

# the review

January/February 2013

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

EMOTIONAL  
ROAD SIGNS

HYPER-LOCAL  
PLACEMAKING

ONLINE CROWD  
SOURCING



GRANDVILLE  
**WINS!**

2012  
COMMUNITY  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARD

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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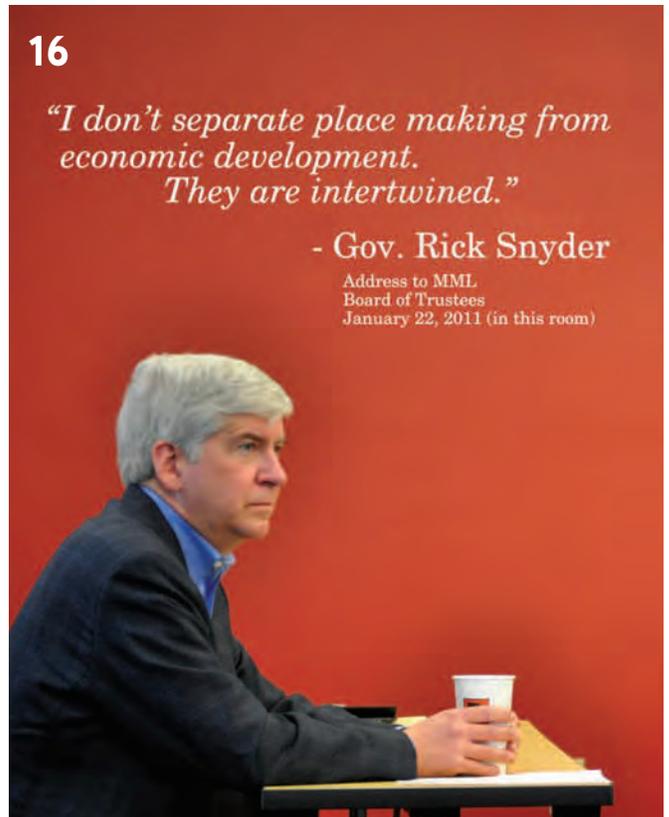
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The engineering firm of Moore & Bruggink, Inc. partnered with the city of Grandville to expand its clean water treatment plant. Pictured from left to right: Ken Krombeen, Grandville City Manager; John Racek, project engineer, Moore & Bruggink, Inc.; Brian Hannon, project engineer, Moore & Bruggink, Inc.; and Todd Wibright, Grandville Clean Water Plant Superintendent.



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*"I don't separate place making from economic development. They are intertwined."*

- Gov. Rick Snyder

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michigan municipal league

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 86, Number 1

### 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 nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.

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## Do Something Different, Not the Same Thing Better

Throughout this New Year's issue of *The Review* you're going to read a lot about innovation: bold new ideas in everything from technology to civic engagement and organizational management. So maybe we should start by talking about what innovation is, and what it isn't.

According to *Wikipedia*, "Innovation differs from improvement in that innovation refers to the notion of **doing something different rather than doing the same thing better.**"

Now, that's a profound difference.

It's the difference between improving a gas-driven engine, and inventing a gas/electric hybrid.

It's the difference between re-paving the potholes of an existing roadway, and transforming it into a Complete Street. It's the difference between using tax breaks and other traditional incentives to lure new business to the same old places, and creating places where those businesses simply *choose* to be.

Einstein said that insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different results. If that's true—and I suspect it is—then it's high time we stopped the insanity of all the old bureaucratic, political and business thinking that only tries to improve on the same old things that aren't working anymore. Digging our way out of those entrenched mindsets is the only way to make real and fundamental change possible.

That's the kind of innovation you're going to read about here: people, places and projects that shake up the paradigm in exciting ways, creating space for new solutions and alternative methods that might not have grown naturally out of the old. It's not just about finding new answers. It's about asking new questions.

Take, for example, Grandville's water treatment plant expansion, our 2012 Community Excellence Award (CEA) winner. They could have simply asked "how much will it cost to increase our capacity?" and then added on to the existing operation. Instead, they chose to ask an entirely different set of questions. How can we treat more wastewater using less energy? How can we make water treatment more sustainable? Can the process itself produce valuable resources instead of waste? Can a water treatment plant be an aesthetic asset to a community? The answers to those questions are what won them the well-deserved CEA title and the cover story for this issue.

You'll also read about innovators across the nation whose successful ideas could easily be transplanted to Michigan

communities faced with similar challenges and opportunities for change.

The League has recently been researching innovation districts as a way to foster a rebirth in ailing rust belt cities. In Boston's Innovation District, blocks of old, brick factories and warehouses have been converted into hip working spaces, restaurants, and housing by hundreds of entrepreneurs, thanks to the city's bold new vision for revitalizing its waterfront.

One Wisconsin town solved a long-time traffic problem with their "you can't do that—oh yes we can" approach to street sign art.

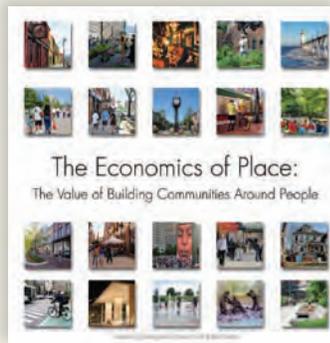
Mesa, Arizona's *iMesa* brings the genius of crowd-sourcing to local government through a unique online community brainstorming project.

You'll also find plenty of inspiration from our homegrown innovators, including the "Dean of Innovation" Jeff DeGraff (a keynote speaker at the League's 2012 Convention) and the MIplace Partnership's new PlacePlan initiative.

So take a few minutes to see what's burning in the bright ideas department. Who knows? The innovative approach you've been searching for might be right here waiting for you. We can't think of a better way to start the New Year than through the power of change. Get inspired. 

### The Economics of Place

We believe that our communities are at the core of our state's economic turnaround, and that "place" is the huge economic driver. In 2011, the League published *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, available at Amazon.com and [economicsofplace.com](http://economicsofplace.com).



Daniel P. Gilmartin  
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# INNOVATION

## DISTRICTS: Hyper-Local Placemaking

A handful of cities around the world are experimenting with placemaking in an incredibly targeted way. The result of this hyper-focused approach to creating vibrancy and economic growth is known as an innovation district. An innovation district is a designated area within a city that encompasses higher-education institutions, and public and private sector industries such as science and technology, to attract entrepreneurs. In a knowledge-based economy, the goal is to encourage cross-disciplinary partnerships. Bringing people (talent) and ideas together to spur entrepreneurial creativity will in turn grow jobs and strengthen economies.

### Catalyst Required

The League has been researching various innovation districts in Pittsburg, Boston, Portland, Toronto, and Barcelona to discover their shared characteristics and successes, and how

these might be applied to cities in Michigan. Each district was created by the commitment and vision of one key public figure in the community. While there was most certainly buy-in from many other sectors, the initial promotion of the concept required a primary voice to serve as a catalyst. That figure was most commonly—but not always—the mayor. There must be someone with a knack for publicity to promote these projects.

### Finance and Investment

The financing tools and public investments used in these districts are distinct. While they each benefit from state or federal funding and/or programs, the degree to which they utilize them varies. Each district uses a variety of tax captures, seed funding, infrastructure development, and grants. This demonstrates the possibility of multiple methods of achieving similar outcomes depending on the resources available in each city.

Each innovation district we researched had a slightly different focus. For example, Barcelona concentrated its efforts on five high-tech areas, whereas Toronto focused on biomedical and financial industries. Boston, however, chose not to target specific industries, instead allowing different industries to grow naturally. Despite the differences in focus and funding, innovation districts can be identified by a few key components.

## 1 Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs are the focus of attraction. While some innovation districts may have specific sectors in mind, they are all focused on individuals who are creating opportunities, products, and services. If placemaking is designing communities around people, then the innovation district model is placemaking for entrepreneurs.

## 2 Universities

Each district has at least one college or university—a necessity for making the education, talent, entrepreneur connection. In some cases, the district was created around an anchor institution, and in others, such as Boston, leaders worked with Babson College to open a branch in the innovation district to teach entrepreneurship classes.

## 3 Philanthropy

Along with universities, there is a strong partnership with the philanthropic community in each district. In fact, the nonprofit work that is managing and/or connecting incubator programs with investing opportunities, skill building, and networking is a major factor setting these areas apart from the rest of the city and/or region.

## 4 Infrastructure

There is a significant commitment to infrastructure investment in each district. Some cities benefitted from investments made just prior to the district being developed, while others had to create proposals as the district was developed. Barcelona is the most obvious and ambitious of the cities mentioned here. It completely transformed entire systems—energy delivery, waste, and lighting—with the most high-tech equipment available. However, access to public transit, internet connectivity, and multi-modal transportation were undoubtedly major components of all the districts. These cities made a concentrated commitment that the private sector could build off, and that residents were attracted to.

## 5 Housing

There are housing options in these districts, including affordable housing for entrepreneurs who are seeking live/work space. New, creative, and affordable housing options, like co-housing, are a consistent innovation district element. In most cases, cities solidify housing requirements through zoning changes. In return, owners and developers are able to increase their units per structure and obtain more uses for their property.

## 6 Open/Green Space

Access to open space and green space is also a central component of an innovation district. It can take many shapes—from parks and walkways to open indoor gathering spaces. These cutting-edge cities recognize the importance entrepreneurs place on this amenity. It adds a quality of life measure that is becoming



**If placemaking is designing communities around people, then the innovation district model is placemaking for entrepreneurs.**

# Boston's Innovation District: A Closer Look

In January 2010, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino launched the Boston Innovation District to spur the economic revitalization of an area along Boston's waterfront. It was a significant undertaking intent on completely transforming an area by using a geographical space as an urban laboratory—everything was intended to be fluid and creative in order to attract entrepreneurs.

To accomplish this, the city established a huge marketing and public relations effort. It worked with businesses and developers to infuse creativity into development plans—introducing collaborative spaces into new buildings (including co-housing and units with small square footage) and installing open space among the developments.

One of the initial beneficiaries of this approach was MassChallenge, a nonprofit organization and the world's largest start-up accelerator.

MassChallenge finalists have free office space in the innovation district, networking connections, and significant funding.

The Boston Innovation Center offers entrepreneurs public space to host free events and gather to work collaboratively. The

one-story 12,000 square foot space has 9,000 square feet of modular meeting space and 3,000 square feet of restaurant and test kitchen space. It is home to some high tech companies and is thought to be one of the first facilities of its kind in the country.

The district has added 3,000 jobs and 100 new businesses since it began two-and-a-half years ago. The district's subway lines have seen a significant increase in ridership. They recently drew Babson College to the district to teach classes on entrepreneurship and host public events.



increasingly necessary to draw and retain talent. Each of these cities has acknowledged that need and rigorously included it in their development plans.

## Conclusion

Pittsburg, Boston, Portland, Toronto, and Barcelona boast impressive figures on residential growth, job creation, and a number of other economic statistics. They have clearly reaped the benefits of hyper-focused development strategies. We believe there are opportunities for this concept to be pursued in Michigan. Innovation districts could be a path toward greater prosperity, and we are working with several stakeholders, including the governor's office, regarding how they could be developed here. Stay tuned—you will be hearing more about this in the near future! 

*Summer Minnick is the director of policy initiatives and federal affairs for the League. You may contact her at 517-908-0301 or [sminnick@mml.org](mailto:sminnick@mml.org).*

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# HOW TO MAKE COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION HAPPEN

By Tom Wolff



# Stone Soup

**A**ttendees of the League's 2012 Annual Convention definitely received a high intensity, enthusiastic send-off from Jeff DeGraff during the closing general session. Referred to as the dean of innovation, he is a professor at the University of Michigan where he brings business leaders, faculty members, and students together to collaborate on innovative projects. He

oversees an innovation laboratory which is designed to develop innovation experts who can make innovation happen every day and everywhere. His energetic speech on the last day of Convention gave attendees insight into why certain organizations have become successful: They innovate and they collaborate.



## Innovation Isn't Your Best Friend, It's Your Only Friend

Organizations that have become highly successful achieved their success because they followed trends. Following trends allowed them to renew themselves and grow. DeGraff gave examples of several organizations such as Apple, IBM, and LG Electronics, that achieved great success early on, but then lost their way and were on the verge of collapse. They weren't languishing because of competition—it was because they died internally. But, they rebounded, and are now at the top of their game. Why? Because they innovated.

They jettisoned their old processes and ways of thinking and tried new things. They were open to new ideas and they observed trends that they were then able to apply to their own organizations. They didn't wait for someone or something to save them. They took it upon themselves to change and shake things up. DeGraff emphasized that even in the worst of times, major companies have been built and resurrected during down cycles. They manage to do this because they try new processes and launch new projects; they innovate. The time to take risks is when you're on the brink of insolvency—when you have nothing to lose. DeGraff encouragingly says, "If you fail, so what? Keep trying until you succeed."

**Collaborative innovation can occur in any type of organization, including municipalities.**

## Don't Let Success Make You Complacent

Most importantly, once you're successful, don't become conservative and complacent. That's when you need to innovate or you'll find yourself on the verge of collapse again. It's important to learn from your experiences and your experiments.

DeGraff pointed out that there is no one, singular way to be innovative. When a group of business leaders were asked to list 25 of the most innovative companies, they came up with firms such as Apple, IBM, Microsoft, Toyota, Research In Motion, Wal-

Mart Stores, Ford Motor Company, Coca-Cola, Volkswagen, and Proctor & Gamble, among others. When asked to describe what these organizations all have in common, no one had an answer. That's exactly the point: There is not one magical way to be innovative or creative in order to be successful. It works differently for different types of organizations. And creativity is just connecting things—being able to connect experiences and synthesize those experiences into new things and ideas. Finally, what might be successful and innovative today might not be tomorrow. The recipe for success changes over time. DeGraff gave the startling example that Enron was considered the most innovative company during its peak from 1996-2001; but Enron no longer exists. There is no one solution on what will be successful and there is no data on where future growth occurs.

## What if the key to innovation in your organization doesn't entail starting something new but stopping something old? What would you stop?

### Collaborative Innovation Leads to Greater Benefits

The way to foster innovation and success is to have the right workplace. It's necessary to have creative, clever, optimistic people that find the environment stimulating and are not afraid to take risks. You also need to have people who do things correctly and have expertise in certain areas. By allowing creative workers to interact with workers who take a more measured approach to processes and projects, a constructive tension or conflict will develop between the two groups which will result in new ideas that are realistic and likely to be implemented. Having a workplace where diverse groups collaborate will allow the different groups to grow together, forming a union over time, and is thus a recipe for an efficient organization.

Collaborative innovation can occur in any type of organization, including municipalities. The big-picture, free-thinking folks may be the elected officials who interact with the city manager, finance director, city attorney, and public works head who all have specific areas of expertise. The collaboration and constructive exchanges that occur between these two groups can result in new ideas and innovations. For example, an innovation may be as simple as stopping something old instead of starting something new. But by working together, the byproduct of that collaboration will be new solutions which will benefit the entire community. 

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*Tom Wolff is claims manager for the League. You may contact him at 734-669-6343 or twolff@mml.org.*



# Stone Soup

In the classic children's story *Stone Soup*, three wily soldiers with no money or food come to a wary village and set a large iron caldron by the well in the town square. As the inhabitants look on, the soldiers fill the vessel with water and ceremoniously place a large stone in the pot. Intrigued, the villagers come out to examine and critique the colorless concoction. Some suggest that the broth would be improved with carrots or potatoes and such, to which the tricksters agree. The meal gains momentum as the folks each willingly add some small ingredient. Soon the caldron is bubbling with a sumptuous brew and all feast and dance in celebration. The story ends with the soldiers moving down the road to repeat the whole charade on the next unsuspecting burg.

This parable about the creative power of communities was enormously popular in both Europe and the States during the Great Depression when those down on their luck were expected to contribute a little something to the family or community. Participation moves potential resistors out of their reactive positions when they are engaged in a potential solution.

Source: [www.jeffdegraff.com](http://www.jeffdegraff.com)  
Blog excerpt, September 12, 2012

# Michigan Municipal League Wins Three 2012 MSAE DIAMOND AWARDS

The League is proud to announce that our organization was the recipient of three Diamond Awards from the Michigan Society of Association Executives (MSAE).

The League earned a Diamond Award in government relations for our work on the personal property tax issue and related Replace Don't Erase campaign. The League also received a Diamond Award for its public relations campaign about placemaking, which included the League's book *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, which continues to be talked about, used in college classrooms, and purchased on Amazon.com.

However, the biggest honor of the night was bestowed on Dan Gilmartin, League CEO & Executive Director, who received the 2012 Strategic Association Leader Diamond Award. Dan was honored for exemplifying the highest standards of service and professionalism, not only within the League, but through the example he sets and the relationships he's built among his state and national peers.



*Pictured left to right: Rob Ferrari, Director, Communication Strategies & Design; Matt Bach, Director, Media Relations; Kelly Warren, Director, Events; Dan Gilmartin, Executive Director & CEO; Heather Van Poucker, Director, Information & Policy Research; Anthony Minghine, Associate Executive Director & COO; Arnold Weinfeld, Director, Strategic Initiatives, and Michigan Municipal League Foundation President.*

The 11th Annual Diamond Awards is a program that recognizes excellence, innovation, and achievements in the association industry and honors outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to the association profession. The League last won a Diamond Award in 2009 for our Legislative Link e-Newsletter. We also won a gold award in 2009 in the website category for over-all design and tactical online presence.



# Citizen

By Andy Pederson

# Engagement:



## Right Brain and the Emotional Draw

Bayside, Wisconsin is in an urban setting, yet prides itself on its rural natural features. The village has a limited number of sidewalks, but a lot of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The mentality in much of Wisconsin is that vehicles have the right-of-way, not pedestrians. The issue at hand is a 35 mph stretch of road (a state highway), that many children, pedestrians, and bicycles must cross to go to and from school. As one of the most traveled areas in the village (for both vehicles and pedestrians), we began to search for a long-term solution to a dangerous traffic situation.

In early 2011, the village received a groundswell of support for improvements on this busy stretch of road. Many residents began working together to form advisory needs for the area. Residents and the village participated in organized bike-to-school days, where our police department provided added enforcement and visibility. While these initiatives helped create community momentum, there was still something missing. For example, the village received this email:

"I have a few suggestions to improve the safety of this crossing. I personally would recommend, at a minimum, the following changes:

- Add additional crossing lines
- Add yellow "strobe lights" to alert vehicles to slow down and yield to crossers;
- Create a "15 mile/hour" zone during peak hours prior to and after school"

The premise was simple: hold a contest for children, parents, and residents to create signs that would draw motorist's attention and force them to slow down and stop at crosswalks. The winning designs would then be made into actual traffic signs (for about \$100 each), providing a fresh, innovative look at the way we reach the public.

The project began in earnest when the village publicized the contest through its weekly email newsletter. We didn't know how much, if any, the public and the kids would engage in the process. However, the program quickly snowballed from what some considered a "dumb idea" to one that garnered local, state, and national media attention. It became so noteworthy that it attracted the attention of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WIDOT). In a public email, it outlined the following:

"Do people at times ignore signs or overlook them? Certainly. Of course, you can install what you like on private Right of Way, but we would not recommend "emotionally intelligent signs."

This is an example of why the public finds government frustrating at times. The WIDOT admits that normal regulatory signs are ignored, but are not willing to explore alternative solutions to resolve the issue. After receiving WIDOT's response, the village was even more motivated. We knew we were onto something that was different and may have an impact.

Through the work of a dedicated team, we spearheaded several community engagement activities, including:

- Judging at each of the three local schools by the students and faculty;
- Entries on display at Village Hall during open hours for judging and evaluation;
- Online judging of individual signs;
- Town Hall meetings providing community input, education on crosswalk safety, and judging;
- A community gathering (bonfire in the park and business promotion) to evaluate and judge signs; and
- At the conclusion of the 4th of July parade, all signs were posted on our website and one last email was sent encouraging the public to evaluate and judge the signs.



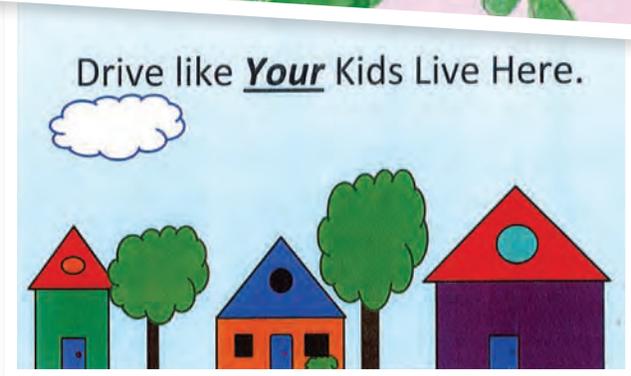
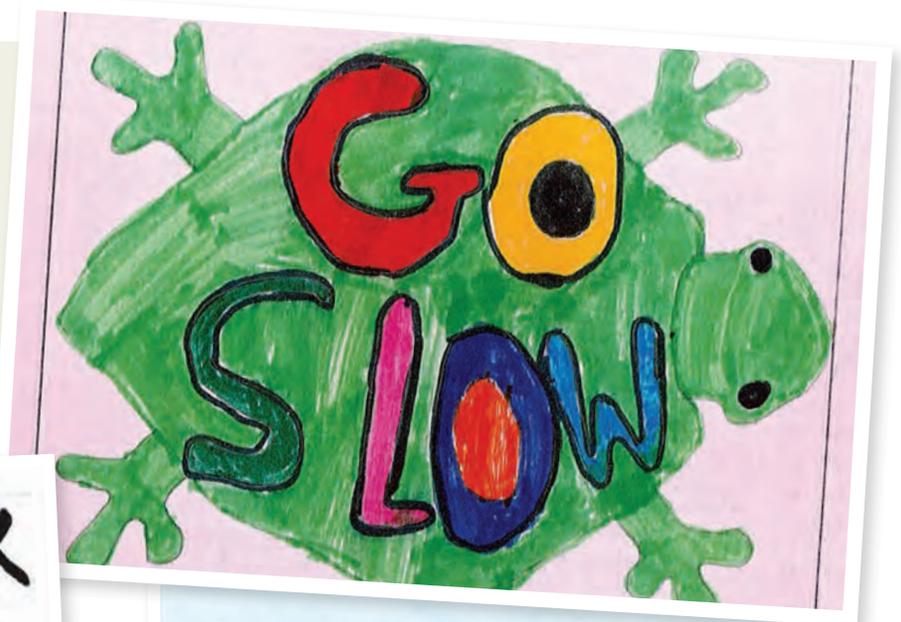
These improvements are reasonable, but there was one problem—we already had every one of them in place! And that's the dilemma—these safety measures were unnoticed, ignored, or simply ineffective. So much so, that the group of concerned residents lobbying the village didn't even know they existed.

To combat this concern, the village took a multi-phased and -faceted approach to improve pedestrian awareness in a less traditional way. In the mindset of author Daniel Pink, who promotes "right brain," emotional thought as a way to better communicate with the public, the village embarked on an emotionally intelligent sign contest.



## The winning sign slogans:

- Slowpokes Welcome in Bayside
- Drive like Your Kids Live Here
- Hit the Brakes, Not Us
- Simon Says Slow Down
- This Is a School Road; Not a Speedway
- Get Off Your Phone; Hang Up
- Slowing Down = Saving Lives
- Slow Down
- Go Slow



Perhaps most unexpected was the community's outreach and involvement in the process. Many of the local school districts took the project on as a challenge, and incorporated the sign design into their classroom syllabus. A local arts and crafts business, Art Trooper, held a Sign Design Night, where children could use their supplies to create an entry. In fact, the efforts to improve pedestrian safety became so widely recognized, that many members of the public indicated their interest in becoming volunteer crossing guards for the busiest intersections. The village police department provided necessary training and equipment, with local parents providing the time—at a volunteer rate.

At the end of this process, 115 sign designs were submitted and 2,412 votes were cast. After all the votes were counted, the field was narrowed to 25. From this, a seven member evaluation panel evaluated the signage on: originality, creativity, overall impact, "wow"

factor, uniqueness, relevance, simplicity and intuitiveness, effective appeal to different generations (kids, adults, etc.), and overall impression.

Twelve signs were ultimately selected as finalists to be turned into traffic signs. The village then worked with a local vendor, TAPCO, Inc., who donated three of the initial signs, as well as constructed all of the winning entries into aluminum traffic signs, which were placed throughout the community.

## Conclusion

The idea for emotionally intelligent signage has helped raise awareness throughout the community, as well as village government. Each department has a buy-in to see the project come to fruition, with public safety front and center. In addition, we've created a new way to think about issues. As opposed to looking for what has been tried and tried again unsuccessfully, we have taken a different approach to problem solving. We believe this is a formula that can be

replicated anywhere—and even tweaked to serve specific communities and various subjects. Perhaps the most important takeaway is the process of education and engagement these challenges provide. It's often the journey, more than the destination.

For more information, visit [bayside-wi.gov/index.aspx?NID=350](http://bayside-wi.gov/index.aspx?NID=350).

Bayside received a Community Partnership Award from ICMA on October 10, 2012. The award recognizes programs or processes that demonstrate innovation, excellence, and success in multi-participant involvement between or among a local government and other governmental entities, private sector businesses, individuals, or nonprofit agencies. 

*Andy Pederson is the manager for the village of Bayside, WI. You may reach him at [apederson@bayside-wi.gov](mailto:apederson@bayside-wi.gov).*

By Arnold Weinfeld

# Miplace

## Partnership Initiative



**Connect.  
Collaborate.  
Coordinate.**

Those three essential Cs are the key building blocks for a new powerhouse in Michigan's ever-growing arsenal of placemaking tools: the Miplace Partnership Initiative.

The Miplace partnership is the latest collaboration in the League's ongoing mission to support local efforts to revitalize communities, and is part of the governor's ongoing commitment to embed place-based initiatives into the state's overall economic development strategy. It's also the next natural step in a process launched nearly six years ago by the Sense of Place Council, to bring public and private interests together to take placemaking ideas off the drawing board and make them a reality.

Working with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and Michigan State University's Land Policy Institute, the partnership will provide hands-on help to targeted local and regional placemaking efforts throughout the state.

“Michigan is proud to be at the national forefront of the placemaking movement. Governor Snyder has made it clear that interesting and vibrant places are essential for Michigan cities to compete in the 21st century,” said Scott Woosley, the newly appointed executive director of MSHDA. “The Mlplace Partnership Initiative will play a critical role in ensuring that the state continues to move forward in reimagining itself.”

Indeed, only a few months old, Mlplace is already earning recognition as the most comprehensive, public/private place-based economic development initiative in the country.

So what makes Mlplace different from everything that’s come before it?

Probably the most visible and tangible proof is the initiative’s new website. Mlplace.org is first and foremost a gathering place to showcase and share the work being done by Michigan’s placemaking movement. This is where you can see what progress is being made elsewhere in the state while sharing your own ideas and successes. It’s also “ground zero” for step-by-step

guides to building a local placemaking plan, and finding access to the contacts and connections that will help you coordinate and implement your place plan.

A primary objective is to provide education and training for everyone involved in the local or regional placemaking effort, from state agency and local government officials to key community stakeholders. Since the initiative was announced last spring, the Mlplace partners have been crisscrossing the state to various association conferences and communities, offering a broad-based introductory education on what placemaking is, and how to effectively engage in it. Presentations have already taken place in Muskegon, Oakland County, Marquette, and Newaygo. Sessions were also held at the annual conferences of the Michigan Economic Development Association, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Association of Realtors, and Michigan Association of Planning.

Toolkits are being developed to assist in the various phases of planning, design, and implementation. State agency consultants will provide direct technical



assistance when needed to help local officials resolve barrier and gap problems. MIplace will also provide measurements of progress and outcomes to effectively evaluate a plan's real impact to help stimulate even more local improvements.

As a new year begins, the next important phase of MIplace implementation will be the delivery of a specific training curriculum based on the connection between economic development and placemaking, and how to engage in effective placemaking. The target audience will include state, regional, and local government officials; economic developers; and key stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

## MIplace: The Beginning

The MIPlace initiative is an outgrowth of efforts by the Snyder Administration's Interdepartmental Collaborating Committee's (ICC) Placemaking Subcommittee and the League/MSHDA led Sense of Place Council. The ICC Placemaking Subcommittee is comprised of state departments that work directly with communities, including: transportation, agriculture and rural development, natural resources, environmental quality, the Housing Development Authority, and the Economic Development Corporation. The Sense of Place Council (SOPC) has grown into one of the largest public/private groups in the state, consisting of representatives from state agencies and those outside of state government working on creating better communities. Over the years, organizations within the SOPC have worked together on a number of different projects. Now, the MIPlace Initiative will become a focus.



Moving forward, MIplace will also build on the earlier success of five pilot placemaking projects developed by the Michigan Municipal League's Center for 21st Century Communities. The outcomes of these projects will be translated into a formal assessment process called "PlacePlans," which will help solidify placemaking as a key economic development strategy for Michigan communities.

MIplace has already received more than 30 letters of interest from communities across the state wanting to participate in the PlacePlans process. From this group, four initial projects have been selected that represent a cross section of project

type, size, and geographic location. They include a downtown plaza in Alpena, a mixed-use downtown space in Sault Ste. Marie, riverfront/downtown development in Allegan, and transit-oriented development in Dearborn. The communities will work with the MSU School of Planning, Design and Construction through its Small Town Design Initiative.

But all this is still just the beginning. The League continues to be at the center of collaborative efforts to achieve Michigan's placemaking objectives by investing in communities. To truly succeed, Michigan must do a better job of coordinating state resources around placemaking. State government must become a more effective partner with local governments and the private sector in financing economic development strategies and projects. State agencies responsible for these activities must be connected in a way that promotes teamwork, with each other as well as in collaboration with local government and regional leaders. The MIplace Partnership Initiative is another step toward achieving these goals. 

*Arnold Weinfeld is the director of strategic initiatives for the League, and president of the Michigan Municipal League Foundation. You may reach him at 517-908-0304 or [aweinfeld@mml.org](mailto:aweinfeld@mml.org).*

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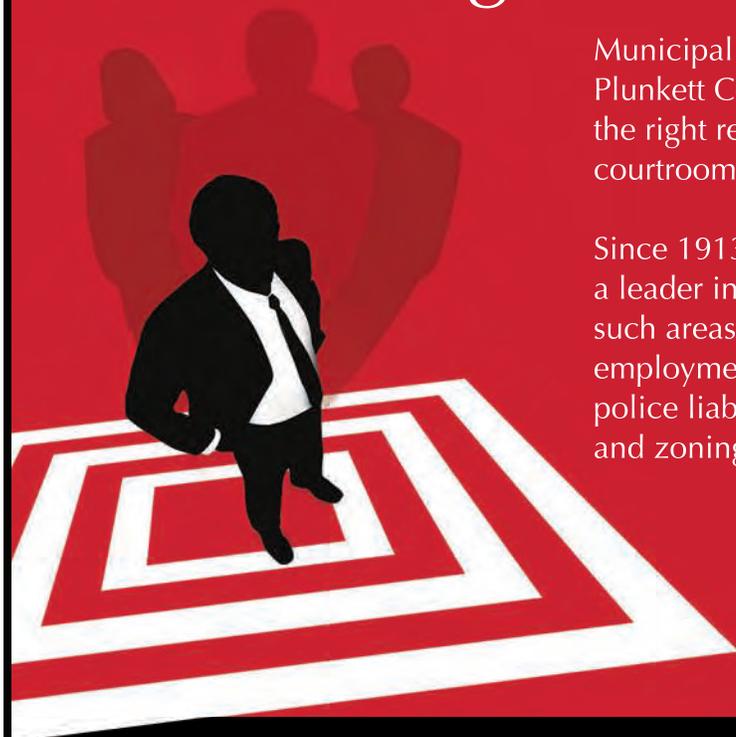
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# Residents *Imagine*

By Kathy Macdonald

# INVEST

# *& Improve* with iMesa



“Great cities invest in their communities and iMesa has given us a chance to build the projects our residents want in their neighborhoods,” Mayor Scott Smith said. “It is time to invest in Mesa.”

## **iMesa**

Like many cities nationwide, Mesa, Arizona, was at a crossroads. It was late 2010 and we needed to decide how we were going to deal with both our current financial challenges and our future. Were we going to be in survival mode or growth mode? In January 2011, Mayor Scott Smith introduced a tool to put us in growth mode. iMesa issued a call to action for residents to engage in a process—imagine, invest, improve—to Build a Better Mesa.

Part of the iMesa strategy is to use technology to engage residents like never before. iMesa utilizes an online crowd-sourcing tool, a type of mass online collaboration, to collect fresh ideas and stimulate discussions. The software we used, UserVoice, is free for community engagement purposes.

## How it Works

iMesa is a grassroots improvement effort where residents go to [imesa.mesaaz.gov](http://imesa.mesaaz.gov) to submit, vote, and comment on ideas that transform the community. Residents can create a thread about an improvement or new project, and others can vote and comment on the ideas. This not only allows residents to take an active role in the future of the city, but it serves as a gauge of the priorities of Mesa residents.

Through the web, social media, and mobile apps residents have opportunities at their fingertips to share ideas and solutions. Conversations, votes and the status of each idea are available, 24/7, for residents to see that their government is listening, considering, and acting on their input.

The ideas are grouped by “village”—sections of the city defined by the unique characteristics of the neighborhoods in that area. Recognizing that face-to-face interaction is still an important part of citizen engagement, public meetings are held in each village to gather additional feedback from members of the public who are not as active online.

The collected ideas are then referred to the iMesa Resident Steering Committee. The steering committee recommends ideas that have the potential to be transformative, meaningful, and extraordinary to the Mesa City Council.

Some ideas are simple and can be implemented right away and others take time, funding, and planning to accomplish. One of the first ideas posted to iMesa was to find a new home for a hackerspace called HeatSync Labs, which had grown out of its current space in another community. The tech savvy users of the lab made the idea shoot to the top of the list with more than 100 votes, and the city took notice. Our economic development department found available properties and a few months later, HeatSync Labs opened on Main Street in the heart of downtown Mesa.

Now, the most popular idea on iMesa is to save the historic Buckhorn Baths. The Buckhorn Baths is a hotel and mineral bath spa used by spring training athletes and movie stars in the '50s and '60s. The hotel closed in 1999 and is number one on the Society for Commercial Archeology's top 10 list of endangered roadside places.

Throughout the process, iMesa has become a brand for Mesa's future. From an iMesa flashmob and public service announcements to booths at community events and business cards, the iMesa message to imagine, invest, and improve has become our mantra and part of our culture.

## The Success of iMesa

Since its debut, iMesa has received more than 1,500 comments on the site which have fueled fourteen completed projects, five that are underway, and twenty in development stages. Contributors and followers receive updates on the progression of the ideas through email notifications and on the individual postings.

After collecting project ideas and gathering input from the community for more than a year, the Mesa City Council agreed



*Recognizing that face-to-face interaction is still an important part of citizen engagement, public meetings are held to gather additional feedback from members of the public who are not active online.*

to forward a \$70 million bond package of projects to voters, which passed on November 6, 2012. The projects include a variety of new and renovated recreational assets such as youth and adult sports fields, open turf areas, playgrounds, trails, museum resources, and an aquatics facility.

Remember the Buckhorn Baths? Well, included in the bond package is a project to begin working with the landowners and community preservation leaders to identify opportunities to reuse the Buckhorn Baths site.

Each project in the bond package had been through the iMesa process, beginning as an idea from the community and working its way through the iMesa Resident Steering Committee, city staff for feasibility, advisory boards for recommendation, and many public meetings to collect feedback from residents.

“We are very gratified that Mesa residents have once again chosen to invest in our community. We are confident that these projects, which came from a citizen-driven initiative, will Build a Better Mesa for current residents and generations to come,” Mayor Scott Smith said. “These improvements to our parks and trail systems are part of the iMesa process where residents were challenged to imagine a better community, invest in that community, and improve our community. We hope to build on this success by utilizing the iMesa process to develop more ideas for great projects in the future.”

For more information about iMesa, visit [imesa.mesaaz.gov](http://imesa.mesaaz.gov) or follow us on Facebook and Twitter. 

*Kathy Macdonald is chief of staff for Mesa, Arizona. You may contact her at [kathy.macdonald@mesaaz.gov](mailto:kathy.macdonald@mesaaz.gov).*



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# CAPITAL CONFERENCE

APRIL 9-10, 2013 • LANSING CENTER, LANSING

Visit [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org) to register online starting January 9, 2013

# CAPITAL CONFERENCE

April 9-10, 2013  
Lansing, Michigan

Are more changes ahead for the Economic Vitality Incentive Program? How will your business community be affected by pending legislation on liquor licensing? What exactly is an Innovation District, and how could it work as a redevelopment model in your community?

Capital Conference is the source for answers on all the state and federal issues that impact local communities, and the best place to network and make your voice heard on matters of public policy. Don't lose your place in Lansing. We're saving you a seat at the League's 2013 Capital Conference.

## Sessions include:

- Liquor Control Rules
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- Transportation
- Term Limits

Register at [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org)

## Marketing Opportunities at Capital Conference

The League offers many opportunities for you to get your name in front of municipal decision makers: exhibiting in our Annual Expo, advertising in the Capital Conference Program, and event sponsorship.

Exhibitors are welcome to attend educational sessions and events. The League believes that the more you know about our municipalities' problems, the better prepared you will be to help them find solutions.

Our schedule allows plenty of time for attendees to tour the Expo Hall throughout the day on Wednesday, and the Tuesday evening Kick-Off Party, hosted in the Expo Hall, which is a popular event that allows vendors and attendees the opportunity to network.

### Tuesday, April 9

2:00-5:15 pm Booth Check-in and Set-up  
4:30-5:30 pm Opening General Session  
5:30-7:30 pm Kick Off Party in the Expo Hall

### Wednesday, April 10

7:30 am-3:15 pm Annual Expo Open

## Sponsorship

Opportunities are available starting at \$500, corporate recognition on signage, pause screens, ads in the event program, and in *The Review* magazine means your money is well spent.

For complete details about marketing opportunities at the League's Capital Conference, go to [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org) or call Terri Murphy, 800-653-2483.

## Advertising

Display ads are scattered throughout the program, among the session and event descriptions. The program page size is 5.5" x 8.5". All ads are full color.



## Pre-Conference Workshops Tuesday, April 9

### Labor Negotiations 101

9:00 am-12:00 pm

Collective bargaining has become a hot topic here in Michigan and all across the nation. This workshop will teach elected officials the basics of labor negotiations, including terminology, the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) and other laws, and what NOT to do. Learn about the role that elected officials might play in communities with a manager and those that rely on a council committee for negotiations. By day's end, attendees will know how to develop and implement a negotiation strategy and what a typical process might include.

### Healthcare Reform: A Practical Update on How It Affects You

9:00 am-12:00 pm

The purpose of this training is to provide an overview of the new administrative obligations impacting employers. Healthcare Reform created a number of challenges and compliance action items for plan sponsors. This training is designed to give employers a road map for the new administrative obligations and a way to organize the new rules and requirements into categories.

### Mlplace Partnership Initiative

9:00 am-12:00 pm

Governor Snyder has challenged all Michigan stakeholders—from state agencies and local governments to businesses and neighborhood associations—to focus on placemaking as a key strategy for both economic and community development. The Mlplace Partnership Initiative ([www.mlplace.org](http://www.mlplace.org)) can plug you into resources that will help put your community on the path toward greater prosperity. You'll also learn how to apply market trends to attract and retain jobs and businesses, how to improve your community's assets with existing resources, and how to define the resources that will best aid economic development in your community.

### Impact of Changing from a Village to a City Workshop

9:00 am-12:00 pm

Over the years, a number of Michigan villages have incorporated as cities. Are there advantages to be gained by a village, or a township, incorporating as a city? This training session will look at the factors to consider in deciding whether to seek city status. Citizens of densely populated townships considering incorporation will also benefit from a discussion of the similarities and differences in city and village government. The incorporation process and the proceedings of the State Boundary Commission will be reviewed, and the ins and outs of the incorporation process will be discussed by a village official currently seeking city status.

### Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys (MAMA) 27th Annual Advanced Institute

9:00 am-4:30 pm

Stay current on the latest legal issues affecting Michigan local governments. Attendees will hear various presentations from several experts who will review recent court decisions and legislation, challenges being faced, strategies, and examples. This is the perfect opportunity to "meet and greet" your colleagues while you network and exchange ideas and experiences. You will leave this session with a better understanding of current legal issues and the impact they will have on the municipalities you represent.

## AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

### Tuesday, April 9, 2013

9:00 am-12:00 pm	Pre-Conference Workshops
9:00 am-4:30 pm	MAMA Municipal Law Program
10:00 am-1:00 pm	Board of Trustees Meeting & Lunch
12:00-6:00 pm	Registration Open
1:15-2:15 pm	Governance Committee Meeting
2:30-3:30 pm	Capital Conference Welcome
3:45-5:15 pm	Regional Roundtables
5:30-7:30 pm	MML Liability & Property Pool Capital Conference Kick-Off Party

### Wednesday, April 10, 2013

7:30 am-4:00 pm	Registration Open
7:30 am-3:15 pm	Annual Expo: Connect, Get Inspired!
7:30-8:30 am	Continental Breakfast in Exhibit Hall
	MWIMG Eggs & Issues Breakfast
8:30-9:45 am	General Session
9:45-10:15 am	Networking Break
10:15-11:30 am	Concurrent Sessions
11:30 am-1:00 pm	Awards Luncheon
1:00-1:30 pm	Networking Break in the Expo Hall
	MBC-LEO Annual Meeting
1:30-2:45 pm	Concurrent Sessions
2:45-3:15 pm	Networking Break in Expo Hall
3:15-4:30 pm	General Session
4:30-6:30 pm	Legislative Reception

Register at [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org)

## General Information

### How can I register?

#### Online!

In order to reduce the amount of printed paper and increase member privacy, the League will no longer accept credit card payments on printable registration forms for League events. All credit card payments are to be completed online via My League ([www.mml.org](http://www.mml.org)). My League is your secure, interactive online League account. It's available to all members and non-members, with a quick and easy sign-up process.

#### Via Printable Form

Visit [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org) to download and print a faxable registration form. Complete and fax to 734-669-4223, then mail with check payable to:

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#### Housing

Housing reservations are only accepted at the headquarters hotel for registered Conference attendees. Within 48 hours of the League receiving your Conference registration form, you will receive a confirmation email containing your registration information and your personalized housing code.

#### Headquarters Hotel

The Radisson Hotel, Lansing  
111 N. Grand Ave., Lansing, MI 48933  
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Room rate: \$119 (plus 7% city occupancy and 6% state sales tax). After March 18, 2013, reservations accepted on space-available basis only.

#### Lexington Hotel

Contact the hotel directly for reservations.  
925 S. Creyts Rd., Lansing, MI 48917  
Phone: 877-322-5544  
Room rate: \$99 (plus 7% city occupancy and 6% state sales tax). After March 22, 2013, reservations accepted on space-available basis only.

#### Parking

Parking is available at all city parking structures at a rate of \$2.00 per hour, or for Radisson Hotel guests at \$10 per night when vehicle is valet parked.

## Regional Roundtables

On April 9, 2013, the League is again offering the Regional Roundtables, a free opportunity to get together with other members from your region. This session will take place immediately following the Welcoming General Session at Capital Conference, from 3:45-5:15 pm, in Lansing. Don't miss this chance to participate in community updates and enter your community's project in the Community Excellence Awards!

To find out more about your region or the League's upcoming Region Meet Ups, visit [www.mml.org](http://www.mml.org).

## Community Excellence Awards

### Enter on April 9, 2013, at your Regional Roundtable!

All Community Excellence Award (CEA) presentations will be limited to an "elevator pitch" format and will be presented at their Roundtable on April 9, 2013. Communities entering will have five minutes to passionately present their project—no videos, no PowerPoints, nothing but your project and power of persuasion!

Regional winners, who will be voted on by their peers on April 9, will compete at our Annual Convention and typically prepare more spectacular videos and/or PowerPoint presentations for that venue.

## Student Scholarship Essay

Students (ages 15-19) are encouraged to submit an essay for the opportunity to receive a scholarship for registration to the Capital Conference. Essay submission forms, rules, and the 2013 topic can be found at [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org). Essays will be judged on creativity, clarity, sincerity of thought, and proper use of grammar and spelling.

Please complete the essay form which can be found at [cc.mml.org](http://cc.mml.org). Submissions must be received by March 13, 2013. Mail submissions to Michigan Municipal League, Attn: Jane Bruck Moore, 1675 Green Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105, email [jbruck@mml.org](mailto:jbruck@mml.org), or fax 734-662-9399. Only one entry per student. Limited space available.

The supervision of students and arrangements for travel and lodging (including associated costs) are the responsibility of the student, host municipality, school, or organization. Students may not attend unsupervised.

## Legislative Reception

### Wednesday, April 10, 4:30-6:30 pm

This reception is an exceptional opportunity to network with senators, representatives, key legislative staff members, and other top state officials and hear their perspectives on state issues in a relaxed setting.

## Eggs & Issues Breakfast Michigan Women in Municipal Government

### Wednesday, April 10, 7:30-8:30 am

Cost: \$25

This is a chance for local government officials to share ideas and solutions and hear updates on issues pertinent to municipalities. Use the Delegate Registration Form to reserve your ticket. Tickets must be paid in advance.

By Joshua Meringa

# GRANDVILLE'S CLEAN WATER PLANT

*First of its kind in Michigan*

**T**he city of Grandville is becoming recognized as an innovator in wastewater treatment. The city incorporated new technology to improve a process while continuing to provide an essential public service that impacts quality of life in the most basic sense. Grandville was recently awarded the League's prestigious Community Excellence Award at the 2012 Annual Convention on Mackinac Island for its innovative Clean Water Plant Expansion and Renovation project.

The project includes an expansion that incorporates an egg-shaped anaerobic digester and cogeneration system that will create heat and power for the plant to offset energy requirements and save money. This project not only incorporates innovative and efficient design elements, it also is environmentally friendly and uses green technologies to maximize return on investment for rate payers.





## THE PROBLEM

Population growth in Grandville and substantial growth in Ottawa County in recent decades has resulted in the Grandville plant being expanded several times. By 2008, the plant was becoming stressed and biologically overloaded, especially during wet weather flow events. Todd Wibright, Grandville Clean Water Plant Superintendent relates, "The plant was hydraulically overloaded. We were over capacity, and we needed to expand to accommodate future residential growth."

## THE SOLUTION

The recent expansion and renovation project began in 2010. Moore & Bruggink Inc. Consulting Engineers of Grand Rapids was enlisted for the design and engineering aspects of the project, The Architectural Group of Grandville as the architects, and Grand River Construction of Hudsonville was awarded the bid for general contracting services for the construction. The expansion of Grandville's plant brings current total capacity up to 10.0 MGD, which can accommodate all current system needs as well as some future growth, and brings all clean



Grandville,  
pop. 15,378

Grandville is a suburban community of about 15,000. The city has some experience in the area of wastewater treatment: Grandville has owned and operated a modern sewer treatment (clean water) plant since 1964. Grandville's plant uses physical, chemical, and biological (using microorganisms) processes to remove contaminants from wastewater and household sewage. In turn, it produces a treated water stream that is safe for the environment and a nutrient-rich fertilizer that can be recycled by application as a farm fertilizer.

In the late 1960s, Grandville was approached by several nearby Ottawa County communities about collaborating to provide sewer treatment services to their residents as well. Agreements were reached with the city of Hudsonville, Georgetown Township, and Jamestown Township to provide wastewater treatment services to their residents.

**"THIS PROJECT COMBINES  
UNIQUE ELEMENTS  
OF SUSTAINABILITY,  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
STEWARDSHIP, AND...  
ECONOMIC VIABILITY..."**



water operations in-house at Grandville's facility. Grandville's clean water plant provides service to approximately 75,000 customers in throughout the region.

The project was not without some unique challenges. During construction, the plant needed to continue treating wastewater; at times, resulting in the need to pump around tanks, or modify the treatment process frequently to maintain the stability of the process. The site of the project itself posed engineering challenges, as adjustments needed to be made in design to accommodate fitting everything needed on a physically constrained site. Grandville's plant is boxed in by a major interstate highway, two streams, and the Grand River.

## DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the plant expansion and renovation include a new laboratory and operations building with offices and state of the art laboratory facilities for comprehensive monitoring of the treatment process. But the centerpiece of the plant expansion project is the new egg-shaped anaerobic digester (ESD) and biogas cogeneration system. At 75 feet above ground and 63 feet at its widest point, the ESD is the most noticeable part of the expansion project and can hold up to one million gallons of sludge. Adapting technology originally developed in Germany, and already employed in other Midwestern states, such as Illinois and Ohio, Grandville's new ESD is the first of its kind in Michigan. John Racek, project engineer with Moore & Bruggink, Inc. Consulting Engineers, explains that the ESD's unique shape is the most significant factor from a design standpoint. Racek says, "It makes the digestion process more efficient. It takes less maintenance, and it generates more gas for utilization and generating electricity."

The digestion process with the ESD is more efficient. Due to the ESD's double curvature shape, sludge can be re-circulated to more efficiently promote proper anaerobic digestion of the organic solids, utilizing the entire tank more effectively and resulting in maximization of gas production. The unique design also reduces scum and grit buildup, which reduces maintenance needs. This increased digestion efficiency also reduces the overall quantity of biosolids (waste product) produced, which helps lower the cost of disposal. These biosolids are removed at the end of the process and are land-applied on local farms as an organic fertilizer. Grandville's ESD is the proprietary design of, and was built by, CB&I of Chicago. The smaller footprint of the ESD also works nicely on a constrained site, because most of the piping associated with it is contained underneath the structure itself.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Greenhouse gases are no longer vented into the atmosphere as a waste product, minimizing the plant's carbon footprint and environmental impact. Biogas can now be captured and utilized by the cogeneration system to provide heat for the digester itself; to power blowers, pumps, and other equipment; to heat water; and to offset other plant energy needs including heat for the new laboratory/operations building, eliminating natural gas and electricity usage.



Brian Hannon, project engineer, also with Moore & Bruggink, Inc., notes that the cogeneration system is estimated to save the plant a total of about \$142,000 annually (at startup rates) in electricity (\$95,000) and natural gas (\$47,000) costs, and the cogeneration equipment is expected to pay for itself in about 7.8 years and has a life expectancy of about 20 years. Hannon says, "For a clean water plant, which is normally a consumer of energy versus a producer, this is a pretty good payback."

## FUNDING

Ken Krombeen, Grandville City Manager, describes the funding arrangements for the \$23.3 million price tag for the project saying "We bonded for it and it was kind of split in two components. The renovation portion here is being financed by the city of Grandville through bonds we have obtained. The expansion portion, which is the larger portion, was financed by bonds acquired by the Ottawa County Road Commission on behalf of the customer communities. So there are two pots of money that we're working out of. All the bills that come in for construction, engineering, whatever, are being split along those lines and then they'll be paid back by the rate payers over the life of the bonds."

Krombeen emphasizes that sewer customers are not expected to see higher rates as a result of the project; in fact lower rates will be the long-term goal. In addition to savings

from utility costs, savings include an estimated \$1 million per year by treating all of the Grandville system's wastewater in-house versus sending a portion to the Wyoming plant. Grandville was able to take advantage of attractive interest rates and bid prices for the project. In addition, a lot of the work was done by local companies, which Krombeen believes probably also helped save on costs. The project was completed late fall 2012, about six months ahead of schedule and within budget.

Hannon summarizes the benefits of the project, "This project combines unique elements of sustainability, environmental stewardship, and also economic viability in a regional project that benefits a lot of people." 

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*Todd Wibright, Grandville Clean Water Treatment Plant Superintendent, 616-457-0720 or [wibrightt@cityofgrandville.com](mailto:wibrightt@cityofgrandville.com)*

*Brian Hannon and John Racek, project engineers, Moore & Bruggink, Inc., 616-363-9801 or [bhannon@mbce.com](mailto:bhannon@mbce.com)*

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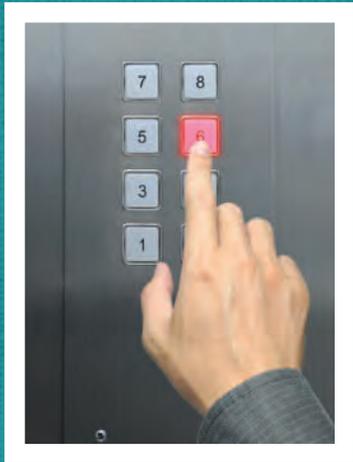


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# 2013 Community Excellence Awards



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Enter the 2013 CEAs by attending your Regional Roundtable at the Capital Conference on April 9 in Lansing. Be prepared to give a five minute "elevator pitch" style

presentation to your peers in your region. Voting takes place on-site—the Regional winner will be announced on the 9th. The seven Regional winners will compete for the Cup at the Annual Convention in September in Detroit.

## CEA VITALS

- Regional Roundtable
- April 9
- Lansing
- 5 minute elevator pitch

League Annual Convention  
September 18-20, 2013, Detroit  
7 Winners Vie for the Cup

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# OPERATION *Clean Sweep*



## WARREN CLEANS UP TARGETED NEIGHBORHOODS



Warren,  
pop. 134,056



*City of Warren property maintenance inspector Frank Badalamente writes a five-day warning notice.*

In November 2007, my top priority became making Warren a cleaner and safer city. The “cleaner city” priority began with my campaign idea to conduct organized neighborhood sweeps in targeted neighborhoods. I established a task force with the directive of replacing the system of reacting to blight complaints citywide to initiating a pro-active program that would produce visible results in target neighborhoods. Previously, blight inspectors would inspect blight complaints haphazardly throughout the 34.5 square mile city. This unsystematic approach made follow up very difficult and inefficient.

The task force recommended a teamwork idea involving the following city departments: assessing, communications, building inspections, Department of Public Works, planning, police, property main-tenance, and sanitation. Neighborhood Clean Sweep began in April 2008, and is conducted annually. Over 70,000 commercial and residential buildings have been inspected since the program began. Here’s how each department contributed to the effort:

### Planning

The planning department identified city neighborhoods that needed cleanups. Almost all were in the city’s south end, which featured houses built during WWII. The typical wood-framed home had 900 square feet on a 40 ft. lot. Thirty years ago, these neighborhoods were dominated by owner-occupied homes. As seniors moved, they were replaced by renters.

## Assessing

The assessing department provided addresses of all businesses and residences in each targeted neighborhood. The list eliminated addresses of all vacant buildings and empty lots. It was what I called a “purged” list that saved city taxpayers printing and postage costs.

## Communications

Communications staff developed a brochure for mailing that warned those on the mailing list in advance of inspectors arriving in their neighborhoods. We timed the mailings of the brochure to arrive at least one week prior to sweeps week so residents would have time to clean up their yards. TV Warren, the city’s cable TV station, promoted the sweeps schedules.

## Building Department

Building department inspectors went through neighborhoods “tagging” vacant homes and checking commercial properties for zoning and blight violations.

## Department of Public Works (DPW)

DPW crews drove street sweeping vehicles in the target neighborhoods during sweeps week.

## Police

Police officers ticketed junk and unlicensed vehicles parked on city streets.

## Property Maintenance

Inspectors walked house-to-house during sweeps week issuing 5-day cleanup warning notices and following up with district court violations for non-compliance.

## Sanitation

Sanitation workers picked up everything placed at the curb during sweeps week, allowing residents to clean up large items. The amount of rubbish collected during that week increased dramatically.

The results of Operation: Clean Sweep have been visible. Residents and businesses are cleaning up their properties before sweeps week to avoid a 5-day warning notice and possible \$1,000 district court fines.

Of the 30,000 warning notices issued, only 350 were ticketed. This means the vast majority of businesses and residences cited for blight cleaned their properties within the 5-day period. An interesting side note is the response of residents and business owners. They made comments to our inspectors like: “It’s about time city hall did something about eliminating blight,” “My neighborhood looks cleaner,” and “My neighbors are now taking pride in their homes.” To be honest, negative comments like: “Why are inspectors nitpicking every little thing?” have been rare.

Most violations could easily be corrected during the 5-day period, but some, like repainting a garage, needed more time and inspectors were instructed to be flexible.

## Vacant Homes, Lots, and Rentals

Also, we demolished over 600 vacant, dilapidated houses that were evaluated as “unfit for human habitation” by our building inspectors. Previously, the city had demolished less than 100 dilapidated homes over a 5-year period. (Since 2006, the percentage of vacant addresses in Warren has more than doubled from 2.6 percent to 6.7 percent.)

Inspectors are instructed to cite vacant lots for high grass or weeds. If the owner of record does not comply with the



*Operation: Clean Sweep is an annual blight eradication campaign. Over 70,000 commercial and residential buildings have been inspected since the program began. At left is a vacant home before Operation: Clean Sweep, and at right is after neighborhood sweeps.*

5-day warning notice, a city contractor cuts the grass and bills the owner, usually a bank or mortgage company through the property maintenance division.

Suspected drug dens are referred to the special investigations unit of the police department by inspectors. Drug raids have been conducted, pleasing nearby residents. This unit averages 20 arrests and three search warrants each month.

Inspectors are also instructed to list homes advertised for rent, and the rental inspections division follows up with a phone call warning that rental units must be registered with the city. As a result, over 6,000 rental units are now registered with the city and being inspected by our city's rental inspectors every two years.

*“My neighbors are now taking pride in their homes.”*

### Anti-Blight Hotline

We also established an anti-blight telephone hotline seven days a week, 24 hours each day to record anonymous complaints about blight. The complaints are forwarded to property maintenance inspectors.

The hotline also records non blight-related complaints that are forwarded to the respective departments via a new system called QAlert; no phone calls need to be made. The complaints are forwarded by QAlert and checked for follow up on the system.

QAlert Mobile provides the only known CRM (Customer Relationship Management) integrated tablet application that allows the inspector to respond in real-time to log activities and photos, complete the task, and automatically notify the resident. This new and revolutionary mobile responder also creates a paperless and accountable mobile workforce, using geospatial (GIS) technology, and outputs reliable performance measurement data.

Since the blight sweeps are conducted April through October, the property maintenance inspectors are seasonal employees paid on an hourly basis.

Operation: Clean Sweep is an unqualified success. Neighborhoods are indeed cleaner, and residents are taking pride in their neighborhoods and calling in blighted structures for city action.

The important features of this program are communicating with residents that sweeps week is soon coming in their neighborhoods, and the teamwork approach among several city departments. 

*James R. Fouts is the mayor of Warren, Michigan. You may contact him at 586-574-4520 or [mayor@cityofwarren.org](mailto:mayor@cityofwarren.org).*



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**KNOWLEDGE SHARING:** The Alliance disseminates information to accelerate the adoption of innovative practices in the profession. Through access to innovative content, learning opportunities and our online tools, we establish the free-flow of information vital to your organization.

**ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** We engage organizations in their continuous learning journey. Conferences, webinars and workshops provide cutting edge, pragmatic and relevant learning opportunities.

**NETWORKING:** The Alliance connects local government practitioners to the people and resources needed to push beyond traditional boundaries. We are building a community of innovators through face-to-face and virtual platforms.

**RESEARCH:** By leveraging the capacity of Arizona State University-School of Public Affairs, local government case studies, award submittals, and a network of academics, we facilitate research on emerging practices. With our corporate partners, we provide opportunities to pilot new ideas and test products entering the local government marketplace.

## Innovative Content

Check out the Members Only Section of the Alliance webpage for access to Innovative Content!

**GOV NEWS:** News alerts, cutting-edge practices, and awards/recognition of Alliance Members.

**TRANSFORMATIONS:** Monthly e-newsletter that highlights innovations by local governments from local governments, the private sector, and the academic community.

**IDEAS QUARTERLY:** IDEAS is a theme-based periodical that shares best practices and thought-provoking information that impacts local governments. *Discover why "eighty-two*

*percent of Alliance members are above the average rate in their adoption of innovative practices, and over half are in the very high category."* Dr. James H. Svara, Director, Center of Urban Innovation, Arizona State University

**INNOVATION CASE STUDIES:** Cities/counties are eligible to submit. Submissions are solicited annually to be considered to present at the annual Transforming Local Government Conference.

**INNOVATION AWARDS:** Award applications are received annually to be considered for the J. Robert Havlick Award for Innovation, the Thomas H. Muehlenbeck Award for Excellence, and the Outstanding Achievement in Local Government Innovation Awards.

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## Knowledge Network

The Knowledge Network (KN) is your online community to connect with local government professionals! KN is built on rich content, social networking, and knowledge sharing. This community is the result of a unique partnership between the Alliance, ICMA, and the School of Public Affairs at Arizona State University and is made possible by dedicated Alliance and ICMA members.

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# YOU CAN MAKE SAUSAGE, TOO



By Samantha Harkins

People say that laws are like sausages—it's better not to see them being made. At the League, we can't look the other way. We need to add our own ingredients and try to make the sausage better.

For example, there are approximately 4,000 bills introduced in every two-year legislative session. Two-thirds of these bills will affect local units of government. Not all of them will be taken up by the Legislature, but the rest need to be evaluated and acted upon, where appropriate. It is our lobbying team's job to determine which bills have potential to get traction. This is determined in a number of ways—the political nature of the issue, the bill sponsor, and the Legislature's agenda.

How does our advocacy team get from bill introduction to championing a position at the Capitol? We rely on our membership. We need members to bring the municipal perspective to the table and chime in on issues. Our committees

help us formulate positions on legislation. There are two levels of participation.

The Legislative Governance Committee is the "big picture" body that debates and decides on broad legislative considerations for the League. We also have five issue committees:

- Energy, Technology, Environment & Infrastructure,
- Municipal Services,
- Municipal Finance,
- Transportation, and
- Economic Development.

The participation of our members on these committees is critical to our success as a lobbying team.

Lansing moves at its own speed. Sometimes League lobbyists work on the same issue for decades, while at other times a bill is introduced and sitting on the governor's desk in a matter of weeks. While the latter is unusual, it

# Contractors Ballot Proposals PA 152

does happen. The varying speed with which the legislative process operates makes our committee members' input all the more valuable.

There are times when a bill pops up and we need recommendations the next day. Without the valuable input of our members, it's difficult for us to evaluate how it would impact our communities. Your input makes us informed lobbyists ready to defend against, or push for, legislation quickly and effectively. Our issue committees meet regularly in our Lansing office to discuss bills and policy. We react to existing bills, come up with ideas for new legislation, and consider various issues that affect our communities. The committees consist of a variety of local officials, both elected and appointed, as well as other experts including engineers, utility directors, and others. We use listservs to get feedback from committee members if we have a legislative issue that arises in between committee meetings.

The committees are an annual commitment. If you're interested in participating on one of the League's issue committees, please fill out the form to the right. We've had a number of successes in the Legislature in the last few years, and our issue committees play a significant role in those accomplishments. We're excited to start a new legislative session with gusto. Please help us make the sausage more palatable! 

*Samantha Harkins is the director of state affairs for the League. You may contact her at 517-908-0306 or sharkins@mml.org.*

## Application for Membership to MML Legislative Committees

**I would like to be a member of the Legislative Governance Committee.**

I understand that this committee meets twice each year (as part of the Annual Convention and at the Legislative Conference) and I will do my best to attend and contribute in order to improve our local communities.

*(The Legislative Governance Committee members are appointed by the MML President for a **two-year term**, with re-appointment possible)*

**I would like to be a member of one of the Legislative Issue Committees.**

I understand that these committees are vital to the rapid response needed for legislation considered in the Legislature and Congress, and will do my best to contribute my expertise and opinions as needed. I have access to the internet, which will enable me to participate in some virtual meetings.

*(Legislative Issue Committee members are appointed by the MML President for a **one-year term**, with re-appointment possible)*

Specifically, I would like to serve on the following issue committees (if more than one please rank – 1 is first choice, 2 is second choice, etc):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy & Environment              | <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Services            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Finance                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Infrastructure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use and Economic Development |  |

**I am seeking EOA credits for my advocacy role on either of the above committees.**

Being actively involved in one of our issue committees or the Legislative Governance Committee is now a requirement for individuals seeking the EOA Level 2 certification beginning in 2011.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this form via mail or email to Nikki Brown:*

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Attn: Nikki Brown  
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Lansing, MI 48933

OR

nbrown@mml.org

## Keweenaw Peninsula's

# SMARTZONE

## Is Creating High-Tech Jobs

**T**oday, from its seemingly remote location in the Keweenaw Peninsula, MTEC SmartZone provides business counseling, expertise, and other technology start-up resources for university research commercialization and corporate R&D innovation in the region. Ultimately, MTEC SmartZone's mission is to create high-tech jobs for Michigan.

In January, MTEC SmartZone CEO Marilyn Clark and their strategic planning committee announced a 10-year vision for Upper Michigan's northernmost technology business incubator—to create 750 jobs.

MTEC SmartZone is one of 15 SmartZones in Michigan, and one of two in Upper Michigan. It includes four business incubator locations, totaling 116,000 square feet of customized office and lab space for high-tech business growth, with the goal to increase employment, income, wealth and recognition for the U.P. communities served.

"Technology founders face unique challenges in business creation, including funding for research and prototype development, penetrating a market or sometimes creating one, and acquiring new skills, some of which the founders have not used before," Clark said. "MTEC SmartZone helps technology founders in the Keweenaw develop strong business skills, provides access to state training programs, and build successful teams and accessing capital."

Countless success stories have emerged from MTEC SmartZone. Foremost is the creation of more than 300 technology jobs since its inception in 2002. This year alone, high-tech industry tenants Talon Research, Inc. and Xeratec graduated out of MTEC SmartZone and established permanent locations in the local community, where they continue to create jobs.

### FORTUNE 500 FORMULA

MTEC SmartZone has crafted yet another unique business model that has created hundreds of jobs and continues to grow.

MTEC SmartZone's Fortune 500 Formula, a company attraction program, lured several prestigious companies such as GE Aviation, Ford Motor Company, Dematic, Jackson Life and CONTROLTEC, who opened satellite offices in the business incubator. By utilizing Michigan Tech student talent to expand IT projects, Fortune 500 companies experience significant cost-saving growth. It's a win3: students gain valuable hands-on experience; companies save money by not outsourcing jobs overseas, while jobs are created locally; and MTEC SmartZone receives rent monies.

### SMARTSTART FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Picking up steam in the community is MTEC SmartZone's new program, "SmartStart," a pre-incubation or entrepreneur course designed to help entrepreneurs progress their business idea to the marketplace. SmartStart is highly interactive and hands-on, modeled after the nationally renowned Wendy Kennedy "So what? Who cares? Why you?" program. Entrepreneurs meet weekly and have the opportunity to network with peers, share ideas, and receive one-on-one counseling with professors.



This field report is an update on the MTEC Smartzone, published in the March/April 2009 issue of *The Review*.

## Two Cities, One Community

Houghton and Hancock are both picturesque cities, with natural beauty and historical architecture. Divided by the Portage Canal and linked by the Portage Bridge, the two cities have had a long but good-natured rivalry. The area is blessed with Michigan Technological University (MTU) and Finlandia University, producing a wealth of talented, high-tech and creatively minded young people. In 2003, the two cities, MTU, and the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance joined forces to compete for one of 12 Michigan SmartZone designations, awarded through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Their successful collaboration resulted in a Michigan Tech Enterprise SmartZone designation (MTEC).

SmartZones, a kind of precursor to Innovation Districts, provide incubator space for technology-based firms, entrepreneurs, and researchers in proximity to the community assets best able to assist these endeavors. Combined, Houghton and Hancock have the resources of two universities and four incubator locations—some in historic buildings. Separately, they would have competed directly against each other and all other state applicants with half the resources. Together, they succeeded not only in winning the designation but in truly capitalizing upon that opportunity.

MTEC SmartZone has many successes under its proverbial belt: Leveraging more than \$65 million in public and private investments; attracting two Fortune 100 companies; filing 12 patents; assisting more than 30 start-up companies, and Smartzone companies earning Michigan's 50 Companies to Watch Award in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, and 2011.

Each technology business incubator, which includes the Jutila Center in Hancock, and the Lakeshore Center and Advanced Technology Development Complex in Houghton, is outfitted with high-tech communication equipment.

MTEC SmartZone has proven time and again, location need not be an impediment to attaining success in the fast-paced business world.

"Information and networking technologies have transformed the dynamics of business and economics, as evidenced by the success stories you see coming out of MTEC SmartZone," Clark said. "And better yet, we are surrounded by some of the Upper Peninsula's most beautiful attractions, while doing business."

For more information, visit [www.mtecsz.com](http://www.mtecsz.com). 

Marilyn Clark is the CEO of the MTEC SmartZone. You may contact her at 906-487-7000 or [mclark@mtecsz.com](mailto:mclark@mtecsz.com).

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# Powers of Boards of Review and Tax Tribunal

## Authority of Board of Review: Case No. 1 FACTS:

Michigan Properties, L.L.C., purchased three apartment complexes located in Meridian Township in December 2004. Michigan Properties properly notified the township assessor of the transfers of property. The assessor did not, however, adjust or “uncap” the taxable values of the properties for tax year 2005. As a result, the taxable values for tax year 2005 were entered into the tax rolls using pretransfer values that were not in compliance with section 211.27a(3) of the General Property Tax Act (GPTA).

In 2006, Meridian notified Michigan Properties of the erroneous values and indicated that the tax bill for tax year 2005 would be revised and that the taxable values for 2006 would be revised by the board of review. Michigan Properties argued that Meridian did not have the authority to do so since it had not timely challenged the 2005 assessments. Litigation ensued in the Tax Tribunal and the parties ultimately entered into an agreement for tax years 2005 and 2006. However, litigation continued for tax year 2007 after the board of review uncapped the taxable values for 2007 based on the transfers in 2004. On appeal, the Tax Tribunal held that the board of review had acted appropriately to bring the taxable values into compliance. The Michigan Court of Appeals reversed.

## QUESTION & ANSWER

According to the Michigan Supreme Court  
**Whether the failure of the taxing authority’s assessor to adjust the taxable value of real property in the year immediately after a transfer of property precludes the board of review from adjusting the taxable value in a later year?**

The Michigan Supreme Court held that although the GPTA does not grant a board of the review the authority to alter a previous year’s tax rolls, a board of review does have the power to correct previous errors for the purpose of updating the current year’s tax rolls. Accordingly, the board of review correctly brought the 2007 taxable values into compliance with the GPTA by adjusting the current values because of the uncapping of the 2004 taxable values.

## Authority of Tax Tribunal: Case No. 2 FACTS:

Toll Northville Limited Partnership, a residential developer, installed public service improvements to a parcel of land under development. The value of the improvements was included in

the taxable value for the parcel for tax year 2000 on the basis that the improvements were additions to the property substantially increasing its taxable value. Toll did not timely challenge the increase in taxable value for tax year 2000 and the parcel was divided into “child” parcels. For 2001, the assessor proportionately split the addition to the taxable values among the child parcels. Toll timely appealed the taxable values of the child parcels for tax year 2001 in the Tax Tribunal. Toll also instituted an action requesting that the circuit court declare unconstitutional the statutory provision permitting the improvements to be considered as “additions.” The Michigan Supreme Court ultimately declared the statutory provision, i.e., MCL 211.34d(1)(b)(viii) unconstitutional.

After the Supreme Court’s decision, the case in the Tax Tribunal was reopened. The tribunal concluded that it lacked jurisdiction to amend the taxable value of the original parcel for tax year 2000 since it had not been timely appealed. However, the tribunal prospectively amended the taxable value of the properties at issue to conform to the Court’s decision, removing the value of the improvement additions from the parcels’ taxable values for tax year 2001 and forward. The Court of Appeals reversed holding that the tribunal lacked the authority to reduce an unconstitutional increase in the taxable value of property if a challenge had not been made in the year of the increase.

## QUESTION & ANSWER

According to the Michigan Supreme Court  
**Whether the Tax Tribunal has the authority to reduce an unconstitutional previous increase in taxable value for purposes of adjusting a taxable value that was timely challenged in a subsequent year?**

The Michigan Supreme Court agreed with the Tax Tribunal that it has the ability to prospectively adjust the timely challenged taxable values of the parcels for tax year 2001 and subsequent years because the tax year 2000 taxable value of the parent parcel was erroneous as a result of the inclusion of unconstitutional additions. The Court held that once the jurisdiction of the tribunal is property invoked, the Tax Tribunal possesses the same powers and duties assigned to a board of review under the GPTA.

*Michigan Properties, L.L.C., v Meridian Township*, Case Nos. 143085, 143086 and 143087 and *Toll Northville Limited Partnership v Northville Township*, Case No. 143281 (June 14, 2012).

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

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## Budgeting, EVIP, and Healthcare

**Q:** Do we have to hold a budget hearing if we are not going to increase our millage?

**A:** Yes. The Uniform Budget Act requires that a hearing be held prior to adopting the budget (MCL 141.413).

If you are going to increase the millage, the hearing notice must include the language “THE PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE RATE PROPOSED TO BE LEVIED TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED BUDGET WILL BE A SUBJECT OF THIS HEARING” printed in ALL CAPS in 11 point bold. Otherwise, you must hold a separate Truth in Taxation Hearing (MCL 211.24e).

There is a One-Pager *Plus* Fact Sheet on our website (mml.org) outlining the steps to take in adopting a budget. The *Plus* portion of the Fact Sheet is a sample hearing notice.

**Q:** What is my responsibility as an elected official if my city’s revenues are less than expected?

**A:** In short, expenditures can’t exceed the total of revenues plus surplus.

If, during a fiscal year, it appears to the chief administrative officer or to the legislative body that revenues are less than estimated, the chief administrative officer or fiscal officer shall present to the legislative body recommendations that would prevent expenditures from exceeding available revenues, plus existing surplus to ensure that a deficit is not created for that current fiscal year.

The recommendations need to recognize the requirements of Michigan’s Uniform Budget and Accounting Act and the provisions of any collective bargaining agreements.

**Q:** Can we make financial commitments outside of the approved budget?

**A:** Basically, no. Except as otherwise provided for in the ordinance that adopts the budget, a deviation from the original budget shall not be made without amending the adopted budget. The legislative body of the local unit needs to amend the budget as soon as it becomes apparent that a deviation from the original general appropriations act is necessary and the amount of the deviation can be determined. Any amendment should indicate each intended alteration and the purpose of each appropriation item affected by the amendment.

The legislative body should ensure that they receive periodic reports on the community’s financial condition so that these issues can be addressed in a timely manner. Local charters may also further define this process requiring the administration to prepare and present amendments to council for their approval only.

**Q:** We completed the requirements for EVIP last year. Do we need to do anything this year?

**A:** Yes, EVIP is a yearly program. Municipalities must meet the requirements of all three phases of EVIP on a yearly basis.

The next two EVIP deadlines are coming soon. By February 1, 2013, municipalities must produce a plan with one or more proposals to increase existing levels of cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation within their jurisdiction or with other jurisdictions. In addition, the plan must list previous efforts and the cost savings realized from these, and project estimates of potential savings of future efforts.

By May 1, 2013 municipalities must certify they intend to implement the employee compensation criteria for any new, modified, or extended contract or employment agreements for employees not covered under contract or employment contract.

**Q:** Now that the national election is over, and it looks like National Health Care is moving forward, what do I need to know and how does it affect me?

**A:** We’ve found the best source of information on National Health Care, or the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as it has come to be known, is the Kaiser Foundation. The National League of Cities also has information on how the ACA applies to municipalities. Information and links to both these organization’s websites can be found on the League website at [mml.org](http://mml.org).

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The League’s Information Service provides member officials with answers to questions on a vast array of municipal topics. Send your municipal inquiries to [info@mml.org](mailto:info@mml.org), or call 1-800-653-2483.

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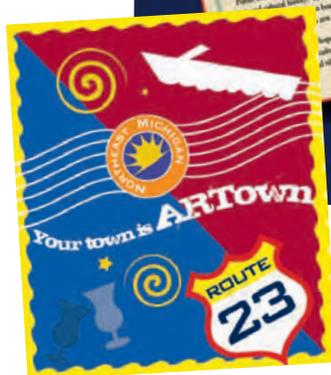
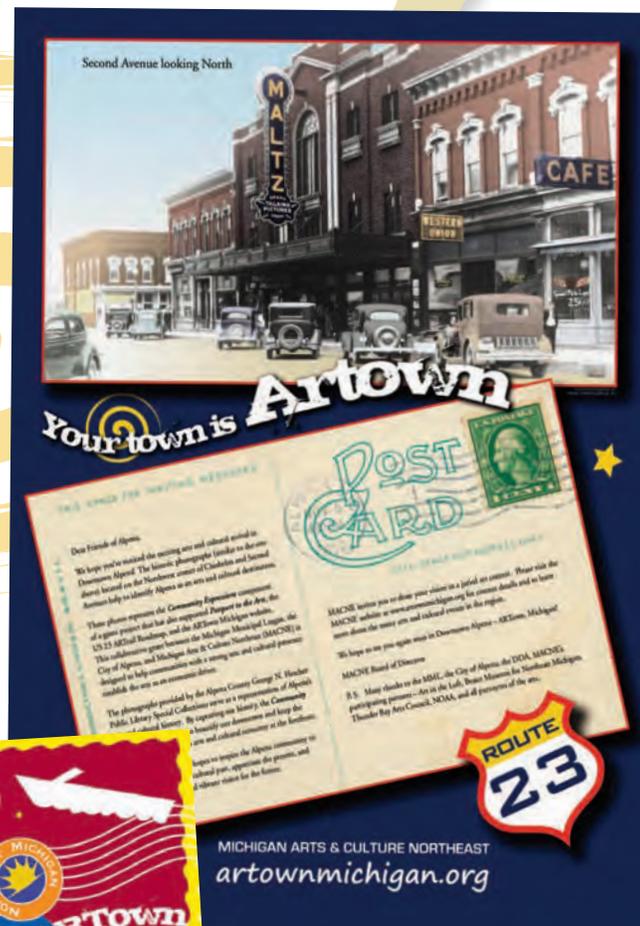
If you hear “arts and culture” and Alpena or Northeast Michigan doesn’t come to mind, think again! Arts, culture, and history have an enduring presence in Northeast Michigan, and MACNE-ARTown Michigan is evidence of that. This nonprofit corporation is led by Besser Museum for NE Michigan, Art in the Loft, Thunder Bay Arts Council, and Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The city of Alpena became a formal partner in MACNE, which also includes 44+ other organizations and individual artists from around the region. Through their powerful collaboration they are accomplishing what one group could not do alone.

Artown Michigan is a region, a destination, and a state of mind. It spans northeast Michigan along the coast of Lake Huron from Standish to Mackinac. It is a series of distinct yet inter-connected creative communities, each with its own rich array of arts and cultural events, activities, galleries, shops, and businesses. It is a place to wander down a road less traveled; a place to relax, unwind, have fun, create, explore, reach out to others, or enjoy the serenity of a day to yourself.

ARTown includes a Passport to the Arts, a website, an ARTrail Roadmap, and Community Expressions. The passport to the arts is MACNE’s flagship project—an actual passport that serves as a comprehensive regional arts/culture calendar for nearly 200 events/activities in the summer season. Our website is a communication hub for myriad arts, culture, humanities, and history organizations in the region, and a mechanism to collectively promote programs and events. ARTrail Roadmap is a locally designed and printed regional road map and reference guide highlighting 44 arts, culture, natural resources, historical sites and related attractions along the US 23 corridor from Standish to Mackinaw City. And Community Expressions are a variety of hands-on creative and cultural experiences for the community including the installation of building scrim (art and photography printed on all-weather fabric for enormous outdoor displays).



Alpena,  
 pop. 10,483



Visit [artownmichigan.org](http://artownmichigan.org)  
 for more information.