

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

November/December 2011

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

“ TO ME **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
MEANS THAT YOU ARE PART OF
SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOURSELF. ”

—KAREN MAJEWSKI Mayor of Hamtramck and new League President



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The League's new president, Karen Majewski, mayor of Hamtramck, stands on the roof of city hall. As a student, she studied Polish heritage and wanted to live in an urban environment where immigrants gathered. She chose Hamtramck for its Polish ethnic enclave and has loved it ever since.



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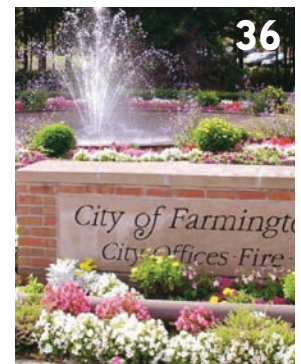
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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 84, Number 6

Better Communities. Better Michigan.

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. Our goals are to aid them in creating desirable and unique places through legislative and judicial advocacy; to provide educational opportunities for elected and appointed officials; and to assist municipal leaders in administering community services. Our mission is that of a non-profit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.

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Plug Into Your Residents

Not long ago, the League gathered together some of the state's most progressive thinkers to talk about a new transportation vision for Michigan. For nearly two hours straight, everyone at the table was furiously focused on their smartphone or laptop.

Rude? Not at all. We were using Twitter to open up the conversation to interested organizations and citizens all across the country. More than 60 individuals and groups participated, with a combined social network of 76,527 followers. In the "real" world, we would've needed a venue the size of a football stadium to bring this many people into the conversation.

That's the kind of impact that social media can have on civic engagement. And engaging our citizens is absolutely essential if we hope to accomplish our goals of revitalizing and reenergizing our cities, villages, and neighborhoods.

Times have changed. For decades, Michigan led the nation in nearly every economic measure that counts. We were tops in per capita income, our unemployment was low, our public schools and universities were the envy of the nation, and our communities thrived.

I'm not sure anyone can say exactly when all that stopped being true; but I firmly believe we have the opportunity to make right now the time when Michigan turned it all back around. The challenge is connecting the dots between the change that needs to happen, and the people who can drive that change. Civic engagement isn't just a buzzword. It's about going beyond some generalized concern for the problems in your community, and starting to take real action to solve them.

Our Twitter Talk used powerful new social media technology tools to engage citizens. But groups across the state are finding all kinds of new ways to encourage civic engagement on a grand scale.

In Detroit, a hardcore group of visionary entrepreneurs has been taking on the city, street by street, reconnecting people to their neighborhoods through everything from soccer games and urban gardens to promotional events and clean-up campaigns. That kind of passionate personal investment has encouraged new business investment, too. One direct result: *Crain's Detroit Business* listed no less than 32 new developments underway this past summer throughout the city's core.

Of course, civic engagement is only one side of the equation. The power of the people can't recreate our communities in any truly sustainable way without our local governments working with them, side by side. It is government's job to create and maintain an infrastructure of core services—that's the solid foundation necessary for building the kind of places where people and businesses want to work, live, and play.

We all know that mission is getting tougher every day, as our state's policy makers continue to strip local governments of the revenues and resources they need to simply do their job.

If we don't have quality places where businesses and people want to be, we're not going to see significant new investment in our state no matter what kind of regulatory environment we have or how low our taxes are. That's the reality. That's where we are right now. That's the message we need the people to hear if we want to make this the time for change.

So Tweet it and Facebook it. Go knocking door to door. Start block clubs and soccer teams and neighborhood organizations. Find new ways to grow business and the arts. Plug into your residents for new ideas.

This issue of *The Review* focuses on civic engagement—both statewide and at the local level. In addition, we are proud to highlight the culmination of our 2011 Convention Tour, "Taking it to the Streets."

That's Power to the People, baby. And that's who we are. 

THE PROSPERITY AGENDA RADIO SHOW

The Michigan Municipal League is taking its message to one of the largest radio stations in the Midwest—News/Talk 760 WJR. Throughout 2011, League Executive 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 pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month. We encourage all our members and friends to tune in for each show. For those outside the WJR listening audience, you can hear segments of the show at mml.org by clicking on the Prosperity Agenda logo you see here.

Daniel P. Gilmartin
League executive director and CEO
734-669-6302, dpg@mml.org



Beyond CIVILITY

FROM PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TO PROBLEM SOLVING

"The best examples of democratic governance are those that engage a diverse assortment of people and institutions in learning more about community issues and working together to arrive at solutions."

In recent years, questions regarding civility have come up again and again in conversations among America's city leaders.

The National League of Cities (NLC) has responded by providing resources and training in how to engage local residents more effectively in the work of "democratic governance." In the course of its research and other work on this topic, NLC has identified a number of roles and responsibilities for city leaders in promoting democratic governance.

Obviously, government does not bear the sole responsibility for doing this work. The term "governance" itself is meant to affirm an active role for residents, community organizations, business, the media, and others. The best examples of democratic governance are those that engage a diverse assortment of people and institutions in learning more about community issues and working together to arrive at solutions.

DOING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE RIGHT:

Seven principles to help city leaders build a culture of democratic governance in their communities:

1. MODEL CIVILITY
2. SHARPEN SKILLS
3. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFORMED ENGAGEMENT
4. SUPPORT A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
5. MAKE THE MOST OF TECHNOLOGY
6. INCLUDE EVERYBODY
7. MAKE IT LAST

1. MODEL CIVILITY

All too often, Americans sense that real progress on critical public issues is impossible because they see policy debates among elected leaders degenerate into electioneering, posturing, name calling, and worse.

While city leaders have little control over the conduct of the national debates that are often the ripest targets for voter anger, they can work to ensure that local and regional decision making is conducted in a civil and responsible manner. Not only will this help build residents' confidence in government's ability to address problems effectively, but it also will set the tone for civil discourse throughout the community and provide a model for other levels of government.

2. SHARPEN SKILLS

The work of promoting effective public engagement and problem solving may require city leaders to develop and refine new skills in areas from convening and facilitation to conflict resolution, mediation, and cultural competence (i.e., reaching out to diverse populations). In a recent NLC survey, about half of all city officials and top staff said that neither they nor their constituents have the skills and experience needed to carry out effective public engagement. Training can help even the most "natural" politicians develop and hone the core competencies they need.

3. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFORMED ENGAGEMENT

Implement public engagement processes to mobilize residents to provide input and make decisions about important

issues facing their communities. Give residents a firsthand look at how government—and governance—works. People can learn the importance of compromise, and they can see how conflicting priorities and values often influence solutions. A growing number of cities have created neighborhood councils that engage residents to provide input on policy decisions. Other cities have convened residents in other ways to debate issues, develop priorities, and propose policies and strategies for addressing community needs. A key consideration: reaching beyond the “usual suspects” to engage and involve diverse groups of residents in local problem-solving efforts.

4. SUPPORT A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizenship is about more than voting. It is about fulfilling one’s responsibilities as a neighbor and connecting with others in the community. Government can’t solve community problems on its own. Residents can contribute their own time, energy, and resources to solving problems large and small. As municipal budgets continue to tighten, city leaders increasingly are turning to residents and community organizations to work with them to respond to critical community needs, strengthen and expand services, and build stronger communities. Cities of all sizes are finding ways to foster a strong culture of civic responsibility through volunteerism.

5. MAKE THE MOST OF TECHNOLOGY

The participatory nature of social media and web 2.0 technologies makes them natural platforms for engaging the public in discussing and solving community problems. The use of social media in particular can be an effective way to engage technologically savvy young people in the work of community problems. City leaders should know that residents are becoming increasingly comfortable with online forms of communications. In many respects, the internet is the new town hall, and city leaders can work with residents and others to make sure it delivers a form of dialogue that can help solve real problems.

6. INCLUDE EVERYBODY

Many cities are taking steps to expand the circle of public engagement to audiences that traditionally have not been involved. One action city leaders can consider is inviting young people to play a more meaningful role in local problem solving. Many cities are launching targeted efforts to engage people of color, including recent immigrants, in the work of democratic governance. Whether the focus is young people or people of color (or both), city leaders increasingly view these populations as an untapped resource that can bring new talent, knowledge, and insights to inform community efforts to solve problems.

7. MAKE IT LAST

A one-time convening or volunteer drive can deliver short-term results, but it is not enough to fully engage the public in solving a community’s long-term problems. City leaders should work with their partners inside and outside of government to make public engagement an ongoing commu-

nity priority. The idea is to embed communitywide input and involvement into the process by which government and local residents address problems and opportunities and adopt priorities for the years ahead.

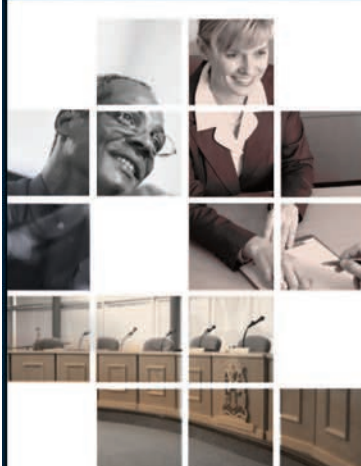
None of these principles stands on its own. For example, a city’s efforts to promote informed engagement (#3) will surely involve outreach to diverse audiences (#6) and the effective use of technology (#5). NLC hopes that city leaders will consider the full range of activities covered in the following pages and how they support each other, and then weigh the best approaches for their communities.

Visit www.nlc.org, for the full report and these additional civic engagement materials:

- Making Democracy Work: Municipal Officials’ Views About Public Engagement (2010)
- Local Practices in Public Engagement (2010)
- City Government Promoting Civic Responsibility through Volunteerism (2010)
- Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities (2010)
- Research Brief on America’s Cities: Municipal Officials’ Views on Public Engagement: City Hall, the Public, the Media and Community Groups (2010)
- Authentic Youth Civic Engagement: A Guide for Municipal Leaders (2010)

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CIVIC Engagement?

See These Great Examples

Compiled by Kim Cekola

IN MICHIGAN...

City Recreation Department Kept Alive with Volunteers

Ypsilanti; population: 19,435

The city eliminated its Recreation Department due to severe financial stress—but it was able to keep park maintenance and programming alive through the effort of the Recreation Commission and numerous volunteer groups, and staff from multiple departments. The city has four major recreational facilities, each with an associated volunteer “Friends” group: the Freight-house, the Rutherford Pool, the Senior Center, and the Parkridge Community Center. The Friends of the Freight-house, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit, raised money through grants and private donations to perform repairs. The other Friends groups manage the daily operations of the respective recreation facilities, including fundraising to pay facility staff. Volunteers make park improvements and run recreation programs. Neighborhood and school groups maintain community gardens at two middle schools with local non-profit Growing Hope. The Ypsilanti Disc Golf Club provided equipment and assisted with the installation of a disc golf course. The Ypsilanti Health Coalition and various community partners were awarded grant money to make capital improvements to basketball courts and other park facilities, as well as coordinating a Health Festival to promote park use. (source: www.cityofypsilanti.com)

Citizens Raise Taxes to Keep Services

Huntington Woods; population: 6,238

The city created a committee open to any resident or business-person willing to make a one-year commitment to a comprehensive financial study. Committee members tackled issues in these four sub-committees: library/recreation; public safety; administration/finance/legal/regulatory; and revenue. Each sub-committee studied departmental operations, budgets, and revenue sources and interviewed departmental directors, employees, and advisory boards. Each developed formal recommendations, the most significant being a uniquely structured “Headlee Override” property tax increase to restore the city’s charter limit of 20 mills; and to add a new provision to the city charter limiting the maximum increase in the annual operating millage rate to no more than ½ of 1 mil. The recommendation represented a major compromise among the diverse positions of the committee members. The millage was passed by 78 percent of voters. Committee members were vocal advocates for the issue; they attended numerous public forums to explain their findings and recommendations.

Walkers and Cyclists Get Legislation Passed

East Lansing; population: 48,579

In East Lansing, walkability advocates spent an entire summer going door-to-door, informing and energizing the public about the need to make the city safer and more accessible for all forms of transportation. Before they started, a cyclist or walker was getting hit by a car somewhere in the city every three days. Thanks to a driving force of more than 5,000 petitioners, East Lansing became the first city in the state to enact a Complete Streets ordinance. And it didn’t stop there. Today, Michigan leads the country in the number of communities with Complete Streets ordinances in place.

Photo Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden



PARK(ing) Day

**Lansing, Detroit, Ann Arbor, and
Traverse City**

The Let's Save Michigan campaign helped coordinate the state's involvement in the international PARK(ing) Day event on September 17, 2010. The event highlights the need for more livable, vibrant spaces in our cities. PARK(ing) Day is a quirky, annual, worldwide event where folks use their creativity to transform metered city parking spots into temporary parks for the public good for an hour or two. It's easy to forget about the public spaces that make our cities so great. We often forget how they host our festivals, our work lunches, or family picnics—and play the underappreciated role of creating the vibrant cities that will help turn Michigan around. The Let's Save Michigan campaign had events in Lansing, Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Traverse City. About 700 parks were created in more than 140 cities in 21 countries on six continents for PARK(ing) Day 2009. The photo to the right is from the PARK(ing) Day 2010 event. "We want to encourage people to think creatively about the possibilities for using space in Lansing," said Sean Mann of Let's Save Michigan. "Gardens, parks and playgrounds are so important to healthy, thriving urban communities. This is an opportunity to initiate a public conversation about how we develop as a city." For details, go to letssavemichigan.com.



OUT OF STATE...

Electronic Platforms for Receiving and Implementing Public Input

Manor, Texas; population: 5,037

"Manor Labs" is a citizen collaboration platform that allows residents to submit technology ideas for the city and rate the ideas of others. The dedicated website awards "Innobucks points" when someone submits an idea, comments on another's idea, or votes for an idea. Once an idea has attracted enough comments and receives approval from a committee, it is then evaluated by city officials who decide whether to implement it. To encourage participation, Innobucks can be turned in for tangible prizes like "Mayor for the Day," a ride-along with the police chief, and meals from a local restaurant.

Volunteers Operate Community Resale Shop

Grass Lake; population: 1,173

The Copper Nail Resale Shop is a community non-profit organization operated completely by volunteers. It provides financial support to nonprofit organizations in the Grass Lake area to assist them in meeting their group goals. The store offers a "fund day" one Saturday each month where a local group engages in volunteering at the store then receives the net receipts for the day along with a match from the store. Effectively, the store has furnished thousands of dollars in support for local community non-profit groups including the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, soccer leagues, summer baseball leagues, and a multitude of other deserving non-profit, church, and school supported organizations. The Copper Nail has given more than \$67,000 back to the Grass Lake community—made possible through fantastic volunteers and a supportive and wonderful community! (source: coppernail.org; grasslakedowntown.com)



The initiative relies on inexpensive, readily available software tools and has engaged more than a third of the city's population. Five of the more than 80 ideas submitted have been adopted by the city, including a free, automated guided tour for visitors, who use their cell phones to scan pictographic bar codes posted on historic sites around the city.

In 2010, Manor was conferred the "Visionary Award" by the Center for Digital Government's Best of Texas, and the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University selected Manor Labs for its "Bright Ideas" program. (source: National League of Cities, City Practice Brief)

Neighborhood City Halls

Wichita, Kansas; population: 382,368

The city of Wichita maintains four Neighborhood City Halls spread throughout the city that provide access to various city and social services and to city councilmembers. Two of these are located in elementary schools to allow working parents increased access to city resources. With limited variation among them, the neighborhood city halls provide free community education classes, computer and printing services, bill pay services, and meeting space where neighborhood associations and boards gather. In addition to offering city services, other organizations use the same building space, including a free notary public, police, and a health services center. (source: National League of Cities, City Practice Brief)

(See *The Review*, July/August 2010, for an article on Lathrup Village Michigan's TimeBank, winner of the 2009 League's Community Excellence Award Cup. The concept of TimeBanking is catching on and spreading throughout Michigan and the world.) (source: MI Alliance of TimeBanks September 2011 Newsletter) 



Kim Cekola is research associate/publications editor for the League. You may reach her at 734-669-6321 or kcekola@mml.org.

OUT OF COUNTRY...

TimeBanking Helps Curb Teen Anti-Social Behavior

Bettws, South Wales, United Kingdom, population: 8,278

In the small community of Bettws, South Wales, police were faced with the highest levels of youth anti-social behavior in the county. The police recognized the need to engage positively with young people and brought together local organizations to establish the Time for Young People (T4YP) TimeBank.

Young people from the village earn time credits by giving their time to community-based projects facilitated by the Boys and Girls Club, community groups and the school. These include anti-bullying and environmental projects, supporting local community groups with activities, helping to run children and youth activities at the Boys and Girls Club, attending training by the police, and making decisions with local community police.

The young people use their time credits to attend classes at the youth club like first aid courses, health and beauty sessions, judo, cheerleading, and carpentry courses. Improved relationships between police, service providers, community members, and young people have resulted in 17 percent lower crime rates (mostly anti-social behavior), increased community trust, and community awareness.



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Kingsley

Friends of the Library

Galvanize the Community

When it comes to square-footage, 800 square-feet can make for a decent-sized apartment, but when it comes to a public library it makes for a very cramped space. An 800-square-foot library was exactly what the community of Kingsley was facing.

The library was housed in what once was a bank building. When it first opened up shop there, back in the 1930s, the facility served the community well, but by the 1990s the space had grown inadequate at meeting the community's needs.

"We have at least three if not four generations in our area that have used the old library and realized its shortcomings because of its lack of space," said Kingsley Friends of the Library President Gay Travis.

While libraries will always be associated with the lending of books, they have long played other roles like providing educational programming, community meeting places, and access to computer technology, but Kingsley's old facility limited its ability to play that expanded role.



We Have Community Support, Now We Need Money

It's a spot many communities have faced before—an overwhelming need. Was it time to ask for a millage? That was something the community didn't want. "The village of Kingsley is a low to moderate income community, with 57 percent of our residents falling in the low to moderate income range," said Village Manager Adam J. Umbrasas.

Building community support for a new library wasn't the issue, but raising the money for the project was going to take some doing.

"Not one person that I'm aware of said, 'We don't need a larger or new library.' It was a wish that was already in everybody's mind," Travis said. "What we needed planning, hard work, and leadership to find the way to make it happen. Kingsley Friends of the Library (KFOL) said, 'If we don't provide the leadership, who else will? We made a new library our goal and our purpose.'"

'Fund' not 'Fun' Raising

With a population of only 1,500 people, raising enough funds for a brand new \$1.3 million library and village hall seemed a little impossible. "At the very beginning it was a daunting task and the Friends did muddle around a bit looking for a pathway to our goal," Travis said.

The Kingsley Library is part of the Traverse Area District Library (TADL)



and so the KFOL received help from the library system by meeting with members of the TADL Board Facilities Committee. The TADL also hired an architect

"Each person, from our youngest to our oldest did something to help fund the project. Each citizen feels proud to have been part of something of such significant worth."



Above: The whole community sat up and took notice when a \$50,000 gift was made to the library. The gift was divided up—in order to receive the next donation, the 'Friends' had to reach certain fundraising goals. Left: The knobs on the "Celebration" wall represent varying levels of donorship to the library.

to make a prototype plan for the new library and hired a consultant firm to do a study of the fundraising potential in the community. "Among the results was that we could perhaps raise \$100,000 locally. Maybe," Travis said. Not the best news, but the KOFL pressed on.

While the consultant's news wasn't exactly what the KOFL had hoped for, the report included a detailed plan of action that the Friends were able to put into action.

"Each person, from our youngest to our oldest did something to help fund the project. Each citizen feels proud to have been part of something of such significant worth."

A New Site for the Library and Village Hall

Finding a new location was also paramount, and the village owned three sites that had potential. The village council agreed that they would donate a site, demolish the existing buildings, and prep the site for construction. The new facility would also include Kingsley Village Offices.

The village obtained a low interest loan for \$612,000 from the USDA's Rural Development program, and contributed another \$338,000 through a \$188,000 general obligation bond and \$150,000 from the village's general fund to help the project, said Umbrasas.



Kingsley is a low to moderate income community, and council didn't want to ask for a millage for the library. Consequently, the library was a result of a real community effort—there were school penny drives, band concerts, a garden walk and plant sales, bazaars, book sales, and a silent art auction. So when it was time to build, everyone in the community and all donors were invited to come to the groundbreaking with a shovel or a spoon.

That left the community a lot of money to raise, and they didn't back down from the challenge. "I really credit the Friends of the Library," said Jim King, a member of the village council. "I give the credit to them, without them there never would have been a new building."

A Gift Also Creates Goals

There were some substantial gifts including a \$50,000 gift from Val and Ken Bilbrey, in honor of Val's parents, Pete and Vera Nickerson. "The whole community sat up and took

notice of that donation," Travis said. "The money came in four increments and to receive the next donation the friends had to achieve certain goals. The goals made us work harder and we met each one."

The Friends became skilled at writing grants, many of which required matching funds, so fundraising was never far from their minds. Just because the community didn't want a millage didn't mean they weren't willing to be generous in the support of the new library goal.

'Friends' Galvanize the Community

"We involved our school children in penny drives, band concerts, silent art auctions, and art on the walls of local restaurants," Travis said. The Friends also started an annual garden walk and plant sale. There were races, bazaars, and book sales.

All the hard work paid off, and the community was able to gather together to celebrate the facilities' groundbreaking. "On the bare site the library was outlined with stakes and orange ribbons, showing each room labeled with a sign for what it was to be," Travis said. "Everyone in the community and all the donors were invited to come with a shovel or a spoon and to take part. They did come, all ages from far away, in great numbers and it was a tremendously happy celebration."



The community involvement didn't stop there; when the facility, which also includes the village's municipal offices, was built, local tradesmen volunteered their skills to make items, including cabinetry for it.

"Because of the individual donations of time, craftsmanship, ideas, and effort, the building has character," Travis said. "Each person, from our youngest to our oldest did something to help fund the project. Each citizen feels proud to have been part of something of such significant worth."

No longer short on space, the 8,330-square-foot Kingsley Library and Municipal Center provides the library with six times the space it once had and the village with double the space. The effort took 10 years of fundraising efforts, but the community was able to raise \$900,000 to put toward the library. The level of civic pride raised, however, is immeasurable. 

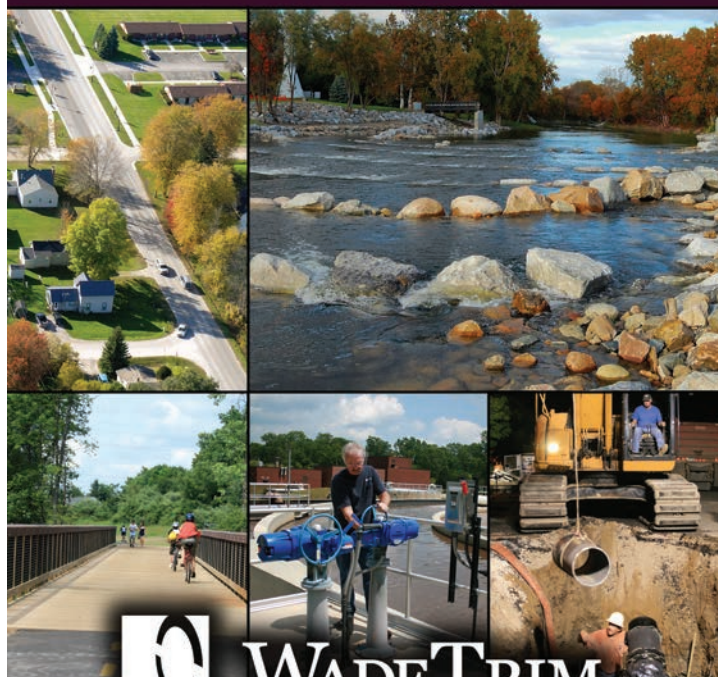
Rene Rosencrantz Wheaton is a freelance writer. You may contact her at 810-444-3827.



COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Kingsley was the 2010 Region 6 Winner in the Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup." The CEAs are the League's most prestigious community awards. They are decided upon by peers both at the regional level and at the Convention, where one of seven finalists is selected as the Cup winner. To find out more about the CEAs, go to mml.org/awards/cea.html.

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Voices

SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 2006, THE CENTER FOR MICHIGAN HAS MADE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT THE CENTERPIECE OF OUR WORK TO CURE OUR BROKEN POLITICAL CULTURE AND DEVELOP A CITIZEN'S AGENDA FOR OUR STATE'S FUTURE.

OUR WORK FALLS INTO THREE PHASES.

Michigan's Defining Moment

Our Michigan's Defining Moment campaign engaged from 2007 to 2010 more than 10,500 citizens in community conversations throughout Michigan. "Weighing in on Reinvention" report, published in May 2011, pulled together community conversations, polling, and television reports designed to call forth citizen reaction to Governor Snyder's plans to reinvent Michigan. Our public engagement work for the next 18 months will focus on education in Michigan, addressing the subject from the seldom-heard perspectives of students, families, and employers—all customers of the education system.

The Michigan's Defining Moment (MDM) campaign involved 580 small community conversations ranging from 10-25 people in each, taking place in communities throughout Michi-

gan. In addition to note takers, "clickers" were used to record participant preferences, which were databased by Public Sector Consultants. The demographics of MDM participants closely mirrored the face of Michigan in gender, race, age, and geography.

The largest public engagement campaign in Michigan history, MDM generated a common ground, bottom-up citizens' agenda for the transformation of our state that was published in our 2010 report, "10,000 Voices to Transform Our State." Every candidate for governor visited The Center to discuss the report, with Rick Snyder making it a centerpiece of his campaign.

Citizens' Agenda

The 10-point MDM citizens' agenda in numerous ways helped set the tone for the 2010 gubernatorial election and for some of the policy debates now underway in Lansing regarding the size and role of government in our state and public investment priorities.

The more than 10,000 citizens who built this common ground, bottom-up agenda for Michigan's future did so because they share a belief that even in this time of deep political skepticism and economic upheaval, they can help transform our state. Deliberated and refined in an unprecedented, nonpartisan campaign of nearly 600 community meetings statewide, the people's 10-point action plan is to:

1. Create a more business-friendly entrepreneurial environment
2. Overhaul the Michigan tax system for the 21st century
3. Build on Michigan's distinctive and competitive assets
4. Change how and what schools teach
5. Transform education operations and funding
6. Hold educators, parents and students to higher standards
7. Hold politicians—and ourselves—more accountable
8. Lengthen or repeal term limits
9. Execute transparent and strategic state budgets
10. Intensify consolidation and service sharing in local government

This vision—and the action steps to achieve it—grew not from the dogma of any particular political party, one issue-interest group, or regional power base. Instead, this agenda is rooted in widespread public concern for the state as a whole.

Weighing in on Reinvention

The Weighing in on Reinvention campaign was launched to probe public reaction to Governor Snyder's legislative and political priorities after taking office. Running January–April, 2011, the campaign involved seven regional community conversations, a statewide telephone poll, a popular “You Balance the State Budget Game” and “Citizens Speak” television programs co-sponsored with Detroit Public Television. All told, the campaign touched at least 50,000 Michigan citizens.

In general, we found favorable but mixed public views on Governor Snyder's program. Many supported the business tax cut, but questioned whether it would really yield many jobs. Opinion was split on taxing pensions and many were opposed to sharp cuts in support for schools and universities. Widespread concern was registered about legacy pension and health care costs for public employees, both state and local. A majority preferred to balance the state budget through both budget cuts and new taxes, in contrast to the “all cuts” method adopted by the Legislature and signed by the governor.

Our findings were published in a May 2011 report, “Weighing in on Reinvention: Citizens Respond to Change in Lansing.”

MORE

By Phil Power



Our Next Challenge: The Education System

Our public engagement campaign over the next two years will drill deep into the central subject behind our economic prosperity: our education system. Over the years, there has been considerable debate around Michigan's education institutions—pre-K, K-12, community colleges and universities—but much of it has been dominated by people and groups themselves within the education sector.

Our approach will be to expressly reach out to the customers of the education system, whose voices, while not neglected, have been largely overshadowed by institutional forces within the system. We expect to engage students themselves to determine what they like/don't like about our schools and what they want from them. We will ask the same questions of parents and families of students. And we will reach out to employers to determine whether Michigan's education system in Michigan is meeting their needs.

The Center has peer reviewed our approach with education experts and is developing a comprehensive issue guide to help community conversation participants understand what is plainly a very complex topic. We expect to issue a preliminary report late next summer in time to affect political discourse in the 2012 campaign. And we plan to issue a more complete report ready for distribution to the new Legislature in January 2013. Overall, our goal is to reach out to 5,000 Michigan citizens over the next two years and to have a noticeable impact on the political debate and public policy questions facing our state.

Reform and Transformation

Our work can largely be summarized in three verbs: Engage (our public engagement activities); Inform (our newly launched twice-weekly, free email newsletter, "Bridge," designed to fill the information vacuum left by the diminution of mainstream news media); and Achieve (making concrete changes in our political culture and public policy). These activities are mutually interconnected and work with each other to form a dynamic structure for change in Michigan.

The Center for Michigan's basic approach is to call forth the voices of Michigan citizens, amplify those voices, and to carry them to the corridors of power. We believe that our state is ripe for citizen engagement as the driving force for reform and transformation and that our non-partisan, centrist organization has developed a track record of thoughtful and capable advocacy for Michigan. 

For more information and to read the full reports, visit www.centerformichigan.org.

Phil Power is the president of The Center for Michigan. He can be reached at ppower@thecenterformichigan.net.

Building Department Services for Public Agencies – some relief to our economic reality

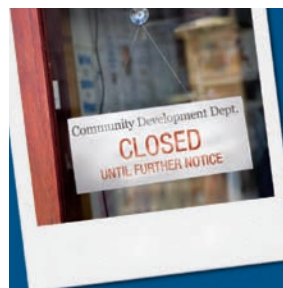
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Certainly, We Should **Save** Michigan But How



For a long time, Michigan has favored policies that support the growth of new suburban communities, farther and farther out from the urban core. Look, I grew up in a suburb—I get why so many people like them. But not everyone wants to live in a suburb—and by failing to provide a really top-notch urban option, Michigan is missing out on most of those people.

Here's why that is bad news (as if consistent population decline wasn't bad enough): young, college-educated individuals are choosing cities over suburbs hands-down. Which is why they continue to leave our state in droves (one of our most valuable exports right now: college degrees, thanks to our world-class universities).

You are seriously stuck in 1950 if you think having a highly educated population is a luxury rather than a necessity. Automation, streamlining, and globalization have changed the way we work; for most people, a college degree is crucial to achieve any financial stability. No longer can a family achieve the middle-class dream on the income you can earn with just a high school diploma.

46% of Michigan's college graduates are leaving the state within a year of graduation.

If you accept that Michigan will only climb out of this economic tailspin by developing a more educated, entrepreneurial, and talented citizenry, there are two basic goals to achieve: 1) ensure that every child in Michigan is prepared for and has access to college; and 2)

Michigan. Why?

By Sarah Szurpicki

retain/import/entice college degree holders and other entrepreneurs to live here.

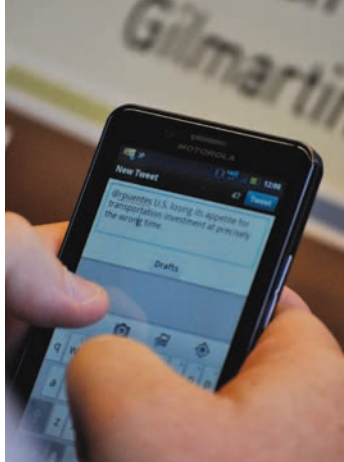
So, let's leave aside goal #1 for now. Way smarter people than me are working on that, and God bless them.

Getting to goal #2, where I have some expertise as both a fairly recent college graduate and a convener for the past four years of young leaders from around the Rust Belt (*The Review*, March/April 2009) where this problem is rampant—ample research shows that when leaving college (if they're not forced to move back in with their parents in our frightening new economy), young people are choosing where they want to live before they choose a job. And they are picking communities where they don't need to own a car, where they have abundant social and cultural opportunities, where they can frequent a farmers market, ride a bike or take a train to work, and where there are lots of people of various backgrounds for them to meet, i.e., they are choosing to live in cities.

I did the same thing. After graduating, I moved to Washington, D.C., and then to New York. When I moved back to Michigan over four years ago, the idea of owning a car—not to mention the expense—was a total shock. I felt like my day was now only 23 hours, since when I relied on transit, I could do other things as I got around.

Let's Save Michigan's Goals

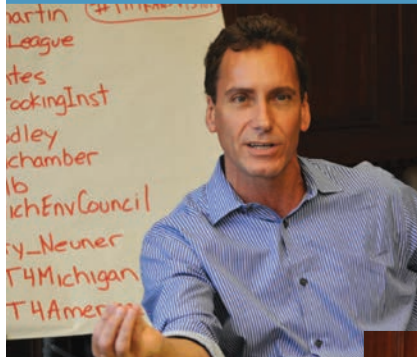
Let's Save Michigan (LSM) is working to advocate for the kinds of policies that will reverse the hollowing out of our cities. Michigan needs to provide better urban options, and LSM is on the job. Let's Save Michigan started in the fall of 2009 as an organization built on the idea that we



Be the Change...

Michigan needs a new vision for its transportation system, one that meets the 21st century needs of our 21st century communities, and that supports Michigan's transition to a new economy. But what should that vision look like? What elements must it contain?

In anticipation of Governor Snyder's Special Message on Transportation and Infrastructure in October, the League and Let's Save Michigan hosted Michigan's Transportation Vision: A Twitter Talk (mml.org/newsroom/twitter-transit/index.html) on September 13. Five transportation experts participated in the event—Robert Puentes of the Brookings Institution; Dan Gilmartin, Executive Director & CEO of the League; Rich Studley, President & CEO of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce; Chris Kolb, Executive Director of the Michigan Environmental Council; and Rory Neuner, Project Coordinator for Transportation for Michigan. Also attending were State Rep. Doug Geiss (D-Taylor), and State Rep. Rick Olson (R-Saline). People and organizations across the state participated in the event on Twitter via computer and smartphone. Discussion centered on a variety of transit-related topics, such as making sure public transit actually connects people to their jobs, and how safety and efficiency must be



Chris Kolb, Executive Director
Michigan Environmental Council



State Rep. Doug Geiss (D-Taylor),
and State Rep. Rick Olson (R-Saline)



Rory Neuner, Project Coordinator
Transportation for Michigan



Dan Gilmartin, Executive Director and CEO,
Michigan Municipal League and Rich Studley, President
and CEO, Michigan Chamber of Commerce

cornerstones to any successful transportation system. Read more about Michigan's Transportation Vision: A Twitter Talk on Twitter @letsavemich and @mmlleague and the hashtag #mitransvision. For more about Let's Save Michigan go to letssavemichigan.com.



More than 300 posters were submitted to Let's Save Michigan's poster contest; over 20,000 people voted. The level of passion, participation, and creativity Michiganders displayed is exactly what it's going to take to rebuild our cities as attractive communities with a high quality of living. (See winner on page 20, critic's choice above, and the runner-ups on page 22 and 23).

need to reach people in a new way to convey the importance of livable communities to Michigan's future. Our goal was to communicate to average citizens about the policies and personal actions necessary to create a more prosperous Michigan—comprised of communities that attract, retain, and foster the talented work force that will make our state competitive again.

I believe that Michigan's citizens intuitively understand the importance of this mission. Who, for instance, doesn't have a granddaughter, nephew, sister, or son

in Chicago? Or New York or LA, for that matter? We all get that those people want the "urban experience," and we also get how vital it is to keep more of those people in Michigan.

We also know that city mayors and managers understand these challenges—they fight every day to provide services to a diminishing tax base. And we're not just talking about Detroit, Lansing, and Flint, here. Smaller down-

According to the last US Census, 2/3 of college graduates between 24 and 35 chose where they wanted to live before they looked for a job.

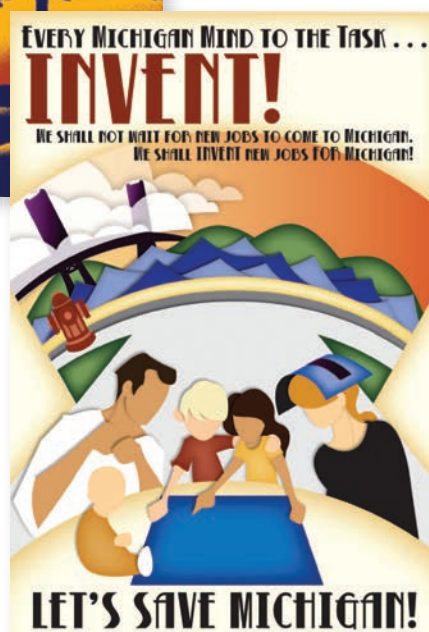
towns around the state, like Port Huron, Saline, Sault Ste. Marie, and Royal Oak are in a similar boat. Even in agricultural communities, leaders understand that protecting farmland means preventing continued outward sprawl.

So if it's not the citizens, and it's not local elected officials who are behind the times—guess who is?

That's right: many of our political leaders in Lansing fail to acknowledge the reality that incentivizing new de-

velopment means we've left little in the coffers to support the older cities and villages. Since maintaining what you have is more efficient than building new (especially when it comes to infrastructure), this means that our own "growth" into new suburbs was actually creating a perpetual cycle of depleting the state's resources.

There are a number of ways we need to attack these very complex problems. But what is most important is that we attack them together. It will be harder and harder for the Michigan Legislature to ignore Michigan's citizens if we speak with a unified voice about the immense



value that cities provide to our state, and the kinds of policies that will support healthy cities. Policies that support arts and culture, transportation options, density, authenticity and history, communal space that is inviting and safe. These aren't accidents: they are the result of specific policies that our state can enact and support—or ignore.

That's where LSM comes in. We work to share the good news about our cities, to provide information that can help residents advocate for them, and to lift up citizens' voices about the kind of state they want Michigan to be. We do this through a dynamic social media presence and special events across the state that demonstrate what Michigan could be. In just under two years, we developed an email database of over 20,000,

a social media presence approaching 10,000, and have been featured in nearly every major news outlet in the state.

A Transportation System for the 21st Century

For instance, we know that Governor Snyder is crafting a new vision for infrastructure and transportation investments in Michigan. And it is about time—we're still operating a transportation system that was designed in the 1950s—and the only thing that hasn't required modification since the 50s is—oh wait, nothing.

LSM wants to engage its audience around the state to inform the governor's vision. Because we think we know what you'll say: we need a transporta-



tion system that sets new and greater goals to help us achieve future prosperity. You want a system that prioritizes people and communities, not just moving products. A system that creates options for people with different needs; a system that gives people access to the education, health care, and jobs they need.

We need a 21st century transportation system designed to meet our 21st century challenges.

On transportation and a host of other issues, if we work together, we can save Michigan. 

Contact Sarah Szurpicki of Let's Save Michigan at 313-920-2143 or sarah.szurpicki@gmail.com.



Civic Engagement Fuels

By Matt Bach

NEW LEAGUE
PRESIDENT

Hamtramck Mayor Karen Majewski stands on the roof of the city hall and points out things she loves about her compact, highly diverse community. On one side are densely packed homes of people of a vast array of backgrounds—Albanian, Asian, Polish, Bangladeshi, Hispanic, Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Macedonian. The homes are so close together in the two-square mile city of about 23,000 people, it's not unusual to smell what your neighbor is having for dinner. On another side is the business district. Residents can easily walk from their home and get everything they need—from freshly made hummus at the Al-Haramain Grocery to paczkis at the New Martha Washington Bakery to dining and having fun at a wide variety of restaurants and entertainment venues.

"This is just a fantastic city. I know people everywhere love and feel attached to the places they live. I've lived in a lot of places myself. But I haven't seen the kind of passionate, gut-level attachment that people feel for this place. Folks come to Hamtramck from all over the world and make a home they love here, whether they've come from Mississippi or Macedonia. And that's a compelling and moving story to be part of."

Political Start

On this day, Majewski is wearing a traditional Polish folk dress from the Polish mountains that she sometimes wears for dances and celebrations in and around Hamtramck. Community engagement is the theme of this issue of *The Review*, and Majewski exemplifies what community engagement is about. For Majewski, being engaged in her community as mayor began with her love of folk dancing, immigration studies,



and her involvement with Hamtramck's Historical Commission. Admittedly, she never intended to enter politics, but did so at the urging of fellow residents.

Majewski—an educator, researcher, and award-winning, frequently published author—tells the story best:

"I never had any political ambitions to begin with. It's no secret that I was draft-

ed to run for office. Local politics can be bruising, and at the time the political atmosphere here was especially volatile. Frankly, I thought that anybody who would run for office in Hamtramck would have to be crazy. I was probably right. But a lot of things in my personal and professional life converged at that time." Majewski was elected to city council in 2003, and as mayor (the city's first woman in that position) in 2005,

and again in 2009. It hasn't been an easy nine years, especially as the city worked through difficult financial issues. But her love for her community fuels her and opened doors she never previously imagined. One such door was serving on the League Board and a second door opened last month when she was unanimously selected as the 2011-12 president. She's the first League president from Hamtramck since the League's inception in 1899.

"I really can't tell you what an honor it is," Majewski said of being named as League president. "It's not something I take lightly."

Moving to Hamtramck

Majewski's journey to Detroit in the late 1980s and eventually Hamtramck in 1998, started in graduate school while studying ethnic groups and immigration. She eventually earned a doctorate degree in American Culture from the University of Michigan. She now works for the Institute for Research on Labor Employment and the Economy at UM. She previously worked for Orchard Lake schools in charge of Polish and rare books. In addition, she is a former executive director of the international Polish American Historical Association.

"I wanted to live in an ethnic enclave. I wanted to live in a place with immigrants. And I wanted to live in an urban environment. The specific group I was studying was Poles, and Hamtramck was the logical place," said Majewski, who resides in Hamtramck with her husband, cartoonist Matt Feazell.

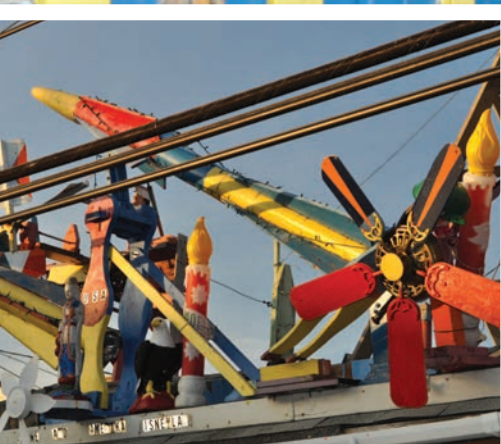
Diversity

With the diversity comes great benefits and difficult challenges.

"We like to brag that we have 26 different languages spoken. While in the past we were predominantly Polish—and the Polish presence here is still very strong—in truth, we attract people from all over the world. I've read reports of more than 50 languages spoken here in the 1920s. So, diversity is not something new to us. And as America's demographic changes, in some ways we're a bell weather—a test case for how this stuff

...the city was going through a transformation and I felt that I was needed...I liked the life I enjoyed and the trajectory I'd imagined for myself would never be the same, and truly it hasn't. That's been both challenging and rewarding."





"Hamtramck Disneyland" was built over multiple decades by Dmytro Szylak, a Ukrainian immigrant. Majewski loves the shrine because it represents something that's so close to her heart—the journey of immigrants to America. It has icons of America, like Mickey Mouse, intermingled with sculptures of reindeer, dolls, tri-lingual press clippings and banners, wind-powered oddities, repurposed lawn ornaments, a plethora of toys and painted bits of wood and steel—all gloriously wired with lights and sound.

works on the ground, in day-to-day life. We celebrate our diversity, but we're not an ethnic Disneyland. There are all kinds of tough issues. But because we're so small and so dense—you can reach out your kitchen window and pass a plate to the house next door—there's no avoiding those issues, or our neighbors of other cultures. We have to learn about each other, and work out ways to get along, however difficult that may be sometimes.

And that opportunity to become familiar with and develop respect for other cultures is a tremendous asset, especially for the kids in Hamtramck." During her nine years in Hamtramck city government, Majewski is most proud of the challenges the city has overcome, such as emerging from financial receivership in 2007. She's also actively involved in creating the Hamtramck Historical Museum, due to open sometime in the next year, featuring artifacts, exhibits, and materials about Hamtramck's diverse and colorful history.

We walk out of Hamtramck City Hall and maneuver along Hamtramck's many one-way streets to an alley between Sobieski and Klinger Streets to the famous "Hamtramck Disneyland" built over multiple decades by retired General Motors worker Dmytro Szylak, a Ukrainian immigrant. Majewski loves

the shrine built in Szylak's yard because it in essence represents something that's so close to her heart—the journey of immigrants to America.

"What's so fantastic about this Disneyland is that a Ukrainian immigrant came here and created this little whimsical world out of his experience. What it says to me is that we humans have an innate, irrepressible creativity. It doesn't matter if you got materials or if you consider yourself an artist. We're all artists. We all try to create some kind of beauty around us. And we try to create a home—a place that somehow encompasses all these incongruent elements into something that, together, feels comfortable to us and tells our story."

In Majewski's view, Hamtramck's Disneyland is Szylak's way to be engaged in his community.

"To me, community engagement means that you are part of something bigger than yourself—whether you belong to organizations or just pick the trash off your yard," Majewski said. "What [comes](#) down to is creating that place that you call home."

Matt Bach is communications director for the League.



From left to right: Richard Mack, Lois Allen-Richardson, Dick Bolen, Pauline Repp, Ricci Bandkau, Scott Erickson

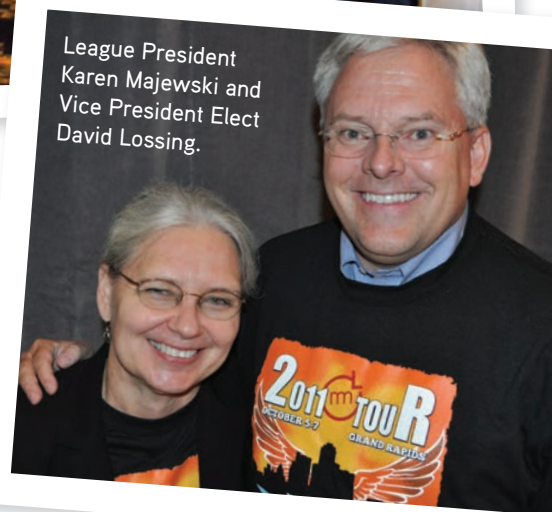
NEW LEAGUE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board is responsible for developing and guiding the organization's strategic public policy initiatives, legislative agenda, and internal workings, all leading to Better Communities. Better Michigan.

Completing our 18-member Board of Trustees, the following new members will serve three-year terms, effective October 5, 2011:

Lois Allen-Richardson, Mayor Pro Tem, Ypsilanti
Ricci Bandkau, Mayor, Brighton
Pauline Repp, Mayor, Port Huron
Richard Mack, Mayor, Manistee
Scott Erickson, City Manager, Ironwood
Dick Bolen, Councilmember, Wakefield

For more information on the League's Board of Trustees, visit www.mml.org/about/mmlboard.htm



League President Karen Majewski and Vice President Elect David Lossing.

Term expires in 2012

Patricia Capek, Councilmember, Cedar Springs
John Davidson, Commissioner, Bay City
David Lossing, Mayor, Linden, League V.P. Elect
Karen Majewski, Mayor, Hamtramck, League President
Gary McDowell, Mayor, Adrian
Larry Nielsen, Village Manager, Paw Paw
Susan M. Rowe, Councilmember, Wayne

Term expires in 2013

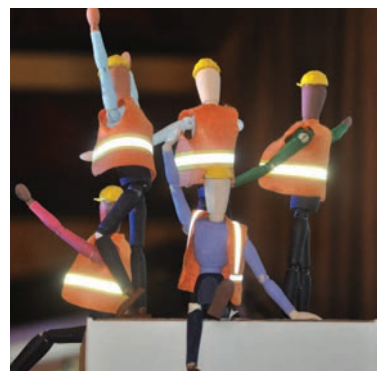
Jacqueline K. Noonan, Mayor, Utica
Amos O'Neal, Mayor Pro Tem, Saginaw
Suzanne Pixley, Mayor, Eastpointe
Charles Pugh, City Council President, Detroit

2011 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Our Convention focused on what really matters—placemaking: creating dynamic, walkable, sustainable communities and regions where people want to live. It's time to start talking about the importance of place as the economic development strategy that will create a positive, dynamic future for Michigan.



Our speaker headliners, leading urban thinkers and doers Peter Allen, Malcom Chapman, Ernesto Sirolli and Helen Davis Johnson, focused on many aspects of economic development and placemaking, but the unifying theme was the importance of engaging and learning from citizens of all ages.



CONVENTION OCTOBER 5-7 • GRAND RAPIDS



From the parade of flags to the numerous education sessions and networking opportunities, the 2011 Michigan Municipal League Convention was bustling in Grand Rapids in the final days of ArtPrize.



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For all the photos from this year's Convention and other League events, go to mml.org/flickr.

2011 CONVENTION MEDIA



From frequent posts on Twitter and Facebook to a press conference about the League's new book, Michigan Municipal League staff and members had all the media angles covered during the 2011 Convention. Governor Rick Snyder participated in a press event about the new book, *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People* along with League CEO Dan Gilmartin and League President & Alpena Mayor Carol Shafto. The League also taped our monthly WJR radio show at Convention.



THE COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD CUP

Convention attendees voted for one of seven community projects, and when the votes were in, the city of Clare was chosen the winner of the 2011 "Race for the Cup." All nine members of Clare's police department banded together to save a historic bakery in their downtown. Dubbed "Cops and Doughnuts," the business has received nation-wide acclaim.



Race for the Cup Winner—Clare



West Branch



Paw Paw



Vassar



Southfield



Marquette



Ludington

Our seven regional presenters and projects were:

Southfield, Field Zone Youth Center (Region 1); Paw Paw, Regional Wine Country Marketing (Region 2); Ludington, New Year's Eve Ball Drop (Region 3); Clare, Cops & Doughnuts (Region 4); Vassar, Chill on the Hill Winter Festival (Region 5); West Branch Fabulous Fridays/downtown promotions (Region 6), and Marquette, Waterfront Task Force Safety Initiative (Region 7).

2011 CONVENTION AWARDS



Legislator of the Year Award



Representative
Jase Bolger
(R-Marshall)

Honorary Lifetime Membership Award



Representative
Vicki Barnett
(D-Farmington Hills)

The Michael A. Guido Leadership and Public Service Award



Richard Notte and family, Mayor, City of
Sterling Heights

Special Awards of Merit



Howard Shifman,
Attorney, Howard L.
Shifman PC



William Rustem,
Director of Strategy,
Office of the Governor



Gary McDowell,
Mayor, Adrian

Elected Officials Academy



Level 1 Graduates

Rebecca Hopp, Steve Baker, Robert Monetza,
Maureen McGinnis, Brenda McNabb-Stange
Not pictured: Robert Getz, Linnie Taylor



Level 2 Graduates

Rebecca Hopp, Juan Zamora
Not pictured: Ricci Bandkau



Level 3 Graduates

Amos O'Neal, Suzanne Pixley, Mary Kerwin
Not pictured: Nathan Triplett

2011 CONVENTION SPONSORS

THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS OF THE 2011 LEAGUE CONVENTION

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Bronze



SAVE THE DATE



**MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
CAPITAL CONFERENCE**

March 20 - 21, 2012

LANSING CENTER, LANSING

Good Morning America viewers vote Sleeping Bear Dunes Lakeshore “The Most Beautiful Place in America.”

Twenty minutes from Traverse City is the “Most Beautiful Place in America” according to ABC News’ *Good Morning America* with miles of sugar-sand beaches along Lake Michigan’s pristine shoreline. The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore consists of a 35-mile stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline, featuring immense sand dunes sculpted entirely by the winds and waters. The National Park was established primarily for its outstanding natural features, including forests, beaches, dune formations and ancient glacial phenomena.

Source: Pure Michigan

Gladwin City Employees Mark Achievements

Bob Moffit, Gladwin city administrator, and Bernadette Weaver, city assessor and zoning administrator, were recognized for their achievements in the area of certified public management. Moffit received the 2010 George C. Akew Award for “the utilization of management practices exemplifying the philosophy of the American Academy of Certified Public Managers.” Weaver earned her Public Manager certification through the Michigan Certified Public Manager Program at Saginaw Valley State University.

A Cool Place to Work

Crain’s Detroit Business named 48 companies of varying sizes as Cool Places to Work in southeast Michigan. The Michigan Municipal League was chosen as a Cool Place to Work in the 1-50 employees category. This year, Cool Places to Work recognized companies and nonprofits that take talent attraction and retention seriously. These organizations acknowledge the importance their workers play in the success of their business and take actions to help those workers thrive.

Nominated organizations were asked to complete a survey conducted by ASE. The survey covered six weighted categories: work-life initiatives, talent management, communication, total rewards, work environment, and recruitment and employment activities. ASE applied scores to each category and derived a final ranking from those category scores.

Although the League advocates for Michigan villages, cities, and urban townships, the organization makes sure to look out for its employees, as well. The League provides tuition reimbursement and professional development through training programs, coaching, and mentoring.

Upcoming League Trainings



michigan municipal league

The League is constantly scheduling educational opportunities with you in mind. Here is a list of just some of what’s coming up. Visit www.mml.org for more information.

2011 Newly Elected Officials Training

NOVEMBER 15
Marlette

NOVEMBER 16
Lansing

NOVEMBER 29
Boyne City

DECEMBER 6
Ferrysburg

DECEMBER 7
Ann Arbor

DECEMBER 8
Mount Pleasant

2012

FEBRUARY 24-25
Elected Officials Academy
Core Weekender &
Advanced Weekender
Frankenmuth



PLACEMAKING

Planning for 2020 Today

By William M. Costick

“Ask yourself—will things really change if we have no plan?”

We think of long-term needs and projects for our community, we dream about the future, ideas of what we would like to do to improve and our first thought is...whoops! We have no money. More often than not, community leaders so caught up in dealing with declining revenues, budget cutting and doing more with less, are discouraged from making plans for long-term projects, renewal and revitalization for the future.

Develop A Fresh Attitude!

Michigan's economy is not going to stay in the tank forever! Local government leaders need to look ahead with vision and positive, creative and realistic leadership. We need 2020

vision! Clear, bright, sharp, focused and yes, hopeful that we can renew, improve and create a 21st century community with all of the working assets, features, and attractiveness we desire today for our citizens and in the future for our children.

Is There A Void In Our Thinking?

Traditional community planning can include a master land use plan, a zoning ordinance, maybe a downtown development or brownfield development plan; and while these are necessary they are not what this article is about. What communities need today is an exciting vision for the future of what the city, its downtown, its neighborhoods, its commercial corridor or waterfront could become or what its citizens would like it to become. A vision with a series of goals that can be converted into action plans and a realistic time frame—a 2020 (call it what you want) Plan. Think of your planning efforts as plant-

ing a “seed” and nurturing and watering the small plant until it bears fruit. With most good ideas it may take eight to ten years to realize your objective, and if you have a good plan and are willing to nurture the vision at every opportunity, by 2020 you just might realize your dreams for the community.

Getting Started

Open the door wide and invite lots of citizens to be part of your new visioning and planning process. Include a true cross section of the community, residents, business owners, industrialists, educators, developers, citizens interested in the arts and sports, include elected officials, staff and members of existing commissions. The group might consist of 30 people, maybe 60, maybe more? Bring them together, hand out assignments, give them a time frame, and write down a workable process that might outline as follows:

1. First, invite citizens and business owners to participate in the visioning process. Make this an open invitation.
2. Distribute a detailed outline of the process, goals, committee assignments, expectations and deadlines.
3. Break up into specific groups or focus areas. These could include public safety, physical design and walkability, downtown or corridor redevelopment, cultural or economic development, education and recreation, lake or riverfront redevelopment, infrastructure, community image and attractiveness, finance and taxes, etc.—or whatever fits your community needs.
4. Set deadlines for interim and final reports, and a rigorous meeting schedule. Will the process take

90 days, six months, a year? What is a reasonable time frame to develop your year 2020 plan?

5. Make sure someone, preferably two people, are responsible for each study group, its meeting schedule, research and report writing.
6. Be open to creative thinking. Ask people to “think out of the box,” yet be realistic. Remember today there might not be money or a private investor, but if you stick to your 2020 vision and plan, who knows what opportunities might present themselves.

Lessons Learned

It doesn't cost a lot to go through a visioning and goal setting process. It does require leadership, short-term spurts of extra energy and time commitments and a real desire to make a difference.

Past practices have led to master plans, policies and ordinances that were intended to regulate development. We must now be open to practices and even partnerships that will attract development.

To help in setting goals and assist in getting started, utilize the League's initiative, Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3), and the eight essential assets that today are considered vital to strengthening Michigan's cities and villages.

Make certain that when the final vision plan is completed that it is summarized and concise enough to be mailed to every home and business, that it is explained clearly through local media, the press, and on cable, that it is always available at city hall and in the library and that it is never just placed on a shelf to draw dust.

Make the 2020 plan a regular part of city or village business and at least twice a year made part of a formal agenda for the city or village council, planning commission, DDA, park commission, school board or chamber of commerce. Keep a core leadership group together that will make twice a year progress reports to such groups.



Final Pay-Off, Support!

Following a similar outline, a year 2000 Plan was actually developed in the city of Farmington Hills in 1989. It was a ten-year plan. In the beginning of almost a year-long exercise some 150 citizens with a wide variety of interests stepped forward to be part of the visioning process. In the end the city found this group to be supporters and one could say “cheerleaders” for every good cause the city faced in the ensuing decade. The same could be true for you. Good luck!

Farmington Hills Year 2000 Plan

- 1989 city puts out a call for visioning process
- 150 citizens signed up!
- Divided citizens into six focus groups
- Agreed on a rigorous six-month meeting schedule
- Steering Committee assembles focus group reports
- Published a 20-page vision statement with goals and action ideas
- “Year 2000” vision and plan mailed to every citizen & taxpayer
- Involved citizens become city’s greatest asset “cheerleaders”

Farmington Hills Today

Farmington Hills 2020 Visioning Process

In a renewed effort to stay connected with interested residents and gain valuable insights into what they want in the community, Farmington Hills embarked upon a 2020 Visioning Process. It started with:

- City issues open invitation to residents to attend one of four open house opportunities in the four corners of the city
- Residents asked two questions: “What do you like about the city?” and “What do you dislike about the city?”
- Five committees appointed to look ahead 10 years and identify what these five aspects might look like.
- City conducted standardized, statistically valid community-wide survey (through ICMA).

This is a citizen driven effort—the staff is only to help with meeting logistics. 

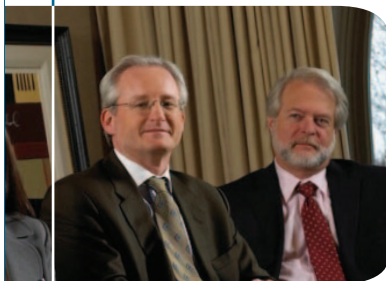
William M. Costick is director of community relations for Orchard, Hiltz & McCliment, retired city manager of Farmington Hills, and member of the League Foundation Board of Directors. You may reach him at 734-466-4405 or bill.costick@ohm-advisors.com.

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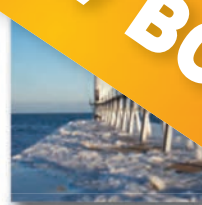


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NEW BOOK!



The Economics of Place:

The Value of Building Communities Around People



Edited by Colleen Layton, Tawny Pruitt & Kim Cekola

Economics of Place Book

Available from Amazon.com

The Michigan Municipal League has published a book on placemaking as an economic development tool, *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*. Learn more about the book and its authors. View Dan Gilmartin's Economics of Place blog.

ECONOMICS
OF PLACE



What Water Rates Can Be Charged to Extraterritorial Customers?

FACTS:

In 1980, Oneida Township wanted to expand residential development by contracting with Grand Ledge for the purchase of sanitary sewer and potable water services. Accordingly, Grand Ledge and Oneida entered into a water agreement under which Grand Ledge supplies water and sanitary sewer services to Oneida residents within a designated area. The water is delivered directly to residents and each resident is billed directly by the city. Although Oneida is the contracting party, it does not receive any water service. Under the agreement, Oneida users are to pay twice the rate charged to city customers.

The state statute in effect at the time that the agreement was entered into, MCL 123.141, allowed such agreements between municipalities and specifically provided that the rate charged, under most circumstances, was to be twice that charged to the residents of the municipality providing the water services.

Just eight months after the agreement was entered into between Grand Ledge and Oneida Township, MCL 123.141 was amended. The provisions of the statute relating to permissible charges were expanded and language related to “contractual customer,” “wholesale customers,” and “retail rate” was included.

Oneida Township and some of its residents sued Grand Ledge claiming that the statute expressly prohibited the rate charged under the agreement and that the rate could not exceed the actual cost of providing the services. Grand Ledge claimed that a certain exemption in the statute applied and that it was authorized to charge the rate provided under the agreement, i.e., twice that charged its city residents. Both Grand Ledge and Oneida Township claimed that language in the statute supported their respective arguments.

This column highlights a recent judicial decision or Michigan Municipal League Legal Defense Fund case that impacts municipalities. The information in this column should not be considered a legal opinion or to constitute legal advice.

Sue Jeffers is a legal consultant to the League. You may reach her at sjeffers@mml.org.

QUESTION:

Can a municipality charge more than the actual cost of service to an extraterritorial customer under Michigan law?

Answer according to the trial court:

Yes.

Answer according to the Court of Appeals:

No. The court of appeals overturned the trial court’s decision and held for the township and its residents.

The court of appeals distinguished language in the statute on the basis of “wholesale” and “retail” customers. Finding that Oneida Township residents were retail customers, the court of appeals applied MCL 123.141(3) and, accordingly, Grand Ledge was not permitted to charge beyond the actual cost of providing the service, despite the language of the agreement.

Answer to the Michigan Supreme Court:

Yes. The Michigan Supreme Court reversed the decision of the court of appeals. The Court found the court of appeals misinterpreted the statute. The Court found that the statute exempts water departments that are not contractual customers of another water department and that serve less than 1 percent of the population of the state from the cost-based requirements despite the language of the agreement.

Grand Ledge was permitted to continue to charge Oneida Township residents the rate outlined in its agreement with the township. The Michigan Supreme Court ruled that the provisions of the statute that outlawed charging more than the actual cost of service did not apply to Grand Ledge.

Municipalities that supply water services to less than 1 percent of the state’s population and are not contractual customers of another water system are not subject to the “actual cost” requirement of the state statute.

A large number of cities have agreements to supply water services to extraterritorial customers, some of which are other municipalities and some of which are individual residents. This case was extremely important to support the terms of those agreements.

Oneida Charter Township v Grand Ledge, No. 138520 (2009).

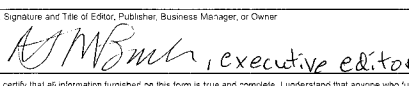


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SB 7 and EVIP:

How Do They Interact?

Q: If we comply with SB 7, are we automatically eligible for the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) payment that pertains to health care?

A: Do not make any assumptions on how these two things will interact! As of the writing of this article, it is unclear how the penalties for non-compliance with SB 7 will intersect with the requirements created by EVIP related to health care, and the penalties therein.

By way of background, Senate Bill 7 (SB 7) is the "Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act." The law takes effect January 1, 2012 and applies to all public employers. However, any collective bargaining agreement or other contract executed on or after September 15, 2011 must comply. SB 7 creates a "hard cap" on the amount a public employer may contribute to a medical benefit plan, which includes but is not limited to hospital and physician services, prescription drugs and related benefits. SB 7 provides an option to elect an 80 percent contribution cap rather than the hard cap, and it contains a provision to allow a local unit to opt-out entirely by a 2/3 vote. Failure to comply (or opt-out) will result in the state treasurer reducing each EVIP payment by 10 percent for the period of non-compliance.

PLEASE NOTE: EVIP IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITIES THAT RECEIVED A STATUTORY REVENUE SHARING PAYMENT GREATER THAN \$4,500 IN FISCAL YEAR 2010. The state's website lists eligible communities (www.michigan.gov/treasury)

EVIP was created to partially replace statutory revenue sharing to local units, which was eliminated by Governor Snyder in 2011. Communities eligible for EVIP must meet three requirements to receive EVIP funding. One requirement is that health care premium costs for new hires must include a minimum employee share of 20 percent; OR that the employer's share is cost competitive with the new state preferred provider organization health plan on a per-employee basis. 

Be sure to visit our website www.mml.org for complete information on SB 7 and EVIP including summary fact sheets and links to state forms and information on these major changes. You'll also see ways to keep up with the latest news and information through our blog "Inside 208," e-newsletters, Facebook, and Twitter.

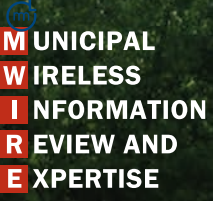
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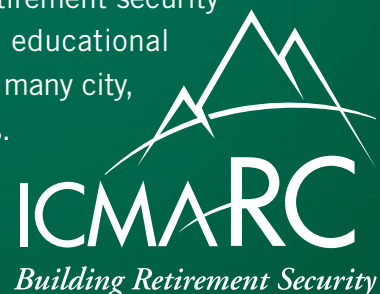
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Statistic Source: The 2010 EBRI/MGA Retirement Confidence Survey

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FOCUS ON

Montague

Better Communities. Better Michigan.

Better Communities. Better Michigan.



Montague,
pop. 2,361

Montague is home to 2,361 residents. Since the first house and blacksmith shop were built in 1841, the community developed a friendly characteristic that prevails today. In 1937, Montague became one of the first home rule cities in Michigan. One of the city's first citizens, Job Sargent, a veteran of the War of 1812, was awarded a grant of Michigan Territory where Montague now exists. Another early citizen, William Ferry, who platted the village, named the streets after Civil War generals and heroes in recognition of his son, Colonel Noel Ferry, who was killed at Gettysburg. Another son, Thomas White Ferry, served as a U.S. senator and president pro tem of the Senate (he was technically President for one day, in-between Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes).

With the pristine White River feeding into White Lake and then Lake Michigan, boating, sailing, and extraordinary fishing offer enjoyment in all seasons. Michigan's first linear State Park, the Hart-Montague Trail, offers 22 miles of scenic hiking, bicycling, and snowmobiling. The trail head and restroom is one block from downtown, and two connecting trails offer more recreational enjoyment and access to several city parks. Adjacent to the main bike trail is the city's Trailway Campground, with 54 fully serviced sites right downtown amongst a 100-year-old soda

fountain, antique shops, book store, art gallery, senior center, waterfront hotel, farmers market, and an original Dog-n-Suds drive-in restaurant.

From 1850 to 1908, there were 16 lumber mills operating on White Lake—many homes built by the lumber barons of the day still exist. Montague has excellent schools, located in residential neighborhoods, and six churches that serve the spiritual needs of its community and extends its benevolence beyond the city limits. Major annual events include Cruz'in and the Pumpkin Roll down the main street hill.



Those who leave Montague return often, and many move back "home" because of fond memories of friendly neighborhoods, a slower pace of life, and unlimited recreational opportunities. Visit once and you'll be back!

The World's Largest Weathervane is right downtown, topped by a real ghost story sailing ship, the Ellenwood. Come visit Ellenwood Park and learn its real story! [cm](#)