flint's downtown *the* place to be.

"We collectively came up with the idea of putting mixed retail on the ground floor and adding residential space on the upper floors," said Scott Whipple, development and project manager for Uptown Developments. "We thought it would be beneficial to enlivening downtown. The residential component is not the most lucrative part—it's really the office component that anchors these projects. But we need people to make the businesses on the first level successful so they can all feed off each other."

Chris Everson, 42, and his wife Jasmin, 29, are among those filling up the many loft apartments in Flint. Chris works downtown and loves being able to walk to his job just blocks away, or grab a bite to eat at one of the many new restaurants a half block away. "I like the energy of downtown," Everson said. "I moved downtown in 1994, when it was desolate. Now, there are people out every night, hanging out and going for walks downtown. It's fun to see downtown coming alive."

Currently, Uptown Developments has \$30 million worth of investment planned for downtown Flint in seven projects.

"I've been in Flint since 1976, and I've seen many attempts to move downtown forward fail," said Mel Serow, a former Flint television reporter who is now public relations manager for UM-Flint. "I think this time the movement is right. I think the backers are in place, and I see more happening now than ever before. I'm very optimistic that we're going in the right direction."

The burgeoning college population helped lure developers, as did the fact that the next generation of young adults have shown that they are tired of the suburbs and want to be downtown. "I think everybody has seen what happen to cities like Boston and Philadelphia, with universities completely driving their economies," Whipple said. "This is what we're hoping to see happen in Flint. I think we're just scratching the surface."

In the fall of 2009, Uptown Developments opened the first phase of the Riverfront Residence Hall project. This project put student housing in a former 16-story, 340,000-square-foot hotel located across the street from the UM-Flint campus and a short drive from the other area colleges. The first eight floors and 250 units are complete and a second phase with an additional 250 units is slated to open this fall, Whipple said.



Top: The top floor of the mixed-use Rowe building boasts eight luxury loft apartments.

Bottom: Consulting firm Rowe Professional Services Company Inc., relocated its headquarters to the second and third floors.

Baker College, and Mott Community College—Flint regularly experiences an influx of close to 30,000 students, many of whom need housing, places to dine, and shopping outlets. Developers and civic leaders are relying on this large student population and the many under-utilized buildings constructed during the auto industry's boom times to revitalize downtown. In less than a year's time, downtown Flint has seen the addition of five new restaurants and/or nightclubs, and later this year, the first full-service grocery store downtown has seen in decades, is expected to open.

The Elements of Change

A leader in the change is Uptown Developments LLC, founded in 2002 by a team of seven local business owners and investors to acquire and renovate real estate in downtown.



Left: Interior of the new Wade Trim offices.

Right: 1925-era First National Bank building underwent a complete renovation, offering residential lofts on floors three through seven.




Additional reuse and redevelopment projects in downtown Flint include:

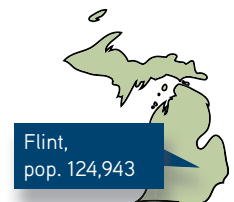
- The redevelopment of the 1925-era First National Bank building into 16 one- and two-bedroom lofts. The project won a 2007 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation.
- Half a city block that was torn down and rebuilt into a 25,000-square-foot mixed-used building. The new Wade Trim Building, named for the engineering firm that occupies the office space, offers five retail/restaurant/bar spaces on the ground floor, offices on the second floor, and four loft apartments on the third floor.
- A completed mixed-use redevelopment of the 83,000-square-foot Rowe Building in the center of downtown that includes the adaptive reuse of three historic buildings. The project cost \$22.7 million and renovated multiple buildings into one modern office-loft-retail luxury building with a four-story lobby atrium. The consulting firm Rowe Professional Services Company Inc. is the anchor tenant, and relocated its headquarters and about 85 staff members to the second and third floors. Two restaurant spaces with outside dining will flank the atrium lobby's main level. The top floor boasts eight luxury loft apartments, and the apartments and office spaces are fully occupied.
- The Durant Hotel, vacant since 1973, is being transformed into a mix of commercial space and apartments for students and young professionals. The hotel was named after William Durant, the founder of General Motors, who was born in Flint.
- The Berridge Hotel, formerly a 100-unit flophouse that rented space to ex-cons for \$20 a night, was gutted and remodeled into loft apartments in late 2008 under the name Berridge Place Loft Apartments. It has 17 units and is 100-percent full.

So Why Is This Happening?

Whipple credits the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, a private foundation based in Flint, for funding studies and grants to make many of these projects feasible.

Another key partner in Flint's revitalization is Uptown Reinvestment Corporation, a not-for profit organization with ties to Uptown Developments. Whipple explained that the corporation has a board of directors that allows them to funnel grants to the projects. "We're connected at the hip," Whipple said. "The purpose of Uptown Reinvestment Corporation has been to pursue grants that might be used to help make the Uptown Developments projects more financially successful. Our goal is to keep the debt down."

Another key to getting the projects was having patient investors committed to Flint. "Some of the investors behind Uptown Developments lived in Flint and did business here for many years, and they wanted to give back to the community," Whipple said. 



Matt Bach is communications director for the League. He can be reached at 734-669-6317 or mbach@mml.org.

BROWNFIELD CLEANUP

IS A NEGOTIATION PROCESS

By Jennifer Eberbach



The tannery buildings were closed in 2000 and demolished in 2007. In the 10 years the property has been slotted for redevelopment, no agreement has been reached on how to clean up and manage the contamination.

Whitehall,
pop. 2,884



Whitehall, Michigan's leather tannery was in operation for almost a century and a half before closing in 2000. The expansive 33-acre property located on the shore of White Lake caught the eye of Grand Rapids-based company Eastbrook Homes, which is set to

build more than 200 condominiums on the site. However, the site's soil and accompanying wetlands sit contaminated by what Whitehall City Manager Scott Huebler calls, "the big three, using auto-industry jargon—methane, mercury, and ammonia," he reports. The presence of these contaminants, as well as additional pollutants that exist "at varying levels," present concerns over public health and the environment.

Although the tannery was demolished in 2007, reaching a final agreement about how to clean up and manage the contamination has not happened in the decade that the property has been slotted for redevelopment. Between property owner Genesco, which is responsible for the cleanup, the city, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the developer, consultants, the White Lake Public Advisory Council and the White Lake Association, "there are a lot of cooks in the kitchen," who "don't always agree,"

Huebler says. "It's not that too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the broth, but a lot of cooks make it more complicated," he explains.

Despite the contamination, "this was the largest track of waterfront land that Eastbrook Homes could find available for redevelopment along the whole west Michigan coastline," Huebler explains. It is predicted that the units will appeal largely to people looking for second homes and vacation homes. Potential buyers have already started inquiring about when they will be available, he reports.

Before redevelopment can happen many different decisions needed to be finalized about how to clean up the contamination. For example, "methane gas migrates, and in an enclosed structure it could accumulate into being explosive. We are looking at the likelihood of putting vapor barriers under all of the buildings," Huebler explains. Other consideration includes whether to remove mercury contamination from a nearby park, and what to do with six contaminated lagoons located west of the former tannery building.

The Muskegon Chronicle reported in January 2010, that "DEQ officials previously expected to have the proposal in hand in the fall," however, indecision over how to handle the six contaminated lagoons has stalled Genesco's final plan. One option is to manage the contamination with a groundwater capture system and a sunken barrier, according to the report.

However, Huebler reports “a public sentiment towards complete removal of the lagoons.” Removal was also recommended by the DEQ, however, he reports that they have not taken any official stance on whether to manage or to dig up the site.

Brownfield cleanup is “a negotiation process” that “requires a lot of patience,” Huebler says. Some site assessment is cut and dried. “If you exceed ten parts per billion” of a given contaminant, “that’s scientific. You either exceed it or you don’t. The questions for Whitehall is, if there is an ‘exceedance,’ how do you manage it?”


“Everyone can argue either side and anything in between, from complete removal [of the lagoons] to leaving them in place,” Huebler says. However, decisions only yield more questions. “If you decide to leave them in place, what are the options? If you dig them all out, it’s not just about digging them out—you have to take them to a proper landfill. What type of restoration goes back into place, and who pays for it?” he elaborates.

“The city’s position is to find the most economical, environmentally safe development or cleanup option out there. We are listening to the science. If that means the removal of the lagoons, we’ll back that. If it means leaving them in place and finding ways to manage the contamination, we can back that as well,” Huebler says.

The city received the following funds from DEQ for the project: an \$850,000 Clean Michigan Initiative

(CMI) brownfield grant; a \$748,000 CMI brownfield loan; and a \$400,000 waterfront grant. City officials are relying on eventual condo sales to help pay off the approximately \$3.5 million they may need to issue in bonds for site preparation and improvements to adjacent streets, and water and sewer pipes. Huebler is “confident that the city isn’t exposed to any kind of financial risk,” and calls the project “about a 99.8-percent guarantee for the city.”

“We don’t want to borrow \$3.5 million for street, water and sewer pipes, and then have none of the condos sell. On the side, we are working out an agreement with Eastbrook Homes where they would have a letter of credit in the city’s name in the amount of the outstanding balance. If they don’t sell a single condo, we’ve got the money in a bank that we can go to,” he explains.

Looking forward to having a final plan for cleanup that will be available for public review in the near future, Huebler hopes “everyone involved will say this will work. That’s a good solution. We can get behind it. Again, with all of these parties, nobody is going to totally get their way. It’s going to have to be a negotiation. We might have to give a little here to get something there.” 

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



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If you are a first-time manager or a student looking to become a manager, you may be thinking “How did my boss do it in my last city?” If you are new to Michigan, you may be wondering “what laws are different here than in my previous state?” Or you may be living the dream and all is well! In any case, sooner or later you will find yourself in need of help—someone who has encountered the situation you are experiencing and who may have sound advice for you. Even if you only need to “vent” a bit about the crazy daytime life you lead, it’s nice to have a non-judgmental friend or mentor. While the Michigan Municipal League (MML) or Michigan Township Association (MTA) can provide a vast litany of assistance with technical issues, you may find the need for some help in a more colloquial fashion.

The Michigan Local Government Management Association (MLGMA) is here to help! The Recruitment Committee of MLGMA has been charged with helping you find guidance when you need it, an avenue to vent when necessary, and an easy way to discuss issues big and small with other local government managers in Michigan.

MLGMA was created in 1927 to increase the proficiency of managers and administrators of city, county, village, township and other local governmental units, including councils of governments, in the state of Michigan; to strengthen the quality of local government through professional management; to encourage and support the council-manager form of local government; to maintain the high ethical standards of the profession; and to provide opportunities to enhance the professional development of its members.

The Recruitment Committee is working to increase MLGMA membership so managers can connect, network, and assist each other. If you are not a member, this is a good time to join. If you know a new manager, give her (or him) a copy of our latest newsletter and a membership form (found on the MLGMA.org website). This simple act may be the best present a new or soon-to-be manager ever receives. 



Jonesville Manager Adam Smith networking at an event.


Announcing National League of Cities 2010 Awards for Municipal Excellence!

The National League of Cities (NLC) is pleased to launch a new year of Awards for Municipal Excellence. Since 1989, this prestigious award has honored outstanding programs across the country that improve the quality of life in America’s communities.

NLC members are invited to nominate an innovative program in your city that has improved the quality of life for its residents by forming successful and productive partnerships or collaborations, effectively managing resources, creating innovative government policies, or implementing projects with tangible positive results.

NLC member cities of all sizes are welcome to submit nominations. Two winners will be selected in each of four population categories. The deadline for all submissions is May 5, 2010.

The eight winning programs will receive awards of either \$1,000 or \$2,000, and will have the honor of being publicly recognized for their outstanding achievements at a ceremony at NLC’s Congress of Cities Conference and Exposition in Denver, Colorado, November 30–December 4, 2010.

To learn more or obtain a copy of the 2010 nomination packet, please email awards@nlc.org, or visit the NLC website at www.nlc.org. 



Legal Spotlight

A column by Sue Jeffers

May Local Units of Government Now Adopt an Ordinance to Conduct Safety Inspections of Rental Mobile Homes?

Yes. Effective January 4, 2010, Michigan law now provides that a local unit of government may conduct safety inspections of rental mobile homes. This includes mobile homes in a mobile park or seasonal mobile home park, or a mobile home located outside a mobile home park, or a mobile home located outside a mobile home park or seasonal mobile home park, if the mobile home is being rented to a tenant by the mobile home's owner. Prior to passage of 2009 PA 215, only the state Mobile Home Commission (MHC) could conduct inspections of a mobile home in Michigan and those inspections were generally done only on a complaint basis. If a local unit of government wanted to set standards related to mobile homes that were higher than provided under the Mobile Home Commission Act, it was required to submit the proposed standard, prior to adoption as an ordinance, to the MHC for approval. The Mobile Home Commission, however, refused to approve any of the proposed standards submitted to it. PA 215 now authorizes a local unit of government to adopt an ordinance to inspect mobile homes which are rented to tenants for safety if the safety inspection ordinance applies to all other rental housing within the local governmental unit. MCL 125.2307.

What Is the Purpose of the Act?

Prior to passage of PA 215, a local unit of government was authorized to conduct safety inspections of rental homes and apartments within its

jurisdiction but not, as a general rule, to mobile home rentals. Inspections for safety of rental mobile homes were extremely limited by virtue of the Mobile Home Commission Act. The authorization to inspect rental mobile homes will now apply notwithstanding anything in section 17 of the Mobile Home Commission Act to the contrary. Section 17 requires the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) or its authorized representative to conduct physical inspection of mobile home parks and seasonal mobile home parks in accordance with DEQ standards. MCL 125.2317.

Local units can now adopt an ordinance to inspect a mobile home for safety within a mobile home park, within a seasonal mobile home park, or located outside a mobile home park or outside a seasonal mobile home park, if the mobile home is being rented to a tenant by the mobile home's owner.

In addition, a local unit of government can now propose a means to determine which mobile homes located within its jurisdiction are being rented to tenants by the owner. This includes imposition of a registration or a licensing requirement for renting mobile homes to tenants.

What Procedural Steps Are Included within the Act?


A local government may inspect mobile homes rented to tenants for safety compliance if the safety inspection ordinance applies to all other rental housing within the local unit.

Inspections for safety cannot require enforcement of any mobile home construction standards greater than those applicable to a mobile home under the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act, or standards and codes to which the home was constructed if it was constructed before application of that Act.

Inspection for safety would mean an inspection of a rental mobile home that is limited to ensuring the proper functioning or protection of these items:

- furnace,
- water heater,
- electrical wiring,
- proper sanitation and plumbing,
- ventilation,
- heating equipment,
- structural integrity, and
- smoke alarms.

If a local government inspects rental mobile homes for safety, the period between inspections may not be less than three years, unless the local unit is responding to a tenant's complaint. An inspection may not be conducted on a mobile home for which an occupancy permit has been issued by the local government in the preceding three years unless the local government is responding to a complaint from a tenant.

Thanks to Andy Schor, assistant director of state affairs for the League, for his assistance in the preparation of this column. 

2010 Community Excellence Awards Call for Entries

Enter the fourth annual “Race for the Cup”

Step 1: Register

The only way to enter is to attend your Regional Meeting and give a presentation on a municipal project or program. Register for your Regional Meeting, mark “yes” to enter the Community Excellence Awards (CEA), and fill out the entry form. There are seven regions, with seven different meeting dates, so each region has a different submission date.

Step 2: Prepare Entry

Prepare a five (5) minute presentation (past presentations have included DVDs, PowerPoints, display boards, show-and-tell—we encourage any and all displays of creativity).

Requirements

- Presentations can be no longer than five (5) minutes.
- PowerPoints or DVDs must be submitted to the League two weeks prior to the date of your Regional Meeting.

Step 3: Voting

Regional Meeting attendees vote for the winner on-site, and the winner is announced at the conclusion of the meeting. The seven regional winners go on to represent their communities in the final round at the League’s Annual Convention. Votes from the Convention delegation are counted by CEA official auditors Plante & Moran, and the winner is announced at the Convention’s final event.

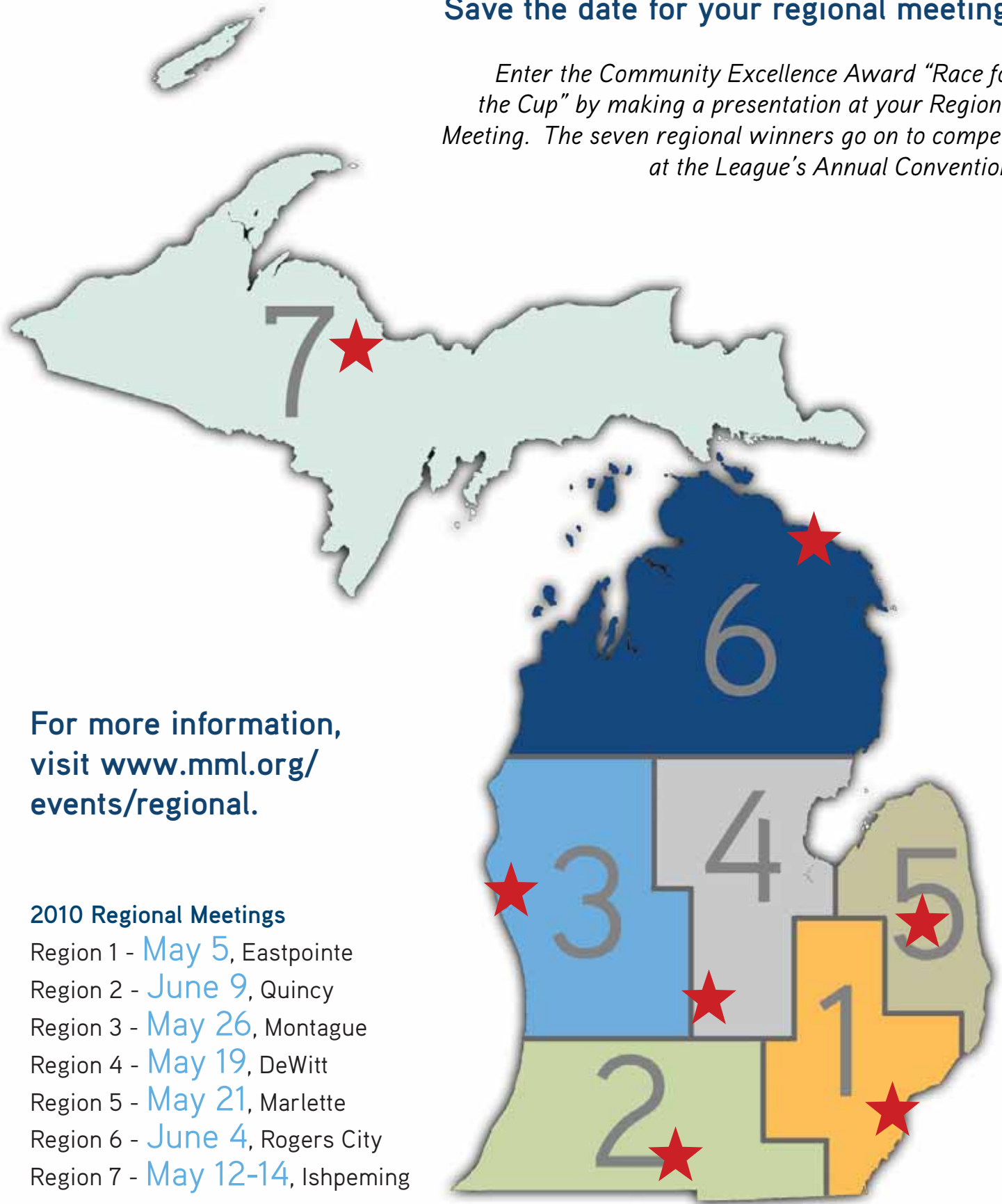
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'09 CEA winners Lathrup Village

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For more information,
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2010 Regional Meetings

- Region 1 - May 5, Eastpointe
- Region 2 - June 9, Quincy
- Region 3 - May 26, Montague
- Region 4 - May 19, DeWitt
- Region 5 - May 21, Marlette
- Region 6 - June 4, Rogers City
- Region 7 - May 12-14, Ishpeming



Northern Field Report

A column by Caroline Weber Kennedy

Reuse and Redevelopment: Adding Jobs by Ones and Twos (and more)

Winter is not yet over at the western end of the U.P., but since spring will be sending its first feeble threats of arrival by the time this magazine hits your mailbox, this article focuses on some redevelopment and job growth occurring in Gogebic County related both to winter and spring, having a positive impact on our three member cities there—Ironwood, Bessemer, and Wakefield.

Ironwood (pop. 6,293), Bessemer (pop. 2,148) and Wakefield (pop. 2,085) are typical of many Michigan communities—they *are small*. The League shares a lot of helpful data about the knowledge-based economy and how to attract talented millennials. We know these 24-35-year-olds are delaying their families and moving to higher density cities. But don't despair. Keep at it, with efforts like we're seeing in Gogebic County. Because some people simply like where they are and aren't going to move. Midwesterners in particular are loyal to their roots. If they move, they later tend to want to "move back." And millennials won't be 24-35 forever. Many will raise their children in Michigan's small, cozy communities.

The lessons still hold true wherever you are; it's just tougher in tough times. Develop your assets (www.mml.org/resources/21c3). Each community can shine a little brighter for the betterment of the region. Develop your connectivity. Make your community attractive to young professionals and retiring boomers alike. Continue developing your own unique sense of place, and help add jobs by ones and twos.

The Gogebic County Economic Development Corporation has been hard at work, involved with assisting in the ownership changes of two ski resorts and the extension of two renaissance zones—growing area jobs by ones and twos, and even more.

Big Powderhorn: Now a Full-Season Resort

There's no quicker fix for the long winter blahs than a great day on the slopes. But even better is the expansion of services now being offered at Big Powderhorn Mountain. Powderhorn completed an ownership change in late 2009 and now boasts 130 seasonal jobs, and will be filling approximately 25 non-seasonal full-time hospitality jobs. While Powderhorn was in full operation last winter, the



Blackjack Mountain. Photo by John Siira, Wakefield City Manager

new business plan is to be a full-season resort providing summer sports activities and hosting special parties. Exciting additions this season include the availability of breakfast, lunch, and dinner, a wireless internet café serving espresso, cappuccino and homemade desserts, and night skiing. Lodging capacity is a whopping 3,000, and probably one of the most significant changes aiding the redevelopment is that both the ski operations and lodging are now under one owner.

Blackjack Mountain

Nearby Blackjack Mountain was closed last year, and prior to that was operational only 3-4 days a week during the season. Under new ownership, Blackjack was anxiously awaiting its liquor license, and with a concerted effort by local legislators and the Liquor Control Commission, "Blackjack's liquor license arrived three days prior to opening," noted Wakefield City Manager John Siira, a long-time ski instructor at Blackjack. "The employment is a big deal for this area, and the two hills are bringing in visitors from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois—new money for Michigan's economy and helpful for the sorely needed tax base." According to Gogebic County Economic Development Corporation/Commission Executive Director and Brownfield Director Donna Scorse, Blackjack has approximately 80 seasonal employees with 5-8 full-time non-

seasonal. The two hills provided a significant employment boost this winter and hope to expand those non-seasonal opportunities. But as warm weather melts away some of those seasonal positions, area residents are also hopeful about additional employment opportunities being created through the extension of two local renaissance zones.

Ren-Zones Extended


The original zones were set to expire, but were recently extended another full 15 years. Expected to open in the spring are two mills in Marenisco Township; one producing hardwood flooring and the other offering basic lumber cutting. The mills will operate in a previously existing facility that manufactured windows in approximately 60,000 square feet, that was vacant for the past seven years or so. The mills represent close to \$1 million in owner equity and are expected to create 20-25 full-time positions.

Renaissance Zones provide businesses with a place to develop, virtually free of state and local taxes, with a gradual phase-in plan to regular tax rates by the end of the agreement.

The extension of a second ren-zone in Wakefield Township will benefit U.P. Recycling, a full-metal recycling plant that began about six months ago and consists of new construction. The full-metal plant employs three full-time positions with a possible expansion to five. Even more exciting however, is the second phase of the business plan, that entails tire shredding for purposes of bio-fuel. The plant is currently exploring its equipment needs and considering capital investment of almost \$3 million, and is expected to create 13-18 new full-time jobs.

Stay Tuned For Orvana

Orvana Mining Company would have the biggest impact on the area if they are able to open a branch of copper mining. The company has made significant investments locally of \$3-4 million in boring and in community efforts—providing small donations and helping to fund local projects. The company is currently undertaking a water feasibility study and reviewing additional infrastructure needs; it anticipates beginning the permitting process in 2011, and hopes to be up and running by 2013.

These projects don't "recreate" the western U.P., but steadfastly re-build on existing assets. These economic infusions will bolster the tax base that allows our communities to put their best foot forward in creating welcoming venues for visitors and residents alike. 

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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The state's most comprehensive pay and benefits data is at your fingertips! The League is currently conducting its annual pay and benefits survey and only respondent communities are provided access to the results. This is the only survey of its kind in the state; it covers 143 municipal job titles and includes data on both pay and benefits. Our searchable database allows users to set parameters such as population and geographic area, and to export results into user-friendly Excel spreadsheets in a matter of seconds. Don't miss your chance to participate! Contact Heather Van Poucker at hvanpoucker@mml.org for more information.



Municipal Q&A

A column coordinated by Mary Charles

Q: Our village president resigned, and now we need to fill the vacancy. We are not sure how to proceed. Do we have to advertise for the position? Is there a time limit for when the vacancy has to be filled?

A: Filling a vacancy in the office of president in a general law village is done by majority vote of the council. There is no requirement to “advertise” for the open seat—though it is an option. You can advertise and ask candidates to fill out applications, or you can simply announce the vacancy at a council meeting and see what sort of interest you receive.

The General Law Village Act (Act 3 of 1895) does not give a timeline to fill a vacancy. It is up to the council to fill a vacancy as expediently as possible. In comparison, the majority of Michigan cities require vacancies in office to be filled in 30 days. Some extend the requirement to 60 days, and a few to 90 days.

Q: Our council is considering reducing or eliminating its compensation. Is it true that an elected official’s pay cannot be reduced during a term of office? What are our options, and how do we proceed?

A: It is possible for a city council to reduce its own compensation. It should be done with the same procedure that set the compensation in the first place—so, if compensation is set by ordinance, it should be reduced by ordinance. If it is set by resolution, the new compensation should also be set by resolution. If it is set by city charter, the charter must be amended. The variable to this would be if your city has a Local Officers Compensation Commission, which is authorized by the Home Rule Cities Act to set compensation (and reduce it). MCL 117.5c et seq.

If you heard that a council’s compensation could not be changed during a term of office, the likely source of this statement is the Constitution of the state of Michigan. The Constitution does not allow for the compensation of state elective officers to be changed during the term of office.


Note to villages:

According to the General Law Village Act (Act 3 of 1895), village council compensation must be set by ordinance. Council pay can be increased or decreased by ordinance.

Q: What can we do about councilmembers who miss council meetings? Is it possible for a councilmember to participate in a council meeting by phone or by teleconferencing? Can councilmembers vote by proxy?

A: There are at least two parts to this question. If you want to deal with council absences, you can enact a policy in your council rules that restricts absences to those that are excused by council. Alternatively, you could decide that three unexcused absences result in a councilmember getting removed from office, or some other type of censure. If you are a general law village and are having trouble finding enough residents to serve adequately on council, you can consider reducing the number of trustees from six to four. This is done by ordinance. (For a sample ordinance on reducing the number of trustees, please go to www.mml.org and search for “reducing trustees.”) Regarding the method of how a councilmember participates in a council meeting, the Open Meetings Act regulates meetings of public bodies in Michigan, and it requires members of a public body to be physically present to deliberate and vote on issues.

Q: Should municipalities be doing something about medical marijuana?

A: Municipalities should definitely be considering if and how they want to respond to the Michigan Medical Marijuana Act. The Act is not as specific as it could be, and leaves many unanswered questions. Please visit our website (www.mml.org and search for marijuana) for information and to see the date of our Medical Marijuana education seminar. 

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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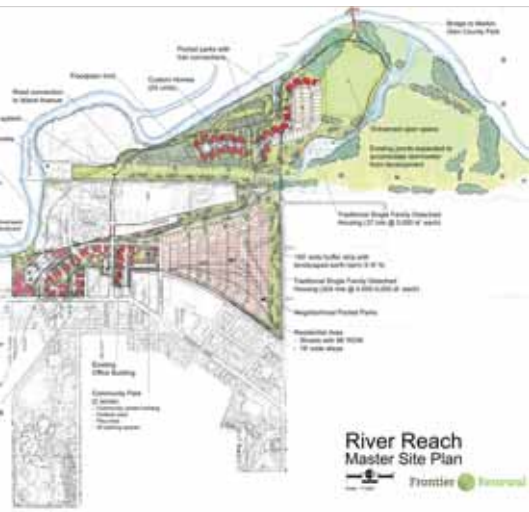
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The city of
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Starting in the
1930s, the city
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of economic growth resulting from a healthy paper industry, leading to quality neighborhoods, a top-level school system, caring and efficient government services, and an abundance of local recreational and cultural amenities. With the decline of the paper industry at the turn of the century, Parchment citizens were forced to plan for life without the community's largest employer, originally the Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Company and later Crown Vantage Paper. And, when the company ceased operations in 2001, work began in earnest to chart a new course.

In 2008, city leaders announced plans for the River Reach project, a mixed-use redevelopment of more than 130 acres of former paper mill property. Partnering with brownfield redevelopment specialists, the plan calls for demolition and redevelopment of the site into a new commercial, retail, and residential center bordering the Kalamazoo River. The project is supported by \$2 million in state brownfield funds and more than \$46 million in Michigan Business Tax credits. Environmental remediation work is currently underway and demolition activities are planned for mid-2010.

When complete, more than \$100 million in private investment is expected to help sustain the high quality of life developed back in the days of the paper industry.

The city is located on Kalamazoo's northern border on the beautiful Kalamazoo River. The 1930 population of 511 residents has grown steadily to 1,936 people in 2009. The city has its own police and fire departments, water system, wonderful community library, award-winning school system, and 40-acre Kindleberger Park. Parchment residents, and residents from all over the region, enjoy community events such as the Kindleberger Festival of the Performing Arts in July, the Kindleberger Stage Concert Series with performances every Sunday evening during the summer, and the Parchment Wassailing holiday celebration in December.

First Community Federal Credit Union built a new corporate headquarters in Parchment in 2003 strengthening an already diverse financial sector. Many businesses call Parchment home—that, along with a thriving service industry—keep the Parchment economy healthy.

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