

Michigan Municipal League

Prosperity Agenda

Public Policies for a Prosperous Michigan



michigan municipal league



“The industries I think about most...are far more sensitive to the quality of talent in the area than they are to tax policies.”

- Bill Gates

What kind of Michigan do we want?

It’s a provocative question that dares us to dream about a better future, a better Michigan.

Abraham Lincoln said: “The best way to predict your future is to create it.” We can’t create it if we can’t dream it. Dreams become agendas; agendas become plans. Plans that become actions can change the world.

Through the Prosperity Agenda, the Michigan Municipal League is intent on creating a better future, a Michigan that prospers once again.

The Michigan Municipal League Prosperity Agenda answers the question: What kind of Michigan do we want? It’s a place, really...a place where people choose to live, learn, work and play once again, and where communities can meet their expectations—whether with fun and educational activities, efficient government services, health care, etc.

Communities where people choose to live, learn, work, and play are places where prosperity can be found.

A better and prosperous Michigan—that’s the Michigan we want. Together with you, and with the Michigan Municipal League Prosperity Agenda, we can create it. Here’s how.

CREATING PLACES OF PROSPERITY



Where does prosperity happen?

Increasingly, prosperity is happening in communities/places where high concentrations of college-educated, talented and creative people live. These people have skill sets that are transferable geographically. They can choose to live, work, and play pretty much wherever they want. Today, in large numbers they are choosing places such as Chicago, Minneapolis, Boston, Denver, Charlotte, Dallas, Austin and other communities that—because of certain public policies—offer the lifestyle, attributes and amenities they seek. The public policies adopted by these prospering cities have created places that are needed more in today’s Michigan.

What do prospering places offer that make them attractive?

While no two communities are the same—Austin is as different from Chicago historically and culturally as Texas swing is from Chicago blues—these and other prospering cities do offer a menu of lifestyle attributes attractive to talented, educated people. Public policies adopted by those communities and their states have created:

- Significant public transit systems (buses, light-rail, commuter rail, passenger rail) and other alternatives to driving including extensive networks of bike lanes, running and walking trails.
- Vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods where people live, learn, work, play, and shop in close proximity. In places where public policies have fostered “walkable urbanism,” driving a car is simply unnecessary.
- Mixed-use developments, where buildings tend to go up instead of out and where people can live, work, and shop, often under the same roof.
- Thriving entertainment and cultural attractions—so-called “third places” such as restaurants, cafes, and bars where people hang out to socialize, dance, access the Internet, read or even do a little work, art and historical museums, libraries, theaters, and nightclubs for movies, plays, and live music.
- Green spaces with parks, trails, gardens and fountains—perfect respites for a couple’s picnic, to take the kids to play, or to walk the dog.
- Economic development initiatives that are growing local economies by one, two and three jobs through strategies such as economic gardening and support for entrepreneurs.

We all know prosperity when we see it. Prospering states and communities have relatively low unemployment, high levels of personal income, significant commercial and residential investments, and growing populations...all needed in today’s Michigan.

If Minneapolis, Denver, Chicago, and Boston—*can you say, snowy and cold!*—can have these places, Michigan can too. The public policies proposed in the Prosperity Agenda can help us create them.



Public Policies to Create Places of Prosperity in Michigan

The Prosperity Agenda proposes public policies to create places in Michigan where prosperity happens. The Prosperity Agenda policies will create Michigan communities where:

- People are living, working, shopping, and playing without having to commute or travel great distances.
- Public transit is generating thousands of new jobs and billions of dollars in new commercial and residential development and redevelopment.
- Young, college-educated, talented and creative people are choosing to live.
- Places have bountiful offerings of art, culture, theater, music, restaurants, cafes, libraries, and green spaces.
- Mixed-use developments are sustainable now and for future generations, are environmentally friendlier, and cost less to maintain and operate.

We are calling on the 96th Michigan Legislature, Governor Rick Snyder, the business community, local elected leaders, and citizens to work together to pass the Prosperity Agenda in 2011 and 2012.

CREATING PLACES OF PROSPERITY



Prosperity Policy: Significantly expand public transit in Michigan

States are finding public transit to be a powerful economic development tool.

Across the nation, cities that have embraced public transit are generating thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in new development and redevelopment. Young, college-educated people are choosing to live, learn, work and play in these places.

Not one of these cities is in Michigan—though seeds to grow transit at least in modest ways were planted in the 94th Michigan Legislature and can be found in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, and Livingston County, where transit projects are moving forward.

Growing numbers of influential business and government leaders agree Michigan will never prosper again without adequate support for transportation and a significant expansion of public transit, including light-rail, commuter rail, passenger rail, and buses.

Policy Action: The Get Michigan Moving coalition, of which the League is a founding member, is working hard to pass public policies that advance transit expansions in key communities across the state. Go to GetMichiganMoving.org for more information.

Prosperity Policy: Protect public safety and other essential local services

No community can prosper without adequate police and fire protection, without clean drinking water, without sound infrastructure like roads and bridges, or without recreational opportunities and culture. These are among the services essential to quality of life and critical to creating places of prosperity.

The state and its citizens expect local communities to provide these basic services. To pay for the services, the Michigan Legislature appropriates “revenue sharing” funds to local governments. Yet since 2001, the Legislature has slashed statutory revenue sharing by more than \$3 billion without lifting the service requirements local governments are expected to meet.

Policy Action: The Legislature and governor must recommit to revenue sharing, give locals the flexibility to control tax dollars and costs in their own budgets, provide state resources to developed areas for services and job development, and grant locals the flexibility to offer revenue options for services demanded by citizens.

PROSPERITY POLICIES



Prosperity Policy: The federal government can play an important role in the revitalization of our communities.

The Recovery Act passed by Congress and President Obama is sending billions of dollars to states to create jobs by shoring up infrastructure and other critical programs. The intent of this funding is to stop the downward spiral of the U.S. economy and help state and local economies.

Yet, funding from the Recovery Act has been subject to current federal regulatory and funding mechanisms. These mechanisms do not always work in the best interest of local communities.

Local communities are on the front lines of providing essential services to citizens. These services work to create vibrant places and establish a high quality of life. As the Congress and the President discuss programs impacting transportation, infrastructure, economic development, telecommunications, housing, the environment and energy, they must not only provide adequate funding but propose policies that will assist local governments directly, so they can leverage all available resources to create strong, vibrant communities.

The League will work with the Michigan Congressional Delegation, federal administration, Michigan Legislature, and Governor Snyder to ensure funding benefits local communities.

Prosperity Policy: Give communities all available tools to manage costs and control revenues

Local governments need all available tools to efficiently and effectively manage revenues and costs. Controlling costs and managing revenues are indicators of well-run communities, where prosperity can occur. Labor costs consume the largest portion of local government budgets. And the biggest labor costs for local governments are police and firefighter wages. As currently written, Public Act 312 of 1969 does not foster local government efficiency. Here is how it works: When local officials and police or firefighter unions reach a collective bargaining impasse, the state appoints an arbitrator to hear from local elected officials and local union officials and then decide what wages and benefits will go to police and firefighters. The arbitrator does not have to base the decision on whether a local community can afford to pay the settlement, local community finances, staffing, or other priorities a community may have. The arbitrator simply imposes a decision that is mandatory for officials—and taxpayer dollars—to follow, regardless of how it affects the community as a whole. The result is often fewer dollars for new police officers and firefighters or other key community services. It can also result in layoffs of workers—including younger police officers and firefighters, who are sent packing so more senior workers can get better pay and benefits. For more information about PA 312, please visit mml.org.

Policy Action: Guidelines need to be created in PA 312 to enable local governments to appropriately manage their revenues and costs, and to allow them to put more police officers and firefighters on the street by effectively distributing the limited funds available.

CREATING PLACES OF PROSPERITY



Prosperity Policy: Promote sustainable development, green initiatives and cultural economic development

The terms sustainable development, cultural economic development, and green initiatives may not be familiar to most people, but they are as critically important and relevant to Michigan's future prosperity as manufacturing was to our past.

Each term reflects contemporary development practices and approaches aimed at restoring prosperity to existing communities. They help communities create the types of places where young, college educated, talented and creative people are choosing to live. Equally important, they help create communities that do a much better job of protecting the environment and maximizing tax funds and existing infrastructure so current and future needs can be met.

Cultural economic development is how communities grow jobs, tourism, and tax revenues through museums, art galleries, libraries, cultural heritage, live music halls and theaters. Educated, talented and creative people—young and old—flock to places that offer these types of attractions. Michigan is well positioned to take better economic development advantage of these attributes.

Sustainable development holds that a community should do as little damage as possible to the planet and should maximize the use of existing resources and infrastructure. An example is mixed-use development—buildings that go up instead of out and combine multiple uses under the same roof: residential, commercial, and retail. In addition to being attractive to younger people and the growing population of empty nesters, these types of developments allow communities to concentrate services and existing infrastructure more affordably. In short, they cost less to operate and maintain.

Here are some common elements of sustainable development and green initiatives:

- Development in areas with existing infrastructure that is under utilized. This reduces sprawl.
- Mixed-use development with retail, residential, and commercial in the same buildings.
- Projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Establishing and expanding public transit (buses, light rail, commuter rail, passenger rail, trolley lines, carpooling).
- Establishing and expanding bike lanes, walking and running trails.
- Developments and redevelopments with sustainable design principles, such as green building retrofits (high energy efficiency, lower water consumption).

Policy Action: The Legislature and governor must support laws that promote sustainable development, green initiatives, and cultural economic development.

Michigan Municipal League Prosperity Agenda Staff Contacts

For information about the League's Prosperity Agenda and public policy priorities that can help create a more prosperous Michigan, contact the staff of the Michigan Municipal League.

SUMMER HALLWOOD MINNICK

Director, State Affairs

517-908-0301, sminnick@mml.org

Municipal Finance

City income tax, property tax, state revenue sharing, state budget issues

ANDY SCHOR

Assistant Director, State Affairs

517-908-0300, aschor@mml.org

Economic Development & Land Use

Annexation, blight, brownfields, community revitalization, housing, planning/zoning

ARNOLD WEINFELD

Director, Public Policy & Federal Affairs

517-908-0304, aweinfeld@mml.org

Federal Affairs and Public Policy

Center for 21st Century Communities, Fiscal Responsibility Project, Get Michigan Moving Coalition, federal legislation

SAMANTHA JONES HARKINS

Legislative Associate

517-908-0306, sharkins@mml.org

Municipal Services

Elections, public safety, energy & technology electric restructuring, energy regulation, rights of way, telecommunications

NIKKI BROWN

Capitol Office Coordinator

517-908-0305, nbrown@mml.org