



## Michigan Report

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### **H.A.L. WORKING TO BENEFIT ECONOMY**

To many the arts remains a nicety, something good to have if you can afford it but expendable in hard times. But the leadership of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries continues working to show the benefits of the arts on the state's economy and is seeking some additional state investment into that work this year.

HAL Director William Anderson said the department is deeply involved in "cultural economic development" throughout its programs.

"We're all about job growth and the governor's agenda to diversify the economy," Mr. Anderson said in an interview with Gongwer News Service.

For broad reach, the department is working with the Michigan Municipal League on a series of cultural economic development forums around the state to help community leaders recognized and build on their assets, and the department is developing an online tool to provide the same assistance.

But the department is also working with specific communities to create development and marketing plans for cultural resources, Mr. Anderson said, something that needs more staff to respond to invitations but which he acknowledged is unlikely in the short run.

Through the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs the department is also involved directly in developing those existing cultural resources and developing new ones. The council provides a variety of grants to allow museums, zoos and other facilities run programs.

The council last year handed out \$7.7 million in grants, and Director John Bracie said that generated \$251 million in matching funds.

"The organizations we fund with our tax dollars are creating better citizens," Mr. Bracie said.

But they're also creating jobs. The various facilities last year employed 20,000 people,

including 5,000 full-time with benefits, he said. And they hire another 65,000 artists.

"You hear so much about valuing every Michigan job yet for the last six years I've witnessed a systematic disinvestments in these jobs," Mr. Bracie told the Senate Appropriations HAL Subcommittee on Thursday. "These organizations and the people that work for them are Michigan."

"If this state doesn't make a significant effort to reinvest in these organizations then all of our efforts to fix the situation we're in are going to be somewhat less than successful."

Mr. Bracie did not specify the funding increase he would like to see to the subcommittee, though he told Gongwer News Service after the meeting that he hopes the legislative process will see progressive increases in the funds available.

If nothing else, he said he would like to be able to hire more staff. "I have five staff including myself," he said. "We're tied with Guam. Ohio has 32 and Kentucky has 20."

His supporters were more specific, with a group of arts and museum leaders asking the committee to approve \$14 million for the council for the coming year and to gradually increase that, by 2013, back to the \$27 million that was available in fiscal year 2001-02.

"All evidence points toward the absolutely critical role the arts plays," said Neeta Delaney, president of ArtServe Michigan. She said the sector employs 108,460 people and generates \$2 billion in personal income.

The department is also helping communities bring the arts and other sectors together. Mr. Anderson said a project in Huron County is trying to match artists with some of the small manufacturers in the county. "We believe these manufacturers can help these artists create new products," he said.

The Michigan Historical Center will be working to build the communities that will attract businesses and workers, said Director Sandra Clark. Key in that will be coming legislation promoting historic preservation projects.

"Investment in preservation generates dollars and builds communities that attract in particular the young people we want to keep in Michigan," Ms. Clark said. "We also see this as a significant part of our effort to green the state."

Renovating existing buildings uses less energy and material than building new, and she said many of those renovations can be designed to make those older buildings more energy efficient.

The department is also working to generate tourism traffic in the state.

The Mackinac Island State Park museums already have some 60,000 people with reservations for group events this summer and Director Phil Porter expected the island to see a million visitors this summer. "Early numbers indicate people are still going to be traveling," he told Gongwer, noting to the Senate subcommittee that out-of-state travelers to the island were actually up last year despite high fuel prices.

But he also noted that without general fund increases the attraction of the island's amenities could dim. He told the subcommittee that the last major general fund cut to the agency in 2003 left the parks with essentially enough money for ongoing operations, but not enough for some of the maintenance needs.

He said there are a number of buildings with leaking roofs and other maintenance needs but currently not enough money to cover them. "We have one painter for 110 buildings and he only works part time," he said. "Our appropriation needs to be increased. Keeping it at the same level means we have to lay off people."

In addition to some new programs designed to better interpret both the natural and man-made elements around the mill, the park is adding a \$250,000 "adventure tour," built with entrance fees, donations and grants. It includes a five-story climbing wall, a rope bridge and a zip line, each tied to an element of the ecosystem around the park. "It's all borrowed from the world of eco-tourism," Mr. Porter said.

The parks are not specifically mentioned in the Pure Michigan campaign that recently received additional funding, but Mr. Porter said the parks and museums have been adding language from that campaign into their own materials.

The park is also working more with other local attractions and businesses. "By packaging together we can make it easier for visitors to do one-stop shopping," he said, adding that off-site ticket sales to the parks grew 37 percent last year.

The historical center is also delving into tourism this year, Ms. Clark said. In partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, the center has renovated the lighthouse at Tawas State Park and will open it to the public.

But she said the tours of the lighthouse will have a twist: they will be led by other tourists. The upper floor of the lighthouse has been renovated into living quarters, which will be available for visitors to rent. But those staying in the lighthouse have to agree to learn to lead tours through the rest of the facility.

"We're doing the Tom Sawyer thing," she said. "You're paying us to help us run our lighthouse."

The center has also been a partner in development of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, where interpretive exhibits officially open with special events June 14-15. "That's going to be a major thing contributing to Michigan's tourism product," Ms.

Clark said. "It already has been a lynchpin for a lot of development."

Mr. Anderson said a future goal for the department is case studies of areas like Alpena and Thunder Bay to determine exactly what made the projects successful and how those elements could be built into other projects.

Among the more distant new attractions is the West Michigan Pike, the road along the west coast of the state that connected Chicago and Northwest Michigan. "It'll be a couple years before we have formal designation," Ms. Clark said.

But the center is working with communities along the coast to develop maps to allow visitors to follow the route, essentially created by business leaders in the region to help visitors get to their communities.

The Iron Heritage Trail in the Upper Peninsula will renew access to a number of features and historic sites in the Upper Peninsula, again with the department basically helping community leaders develop the project.

The department has also been involved in the revitalization of Idlewild, one of the leading black resort communities during the era of segregation.

"The goal is to upgrade the historical register from state and local to national," Mr. Anderson said. "I truly believe that it has the potential to be a national tourism destination that will not only appeal to people of color."

The development, which includes preservation of some historic buildings in the community, removal of blight and creation of various interpretive guides and five historical markers, could also be a boon to Lake County, one of the two poorest counties in the state, he said. The community has already been approached by a developer seeking to build a condominium project.

One area of economic development where the department will not be able to claim credit is new film development. Film Office Director Janet Lockwood told the Senate subcommittee that the state's new tax credits for film work, combined with a low-interest loan program, is making Michigan a better deal than some traditional movie strongholds like Toronto. The office is currently reviewing some 100 movie scripts to recommend filming locations.

But not all of those deals will come through, she said, and those that do will not likely bear fruit until after the office is moved to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

The department, through the Library of Michigan in conjunction with the Department of Education, is also involved in ensuring Michigan's children are prepared to enter higher education and the workforce.

Among the key programs to improve reading skills is the Michigan Notable Book Program, said State Librarian Nancy Robertson. "The list of notable books is becoming really a plum," she said, with publishers working to have their books on the list.

In addition to providing copies of the books to schools around the state, the program also includes a tour of as many of the authors as possible to visit schools, Ms. Robertson said.

The library is also working to give better access to its various materials. With some increases in funding, Ms. Robertson said she hopes to see library hours expanded again in the coming months, though she did not have a target as to when or how many hours would be added. Hours had been cut back after budget cuts prevented the library from hiring student workers to do some of the reshelving and other sorting work.

The Michigan E-Library (MEL) is expanding to also include resources for K-12 teachers that have been vetted by the library, the Department of Education and Wayne State University to align with the state's grade level content expectations. "It's really, really going to be fantastically useful," Ms. Robertson said.

The Michigan Historical Center is also working to help teachers meet the new grade level expectations. "We're focusing very hard on getting resources ready for third and fourth grade teachers," said Director Sandra Clark.

In addition to some online resources, the historical center is working with Ingham Intermediate School District to develop a training program for third grade teachers given the new focus in state history for that grade.

Genealogists will find the coming Seeking Michigan program useful, Ms. Robertson and Ms. Clark said. The collaboration between the library and the historical center, nearing completion, will post online the birth and death records for the state before about 1920.

The historical center is also digitizing and posting all of its Civil War records and photographs, which is another project expected to be completed "very soon," Ms. Clark said. "That is one of the heaviest used collections," she said. The posting is also among the preparations for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War to be celebrated nationally 2011-14.

Mr. Anderson noted the department is involved in preparations for a number of centennials and anniversaries, including the War of 1812 and the birth of Abraham Lincoln. But, unlike other states, is making those efforts without any state funding.

The department is also hoping to see a more accurate count of state residents in 2010, Ms. Robertson said. The state demographer, housed in the library, has been developing and providing to the U.S. Census Bureau, an improved database of

addresses in the state.