

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

May/June 2010

Walkable Communities

From Abbey Road to Brighton Road

“SINCE THE BOARDWALK OPENED UP, IT PROBABLY INCREASED OUR SUMMER BUSINESS BY AT LEAST 15 PERCENT.”

—Joe Mackle
Brighton restaurant operator



DREAMING BIG
IN **EDWARDSBURG**

CONNECTIVITY
IN **CADILLAC**

MARQUETTE'S
FORM-BASED CODES

the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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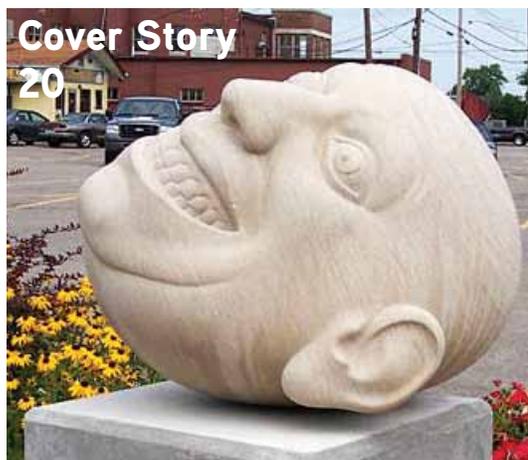
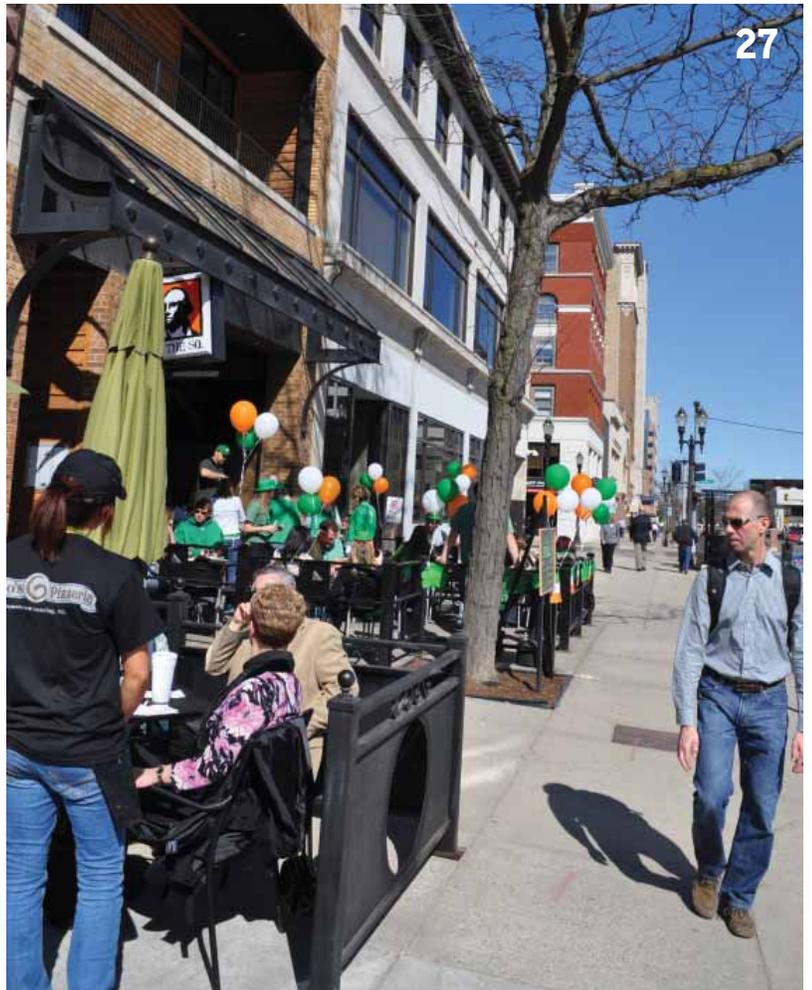
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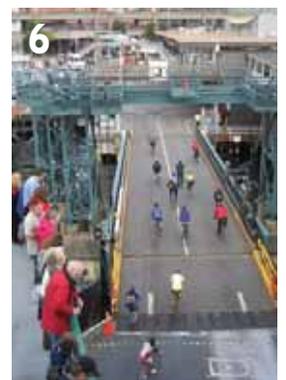
About the Cover: Beatles-impersonators are Brighton city officials (from left) Piet Lindhout, DDA designer and architect; Matthew Modrack, community development director; Dana Foster, city manager; and Matt Schindewolf, public services director.

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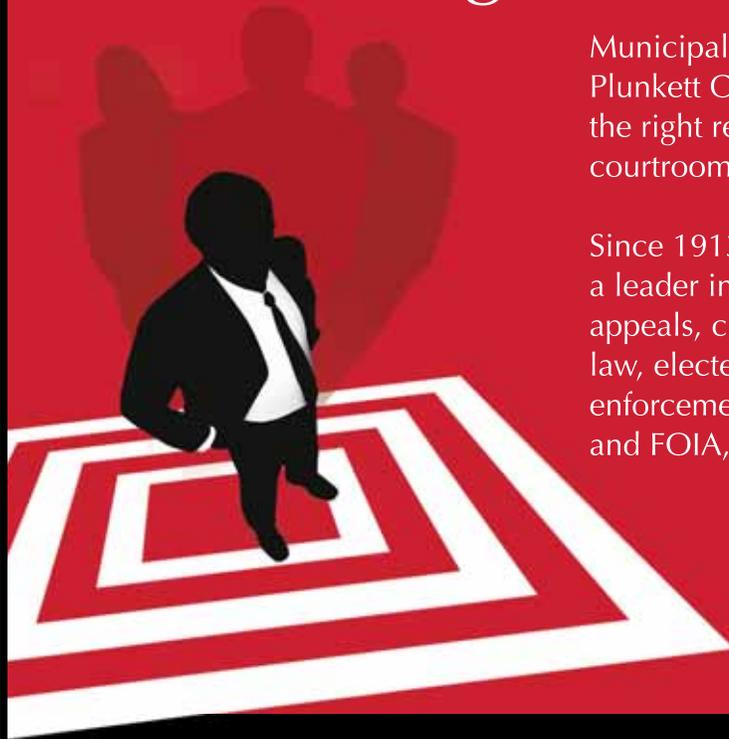




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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 83, Number 3

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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Please recycle this magazine

League Works to Make Walkability Possible

From Abbey Road to Brighton Road, walkability is hip again! And like the Beatles, it isn't just a passing fad. The Beatles impacted music for all time, and walkability will shape our communities for a lifetime.

For years, communities were designed to shuffle people between work and home. However, market analysis shows that today's "millennials," young professionals, "baby-boomers," and "empty nesters" want to live in neighborhoods with walkable downtowns, access to cultural, social, and entertainment opportunities, and a variety of transportation options.

Imagine living in a community where you could wake up in the morning, walk a block or two for a cup of coffee and a bite to eat at a nearby café. You leave the café, walk a little bit more to work or head across the street and catch a trolley or high speed rail. Or even better, imagine an entire day where you saw all your friends, ate at a local restaurant or spent a day shopping and none of you ever once had to get in your car?

It's our mission to make that dream a reality. We've identified physical design and walkability as one of our eight key assets of a viable community in our Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3) initiative.

Through 21c3 the League offers many programs to communities to improve their physical design and walkability. You can view what we have to offer at our website: www.mml.org/resources/21c3/walkability, where you will find the "walk score" of your community and what financial resources (think grants and stimulus dollars) are available to help your community achieve your dreams. This spring, several of the League Regional Seminars will feature the walkability topic. Stay tuned to mml.org for more information on your region's seminar topics.

In Lansing, the League's legislative staff has been pressing this walkability message to our legislators, and we have many allies. I presented the League's "Prosperity Agenda," which prominently features our move toward walkable communities, to several legislative committees. Many legislators have responded positively to this message.

Our Capital Office staff is working with 2008 League Legislator of the Year Senator Jason Allen and Senator Cameron Brown (former Sturgis City Councilmember) on legislation to create "elder friendly" communities. This legislation will make it easier for our communities to provide walkability for seniors. It will give communities tools such as allowing DDA dollars to be spent on heated sidewalks, adding walkability to community planning, incenting elder housing in or adjacent to downtowns so they can easily get around without a car.

We have also worked to pass legislation which will allow for downtown redevelopment that will provide more walkability. We worked with Sen. Allen to recreate the Commercial Redevelopment Act and worked with 2006 League Legislator of the Year Sen. Gilda Jacobs to create new redevelopment liquor licenses. All of these tools will assist our downtowns and business districts, and help our communities to be more walkable and pedestrian friendly.

I hope you enjoy the many articles in this issue of *The Review*. In the following pages you'll read advice from walkability expert Dan Burden, and about a popular walking and biking path system developed in Lapeer. You'll also learn that having a walkable community can be done in communities of all shapes and sizes, including the village of Edwardsburg and Ontwa township near the Michigan-Indiana border. 

THE PROSPERITY AGENDA RADIO SHOW

Program Promotes League's Mission



The Michigan Municipal League is taking its message to one of the largest radio stations in the Midwest—News/Talk 760 WJR. Throughout this year, League Director & CEO Dan Gilmartin will host the "Michigan Prosperity Agenda" radio show that challenges listeners to help make Michigan a better place to live, work, and play by creating vibrant and prosperous local communities.

The show is sponsored by the League and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and is scheduled to air at 7 pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month in 2010. We encourage all our members and friends to tune in for each show. For those outside of the WJR listening audience, you can hear segments of the show at 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



HOW MICHIGAN'S FUTURE IS TIED TO WALKABILITY

By Dan Burden



Dan Burden

Michigan's economic fate has been, and will continue to be, heavily tied to transportation. As in the past, when transportation shifted from canals to trains and trolleys to cars, our transportation form is about to shift significantly again.

Around the nation, communities recognize this and have been preparing by focusing their transportation dollars on people-first projects. These projects aim at addressing the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles, transit, and freight to create Living Streets.

Living Streets are designed to provide safe access for all users. This means that the road works for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, bicyclists, and freight, and that it is accessible to seniors, children, people with disabilities—everyone. This is fundamental because our roads play a significant role in defining the character of the place. They enable mobility or they hamper it. They encourage community building by bringing people together or they are deadly. A Living Street is a successful street—one that maximizes exchange between people.

A focus on building Living Streets means that officials, planners, and engineers work with the community to design a road that works for the community—one that functions and reinforces the sense of place. This means that the road moves traffic efficiently, effectively, and at safe speeds so that all users are encouraged. Through a context-sensitive design, the corridor is improved, sparking renewed local and regional interest, public and private investment, and leading to a healthier local economy. To make this happen, diverse sectors of the community must be involved because we are ultimately talking about placemaking. Placemaking describes how environments are welcoming because they are interesting and aimed at involving people in experiences. A Living Street does this. A Complete Street is engineered and designed to encourage multiple modes of transportation; a Living Street engages the public and helps shape the area's identity. It is what we aspire to create when we design a Complete Street.

Roadway projects mean big bucks. It makes sense to ensure that this investment in infrastructure has far reaching benefits. By designing and building Living Streets, leaders and officials work with the community—each providing input, addressing issues, and solving problems through an open discussion process. Residents are brought into placemaking as they provide input and then feedback on plans. The result

is a more active population, a clearer mission and vision, and an end product that not only meets the community's needs, but one that is a source of pride as well.



Characteristic #3 of a Walkable Community = public space. There are 12 characteristics of a walkable community. One is to have many places for people to assemble, play, and associate with others.



Left to right clockwise: Walkability encourages community building by bringing people together, such as this park in Portland, Oregon.

A complete street is engineered and designed to encourage multiple modes of transportation. This example is from Copenhagen, Denmark.

Characteristic #10 of a Walkable Community = there are many people walking.



A properly designed street provides drivers with the cues they need to behave appropriately. Living Streets are designed to move traffic at lower speeds, but more efficiently to relieve congestion and to reduce the rate and severity of traffic accidents—when they do occur. Because of this, pedestrians and bicyclists feel safer sharing the roads. Congestion continues to lessen because now multiple modes of transportation are being utilized. The end result is that people add some quality time to their day and maybe some activity, too. They have more of a chance of running into a neighbor, starting up a conversation, and buying locally, while going for a walk or bike ride.

Walkability is ultimately a quality of life issue. Belonging to, taking part in, and helping to improve a community matters. Many of our social ills (isolation, for instance) can be addressed by giving people the opportunity to walk to a corner store, to meet. Walkable communities have a number of benefits: improved individual and social health, a stronger sense of community, and higher property values (see article on pages 36-37). This is significant. National reports show Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington—two of the nation’s most walkable communities—attract people who want to live, work, and shop locally—despite the rain!

This proves true across the generations as well. Young adults are choosing new settlement patterns—and heading back to cities. *Seinfeld* and *Friends* were popular sitcoms of the '90s and both revolved around urban lifestyles. Add to this the greater flexibility we have today in how we work—from home, from the road, at an office, airport, or school—and any place can become a productive center, given the proper focus on access and amenities. Seniors, too, have found that they are increasingly isolated in sprawling suburbs. Once they lose the ability or desire to drive, they lose their independence. Getting to doctor’s appointments



or to the grocery store or to visit a friend is challenging. Suddenly, they are wholly dependent on others. Walkable communities provide seniors with the opportunity to remain mobile and independent longer—highly important factors for maintaining physical and mental health.

For nearly thirty years, there has been one constant in Americans’ driving practices: it has increased by 2.5 percent miles driven per year, every year. Then, eight years ago, the number of miles driven daily leveled. Today, our daily miles driven are coming down. With people over the age of 65 comprising 20 percent of our population, the numbers will continue to drop. Those communities that will be successful must focus on walkability as the cornerstone of their transportation policy.

If Michigan’s communities take a leadership role and tap into their abundance of great places—lakes, rivers, woods and other natural features, and an equal abundance of great villages, towns, cities, colleges, and universities—to attract new residents and new jobs through a local and

regional approach, they will propel their economies forward at all levels. This coordinated effort requires that municipalities re-adopt the oldest form of transportation as their platform: walking. This is not a new idea, but to do it today seems revolutionary. Yet, there is one true test of this. Ask yourself to imagine the place you want to raise your family...the amenities available in your community...describe your ideal day. Most of us find a sense of belonging that comes from interacting with others as central to our response. Sitting alone in a car in a traffic jam is never part of it.

Interestingly enough, until the late 1930s, the world's cities were based around the human foot—walking was the fundamental transportation mode. As we begin to assess the social and monetary costs associated with sprawl, we see that using walking to define our scale creates the most sustainable and competitive form of city building. It provides the greatest freedoms, cost competitiveness, and ease of movement. By focusing on walking, we find that the other levels of transportation (trolley, train, bus, tram, light rail) function better by taking people further from the city center

through an overall plan that remains true to the human scale. This leads to transit-oriented development—again combating sprawl.

“ To create a uniformly high standard of living, Michigan must require projects and plans with walkability as a central component. ”

The good news for Michigan is that its pattern of land settlement—which resulted in great Midwestern cities like Minneapolis, Detroit, Chicago, Buffalo, Columbus and Cleveland—left perfect block forms, great street connectivity, network, and pattern. These cities have the bones to attract industry and people, to energize a community around a Main Street, and begin to support local businesses, artists, and organizations. Walkable communities are better positioned to grow and attract people and jobs with healthy local economies and an even healthier population. By shifting transportation choices into the hands of every person, we begin to take stock of our resources—a park, a community center or a grocery store—and its proximity to where we are. We begin to look locally. When our focus is shifted to this level, we often begin to act locally, too. This encourages others. We begin to find that much of what we need—from recreational opportunities to daily purchases—can be met in a fifteen-minute walk and we explore more and more—finding places that we might have driven past a hundred times before. Placemaking is about creating opportunities for discovery.

When you really look at it, a shift from auto dependency to walkability is a step, literally, toward personal autonomy and social equity. Every man, woman, and child is given the



Top Left: A crossing island with textured pad.

Bottom Left: Walkability is a quality of life issue. Belonging to, taking part in, and helping to improve a community matters.



choice of how to access resources, and activity is built into the day's routine. Richard Florida, economic and social theorist, writes in *Atlantic Monthly*, "place still matters in the modern economy—and the competitive advantage of the world's most successful city-regions seems to be growing, not shrinking." In his book, *Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida reports that the future economy of any state or city will become increasingly dependent on the city's ability to become a place. And high on this is walkability; quite the reverse is car dependency.

In order to attract people and jobs, we need to understand the benefits of talent clustering. Noble Laureate Robert Lucas declared that the spillovers in knowledge that result from talent clustering are the main cause of economic growth. Well-educated professionals and creative workers who live together and interact in dense ecosystems, directly generate ideas and turn them into products and services faster than talented people in other places can. This is true of creative cultures in general, who seek to grow where the "masters" cluster. Detroit proved this in its earliest years, where many competitive engineers and inventors clustered together to learn from one another. The city became the accelerant of new ideas that built transportation.

It is time for Michigan to focus its resources—including transportation, public health, and urban development dollars—in combined efforts that emphasize active community environments, Main Street and infill development, and projects that allow the built environment to positively impact public health. Michigan already has so much in place to further talent clustering—especially its world class universities—but to create a uniformly high standard of living, Michigan must require projects and plans with walkability as a central component. 

Dan Burden is an internationally recognized authority on livable and sustainable communities, healthy streets, traffic calming, and bicycle and pedestrian programs. Dan is co-founder and executive director of the non-profit Walkable and Livable Communities Institute www.walklive.org. Dan has visited 2,700 communities and helped to reinvent portions of more than 100 Michigan communities.



Left: Walkable communities encourage individual and social health.

Right: Characteristic #4 of a Walkable Community = universal design. Universal Design respects people of all abilities.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF A WALKABLE COMMUNITY

- 1 INTACT DOWNTOWNS.** The downtown includes a quiet, pleasant main street with a healthy set of stores that are open for business a minimum of eight hours a day. There are youth and senior services, and places to conduct civic and personal business, all within a 1/4 mile walk (5 minutes) of the absolute center. The library is open for business at least 10 hours a day 6-7 days a week. There is still a post office downtown.
- 2 RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES, MIXED-INCOME, MIXED-USE.** Near the city/village center (in a large city at appropriate transit locations) there will be true neighborhoods. There are higher densities toward downtown and in appropriate concentrations further out. Housing includes mixed-income and mixed-use. A truly walkable community does not force people to drive to where they work. Granny flats, design studios, and other affordable housing are part of the mix in even the wealthiest neighborhoods.
- 3 PUBLIC SPACE.** There are many places for people to assemble, play, and associate with others within their neighborhood. The best neighborhoods have welcoming public space within 1/8 mile (700 feet) of all homes.
- 4 UNIVERSAL DESIGN.** The community has a healthy respect for people of all abilities, and has appropriate ramps, medians, refuges, crossings of driveways, sidewalks on all streets where needed, benches, shade, and other basic amenities to make walking feasible and enjoyable for everyone.
- 5 KEY STREETS ARE SPEED CONTROLLED.** Traffic moves on Main Street and in neighborhoods at safe, pleasant, courteous speeds. Most streets are designed to keep speeds low.
- Many of these streets are tree-lined, with on-street parking, and use affordable methods to keep traffic speeds under control. There is an absence of one-way couplets designed to flush downtown of its traffic in a rush or flight to the suburbs.
- 6 WELL-LINKED STREETS AND TRAILS.** The town has good block form, often in a grid or other highly connected pattern. Although hilly terrain calls for slightly different patterns, the linkages are still frequent. Some of the newer neighborhoods that were built to cul-de-sac or other fractured patterns are now being repaired for walking by putting in trail connectors. Code for new streets no longer permits long streets that are disconnected.
- 7 PROPERLY SCALED DESIGN.** From most homes, it is possible to get to most services in 1/4 mile (actual walked distance). Elementary schools are within a 1/4 mile walking radius of most homes, while high schools are within a 1 mile radius of most homes. Most important features (parks) are within 1/8 mile, and a good, well-designed place to wait for a high frequency (10-20 minutes) bus is within 1/4 to 1/2 mile.
- 8 CITY/VILLAGE IS DESIGNED FOR PEOPLE.** Places designed for people invest in plazas, parks, walkways...rarely are they investing in decongesting intersections on the far reaches of town.
- 9 COMMUNITY IS THINKING SMALL.** The most walkable communities are boldly requiring maximum parking allowed, versus minimum required. Groceries and other important stores are not permitted to build above a reasonable square footage. This assures that groceries, drug stores, and other important items are competitive at a size that is neighborhood friendly. Most parking is on-street.
- 10 THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WALKING.** This sounds like a silly statement at first... but think again. Often there are places that look walkable, but no one walks. Why? Is it crime? Is it that there is no place to walk to? You should see a great diversity of people walking and bicycling. Some will be very young, some very old. People with disabilities will be common. Another clue: in places where people walk in great abundance, virtually all motorists are courteous to pedestrians. It's true.
- 11 THE COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE A VISION.** Visionary master plans provide direction, engage diverse people, create opportunities for implementation to get past sticky issues, and deal with the most basic decisions and commitment. There are budgets set aside for neighborhoods, sidewalks, trails, links, and parks. The community no longer talks about where they will get the money, but how they will change their priorities.
- 12 DECISION MAKERS ARE FORWARD THINKING.** The community has a strong majority of leaders who "get it," who know that they are not to do all the work...but to listen and respond to the most engaged, involved, broad-minded citizens. They rarely are swayed by the anti-group. They are purposefully changing and building policies, practices, codes, and decisions to make their communities pleasant places for people...reinvesting in the downtown and disinvesting in sprawl. 

*12 characteristics provided by Dan Burden.
www.walkablecommunities.org*

Walking Audits Can Open Your Eyes

“Improving a community’s walkability can dramatically increase property values, attract new jobs, and improve the overall economy.”

—Dan Burden

Walkability expert Dan Burden was leading a group of Linden-area residents and officials when he spotted a large soot-blackened snow bank covering the sidewalk ahead.

As if he was going to play the children’s game “King of the Hill,” Burden climbed to the top of the snow bank, turned to the group on the walking audit in downtown Linden and said “what’s wrong with this picture?”

Everyone laughed—it was clear the snow bank shouldn’t be blocking the sidewalk and within the hour Linden City Manager Christopher Wren had it removed and the path once again clear for pedestrians.

It was a small example of what Burden and his walking audits can do for communities. In the simplest terms, a walking audit is a chance for a community to get an outside expert’s view of how walkable their community is or isn’t. Burden and his Walkable Communities Institute have given walking audits throughout Michigan and the nation. Using examples from these cities and from around the country, Burden leads community leaders through their streets pointing out strengths and weaknesses of their intersections, sidewalks and communities.



*What’s wrong with this picture?
Dan Burden conducts a walking audit in Linden,
and makes his point by standing on top of a
snowpile blocking the sidewalk.*

Sometimes the tips he gives are simple, such as removing the snow bank over the sidewalk, but others are much more difficult and expensive, such as constructing a multi-use development along a river bank in Lapeer; building a tunnel-like road for Southfield Road going through Oakland County’s Lathrup Village; and installing a “roundabout” intersection



Dan Burden was in Michigan in February, conducting walking audits in Lapeer, Lathrup Village, and Linden. He walks through a community and explains how to make it more pedestrian friendly. Photos by Matt Bach.

in downtown Linden. Improving a community’s walkability can dramatically increase property values, attract new jobs and improve the overall economy, Burden said, “You can’t have a city that works well for both cars and people,” Burden said. “You want a town that’s focused on pedestrians and accommodates vehicles.” By putting people, not cars, at the center of design, communities across the country are building attractive, livable environments with strong economies.

A handful of Michigan communities have already realized the benefits of improving walkability in their downtowns and neighborhoods. Burden, of

Washington state, has done a lot of work in Michigan and said some of his favorite “walkable communities” in our state are Brighton, Holland, Milford, Birmingham, Traverse City, Kalamazoo, East Lansing, Mackinac Island, Marquette, Saugatuck, Grand Haven, and Niles.

Michigan community officials who’ve recently had Burden in their communities said his walking audits get them thinking outside the box and get the dialogue going in their communities.

“It was great to have Dan Burden in Linden,” Linden Mayor David Lossing said. “He provided us an engineering sketch for a roundabout and we’re seriously considering it.”

With sufficient demand, the League will coordinate a visit with Dan Burden to Michigan to provide audits to several communities. Contact Heather Van Poucker at hvanpoucker@mml.org if you are willing to commit dollars and a date for a walking audit. 

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



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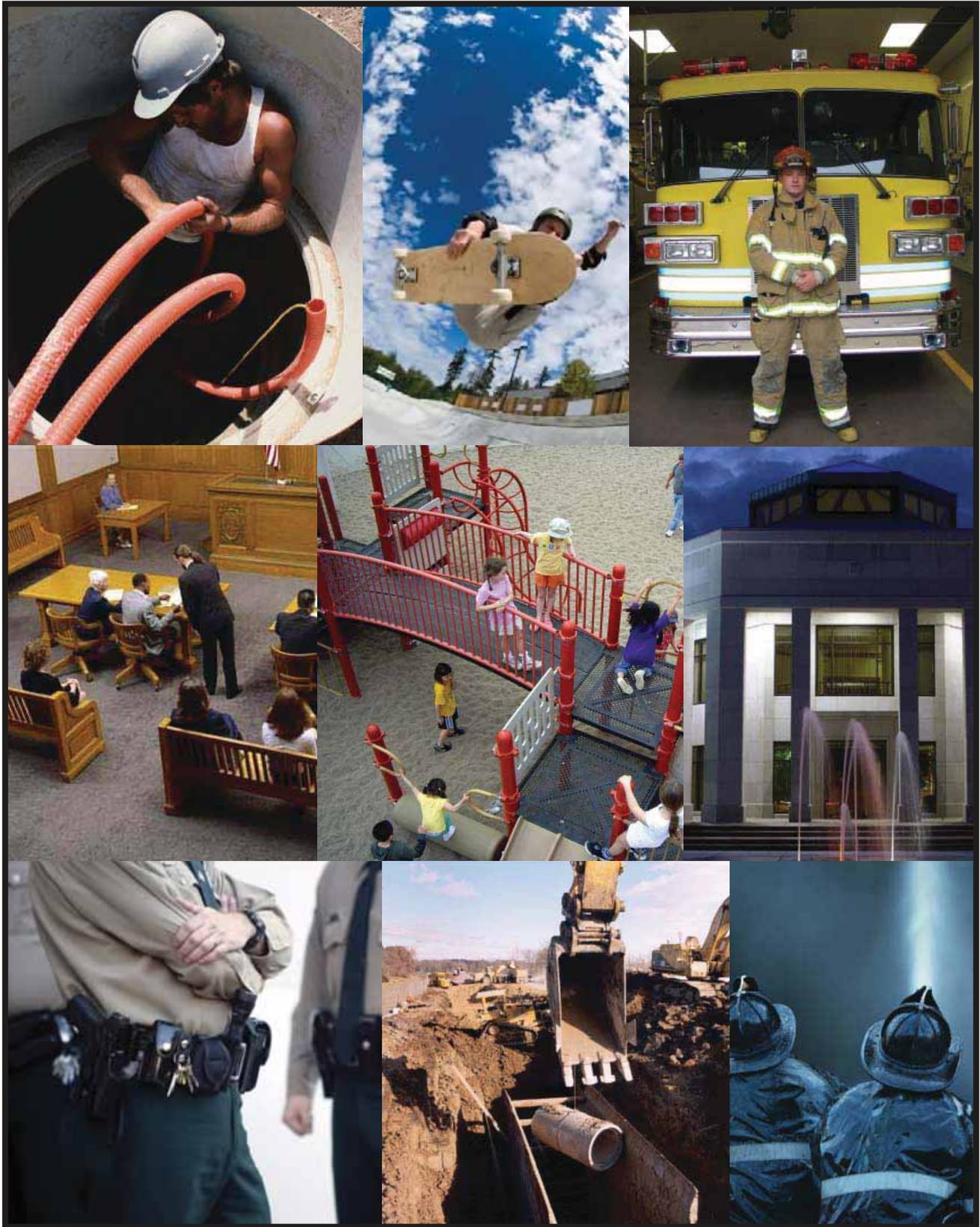
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Forming the Public Realm in Marquette

By Jennifer Eberbach

Q: How do we transform our downtown and pay attention to the unique natural feature of being on the shoreline of Lake Superior?

A: With form-based codes.



Marquette formerly took a traditional, use-based approach to zoning its waterfront community. However, since the city participated in an EPA-Smart Growth pilot program in 2006, City Planner and Zoning Administrator Dennis Stachewicz reports that

Marquette is benefiting from a transition to form-based code. Stachewicz remembers some of the struggles Marquette faced in its previous attempts to develop the downtown with use-based zoning. He explains that “we’ve been told on different occasions that we turned our back on the waterfront. You were basically looking at the backs of buildings.” Furthermore, certain areas of downtown did not support pedestrian traffic. They were swallowed up by automobile sprawl or they just were not as attractive or as inviting as they could have been.

Another significant issue that Marquette’s previous use-based model caused was that development projects were frequently delayed by public criticism, “during the last minute surge,” after developers had already invested money into a given property, according to Stachewicz.

Marquette had a sense that there was a better way to plan downtown and take advantage of the lakeshore. In 2006, the city followed its instincts and successfully applied to take part in a pilot project in form-based codes funded by the U.S. EPA-Smart Growth program and MI Sea Grant, which supplied Marquette with technical assistance provided by Ferrell-Madden Associates. The city also acquired funding through MI Coastal Zone Management, which it combined with the technical assistance grant.

At the time, Stachewicz remembers that the big question on the table was, “how do we transform our downtown and pay attention to the unique natural feature of being on the shoreline of Lake Superior?” Marquette was looking for

solutions that would encourage mixed-use development, a more walkable downtown, and appropriate use of the waterfront, while also maintaining Marquette's historical character.

Stachewicz compares different schools of thought on community planning, by stating; "When you are using a traditional Euclidian, use-based model, you get to pick the uses you want, but you have no participation whatsoever in what things *look* like." For example, "most of the newer developments we've had on the western fringe of our town and even out in Marquette Township have received a lot of negative comments because they look like they could be put up anywhere in America—from a big-box retail center to something as simple as a chain drugstore on the corner."

Another option for Marquette would have been to adopt an aesthetics-oriented model. However, Stachewicz thinks that "something along the lines of an appearance code really ties the hands of local developers. You cannot function in the world of economic development unless you respond to the market. An aesthetics code is too strict."

"Enter form-based code. Here is something where you don't define 100 percent of the aesthetics of a development, but you look at things in terms of context and scale. As opposed to picking which colors and materials would go on a building, and as opposed to the traditional use-requirement model, where you just say, if it's this kind of use, then it can go there—you now have a tool in your toolkit that defines the bulk of a building," Stachewicz explains.

In Marquette's model, the form of a building is defined in terms of things like minimum and maximum height limitations, appropriate lot coverage and creating a cohesive street space. This kind of planning "defines the context and character of a building's form ahead of time," before developers invest their money. Building façades, sidewalks, plants and other physical design elements define the character of the public realm, which Stachewicz likens to "the public's hallway."

According to Stachewicz, one of the greatest benefits of this approach that does not always get enough credit in the media is that it "creates predictability in the public realm." For example, "a form-based code gives assurance to nearby property owners that if they make an investment in their property, it's not going to be spoiled by a bad development next to them."



Form-based codes have created a more walkable downtown in Marquette and helped define the "public hallway." Photos courtesy of the city of Marquette.



Marquette also emphasizes outdoor recreation through its trail system. Photo courtesy of the city of Marquette.

Another benefit is that “site planning and development planning happens as you are writing the code,” which Stachewicz says makes his job more efficient. When a good project crosses his desk, he can sign off on it “fast—in days instead of months,” he reports.

Adopting a form-based code does not mean ignoring how properties are used. Rather, Stachewicz says, “use is still defined in the code, but it is defined in terms of a broader range of uses.” Instead of calling for a very specific use of a property, for example requiring the space to be a coffee shop, Marquette uses broad categories like commerce or retail.

Aside from its downtown, Marquette has also applied form-based codes to its South Marquette neighborhood, which is a mixture of commercial, residential and light industrial zones. Although Stachewicz sees great benefit in using form-based codes downtown and in mixed-use areas, “when you get out on the urban fringe where you have large lot development, certainly this type of technique isn’t appropriate.”

Everything is viewed from an automobile. It’s not really about walking space and density and things like that anymore,” he says. Furthermore, most residential development projects in Marquette employ a “hybrid mixture of form-based and traditional models, as appropriate.”

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Want to Find Out More About Form-Based Codes?

The Michigan Chapter of the Congress for New Urbanism (MiCNU), has developed a guidebook on the use of form-based codes. *Form-Based Codes in 7 Steps: The Michigan Guidebook to Livability* is filled with information to prepare communities to move toward adopting a form-based code. The book is available in a digital web-based, or printable black and white or color version. A form-based code is an alternative to conventional zoning code and is based on the type of development a community envisions and desires with a focus on the physical form of a

building and how it relates to the street and adjacent buildings. With physical design and walkability an important asset of 21st century communities, several Michigan communities have either moved to or are looking at a form-based code system in an effort to create a more attractive, walkable environment. The guidebook is available for purchase through the Congress for New Urbanism website, under the Michigan Chapter www.cnu.org/michigan.

Form-based codes deal in context and scale— as opposed to the traditional use requirement model, which regulates where things can go based on use.

Form-based codes also helped the city sell parcels of property at Founder's Landing, which had been targeted for mixed-use development. Before the city incorporated form-based code into its plan for the area, "what we were looking at was the possibility of a planned unit development.



Downtown Marquette. Photo by Ian Freimuth.

Typically most developers are uneasy going into a planned unit development process, because the gloves are off and anything goes. If the community decides it doesn't like part of their plan, they may have to redesign some things, and you can end up in this six month to a year-long process to approve a set of plans," he says. His solution was to do a form-based code district on the property and developed a building form standard "that was mutually agreeable to all parties. It subsequently led to the sale of the property." After years of frustration, progress at Founder's Landing is beginning to fulfill Marquette's vision of creating a mixed-use space—including a hotel, residential and commercial units, as well as an improved, more walkable public realm.

Stachewicz stresses the importance of "give and take" and creating a plan that is "agreeable between the city, developers and the public." One piece of this is involving everyone in the discussion before money is spent and time is wasted. By creating "predictability in the public realm," form-based codes allow, "the community to almost see what it would look like before it's built," he concludes. 

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

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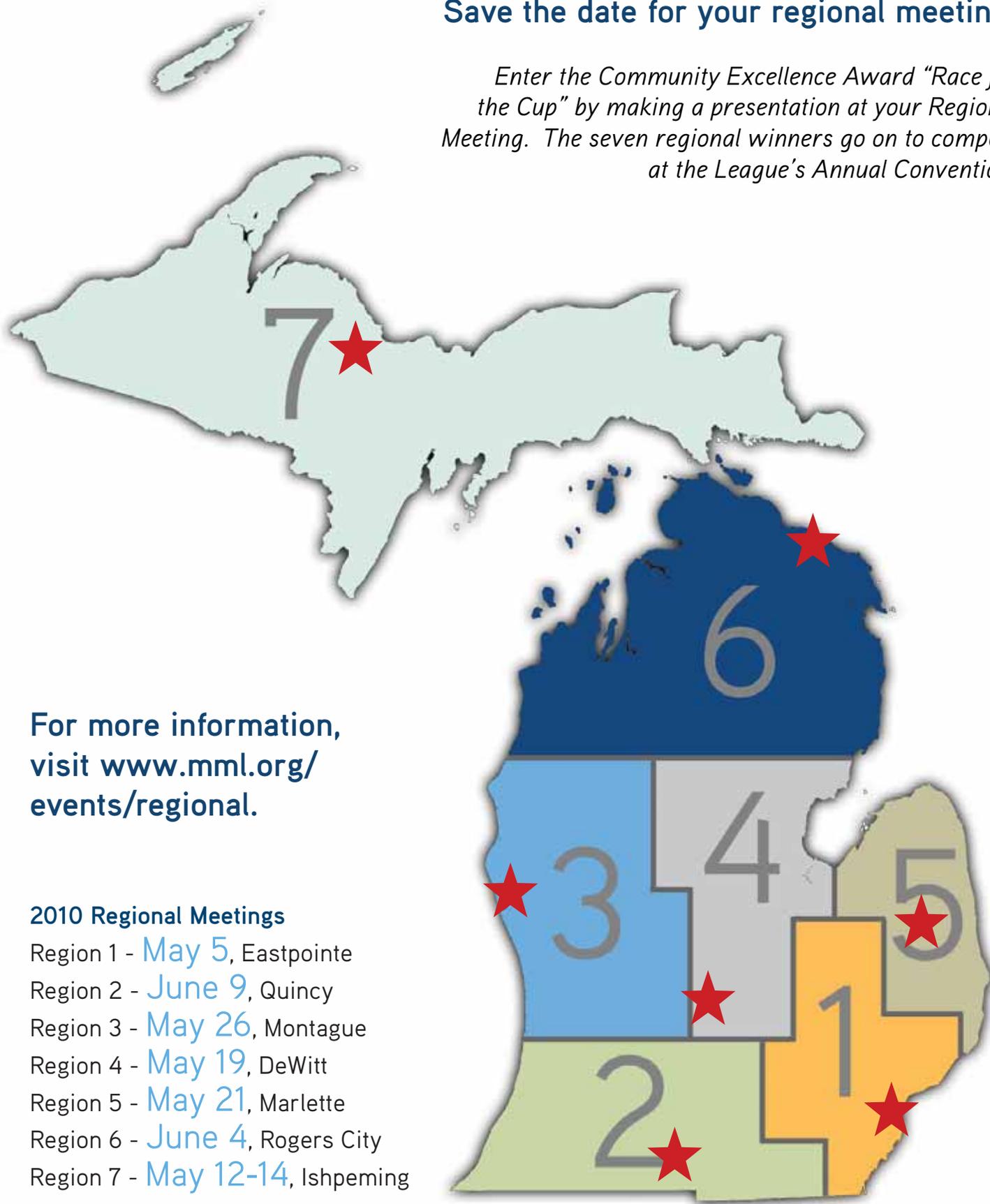
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- Region 6 - June 4, Rogers City
- Region 7 - May 12-14, Ishpeming



COVER STORY

Brighton is an “Old Pro” at Walkable Design

By Jennifer Eberbach



Brighton
pop. 6,701

Walker-friendly terms like “traffic calming,” “pedestrian islands” and “roundabouts” have been part of the vocabulary in Brighton for years.

Since the 1990s, leaders in this Livingston County community have been committed to making the city walkable and accessible. City Manager Dana Foster and Community Development and Planning Director Matt Modrack explain that creating a “walkable community” has been a goal for more

than a decade—even before the movement was en vogue. That progress has accelerated since working with national walkability expert Dan Burden. “He is very much responsible for what we have done. He has been our guru,” Foster says.

Burden has visited Brighton three times since the late 1990s. Initially, he came to town on a SEMCOG grant to perform a field audit. He walked and drove the city to get a first-hand sense of the pedestrian and traffic situations. He returned once to assess their progress and the city ended up hiring him as a consultant. Initially, “SEMCOG contacted us

because they had already been working with us on some traffic issues, and they knew we were struggling with some vehicular and pedestrian related conflicts back then,” Foster remembers.

“That’s where we first got ideas like traffic calming, in terms of physical barriers that encourage calming. It’s where we learned about things like pedestrian traffic islands at crosswalks, and getting buildings closer to the front lot lines and the curbside in our core downtown in order to visually promote the traffic calming effect,” Foster says. He also credits Burden with educating Brighton about improved traffic signals and signage, as well as increased density downtown and much more.

Aside from doing a field audit, Burden gave his input on the design of two particular projects that were huge in making Brighton the pedestrian-friendly community it is today. Foster said that it was Burden who recommended city officials construct a roundabout on Third Street. The roundabout allows traffic to move through an intersection without the use of traffic lights. It was such a success on moving traffic and people smoothly and quickly that Burden frequently uses photos of it in his walkability presentations done throughout the world. The second major project getting the “Burden touch” involved another difficult intersection. “We were in deep with the Cross Street and Grand River intersection,” Foster says. “That used to be one of the most dangerous intersections, not only in Brighton, but in Livingston County. Burden basically redesigned that project right before our city engineers’ eyes.” Improvements to the intersection include raised islands for pedestrians crossing the street, dedicated turning lanes, and improved traffic signals.

Modrack points out that Brighton’s raised paver-brick crosswalks and pedestrian-activated chaser lights, for example, do an effective job at keeping drivers alert. “(They) reinforce to the driver that this is a different material and I need to be paying more attention when I’m driving over these things.” Similarly, by moving lot lines closer to the curb, increasing density downtown, and establishing standards for the aesthetic design of both the urban core and surrounding neighborhoods, Brighton is working to “create a sense of place,” Foster and Modrack agree. According to them, “a sense of place” not only makes the public areas more attractive to pedestrians, but it also indicates to motorists that they are entering an active urban core.

While Burden’s counsel has had a large impact on Brighton’s approach to physical design, Foster and Modrack also point out that walkability has been ingrained in the city’s various plans for a decade. Having a walkable community has been included among the city council’s goals and objectives, the city master plan and the Downtown Development Authority’s plans. Even before working with Burden, Brighton had completed projects that significantly impacted pedestrian accessibility in town.



Opposite: Walkability is part of Brighton’s city council goals and objectives, the master plan, and the downtown development authority’s plan. Photo by Anna Bruchmann.

Right: Brighton’s roundabout moves traffic and people smoothly and quickly. Photo courtesy of www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden.

One of Brighton’s most successful pre-Burden projects was the construction of a three-legged bridge, called the “Tridge,” at the Mill Pond that sits in the middle of town. This unique bridge connects some of Brighton’s public areas, including the very popular Imagination Station playground for families. Before the project was completed, “the general population was only able to enjoy one small portion of the Mill Pond,” which was limited

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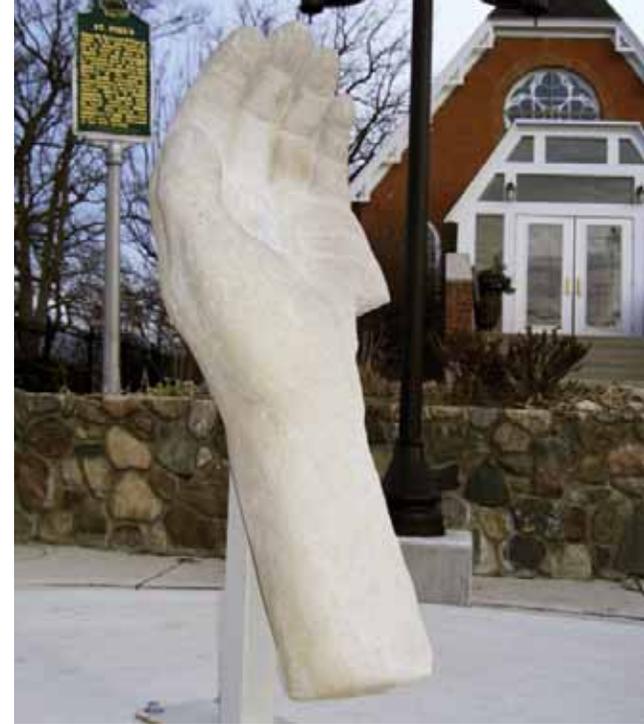
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Left: The Mill Pond “tridge” opened up Mill Pond for pedestrian and recreational activity. Photo by Matt Bach.



Right: Brighton’s Biennial Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit encourages cultural tourism and “puts feet on the street.” Photo by Heather Van Poucker.

to the south tip of the pond. “There was no public access to the property butting up against the Mill Pond around the rest of it. The Tridge opened up the Mill Pond for pedestrian and recreational activity, in general,” Foster explains. Modrack adds that the project has helped “increase access to commercial and business districts,” by better connecting neighborhoods on all sides of the pond.

Increasing foot-traffic also pleased local business people like Joe Mackle, director of operations for the Stillwater Grill. The popular Brighton restaurant is located just outside of the downtown district, but thanks to the Tridge and related boardwalks pedestrians can easily walk to the Stillwater restaurant from the downtown area.

“It’s hard to put an exact figure on it, but since the year the Tridge opened up it probably increased our summer business by at least 15 percent,” Mackle said. “People will park their cars downtown, watch a concert or go to the Imagination Station playground, then they’ll walk over here for dinner. Maybe later they’ll head back downtown for ice cream at the Yum Yum Tree. Families, in particular, love being able to walk from place to place.”

Brighton’s design standards also establish “palettes” of construction materials and physical design elements that are used in development projects downtown, as well as other neighborhoods and districts. These design standards lay out different options for things like landscaping, street lights, site furnishings, paving and façade materials, which bring some aesthetic consistency to the public realm. The city has also improved the parking situation downtown, by completing numerous projects aimed at making Brighton’s downtown and businesses more accessible to motorists.

Another piece of the puzzle involves “creating destination walkables,” like Brighton’s Biennial Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit. Currently in its second round, the biennial public art exhibit showcases outdoor sculptures at around 30 locations spanning the length of downtown. Every two years the artworks are swapped out to make room for new public sculptures. The city has also purchased nine permanent works. According to Foster and Modrack, the biennial is a marriage between cultural tourism and a walkable destination that not only “puts feet on the street,” but it moves those feet from one side of downtown to the other.

Brighton is in the midst of improving access to the northern part of town, which houses activity centers like the public library and the post office. It is also the area where one finds a large Meijer and the mall, which they determined was severely lacking in walkable elements. The plan, which is partially in place, includes new wider sidewalks, landscaping, crosswalks and entrance signage. There is also a proposal on the table to add a natural habitat preserve on the north side of town.

Foster concludes that Brighton has “done a lot, but we also have a long way to go,” in order to make the city a more walkable, 21st century community. “We still have some gaps between our commercial and activity centers” that they are still trying to bridge, he says. Regardless of the work Brighton has left to do, the city has already made leaps and bounds before many communities have gotten their own walkability programs off the ground, so to speak. 

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

DREAMING BIG

By Chuck Eckenstahler

How **Edwardsburg** and **Ontwa Township** are coming together to turn three area focal points into a “walkable destination” for residents and visitors, reviving the town square as a public gathering place.



Left to Right:
Edwardsburg Village
President Jim Robinson,
CIA member Tony
Leininger, Ontwa
Township Supervisor
John Brielmaier



Edwardsburg,
pop. 1,147
Ontwa Township
pop. 5,865

“If you don’t dream, you never get anything done.” This is a quote by Ontwa

Township Supervisor John Brielmaier, but it’s also the underlying vision of a cooperative project by two municipalities located near the Michigan-Indiana border. Dreaming big and then making it happen is the mantra of the Uptown

Improvement Authority Act, passed in 2005, provides communities a means to fund public improvements such as new streets, lighting, and sidewalks, without raising taxes.

Under the Act, a municipality must agree to expedite local permitting and inspections, and modify its master plan to provide for walkable, non-motorized interconnections, including sidewalks and streetscapes throughout the area. A corridor improvement authority is created and operated in a manner similar

VILLAGE-TOWNSHIP COOPERATION

Due to encouragement by several business leaders seeking a public-private partnership, the joint CIA was formed in July 2009 by action of the village of Edwardsburg and Ontwa Township. There were several people responsible for the formation of the CIA—the hard working people who first created the Edwardsburg Uptown Improvement Association, which was instrumental in the eventual formation of the joint Uptown CIA.

“We want to create a **destination** where our residents and visitors will **WANT TO SHOP AND ENGAGE IN OTHER SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.**”

—Tony Leininger, local businessman and CIA boardmember

Corridor Improvement Authority run jointly by the village of Edwardsburg and Ontwa Township. The two communities are working together to form a commercial town center that would serve not only as a resident and visitor shopping venue, but also to become the focal point for the entire Edwardsburg community.

The basic purpose of a corridor improvement authority is to allow older communities with business areas in need of restoration to obtain the economic development tools to make the necessary improvements. The Corridor

to a downtown development authority. Once created, it can establish a tax increment finance plan, levy a special assessment, and issue revenue bonds and notes. The Act requires a municipality to determine that it is “necessary for the best interests of the public to redevelop its commercial corridors and to promote economic growth.” The Act provides a means to make change happen and is especially useful when the business district spans two governmental jurisdictions.

The intent of the CIA is to carry out a program of public and private improvements, laying the foundation for a compact, walkable, landscaped shopping and social gathering center. The CIA’s vision of an improved local job base within an attractive landscaped setting was accepted as an achievable vision that would promote and unite regional cooperation throughout the greater community.

According to local businessman architect Tony Leininger who sponsored the organizational effort and now serves as a CIA member, “recognizing that

Steps to Forming a Joint CIA

1. Resolution of Intent

An adopted formal statement that both governments will consider forming and establishing a public hearing date.

2. Joint Agreement

An adopted agreement between two governments addressing organization, membership, and appointment procedures between the two sponsoring governments.

3. Notice to Treasury

A letter giving notice to the Michigan Department of Treasury of the intent to form a joint CIA.

4. Public Hearing Notice

Newspaper publication of public hearing—two times.

5. Public Hearing Posting Affidavit

Posting at 20 places giving notice of public hearing.

6. Notice to Taxing Entities

Letter informing each entity whose taxes could be affected of the public hearing.

7. Notice to Property Owners

Letter to each property owner within the proposed CIA district informing them of the public hearing.

8. Formation Ordinance

Ordinance adopted no sooner than 60 days after the public hearing by both governments establishing the CIA.

9. Letter to Secretary of State Office of the Great Seal

Letter notifying the Office of the Great Seal of the formation of the authority.

Note: steps 2 and 3 only required for a joint CIA.



The Uptown CIA has plans to link three foundational buildings to create the type of public space that becomes a walkable destination. Ultimately, the library, school, and post office will form a “town square,” anchored by a clock tower and kiosk. Photos by Darleen’s Photography.



What is truly special about this effort is the unique cooperation between the village and township, particularly because only five of the 138 parcels of land

The ambitious plan calls for over \$8 million of infrastructure, streetscaping, building façade improvements including a yet to be designed clock tower funded by CIA-TIF funds, grants, private donations and local budget allocations.

over 50 percent of our residents are employed and routinely shop in Elkhart Indiana, we want to create a destination where our residents and visitors will want to shop and engage in other social activities.” He adds that “going to the village and township with the idea of a cooperative joint CIA naturally fit our goal of a public-private means to accomplish this goal.”

in the CIA are located in the township. There was never a question of the need for cooperation or the need to create communitywide commitment. Guided by Village President Jim Robinson and Township Supervisor John Brielmaier, with funds advanced to the CIA by the township board, the CIA was formed and the Development TIF Plan adopted in less than a year.

“We have been told that we are a little unusual with this type of village-township cooperation,” notes Brielmaier. The Uptown CIA plans to accomplish its goal of making downtown Edwardsburg a walkable destination with these tools:

PHYSICAL STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

8,610 lineal feet of streetscape improvements including installation of streetlights, sidewalks, street landscaping and decorative benches, brick

“WE DON’T THINK THIS COOPERATION IS UNUSUAL,
we just do what’s right for the **community.**”

—Jim Robinson, Edwardsburg Village President

planters, banners, decorative concrete stamping, and underground location of utilities, where required.

BUILDING FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Funding paint and supplies to private property owners for approximately six buildings in the district, and providing design and implementation funds for façade and building renovation grants and loans designed to obtain a unified architectural appearance in the CIA district, including renovation of the mill façade.

M-62/US-12 INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENTS

Addition of crosswalks and streetscape improvements including retaining walls, plantings, signage and lighting.

CLOCK TOWER

The construction of a clock tower with a kiosk below it in the central business district. The clock tower will be the "anchor" of the downtown improvement plan.

MARKETING

Joint funding with existing businesses located within the CIA district enabled a promotional campaign that included advertising, marketing, and preparation of promotional brochures. The CIA has budgeted \$10,000 for marketing purposes.

CASS COUNTY GATEWAY ENTRY FEATURE

An entryway feature including signage at four locations entering the CIA District. The plan, based on sound community planning principles, was prepared under the watchful eyes of strong political and civil leadership with the understanding that they are all in this together, and something needs to be done now to ensure future communitywide economic success.

We don't think this cooperation is unusual, "we just do what's right for the community" notes Jim Robinson.

Successful corridor planning is more than pretty pictures; it's a function of creating a vision supported by a realistic financing strategy that becomes a driving force for change.

STRONG LEADERSHIP

While leadership seems self-evident as an important factor, it can't be taken for granted. Both civic and political leaders visibly displayed a willingness to come together and discuss a bold vision that would become a driver of change. Without this leadership and vision, the effort would have been unable to move beyond the parochialism, conflict, and inertia which continue to weigh upon many similar projects. 

Chuck Eckenstahler is a consultant to McKenna Associates, and teaches economic development subjects in the Graduate School of Business at Purdue North Central. He can be reached at 219-861-2077 or pctecken@comcast.net.



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COMPLETING MICHIGAN'S STREETS

By Jennifer Eberbach

A growing initiative to “Complete Streets” nationwide has Michigan thinking about the value of adopting pedestrian and bicycle-friendly policies and improving the infrastructure for non-motorized transportation. The nationwide movement, which is being fueled by the National Complete Streets Coalition, contends that improving safety conditions and accessibility for walkers and bikers can solve traffic problems, encourage a healthier lifestyle, protect the environment, and increase foot traffic to many types of downtown businesses. The mantra could be, “what’s good for walkers is good for business.”

In 2009, two cities in Michigan got the ball rolling toward implementing Complete Streets practices. Lansing joined the fray of cities nationwide that have adopted Complete Streets non-motorized network ordinances, and this month it will be the first city in Michigan to present a draft of a Complete Streets network plan. Mt. Pleasant is also utilizing the Complete Streets model in a road reconstruction project that aims to slow traffic and make downtown more accessible to walkers and bikers.

The Complete Streets concept has also reached the desks of Michigan’s state legislators, who are considering the value of raising the bar statewide. Proponents of creating more walkable communities and supporting alternatives to motorized travel are working to get a bill passed that would require the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to work with communities across the state to implement Complete Streets best practices.

Completing the Picture in Michigan’s Capital

As the Complete Streets model is being mulled over by state legislators, Lansing’s Transportation and Parking Office and the Lansing Master Plan Team are preparing to be the first city in Michigan to present a draft of a Complete Streets Network Plan.

Support for a more walkable, bike-friendly Lansing grew from grassroots public engagement, spurred along by the Walk and Bike Lansing! Task Force. This is a partnership between the Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council and Michigan Complete Streets community organizers, including the League of Michigan Bicyclists and the Michigan Environmental Council. Proponents of Lansing’s ordinance united under

Complete Streets’ mission, arguing for increased safety conditions for walkers and bikers, environmentally friendly alternatives to motorized traffic, improved traffic conditions, and healthier people. More than 100 volunteers collected over 4,500 signatures in order to petition for Complete Streets policy making. In August 2009, when the ordinance was on the table, residents in Lansing were impassioned by the cause—writing letters to Lansing City Council and speaking up at public meetings.



Complete streets mean including bicyclists in the street equation. Photo by Jhenifer Pabillano.

The Lansing City Council adopted the Lansing Complete Streets Ordinance, in a unanimous decision, on August 17, 2009. According to the ordinance, required improvements to Lansing’s non-motorized network include “at a minimum, accommodations for accessibility, sidewalks, curb ramps and cuts, trails and pathways, signage, and bike lanes, and shall incorporate principles of Complete Streets and maximize walkable and bikeable streets within the city.” It also requires, “to the extent financially feasible, future construction or reconstruction of city rights of way or any part thereof shall be in conformity with the non-motorized network plan.” Lansing will update the plan every five years.

Another significant impact of the ordinance will be an increased minimum requirement for state transportation fund allocation in Lansing. Michigan law currently requires that a minimum of 1 percent of state funds be allocated to non-motorized networks, like bike lanes and sidewalks. Before adopting the Complete Streets Ordinance, Lansing was already spending more than the state required, about 2 percent. The new plan will raise the bar to 5 percent.

Making Mt. Pleasant More Pleasant for Walking and Biking

The city of Mt. Pleasant decided to incorporate Complete Streets principles into the reconstruction of Michigan Street, which is scheduled for the summer of 2010. The decision follows the city's unanimous decision, in October 2009, to reject MDOT's recommendation to address a high accident rate and congestion by banning left-hand turns at the corner of Mission and Broomfield Streets and putting in "Michigan Lefts."

Concluding that MDOT's solution was not the best option for the commercial neighborhood, the city found a solution that they argue is more conducive to their master plan for the city's design. Improved safety conditions for walkers and bicyclists will include "narrower driving lanes, new bike lanes, 'bump out' parking areas (also known as designated parallel parking areas), and wider sidewalks," in order to slow motorized traffic and make the streets safer and more convenient for pedestrians and bicyclists, according to the city of Mt. Pleasant.

Taking it to the Streets, and the State

Complete Streets legislation at the state level proposes that "a transportation network that provides active options for people holds many benefits," including improving public health, according to a resolution put forth in December 2009. Efforts to create Complete Streets legislation, by proponents like Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan, have contended that an "active transportation infrastructure" will support a healthy lifestyle, and reduce childhood obesity.

The proposed legislation also takes the stance that a well-planned non-motorized network increases "safety" for walkers and bikers, "reduces pollution, and holds great potential for revitalizing communities and spurring economic development."

As communities and lawmakers in Michigan endeavor to put Complete Streets concepts into practice, now is the perfect time to get educated about the benefits of non-motorized traffic networks. The Complete Streets initiative seeks to define a new standard. Every community has



Complete streets are designed and operated so they work for all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. Photos by Matt Bach.

different needs and each must approach physical design and transportation planning from their own, unique perspective, however, the Complete Streets initiative supposes that everyone can be doing more to encourage environmentally conscious, safe, healthy and active modes of travel.

Follow these links to find out more:

National Complete Streets Coalition <http://www.completestreets.org/>

Michigan Complete Streets <http://michigancompletestreets.wordpress.com/>

Bike Walk Lansing! <http://www.walkbikelansing.com/> 

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

Connectivity in Cadillac

The Clam River Greenway

By Precia Garland and Shari Spoelman



The Clam River Greenway is a 1.6 mile “ribbon of blue and green” that connects people, neighborhoods, and resources within the city of Cadillac. Born from the imagination of a few engaged citizens who loved their community and weren’t

afraid to inspire and collaborate with others, the greenway developed over a 10-year period. The dream was driven by committee meetings, fundraisers, grant writing, volunteer worker bees, strategic partnerships, and old-fashioned tenacity. Project engineering and construction totaled approximately \$800,000 and extended over three primary construction phases. One Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) grant and two Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) grants were the primary source of project funding, matched by several corporate and private foundation grants, as well as the Community Foundation, Cadillac Rotary Club, and engraved brick paver sales.

Today’s Clam River Greenway caters to a myriad of people and interests. Ranging in width from eight to ten feet, the greenway is an “expressway” for many types of non-motorized users. Some enjoy the greenway as a safe and scenic place for a leisurely stroll; others are more purpose-driven, commuting from home to school, work, or the grocery store. From north to south, the greenway connects various residential neighborhoods with the Cadillac All-Sports Association soccer and baseball fields, Lincoln Elementary School, commercial shopping along Mitchell Street, the Cadillac Junior High and High Schools, and the Keith McKellop (KM) walkway, which follows the northeast shore of Lake Cadillac. Most sections of the greenway are completely insulated from city streets, reducing conflict with vehicular traffic and making the path a safe alternative for non-motorized users, especially children and seniors. Once on the KM walkway, users are able to link to the in-city section of the White Pine Trail spur, which in turn connects Cadillac 90 miles south to the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. Talk about connectivity!

Given its location along the Clam River, the greenway has brought new attention and pride to a previously hidden resource. In decades past, the Clam River was regarded as little more than a drainage ditch and its natural route was altered and channelized in several areas to suit the city’s platting needs and abutting private property owners. Today, with the greenway following its river banks, the perspective regarding the Clam

River is changing. Children take advantage of the increased fishing opportunities and adults admire the wetland beauty within the city while following over 1,600 feet of boardwalk.

Development of the greenway was assisted in large part by platted but undeveloped alley rights of way owned by the city along the riverbank. Other public land owners along the river, such as Cadillac Area Public Schools, also made acquisition of many greenway easements easy. The first two phases of the greenway were completed where land was already under control of the city or easily obtainable.

“The **greenway** has been embraced by the Cadillac community beyond our expectations and added a whole new level of **accessibility** to our local park system.”

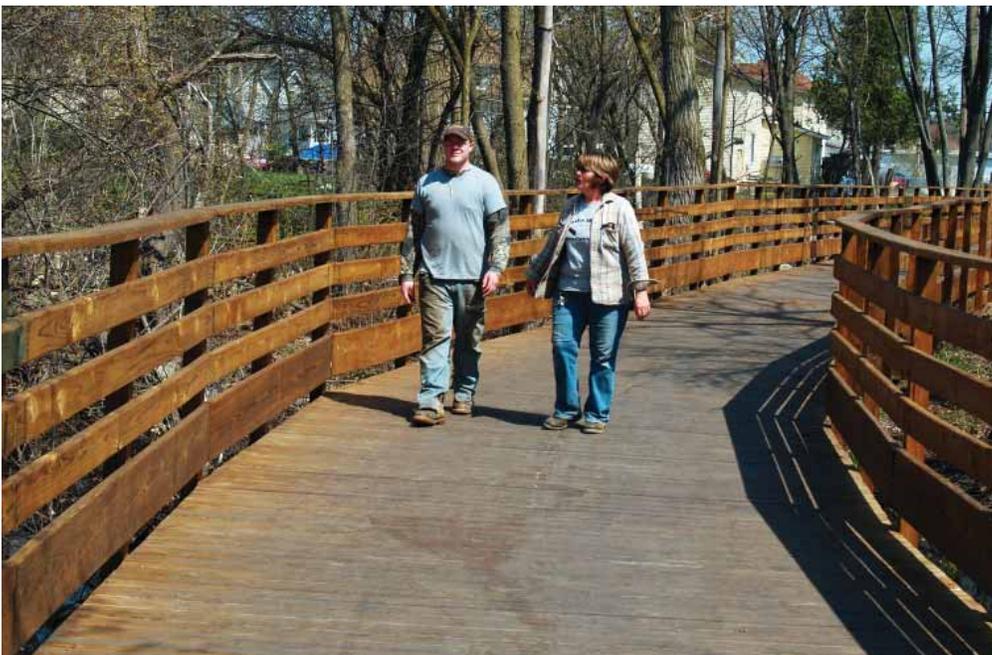
—Councilmember Shari Spoelman



Children and teens are the greenway’s largest user group, at 54 percent. Photo courtesy of the city of Cadillac.



The greenway connects people, neighborhoods, and resources within the city. It is used for leisurely strolls or purpose-driven commutes from home to school or home to work. Photos courtesy of the city of Cadillac.



genius of this phasing was also planned by the Clam River Greenway committee, whose members painstakingly made contact with multiple follow-up visits as necessary to coax private property owners to grant easements to the project. Where necessary, a promise of fencing (with or without an access gate) was provided to property owners. However, many property owners saw the benefit of prior phases of the greenway, and provided easements freely.

Completion of phase III of the greenway was also a major contributing factor in the city's receipt of the 2009 Gold Promoting Active Communities Award from the Governor's

Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports. The gold award requires a community to document outstanding achievements in making it easy for people to be active, and active they are on the greenway!

Based on data collected by District Health Department #10 in 2008, almost immediately following completion of the third and final connecting phase of the greenway, the city estimated that approximately 1,000 trips were occurring on the pathway weekly. Every age group was also represented in

This allowed the Clam River Greenway committee to demonstrate the value of the project to the community before the "heavy lifting" took place for the third and final phase of the greenway, which required 16 easements from various private property owners.

In addition from moving from easy to difficult where easement acquisition was concerned, the beauty of saving the third phase for last was that it was the connecting phase. Without phase III, phase I and phase II did not connect. The

the survey, with children and teens (54 percent) representing the largest user group. A few “intercept” surveys were also conducted while user counts were being taken. One teen commented, “Our parents used to drive us to school. Now we usually take the path—it’s pretty quick and kind of cool!” Another couple using the greenway remarked, “We never knew the Clam River meandered through the city like this until we walked the path.” A pair of senior citizens reported, “The greenway provides a safe and pleasant alternative for walking and exercising as compared to using local streets.”

Given its popularity with the community, the Clam River Greenway committee is now turning its attention to future phases of development, largely outside the city limits. The Cadillac area is blessed with a great deal of wooded public lands, some of which already possess trails that could be connected to the Clam River Greenway. One such area is the Cadillac Pathway, an 11.3 mile trail loop located just northeast of the city. The Cadillac Pathway is located on state property and maintained by the Michigan DNR. It is beloved by walkers, hikers, mountain bikers and cross country skiers, and coincidentally, also contains a small section abutted by the Clam River. Discussions are now underway to determine possible routes and resources for connecting the Clam River Greenway to the Cadillac Pathway.

According to Shari Spoelman, Cadillac City councilmember and chairperson of the Clam River Greenway committee, “The greenway has been embraced by the Cadillac community beyond our expectations and added a whole new level of accessibility to our local park system. We have seen first hand what a difference it has made in the lives of our residents and are excited by the possibilities of extending the greenway beyond our community boundaries to further enhance safe recreational opportunities.” 

Precia Garland is the former assistant city manager of the city of Cadillac.

Shari Spoelman is a Cadillac city councilmember and chairperson of the Clam River Greenway Committee. You may reach her at 231-775-0181 or sspoelman@cadillac-mi.net.



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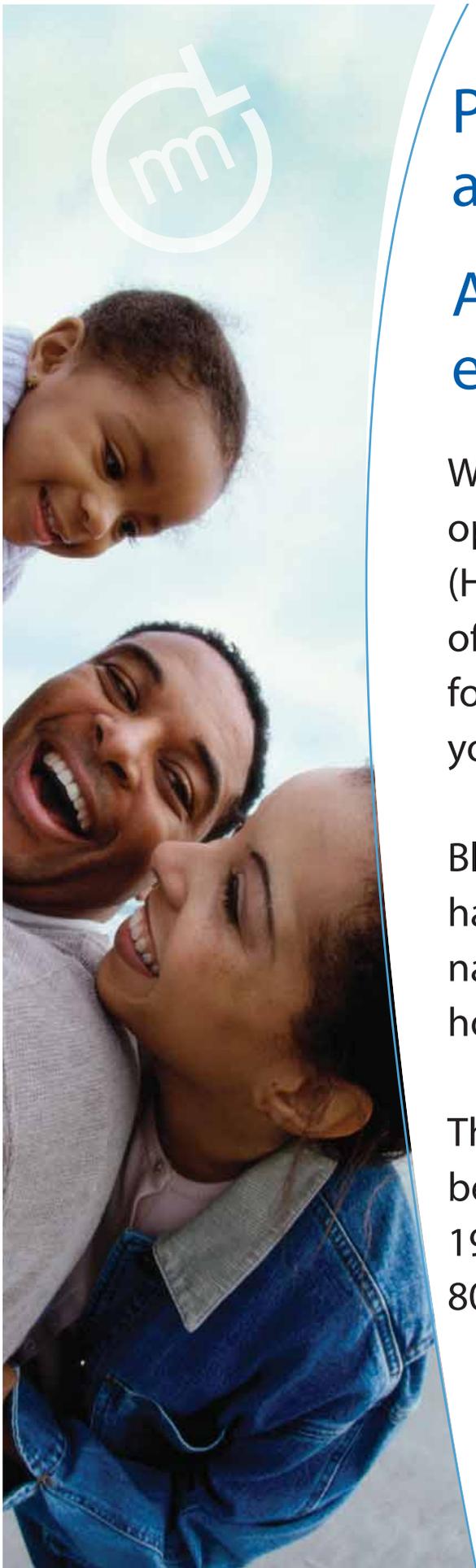
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In some cases, walking is the best way to get from point A to point B. Whether you're walking to the mailbox or walking into a store, the act of putting one foot in front of the other is getting people where they need to be.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network understand the importance of walking, especially when it comes to health. For most people, walking is a simple activity that keeps the heart healthy, increases energy levels and burns calories.

Here are some easy ways to incorporate walking into your daily routine:

- Take the stairs as often as possible
- Walk the last few blocks instead of riding the bus all the way to work
- Park at the opposite end of the mall from where you need to shop
- Walk to do shopping or other errands

One Michigan woman, Jodi Davis, lost 162 pounds by walking 1.5 miles per day and eating right. Jodi blogs daily on AHealthierMichigan.org and she has helped encourage a fellow Michigander, Jon Stanton, during his 230 pound weight loss. "I was on a path to death," Stanton admitted. That was true until he started walking and caring about his health.

AHealthierMichigan.org is an online community where people can join the conversation about how to lead Michigan to a healthier future. The site is divided into four areas of focus:

- A Healthier You, which concentrates on personal health
- A Healthier Business, which zeroes in on our state's economic vitality
- A Healthier Community, which highlights community events and stories
- A Healthier Healthcare System, which addresses how Michigan's health care system can and is becoming stronger

This interactive site features videos, blogs, event calendars, discussion forums, news and much more. Share your insights, contribute content and catch up on the positive things going on in our great state. 



Blues employees out walking during our National Walk @ Lunch Day. Photo courtesy of Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Extensive Trail System Connects Lapeer

“I LIVE IN THE CITY AND NOW I CAN WALK ANYWHERE I WANT.

I can go to Meijer or anywhere downtown to **any of the stores or parks.**
I have **pedestrian access** to all that and can do a lot less in my car.”

—Ray Turczyn



If someone wanted to go for a stroll, jog, or bike ride around Lapeer 15 years ago, the main option would have been on the street along with the cars and trucks.

But today there are about three miles of paved, pedestrian-friendly trails that people can use to connect to multiple city parks, several schools, the downtown district, and outlying commercial areas.

“We had some ball fields and playgrounds, but there weren’t any trails here 15 years ago,” said Ray Turczyn, the director of parks, recreation and cemetery for the city of Lapeer. “Getting trails was one of the highest priorities of the people in terms of their recreation use. I live in the city and now I can walk anywhere I want. I can go to Meijer, Walmart, anywhere downtown to any of the stores and to any of the parks. I have pedestrian access to all that and can do a lot less in my car.”

Having a more walkable community started in 1992 for Lapeer after resident surveys and the city’s parks and recreation master plan identified a need for a trail system. The city used grant and city park fund dollars to purchase some abandoned railroad lines for \$25,000.

Then in 1994, in what was called the Linear Path Development Project, the city built more than two miles of paved trails, bridges, and boardwalks along the abandoned railroad property. The constructed trail connected four

city parks and cost nearly \$260,000. It was funded through several sources, including \$180,000 from the DNR Recreation Bond Initiative, \$60,000 from the Lapeer Optimist Club, and \$19,600 from the city park fund.

There have since been other smaller projects, including an extension to the Linear Path that took place in 2009 and will be concluded this spring with the planting of grass. In all, about three miles of trails have been built since the early 1990s costing \$960,000 total, Turczyn said.

Turczyn is proud of the fact that the city built the trail system using primarily grants and donations. Less than 10 percent of the funding came from city tax dollars, he said.



Dan Burden conducts a walking audit in Lapeer on February 9, 2010. Photo by Matt Bach.

“We tried to benefit from outside funding sources to minimize the impact on taxes,” Turczyn said. “We’ve done nearly a million dollars worth of improvements, of which less than 10 percent has been from city tax dollars.”

But city leaders just didn’t start building trails. They had a mission in mind. They wanted to build a trail system that connected all of the city’s parks and other public areas, including ball fields, schools and the downtown area.

“The idea was to connect our neighborhoods to our parks and schools and downtown area, and businesses,” Turczyn said. “All these trails lead to our park amenities—pavilions, restrooms, and ball fields. So you can go within the parks and between the parks and neighborhoods using the trail system. All the trails don’t necessarily connect together because it’s really been about connecting areas of the city to each other.”

For example, one residential area of the city called Audubon Park Neighborhood didn’t have any sidewalks and the walkability was low. But the neighborhood did have a park—Audubon Park. So a pathway was constructed around the park and a pedestrian bridge was built to connect the neighborhood to a nearby commercial area. To fund the \$225,000 project, the city secured \$150,000 from MDOT transportation enhancement funds and a \$75,000 grant from Walmart.

The trails now connect to Annrook, East Annrook, Rotary, Cramton and Audubon parks to numerous public facilities—Lapeer West High School, Rolland Warner Middle School, Mott Community College—Lapeer campus, St. Paul Lutheran School, and Chatfield Academy, a charter school. It also connects to two commercial areas. The concept was that a city resident could get to any of these areas by biking, rollerblading, walking or jogging.

The city also received a \$250,000 Kellogg Foundation grant and funding from the Lapeer Community Foundation to build a handicapped accessible path and education center in one of their parks. In addition to providing universal access, the area will have a teaching station to conduct outdoor classes about nature and other topics.

On a longer-term basis, the city is looking to form a trails master plan to supplement the city’s parks and recreation plan. This trails plan will lead them for years to come as they look to expand the trail system out of the city limits and into the surrounding townships and county. 



Lapeer’s trails go through city parks and neighborhoods, connecting areas of the city to each other. Photo courtesy of the city of Lapeer.

An advertisement for Wade Trim, a company providing infrastructure solutions. At the top, a dark banner reads "Trusted professionals delivering America's infrastructure solutions". Below this is a collage of six images: an aerial view of a road and parking lot, a river with large rocks, a person on a bicycle on a bridge, a person working on a road, a person working on a large pipe, and a person working on a construction site. At the bottom, the Wade Trim logo is displayed, followed by the text "Engineering | Landscape Architecture | Operations Planning | Sciences | Surveying" and the contact information "800.482.2864 | www.wadetrिम.com".

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

WALKABILITY & HOME VALUES

By Joseph Cortright

Though housing values are still slow to rebound from the collapse of the real estate market, a new analysis from CEOs for Cities reveals that homes in more walkable neighborhoods are worth more than similar homes in less walkable neighborhoods, pointing to a bright spot in the residential real estate market. CEOs for Cities is a national organization of urban leaders.

The report, “Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in U.S. Cities,” analyzed data from 94,000 real estate transactions in 15 major markets provided by ZipRealty and found that in 13 of the 15 markets, higher levels of walkability, as measured by Walk Score, were directly linked to higher home values.

“Even in a turbulent economy, we know that walkability adds value to residential property just as additional square footage, bedrooms, bathrooms, and other amenities do,” said

Cortright. “It’s clear that consumers assign a tangible value to the convenience factor of living in more walkable places with access to a variety of destinations.”

Walkability is defined by the Walk Score algorithm (www.walkscore.com), which works by calculating the closest amenities—restaurants, coffee shops, schools, parks, stores, libraries, etc.—to any U.S. address. The algorithm then assigns a “Walk Score” from 0-100, with 100 being the most walkable and zero being totally car dependent. Walk Scores of 70+ indicate neighborhoods where it’s possible to get by without a car.

By the Walk Score measure, walkability is a direct function of how many destinations are located within a short distance (generally between one-quarter mile and one mile of a home). The study found that in the typical metropolitan area, a one-point increase in Walk Score was associated with an

increase in value ranging from \$700 to \$3,000 depending on the market. The gains were larger in denser, urban areas like Chicago and San Francisco, and smaller in less dense markets like Tucson and Fresno.

“These findings are significant for policy makers,” said Carol Coletta, president and CEO of CEOs for Cities, which commissioned the research. “They tell us that if urban leaders are intentional about developing and redeveloping their cities to make them more walkable, it will not only enhance the local tax base but will also contribute to individual wealth by increasing the value of what is, for most people, their biggest asset.”

An example of the effect of walkability on housing values cited in the study is found in Charlotte, North Carolina. In a neighborhood with a typical Walk Score of 54



A CEOs for Cities study concluded that walkability increases housing prices. Photo by Carson Cekola.

called Ashley Park, the median home price was \$280,000. In a neighborhood with an above average Walk Score of 71 called Wilmore, an otherwise similar home would be valued at \$314,000. Controlling for all other factors including size, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, age, neighborhood income levels, distance from the Central Business District and access to jobs, "if you were to pick up that house in Ashley Park, and place it in more walkable Wilmore, it would increase in value by \$34,000 or 12 percent," Cortright said.

In the typical metropolitan areas studied, the premium commanded for neighborhoods with above average Walk Scores compared to those with average Walk Scores ranged from about \$4,000 to \$34,000, depending on the metro area.

"Walking the Walk' shows definitively what we've always believed—that homes in walkable neighborhoods continue to be a good investment, and are one of the simplest and most effective solutions to fight climate change, improve our health, and strengthen our communities," said Walk Score founder Mike Mathieu. "Our vision is for every property listing to include a Walk Score: Bedrooms, three; Bathrooms, two, Walk Score, 84."

The study, which was funded by a grant from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation (www.driehausfoundation.org/), included 15 metropolitan areas, finding a statistically significant positive relationship between walkability and home values in 13 areas: Arlington, Virginia; Austin, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Fresno, California; Jacksonville, Florida; Phoenix, Arizona;

Sacramento, California; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; Stockton, California, and Tucson, Arizona. In one metro area, Las Vegas, walkability was correlated with lower housing values, and in Bakersfield, California, there was no statistically significant connection between walkability and housing values.

Real estate data for these markets was provided by ZipRealty (NASDAQ: ZIPR, www.ZipRealty.com) a national full-service residential real estate brokerage. "Walkability is a factor we've always considered important for buyers and sellers when bidding or pricing a home. We appreciate that "Walking the Walk" has confirmed this intrinsic value," said Patrick Lashinsky, chief executive officer for ZipRealty. "We were one of the first sites to adopt a Walk Score alongside our listings because we feel walkability helps all our clients in the home search process."

"There are a number of trends that are reshaping the American Dream," said Coletta, "and the value home buyers now place on living close to more daily destinations is one of the most important. Now, planning, zoning and development decisions have to catch up to consumers." 

Joseph Cortright is president and principal economist for the consulting firm Impresa, and senior policy advisor for CEOs for Cities, a national organization of urban leaders. You may contact him at 503-213-4443 or jcortright@impresaconsulting.com.

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Iron Ore Heritage Trail:

A Stroll through Time Develops Future Economy

In this issue of *The Review* you will learn about the economic value of walkability. For example, did you know that proximity and access to trails, parks, and recreational amenities increases property values? In light of declining property values in many communities—that's something for local officials to seriously consider when setting community goals, assessing opportunities, making budget decisions, and educating the public.

This article will focus on one very ambitious trail project—the Upper Peninsula's 48-mile, year-round, multi-use Iron Ore Heritage Trail. (It's so exciting I had to preface the mere name with this hat trick of hyphenated adjectives.) According to the National Park Service, the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority that is developing, managing, and maintaining the trail "represents the largest Recreation Authority in the State of Michigan. The trail runs on abandoned railroad corridors that connected iron mines with Lake Superior's ore docks."

It's so much more than a way from Point A to Point B. The trail is reminiscent of a scavenger hunt for historic landmarks and geologic treasures, with hints of a bygone era literally tucked here, there and everywhere.

A twice annual survey of a short trail section from Negaunee to Ishpeming reveals this literal stroll down memory lane sees a few hundred users daily! And these are local surveys—not accounting for outside visitors. Downtown trailheads provide accessibility for residents, while bringing visitors straight into your business district. That's smart.

The [Iron Ore Heritage Trail] project, when completed, not only will promote Marquette County's standing as one of the top ten biking communities in the country, it will provide a significant boost to tourism in the area. This model develops the way for similar efforts in other historic mining communities in the Upper Peninsula.

—Governor Granholm

The Best of Michigan

What makes this project so special is it provides the perfect setting to discover Michigan's abundant natural wildlife, phenomenal geologic formations, and beautiful scenery. Historians love it. Rock hounds love it. Nature lovers love it. And it's healthy. There's something for everyone.

And there are human stories to be told. Like the old song lyric, "some of it's magic and some of it's tragic." Such as the 1926 Barnes Hecker Disaster, where 52 workers perished when the mine flooded. The sole survivor was a 23-year-old man who was closest to a shaft and first on the ladder when the flood hit. At the surface, Rutherford (Wilfred) Wills's boots were covered with the mud and water that raced him the entire length of the shaft.



Above: Sculpture adorning the Iron Ore Heritage Trail.

Right: The trail has an incredible numbers of users, in all seasons.

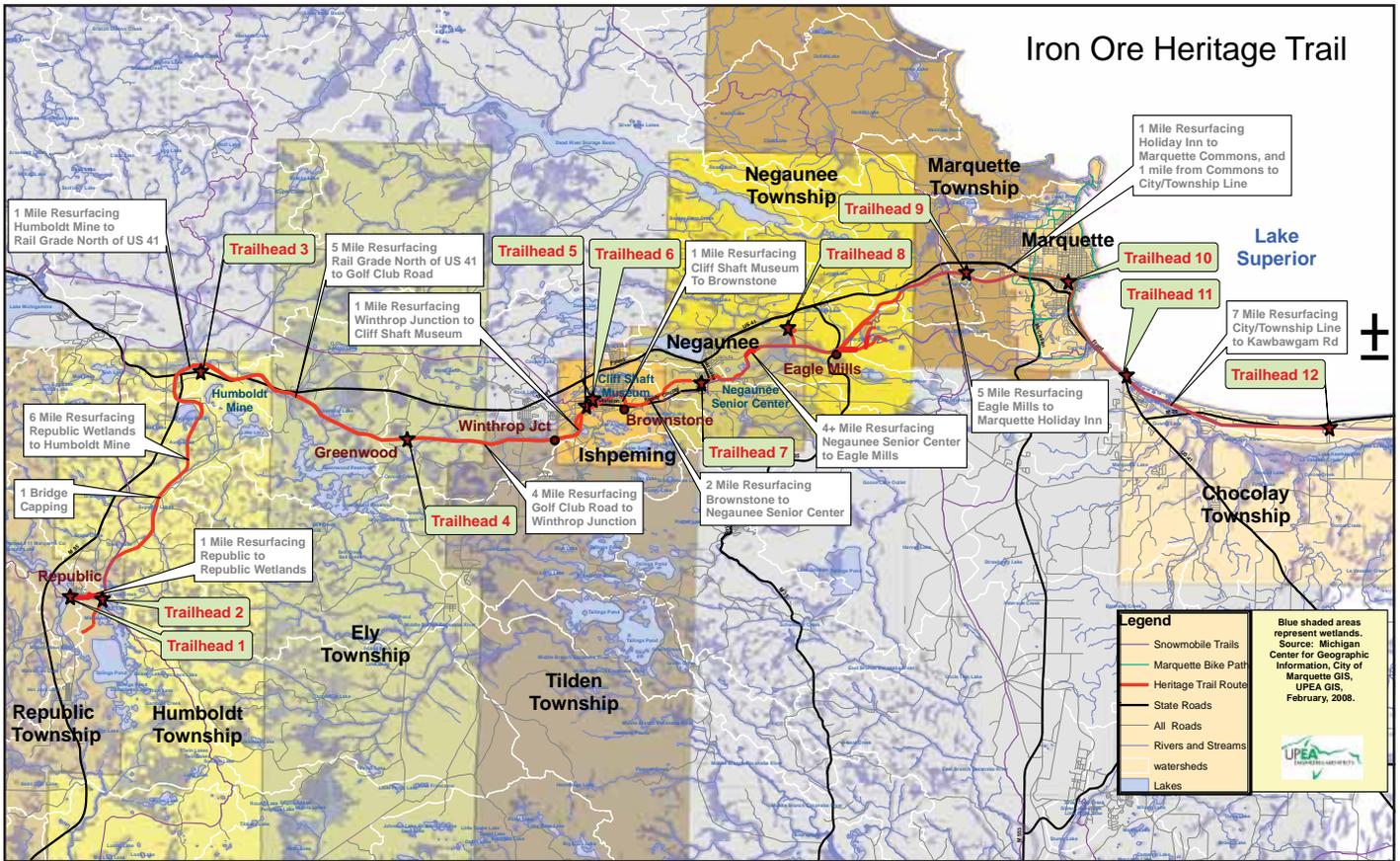
Photos courtesy of the Marquette County Convention and Visitors Bureau.



How will the public learn of this and other stories? There are plans to inform trail-goers through traditional methods and newer, high-tech means. For traditionalists, there will be unique interpretive signs—the posts made from train rails, the signs, and steel panels. Also old glass slides buried in Cleveland Cliffs archives may be reproduced as glass panels. And for those who are a bit more tech-savvy, perhaps you'll punch a code into your cell phone to hear narrations at specific sites.

Broad Appeal Yields Economic Benefits

There are so many points of interest, I can't list them all. For a sampling, the southern terminus in Republic is an old Cleveland Cliffs, Inc. mining site turned 2,300-acre wildlife preserve now open for public recreation, including canoeing and kayaking. There are historic downtown buildings and immigrant neighborhoods, the Cliff's Shaft Mine Museum in Ishpeming, the Marquette County Historical Museum, the Michigan Iron Industry Museum, the Jackson Mine, and the Morgan Furnace. But what's important for municipal officials? This type of project appeals to a variety of user groups that contribute significant dollars to the local economy. Get your project known through social media outlets such as



The Trail: When completed, a 28-mile motorized section of trail will be open year-round from Republic east to Ishpeming. From Ishpeming east the trail runs through Negaunee to Marquette (15 miles), ending in Chocolay Township (5 miles). Most of this trail will be non-motorized three seasons of the year, opening to snowmobiles in the winter. There will be at least eight trailheads and the trail will be paved in its more urban locations, with the remainder surfaced with crushed limestone, suitable for walking, running and biking.

www.gozaic.com. There you will find specific “gozaic circles” such as Bird Trekkers, Family Heritage Travel, and Cycling Through History. Group members share their experiences and photos through blogging, Facebook, and other social media. Do it yourself and make your community part of the buzz.

Lessons in Millages and Economics

Trail enthusiasts Carol Fulsher of Marquette and Jim Thomas of Negaunee were kind enough to give me their time. Jim took me on a hike from the Negaunee trailhead on one of our snowiest days of the season, while Carol walked me through the battle of getting a 2/10 millage passed in multiple communities. Lesson: Always let the voters know what that equals—in this case, less than \$10 per household per year. Emphasize the economic return from out of the area and also the value of locally used labor and materials (more than \$1 million thus far). The millage passed in most places the first time around, but as they found out, two votes short can start the project all over again. They’ll be happy to share their ongoing experience if you want to contact them through me. 

Did you know?

The city of Marquette was named #1 People’s Choice in an online survey contest of the nation’s Dozen Distinctive Destinations by the National Trust for Historic Preservation?

Caroline Weber Kennedy is manager of field operations for the League. You may reach her at 906-428-0100 or ckenedy@mml.org.



Are You Ready for Medical Marijuana?

How a community responds to Michigan's Medical Marijuana Act in the next few months is key.

By Andria M. Ditschman
and Matthew R. Newburg

Michigan's Medical Marijuana Act has been around for nearly two years, but communities continue to have many questions about it. Simply put, communities have three options: Do nothing, prohibit it, or regulate it.

Background

On November 4, 2008, a citizen-initiated law, the Michigan Medical Marijuana Act (yes, they spelled it with an "h") was passed by 63 percent of Michigan voters. To qualify as a lawful medical marijuana user under the Act, an individual who suffers from a debilitating medical condition must obtain a doctor's written certification. Once registered, the individual is authorized to use marijuana under state law. The permitted user can also grow his or her own marijuana or obtain marijuana grown and dispensed by a designated primary caregiver. A primary caregiver means a person who is at least 21 years old and who has agreed to assist with a patient's medical use of marijuana and who has never been convicted of a felony involving illegal drugs. MCL 333.26423(3)(g).

By submitting that certification, an application, and a \$100 fee to the Department of Community Health (DCH), the applicant can obtain a Registry Identification Card. The DCH is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Act and since April 6, 2009, the department has received 16,776 applications, issued a total of 12,193 registration cards, and is currently receiving an average of 81 applications daily. The Act presents a variety of issues for local governments including those pertaining to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/privacy, zoning, and employment.

FOIA/Privacy

A municipality may not rely upon the application for, or possession of, a card to support the search of a person or their property. Although the Depart-

ment maintains a confidential list of registered persons, that list is exempt from disclosure under FOIA. Confirming the card's validity also creates confusion. The DCH rules require that "law enforcement personnel" can check the authenticity of a card through the LEIN (Law Enforcement Information Network) system. Regardless, any employee "of a local unit of government" who discloses confidential information is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Merely maintaining a list of information may not violate the Act, as it punishes the "disclosure" of confidential information, not its "compilation." However, considering the Act's intent and the limitations on the use of confidential information, maintaining such records may present risks without providing any benefit. When determining how a municipality should handle a FOIA request or the maintenance of confidential information, education is imperative. A municipality must educate itself to effectively address the Act's implications.

Zoning

The Act grants qualifying patients and caregivers the right to grow and "sell" marijuana. The law has created a group of individuals who are growing marijuana in their homes and other private areas. But the Act does not address commercial growing operations. Notwithstanding the Act's silence, today's economy is likely to attract entrepreneurial interests. In fact, at least one medical marijuana dispensary already operates in Michigan.

A municipality's governing body should consider how it will address growing operations close to schools, and whether it will permit or prohibit a medical marijuana "business" in a commercial district. The Act is silent as to a local government's role, leaving communities with three options: to do nothing, prohibit it, or regulate it.

Do Nothing

Choosing to ignore the Act may prevent litigation from patient advocacy groups, but it can lead to unintended consequences; such as inconsistencies between a municipality's policies and ordinances, and state and federal law.



The Hubbard Law Firm gives away brownies and information about the Medical Marijuana Act at the League's Capital Conference on April 14. Photo by Matt Bach.

Further, ignoring the Act can result in unintended uses authorized by existing zoning ordinances.

Prohibit It

The possession and manufacture of marijuana remains a violation of federal law. Requiring businesses to comply with federal law provides a potential vehicle to restrict these types of businesses. Although this option may regulate commercial activities, it does not address the non-commercial aspects of medical marijuana.

Regulate It

Communities enact zoning ordinances to regulate businesses for the health,

safety, and welfare of citizens. Zoning regulations could be used to confine medical marijuana businesses (similar to other businesses) to commercial districts, rather than neighborhoods or school zones. Such an approach would draw business activity to downtown zones while preserving residential districts.

The power to regulate, however, may be limited by state preemption. Your municipality must decide the best way to address local zoning issues and draft ordinances to protect and advance its goals. Prudent regulation is an objective that should be explored with legal counsel.

Employment

The Act also raises issues pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act (PDCRA), Michigan's counterpart to the ADA. The ADA and the PDCRA require accommodations for disabled individuals unless accommodations would occasion undue hardships. However, the Act states an employer is not required to accom-

modate the ingestion of marijuana in the workplace nor accommodate any employee working under the influence of marijuana. The law also states that a registered primary caregiver may receive compensation for costs associated with assisting a registered qualifying patient in the medical use of marijuana. Any such compensation shall not constitute the sale of controlled substances. Unfortunately, the Act does not define "under the influence." How is a municipality to reconcile the ADA, PDCRA, and the requirements in the Act? How does an employer determine whether an employee is "under the influence," and respond, while not violating the Act's patient protection provisions?

Merely adopting a policy defining "under the influence" may not be sufficient. Any attempt to determine whether an employee is under the influence of marijuana should entail whether the employee's ordinary judgment, common sense, mental state or physical coordination is affected and to what degree. The implementation of policies aimed at reducing the risk

of loss from claims by employees, residents, and third parties may be necessary.

Conclusion

The Act's silence regarding the role of local government leaves municipalities with a myriad of challenges and options. Each municipality must decide the most appropriate way to address the Act and its effect on the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. How a municipality responds over the next few months will impact every aspect of its operations. 

Andria M. Ditschman is a partner with The Hubbard Law Firm, P.C.. She may be reached at 517-886-7176 or Aditschman@hubbardlaw.com.

Matthew R. Newburg is an attorney with The Hubbard Law Firm, P.C.. He may be reached at 517-886-7176 or MNewburg@HubbardLaw.com.

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

Q: Is the public allowed to participate or comment at a work session of council?

A: Yes. Although work sessions are intended to provide opportunities for council/board members to study difficult issues, gather and analyze information, and clarify problems, whenever a governing body holds a meeting, as defined by Open Meetings Act, it must be posted and people must have an opportunity to address the governing body under the Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.263). Making those in attendance aware of the general purpose of a work session—to study issues, not to take action—often helps.

Conducting work sessions under the Open Meetings Act helps to minimize the public's concern that decisions are not made "in the sunshine." This perception can be addressed by making it clear that council holds work sessions for difficult issues, but that nonetheless these sessions are open to the public, but that no action is taken except in a regular session.

Q: Are municipal governments, as employers, required to post job openings?

A: Likely not. People often confuse their obligation to provide equal employment opportunity (i.e. to not discriminate in hiring and employment) with "affirmative action," i.e. those positive measures taken to overcome the effects of past discrimination and to create systems and procedures to prevent further discrimination. It should be noted that some forms of affirmative action, i.e. preferences, were prohibited by an amendment to the Michigan State Constitution in 2006. There are several federal laws, including the Executive Order 11246, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended, that require employers with federal contracts to develop affirmative action plans which often contain requirements to publicly advertise jobs. However, most of these federal laws specifically exempt local governments. Further, the state of Michigan has no requirement to publicly advertise employment opportunities. Be careful, however, that hiring requirements, including obligations to "post" or advertise jobs in a certain way or in specific places, may be included in your city/village charter, civil service rules (if you have civil service), union contracts, or other sources specific to your municipality.

That said, common sense tells us that broadly promoting employment opportunities to the widest audience of potentially qualified applicants will serve you well in recruiting the most capable people for a job. For additional information, visit www.dol.gov and browse its compliance guide. The State of Michigan Department of Civil Rights has helpful information and publications as well at www.michigan.gov/mdcr.

Q: We want to put a question on the ballot on whether to have a police millage to support the police department. How do we do this?

A: The General Property Tax Act (MCL 211.24f) requires specific ballot language. The ballot language must:

- state the new desired millage rate,
- estimate the amount of revenue that will be collected the first year,
- give the number of years the millage rate will be in effect,
- state a clear purpose for the millage, and
- state clearly whether the proposed millage is a renewal of an existing millage or the authorization of a new additional millage

Fortunately, this is not as complicated as it sounds. Here are a couple of samples—the first for a new millage for law enforcement services, the second for a millage renewal for a community center:

Shall the [municipality] be authorized to levy new additional millage of [3.5] mills (\$[3.50] per \$1,000) on taxable value of property located in the [municipality] for a period of [four] years from 2010-2013 both inclusive, which will raise in the first year of such levy an estimated revenue of [\$5,475,627] to be used for the purpose of providing revenues for law enforcement services?

Shall the [municipality] continue to levy a total of [one] mill [\$1.00 per \$1,000] on taxable value of property located in the [municipality] for [five] years beginning with the [2011] tax levy year and running through [2015] tax levy year (inclusive), which will raise in the first year of such levy an estimated revenue of [\$20,256.00] to be used for the specific purpose of [operation, maintenance and/or improvements of the Community Center building and grounds]? If approved this would be a renewal of a previously authorized millage. 

Mary Charles is a research analyst for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6322 or mcharles@mml.org.



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A generous spirit is pervasive in Charlotte. It can be found in myriad actions of individuals, businesses, service clubs, churches, and other groups and organizations that make up the community. A local industry provided land for a new fire station. Donations support the museum that is housed in the former county courthouse. A friends group raises funds to defray expenses of the Charlotte Performing Arts Center. Local professionals give their time and talents to “Evening with the Experts” programs to assist budding entrepreneurs.

Generosity has a long history in Charlotte. More than one hundred years ago, civic leaders established a program known as Christmas Kiddies through which presents were delivered on Christmas Eve by volunteer firefighters to needy children in the community. This endeavor is supported entirely through donations of toys, money, and time by local residents and businesses. Each year, the arrival of Santa Claus on the back of a fire truck piled high with boxes filled with wrapped gifts ensures a brighter holiday season for more than 500 children.

In 2008, while planning for financing a future facility expansion, Hayes Green Beach Memorial Hospital decided to open its planning to other organizations so that generosity might increase across the community. This move has sparked The Generosity Project, which is spearheading Charlotte’s efforts to become known as America’s most generous community, and The Power of One Fund, which supports local projects begetting generosity. These initiatives, along with the efforts of the charitable assets committee of Charlotte Area Networking for Development and Opportunity, a local nonprofit organization, are designed to focus on a sense of abundance as a strategic advantage that will give rise to economic sustainability.

The Generosity Project recently created the website mostgenerouscommunity.com as a means of collecting stories of giving in Charlotte. It is hoped that documenting generosity will encourage additional giving and Charlotte will become a model for other communities to emulate. 