The League’s Public Policy Initiative

Communities for the 21st century

Creating communities not for the past 50 years, but for the next 50 years!

Change the conversation

It has little to do with...

- Lansing or Washington
- Tax structure
- High cost of housing
- Headlee Amendment
- Revenue sharing
Looking back

The way we were...

- One industry state—auto manufacturing
- "Good" jobs didn't require a four-year degree
- Jobs brought the people
- Detroit was a thriving urban center

Brutal facts

The way we are...

- Quality of life is declining
  - (In 2006, 26th in per capita income—a drop of 10 places in 6 years)
- Manufacturing as we know it is gone
- Not adapting to the knowledge-based economy
- We're under-investing in our universities and community colleges
- Talented millennials don't want to live here
  - 46% leave Michigan following graduation
- We're on our own

What happened?

Impact of global economy

- Knowledge-based
- Education counts, degrees matter
- Technology allows people to work anywhere; they are choosing the cities
- Mobile population
- "Place" attracts people
- Young people choose where to live first, then look for work
- World-wide competition for talent
Name this city!

It's shockingly expensive. The roads are jammed with traffic, The subway system's no better. There's a surveillance camera on every other corner, and the sidewalks are strewn with litter. The airport is a joke. The richest residents are fleeing or threatening to; the poorest have been chased out into the suburbs by soaring prices. And the weather sucks.

What city is this?


London is the city. It's creative, young, diverse, vibrant:
- 32% of Londoners were born outside the U.K.
- 150,000 immigrate to London yearly
- 70% are under 45
- 1 in 8 Londoners work in a creative industry
- 38% is green or open space (NY is 14%)

Londoners went from thinking as a manufacturing city to thinking and working globally.

“London’s creative resurgence is rooted in the city’s changing sense of itself.”

So then what does matter? . . .

Big picture
States prospering in the U.S. have at least one major thriving metropolitan area with a high concentration of young, creative talent.

We have to start measuring jobs in 1s and 2s, not thousands for sustainability. (Long Tail Theory)
We know . . .

Millennials matter

- Ages 24-35
- Most mobile group
- Largest population group after Boomers
- “Urban Tribes” live and move together from place to place (Paul Schutt, Issue Media Group)
- Seek interesting, unique places to “stumble into fun” – cafes, arts and culture, bike paths, and informal “third places”

We know . . .

Design defines

- New urbanism
- Green design

We know . . .

Connections count

- Social networking
- Civic acupuncture
  - Utilizing small projects to institute big change
- Host the party, don’t be the life of the party
- Organically grown
- Viral
What is it going to take?

Understand that we no longer control the message!

“Governments can either play an active role in transforming themselves or wait and let change hit them. Either way, it’s coming.”

_Governing_, May 2008

What works . . . vibrant downtowns

What works . . . arts and parks
What works . . . 1,000 nights

What works . . . density

What works . . . walkable urbanism
What works . . . access to technology

What works . . . leveraging anchor institutions

What works . . . entrepreneurship
"What’s in greatest demand today isn’t analysis but synthesis – seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole.”

Daniel Pink
_A Whole New Mind._

- Change the culture/DNA
- Be open to a new way of doing things
- Market ourselves differently (Web 2.0)
- Recognize that quality of life trumps taxes
- Highlight your community uniqueness
- Expand creative regionalism
- Be bold, visionary local leaders

Stop the negative self talk!
Just stop it!
What the League can do

- Provide training for new media (web 2.0)
- White papers
- Partnerships
- Become ambassadors for our message
- Education–regional meetings, conferences, EOA
- Public policy
- Assessment tools—i.e. green, attracting millennials
- Push our mission and brand "Better Communities. Better Michigan."
- Provide design strategies
- Provide technical assistance in the areas of community audits and market analysis

What the League can do

- Community audits
  - Walkable urbanism; green issues; cultural economic development; entrepreneurialism; talent; diversity
- Educational programming
  - Form-based codes, cultural economic development, Web 2.0, etc.
- Information clearing house
  - Best practices; background materials; research

What you can do

- Ambassadors of the message
- Promote the message internally
- Community presence on Web 2.0 platform
- Engage your community
- Embrace new urbanism principles
We are the ones we’ve been waiting for; if we don’t do it, who will?