



2023-2024 Core Legislative Principles

Enhancing the human experience in ways that benefit all.

This document, which is approved annually by the Michigan Municipal League Board of Trustees and membership, establishes our core legislative principles for the year. It is big picture and aims to support the state's prosperity from the bottom up, ensuring local governments have the resources and tools to serve its residents now and into the future. It recognizes local governments as the economic engine of this state and the foundation for regional and state prosperity. Our decades-long work in placemaking has evolved to include active community wealth building, which in essence is placemaking with an equity lens. The elements of this framework have been incorporated throughout the core legislative principles discussed here.

Community Wealth Building

We define community wealth building as forming strategies that build community and individual assets in ways that enhance the human experience and create resilient and adaptable systems to address social and economic needs.



LIFELONG LEARNING—the journey of education and training is recognized as spanning from young childhood through K-12 education and post-secondary pathways to ongoing opportunities for adult learners.



FINANCIAL SECURITY—municipalities, community institutions, families and individuals are fiscally healthy; economic systems ensure a community can be economically resilient and allow for the continued proliferation of prosperity.



PUBLIC HEALTH—quality of life disparities are recognized and addressed while services are focused on increasing health impacts and fostering the human experience in public life.



SUSTAINABILITY—natural resources are managed to ensure long-term sustainability of and harmony between the built and natural environment and leverage their worth as public assets.



ARTS & CULTURE—cultural identities, traditions and creative outputs are respected, celebrated and recognized as critical assets that build social fabric in a community.



INFRASTRUCTURE—the fundamental facilities and systems serving a county, city, or other area, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function.



TRUST in neighbors, community leaders, local governments and the other partners and services in place to help our communities thrive is essential to achieving community wealth.



BELONGING to the community is what strengthens the tie between community members and the place. Without people, a place is just a physical object. Connecting people who support each other and themselves in a localized way brings a place to life and increases access to community resources and social networks.



Trust and Belonging



Trust and a sense of belonging are essential elements in a community's ability to problem solve and marshal its collective resources to invest in its future. Building community wealth is the process that strengthens the ties between community members and the places where they live and work, creating an environment where trust and a sense of belonging can grow. Welcoming and inclusive communities further acknowledge and specifically address core quality-of-life disparities in an effort to increase trust and belonging among underserved populations. We commit to ensuring equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of local governance and community life.

Recommended Actions: Policies at all levels must be open and accessible. It's important to be transparent with residents in ways that foster inclusion of all people in a community, regardless of their income, race, color, religion, age, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin. To build prosperous communities, Michigan must be welcoming to all who wish to make its communities their home.

Municipal Finance and Services

For several years the League and our members have worked to reform the state's system for funding our communities. This work must continue because our system is fundamentally flawed in that it does not track with the economy.

Recommended Actions: Our fiscal model needs to evolve to meet the demands of a changing economy and for our communities to thrive. Reforms should provide fiscal stability and sufficient flexibility to allow for the necessary investments in attracting and retaining talent in ways that are equitable for all.

Infrastructure

The methods we use to move from one place to another, communicate, and interact both physically and virtually are fundamental assets for a working economy.

Recommended Actions: A strong partnership between local, state, and federal leaders is essential to establishing long-term reliable funding sources that support infrastructure maintenance and improvement. This work includes broadband access, roads and bridges, increased mobility options, and maximizing access to public transportation. Local governments must retain the right to establish, own, and operate existing, new, and emerging systems. Infrastructure investments should be prioritized for all communities.

Physical Design and Walkability

Dense, walkable settings are essential to providing healthy lifestyles that attract people and improve the human experience. The desire for places to provide this benefit is continuously identified among the durable assets and critical infrastructure in welcoming communities.

Recommended Actions: Creating and protecting authentic places requires smart planning and development, attainable housing opportunities for all residents regardless of financial or social status, infrastructure investment, and historic preservation. Revitalization at the local level requires a range of flexible zoning, planning, and financing tools bolstered by predictable and meaningful state and federal incentives, with priority for developed communities.

Public Health

Communities play a significant role in residents' ability to access a healthy lifestyle by creating zoning, transportation, communication, and economic development strategies that provide wide-ranging services. These services include walkable areas, attainable housing, safe drinking water, emergency assistance, outdoor green spaces and parks, and public recreation opportunities.

Recommended Actions: Disparities of quality of life between people need to be recognized and addressed. Policies should focus on collaboration with community stakeholders to promote healthier lifestyles and a healthier community. This can be done with services that are focused on increasing health impacts and fostering the human experience in public life.

Environmental Sustainability

Managing our natural resources to ensure long-term sustainability is essential to bringing harmony between the built environment and the natural environment. Michigan's unique natural resources position sets us apart on a global scale and provides an unparalleled quality of life for all our residents.

Recommended Actions: Local governments are key partners with state and federal agencies in protecting these resources, and in leading our collective transition to the new energy economy. State and federal policy should be flexible and supportive of local efforts to invest in energy efficiency, alternative energy, water quality, and related infrastructure. Financial resources and technical assistance for local initiatives are key to success.

Local Economic Development

Vibrant communities exist when everyone in that community prospers. Fiscally healthy communities, residents, and small businesses are resilient, and fuel accelerated prosperity.

Recommended Actions: Prioritize local economic development strategies aimed at leveraging existing talent, growing talent, and attracting at the local level. Recognize local governments and their residents as key partners in collaborative approaches to supporting and nurturing small business growth at the local and regional level.



Arts and Culture

Respect, celebrate, and recognize cultural identities, traditions, and creative outputs as critical assets that build the social and economic fabric in a community. This core concept is also a primary factor in attracting and retaining both residents and businesses, serving as an economic spark to a region.

Recommended Actions: Investment in arts and culture pays dividends directly and adds much to our collective quality of life and sense of place. State and federal policy should recognize the arts and culture sector as a strategic economic development partner and value it accordingly.

Education and Lifelong Learning

At all levels, our education institutions provide lifelong pathways to prosperity for all. In coordination with the business community, these anchor institutions and educators play a vital role in encouraging, facilitating, and assisting our residents to better themselves, and thus creating a sought-after workforce. If done right, this work will help grow our businesses and our state.

Recommended Actions: Empower local government to effectively collaborate with these key community stakeholders and participate as a partner in decisions that impact the broader community.