

# the review

July/August 2015

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

**VILLAGE OF  
SEBEWAING IS  
MICHIGAN'S  
FIRST GIGABIT  
COMMUNITY!**

"We hope this  
puts Sebewaing  
on the map  
as a leader in  
providing top-  
notch technology  
to residents and  
businesses."

-Village President  
Alex Khoury

Code for America  
Mobile Apps  
Bay City Live Chat  
Sustainable Southfield

**+ Convention 2015 Preview**



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The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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### On the Cover:

Village President Alex Khoury is the youngest leader in the history of the village of Sebewaing. Khoury was first elected to village council in 2011, when he was just 18. The village, population 1,759, is located in Huron County in Michigan's thumb.

Cover photo by Ashley Wehner of Memories by Ashley.

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michigan municipal league

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 88, Number 4

### 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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## Leading the Charge through Technology

Homing pigeons and smoke signals may have been effective modes of communication and navigational tools for thousands of years, but we only have to go back about 50 years to begin to experience the technological force that was beginning to roll our way.

As the TV show *Mad Men* winds down its final season, I'm already feeling nostalgic about an era that was before my time. "Mad men" is a slang term coined by advertisers working on Madison Avenue in New York. The plot of the show focuses on the business of the ad agency as well as the personal lives of the characters, depicting the changing moods and social mores of the country through the 1960s.

A recent episode revolved around a gigantic computer mainframe being installed in the lunch room of the ad agency. It was the beginning of the computer revolution. In case the viewer missed that elephant in the room, more subtle hints of what was to come included the handset of a rotary phone swinging aimlessly from a desk, and the remnants of a broken typewriter thrown in a fit of anger by a frustrated employee.


Rising from the ashes of a decade of counter culture that brought us hippies, anti-war demonstrations, bell bottom pants, recreational drugs, facial hair, and Jello molds, emerged the office mainframe and early personal computing and networking pioneers, such as Apple developers Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, who would begin to shape a future that few could envision.

Today we know that technology is changing the way we communicate, educate, learn, work, play, raise our children, and yes, find our way home. And it is challenging traditional models of governance that local governments have practiced for decades. Residents of a community want to help identify, address, and resolve their community issues because they are invested emotionally in the places they call home. And communities around Michigan are responding and delivering services in more effective and transparent ways through technology.

In the following articles, you will see how the use of technology is leading the charge. Sebawaing is Michigan's first gigabit community—offering 10 to 100 times faster internet speed than anything available to residents/businesses in Michigan today. In response to losing businesses, this village of less than 2,000 residents knew that developing faster Internet would go a long way in helping to attract and retain businesses.

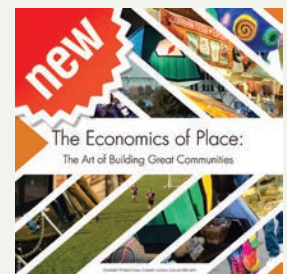
Bay City is a great example of engaging its citizens through radio interviews with local officials and inviting its residents to comment and ask questions through Facebook or Twitter. Several communities are encouraging civic engagement through open data, providing more accountability and transparency to their citizens.

Mobile apps allow residents to inform municipal staff when they see problems, such as potholes and graffiti, while out and about in the community. You'll read about Code for America (Catherine Bracy, Director of Community Organizing, spoke at our Annual Convention in Marquette last fall), and its development of a broad platform of citizen engagement in government through technology. You'll also learn about Merit Network, Inc, a nonprofit that has been building computer networks for public universities for decades, and wants to extend its work with local governments. Check out the Northern Field Report that gives an update on Michigan Tec Enterprise Corporation SmartZone in Houghton/Hancock, which just branched out to Marquette.

And start making plans now for our Annual Convention, September 16-18, in the vibrant downtown of Traverse City. Sessions will be held at several locations within a few blocks of the Park Place Hotel, so be sure to bring your walking shoes. (Shuttles will be available as well.) Everything you need to know is at [mml.org](http://mml.org). I look forward to seeing you all there! 

### New Economics of Place Book

This year, the League wrote a new book to expand on the discussion of the importance of "place." In *The Economics of Place: The Art of Building Great Communities*, we go beyond placemaking as a concept, to offer real-world examples of economic drivers and agents of social and cultural change in Michigan's own backyard. The book is available at [economicsofplace.com](http://economicsofplace.com).



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# social media— meeting people where they are

By League Staff

Of all police departments in the nation, New York City's has the most social media followers. No big surprise there, but which police department is second? Los Angeles? Chicago? Would you believe Brimfield, Ohio!? Population: about 12,500.

The Brimfield police department has fourteen officers but at one point, its police chief boasted more than 88,000 social media followers. The chief, the department, and the community received national attention for its success in engaging the public through its informal—sometimes even irreverent—voice. So that's a cute story of a little town that made a big splash, but why does social media matter to local government? After all, there is enough to do on any given day, so why waste time messing around with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram? Example of the "voice" used in Brimfield Police Department social media:



**Brimfield Police Department**  
@BrimfieldPolice • 5h

Parents, there was a crash at SR43 & Saxe Rd near the schools. Nasty one, with 1 car flipped & a van pushed up against it & a utility pole.

↩️ ↻ 24 ★ ...



**Brimfield Police Department**  
@BrimfieldPolice • 5h

NO STUDENTS were or are involved. Your kids are in the buildings and going about their day learning and passing love notes.

↩️ ↻ 63 ★ ...



**Brimfield Police Department**  
@BrimfieldPolice • 5h

One injured driver was removed from a vehicle by the nozzle jockeys (our BFFs the firefighters/medics). Road open. All is well, Chief Oliver.

↩️ ↻ 11 ★ ...

## Your Public Is on Social Media

In short, because that's where the people (your public) are! We can't deny it, and we really shouldn't ignore it: social media is a major mode of communication today. "Meeting people where they are" is a central tenet for thinking differently about community engagement and local governance in the 21st century. True outreach and real engagement occur when you approach people on their terms, where they are comfortable, and when it is convenient for them. Traditional public meetings don't always meet those criteria. They are certainly necessary as the appropriate venue for conducting formal public business. But they aren't the ideal venue for thoughtful, creative, two-way communication with the broader community.

"...all of this has helped the community understand that we're a team. If we're going to reduce crime, the people have to be willing participants. People have become very protective of the department, and that's huge for us. Some people use the private message function to leave a tip or to tell us about a nuisance in their neighborhood. We wanted to have any means of communication available so our department is the most functional operation it can be. I think the paradigm is shifting a little bit toward using social media as an outreach tool rather than just picking up the phone to call the police department."

— Former Brimfield Police Chief,  
David Oliver, *Governing.com*  
October 9, 2013





## Create an Authentic Connection

What Brimfield PD discovered was that, through social media, they could invite two-way communication on important issues, keep the community informed on “breaking news,” and, maybe most importantly, create an authentic connection between municipal operations and the public they serve. By allowing themselves to show their personality through social media, they made policing truly personal, and forged an incredible connection with the public.

Their connection to the community doesn’t begin and end with Facebook and Twitter. The Brimfield Police Department undertakes other innovative community policing programs: like “ticketing” kids who are wearing bike helmets with a gift ticket for a free ice cream at the local ice cream shop; doing personal senior citizen checks; and having an annual “shop with a cop” program to take kids back-to-school shopping who otherwise couldn’t afford new clothes and supplies.

## Shape Your Own Message


Sadly, the police chief in Brimfield retired this year under a cloud of accusations related to internal departmental issues, and the city disabled these wildly successful social media accounts. Despite this end, his social media presence offered invaluable lessons for any community looking to better engage its public and really connect with the community. Social media is a critical tool for shaping your message and acquainting the community with the people behind the great public service they receive through local government.

## Love Muskegon

In another example, a small group of Muskegon residents stripped down and jumped in icy winter waters with signs spelling out “Love Muskegon,” to show their love for their



community and to attract an out-of-state brewery looking to relocate in Michigan. The simple gesture spawned an anonymous group of young professionals who came up with a brand and started distributing materials with the phrase at events around the community. “The campaign gives everyone permission to have a love affair with their community,” stated national community development expert Peter Kageyama. “That is so important.”

Beyond just spreading positive messages, it is important to use your campaign to inspire and support actual actions. The local community foundation used the “Love Muskegon” banner in a micro-granting campaign, that allocated \$500 for nine small citizen-driven neighborhood improvement projects in the community. Partnerships like this allowed the campaign to be associated with demonstrable action and change. 

For more information on messaging & technology or to see a full list of League Case Studies, such as “Love Muskegon,” please visit [placemaking.mml.org](http://placemaking.mml.org) or contact Heather Van Poucker, director of information and policy research for the League, at 734-669-6326 or [hvanpoucker@mml.org](mailto:hvanpoucker@mml.org).



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# AN EFFECTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STANDARD FOR 21ST CENTURY GOVERNMENTS

By Preston Rhea and Catherine Bracy

## What Civic Engagement Means in the 21st Century

A core value of American democracy is that citizens have an active role to play in shaping government. This manifests itself most prominently through voting and elections, but there are many ways that citizens engage with government on a daily basis, particularly at the local level. It is government's responsibility to seek out that input and find the best ways to incorporate it into planning, policymaking, and service design.

While this value goes back hundreds of years, we now have a toolset that makes it possible for citizens to engage with government—and for government to understand citizen feedback—in a more meaningful way. Doing civic engagement well in the 21st century means implementing these new tools and methods as complements to offline modes of participation.

## The Need for a Civic Engagement Standard

When civic engagement is done well, it can produce better policy outcomes and deepen trust between residents and government, creating healthier communities. However, current modes of engagement largely do not work for either government staff or for the public. The process of input is challenging for regular citizens to effect and know that their voice is heard. For example, public meetings are often held at times or in places that are impossible for many citizens to reach. The input that does come through these meetings can often be hard for government officials to put to use and the format is not particularly enjoyable for anyone. As a result, civic engagement can feel like an unpleasant chore for everyone involved.

In the course of our work over the past five years in dozens of municipalities, we at Code for America have seen glimpses of a better model of engagement working for government staff and the public across America. In order to synthesize this

work and enable it to spread a practice of meaningful civic engagement in more municipalities, we developed an Effective Civic Engagement Standard that describes the competencies local governments must have to effectively engage with all residents. The Standard systematizes successful approaches for civic engagement in the 21st century, and offers both governments and residents concrete tools and tactics to use in their communities.

Getting engagement right means local governments must embrace technology and become adept at directing its use in service of its residents. The effective civic engagement standard is a holistic approach to do that in a way that complements offline engagement.

## The Capabilities for Effective Civic Engagement

The Effective Civic Engagement Standard provides five key competencies that governments must develop in order to practice an effective 21st century engagement strategy. They are:

1. Reach: Defining the constituency you are trying to reach, with an emphasis on identifying those whose voices aren't already represented.
2. Information: Providing relevant information that is easy to find and understand, and speaking with an authentic voice.
3. Channels: Making use of a diversity of spaces, both online and offline, that meet people where they are.
4. Productive Actions: Identifying clear, concrete, and meaningful actions residents can take to reach desired outcomes.
5. Feedback Loops: Making sure the public understands the productive impact of their participation, and that their actions have value.





Photo courtesy of Molly McLeod/Code for America

## What Success Looks Like

When municipalities fully develop these five competencies, we expect to see:

- Measurable increases in the public's satisfaction and trust in government.
- Improvements in residents' sense of efficacy—when they see a problem, they feel there is a path to fixing it.
- Greater number and kinds of people who participate in public conversations.
- A stronger consensus of support from the public for government policies, processes, services, and plans.
- More engagement around public information.
- A more collaborative, less antagonistic relationship between government and the public.
- Public servants who feel empowered to engage the public in their work.

## Practicing Engagement with Tools and Tactics

To help governments form meaningful relationships with residents and use technology to transform the way they work, the Standard includes some tactics and tools that can aid in developing the five engagement capacities. Public officials build their own competency with effective civic engagement when they use these methods and tools, and can continue to use these skills when new issues arise.

## How to Build Your Reach Competency

We are applying the Engagement Standard in Boulder, Colorado to redesign the public input portion of the city's long-term housing plan. To get a sense of the Standard in action, let's examine how Boulder approached the question of how they could reach a more representative set of their residents. First, we worked with the city to ask "Who is not participating in the housing conversation?" We used a tool built by Code for America staff to compare the overall city census data with baseline information about who currently attends public meetings and provides public comment around housing. This revealed that renters and people under the age of 40—each half of Boulder's population—were entirely unrepresented in conversations with the city around housing.



As a result, the city was able to make data-driven decisions about how to design their information to be most relevant, when and where to engage young people and renters in the conversation, and what the most salient questions to ask them might be. This outreach led to new relationships with student groups and immigrant leaders who have invited city councilmembers into their own community spaces to continue the conversation.

## Share Your Tactics and Tools

If you use this Engagement Standard to work on an issue in your municipality, we would love to hear about any tools or tactics that worked for you. You can find out more, and tell us what you think, on the Standard's webpage:  
[codeforamerica.org/governments/principles/engagement/](https://codeforamerica.org/governments/principles/engagement/)

*Preston Rhea is the civic engagement program coordinator for Code for America. You may reach him at [preston@codeforamerica.org](mailto:preston@codeforamerica.org).*

*Catherine Bracy is the director of community organizing for Code for America. You may reach her at [bracy@codeforamerica.org](mailto:bracy@codeforamerica.org)*



From top to bottom: 1. Code Across America events are meant to activate the Code for America network and inspire residents everywhere to get actively involved in their community. 2. Catherine Bracy of Code for America, speaking at the 2014 Michigan Municipal League Convention in Marquette. 3. Code for America hosted Dr. Jill Biden to celebrate and honor the work done by industry and community partners to build tools to support veterans' employment.



# Technology & Communication Statistics

75%

of citizens prefer to complete government transactions online<sup>1</sup>

In 2013, smartphones overtook personal computers as the most common web access device<sup>2</sup>

84%

of local governments have a social media presence<sup>5</sup>

98 BILLION APPS

will be downloaded in 2015<sup>6</sup>

1. Next Generation Government, Center for Digital Government, 2014, [images.erepublic.com](http://images.erepublic.com).

2. Next Generation Government, Center for Digital Government, 2014, [images.erepublic.com](http://images.erepublic.com).

5. Ronda Mosley, Local Government Public Safety Technology Priorities for 2014, Public Technology Institute, March 2014, [pti.org](http://pti.org).

6. *ibid*

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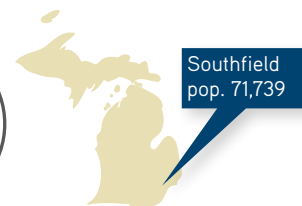
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# SUSTAINABLE SOUTHFIELD



By Sarah Craft

Research from around the globe recognizes the importance of public engagement: it improves trust, builds community, eases policy implementation, and boosts resident confidence in government. But many local governments are struggling to engage residents in a meaningful way. Only 22 percent of Americans attended a public meeting in 2014, and those who do typically engage tend to represent an older and wealthier demographic.<sup>1</sup>

However, people want to be involved: 75 percent of all Americans believe engaging citizens is essential to rebuilding local economies, and half say they would like to be involved in community planning.<sup>2</sup> There seems to be a willing audience, so what are local leaders missing?

To reach a broader audience, some communities are experimenting with online engagement.

"We want to engage a younger and wider demographic, including our business community" said Southfield Planning Director Terry Croad. "Not everyone is willing or able to come to a public meeting, but everyone deserves to have a voice. People are intimidated by having to come up to a microphone to share their thoughts, so going online allows more people to get involved."

Southfield is in the middle of a master plan update, and the city decided to try MindMixer (now called mySidewalk, after the organization went through a rebranding process) as part of its engagement strategy. According to Emily Olinger, mySidewalk community engagement expert, the service was created by planners who were tired of sparsely attended public meetings.

"Anyone can access mySidewalk at any time, and it offers the opportunity for more people to provide feedback at as low a barrier as possible," Olinger said. "We want to make the engagement process easy and meaningful. Residents need to be able to offer their feedback, and civic leaders should have an easy time getting good information back."

So far, more than 2 million people across 1,200 communities have used mySidewalk's platform, but there are numerous

online engagement platforms now available, including: Open Town Hall; Neighborland; MetroQuest; and others.

## Sustainable Southfield

In October of 2014, Southfield entered a 12-month contract with mySidewalk to enhance the engagement strategy for its master plan updates. Planning staff spent the first two or three months doing their background research by exploring past mySidewalk campaigns, sifting through questions from previous master plan updates, and meeting with stakeholders to get support for the engagement strategy.

"We took our time to build consensus, get support, and create a strong marketing campaign so people would feel ownership in the project," said Croad. "We named the campaign 'Sustainable Southfield' because we're taking a holistic approach to planning; we need a sustainable economy, a sustainable environment, and sustainable neighborhoods."

After meeting with city council, department heads, planning commissioners, resident groups, and community stakeholders, the city launched Sustainable Southfield in January 2015. Each week, for 20 weeks, participants answer a new set of questions under a specific theme and give feedback on topics ranging from economic development to arts and culture, transportation, and historic preservation.

So far, the Sustainable Southfield platform has had about 3,000 unique visits and more than 400 participants—about 30 percent of whom are 18-24-year-olds, an age group that

## MINDMIXER

With MindMixer's platform, users can respond to specialized surveys, polls, or open-ended questions; view and make comments on draft plans; or post their own ideas and pictures of their vision for the community.



## JOIN

Create an account and weigh in along with other members of our community.



Sign Up to Participate

## CONTRIBUTE

Share your ideas and your perspective on how to make our community better.



Explore Participant Activity

## CONNECT

Communicate directly with our local leaders to help the best ideas move forward.



See Who's Listening

typically does not engage in local government. “That’s like 400 people coming up to the microphone at a public meeting,” Croad said. “That never happens!”

Southfield’s participation numbers make its campaign well above average, when compared to other MindMixer (now mySidewalk) users. The community’s effort seems to be making an impact and getting people talking.

### Southfield’s Success

Effective online engagement doesn’t come without hard work and a lot of time, like every other engagement strategy. Olinger said the most successful campaigns have strong marketing, and surveys that ask participants the “right” questions—ones that provide valuable information to civic leaders. According to Croad, Southfield’s success amounts to many aspects they’ve learned through the process:

1. Stay organized – Although the entire planning department is involved in the campaign, Southfield’s senior planner, Sarah Mulally, is acting project manager. Mulally communicates with mySidewalk staff on a regular basis, and is the main site administrator. Assigning one person to post each week’s questions and compile data keeps the campaign on-track and well organized.
2. Engage a large group of core leaders – Before planners launched Sustainable Southfield, department heads, council, planning commissioners, the business community, and resident groups were on board and part of the initial planning stages—and they have been involved continuously ever since. For example, each week the planning staff, department heads, and topic experts meet to review engagement numbers from the previous week and finalize questions for the new topic. Because each partner feels some level of ownership in the project, they promote the platform on their websites and social media outlets. These partners help ensure broad outreach, more comprehensive survey questions,

and an increased likelihood that the information collected will be used in multiple ways after the end of the campaign.

3. Lead a fun campaign – Giving the online engagement campaign a name, and asking participants a new set of questions each week, keeps participants talking and the material fresh. Sustainable Southfield also has a photo-share option where participants can post a picture of their favorite thing in Southfield. With more than 55 photos shared, this is proving to be a fun way to build excitement, incorporate creativity, and strengthen community pride. Participants also acquire points each time they post, comment, or share information on the site. The city even offers prizes for different levels of participation—so active users can win prizes ranging from an iPad, a gift card to a local store, or lunch with a city planner.

The recent question on the Sustainable Southfield web page is:

## How can we make Southfield a 21st century city?

Followed up with:

What will it take for our community to lead the way in the 21st century? How can we adapt Southfield with the changing times?



The Sustainable Southfield team, left to right: Senior Planner Sarah Mulally; Planning Director Terry Croad; Lawrence Technological University Student Engagement Coordinator Phil Lucas; and Assistant City Planner Jeff Spence.


4. Select questions wisely – After many weeks of online engagement, the city began identifying trends in response rates: multiple choice questions were answered more often than open-ended ones; and topics with only three or four questions saw the highest response rates. Noticing these trends early on helped staff structure each set of questions to encourage the highest rates of participation.

Question development is also a way to engage a broader audience. For example, when Sustainable Southfield surveyed participants on questions related to education, the planning staff met with leaders from the local university and public schools to develop more comprehensive and useful questions. Because of their participation, the education groups were actively encouraging their own constituents to engage in the online survey.

5. Pair online with traditional engagement – With the goal of engaging a wide audience, planning staff was careful to accommodate all users, including those not active on the Internet. At the launch of Sustainable Southfield, staff mailed letters to the 130 homeowner, condominium, and neighborhood associations across the city to announce the campaign and offer in-person presentations to any interested group. The city also prints the campaign's weekly questionnaire to distribute at events and makes them available for anyone more comfortable submitting a paper copy.

With only a few weeks to go in the campaign (online submissions wrap up in August), staff is proud to have reached so many residents and excited to move through the next steps.

"Sustainable Southfield is a lot of work, but it's proving to be effective," Croad said. "We're putting together a great base of information to guide future decision-making. The master

plan update is a guide to help council lead the city and this level of engagement gives them comfort that the product is reflective of what's important to the community." 

*Sarah Craft is a program coordinator for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6328 or [scraft@amml.org](mailto:scraft@amml.org).*

#### Endnotes

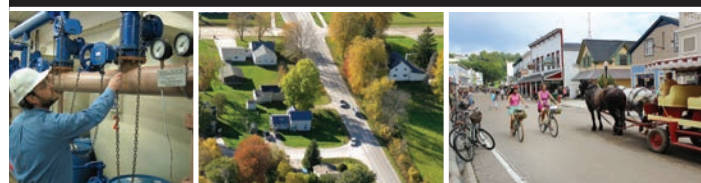
1. Mike Maciag, *The Citizens Most Vocal in Local Government, Governing the States and Localities*, July 2014, [governing.com](http://governing.com)
2. *Planning in America: Perceptions and Priorities*, American Planning Association, June 2012, [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)



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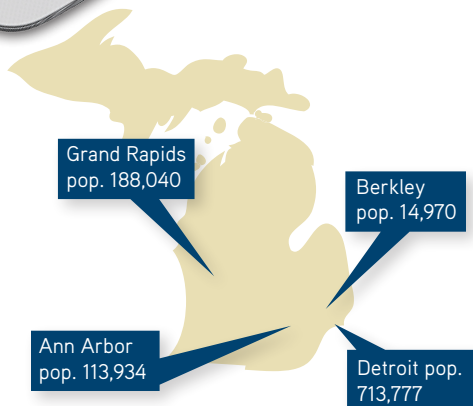
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# There's an app for that!

Civic apps provide the speed and efficiency that users crave

By Lisa Donovan



**B**am! You just hit a giant pothole and visions of an equally-big car repair bill are swimming through your mind. What's a driver to do?

In a growing number of Michigan communities, there's an app for that. Just pull out your smart phone, and with a couple quick clicks your report zips directly to the right person at city hall. With this tool, municipalities are able to enhance transparency and efficiency, and provide meaningful two-way communication with their residents.

## Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids has had a civic app since 2002, but their current version—GRCity311—came into play in 2010. Smart phone users can report issues with potholes, streetlights, and graffiti. They can also add a digital photo and pinpoint the location of the problem with the built-in Global Positioning Technology. Once the report is submitted, users can track its status and they are notified when the repair is complete.

"It gives the public a chance to tell you what they want you to attend to," said Paul Klimas, information technology director. "Some requests are really creative. One person even wrote a poem about potholes."

GRCity311 is clearly popular with residents as usage has doubled every year since 2010. Grand Rapids is currently evaluating 15-20 other services for possible inclusion in a new version of the app, which they plan to launch in late 2015 or early 2016.

"More Internet usage is done from smart phones than computers, so we're doing our best to reach people where they are," said Ryan Harris, CRM practice manager for Corporate Technologies LLC, a consultant to the city.

Grand Rapids purchased the app from Connected Bits for \$32,000, with an annual maintenance fee of \$6,000. Klimas advises other communities looking into offering a smartphone app to consider the total cost of ownership, including software, updates, and interaction.

## Berkley

Berkley's mobile app is much newer, debuting in 2014, but equally robust. Access Berkley offers similar reporting and tracking features, but users can ask questions and report problems on a wider variety of topics, including: potholes; street sign damage; voter precincts; parks; code enforcement; and the Berkley CruiseFest.

"We do our best to stay on top of technology, especially technology that helps the community do its job better and more cost-effectively," said City Manager Jane Bais-DiSessa.

DiSessa was equally concerned with how her staff would interact with the app. She wanted the process to be as simple and straightforward for them as it is for residents, so she sat down with her staff and created a workflow for requests. Now, no matter which avenue a request comes in from—app, Facebook, etc.—the appropriate staff member only gets the request once in their email inbox. After that, a quick response is the next order of business.

Berkley purchased the app from PublicStuff, and DiSessa has been more than pleased with the moderate cost, flexible elements, and personal contact. PublicStuff keeps the software regularly updated, and if another municipality comes up with an idea to improve the app, Berkley and other users benefit from that enhancement.

## Ann Arbor

Ann Arbor also launched a new mobile app last year. A2 Fix It was an instant hit—235 service requests were submitted on the app within the first month.

"It got us out of the awkward place where someone called in a report and it was hard to track," said Robert Kellar, communications specialist for public services. "Now when they report a pothole they get an email. There's much more certainty."

Ann Arbor purchased their app from SeeClickFix because they liked its clean interface, great record, and the fact that it interacted well with Cityworks, their internal work flow system. To keep A2 Fix It user-friendly, the city is looking at how to adjust the pre-chosen categories to make them more responsive to residents' needs.

"We don't want to give people paralysis because there are too many categories to choose from," said Kellar. "It's a constant adjustment process."

## Detroit

One of the newest civic apps in Michigan was recently launched by the city of Detroit. With this app, the name says it all—Improve Detroit. In a news release, Mayor Mike Duggan said it was like having city hall on your phone. Similar to the other apps, submitted reports are routed to the appropriate department, a work order is generated that can be tracked by

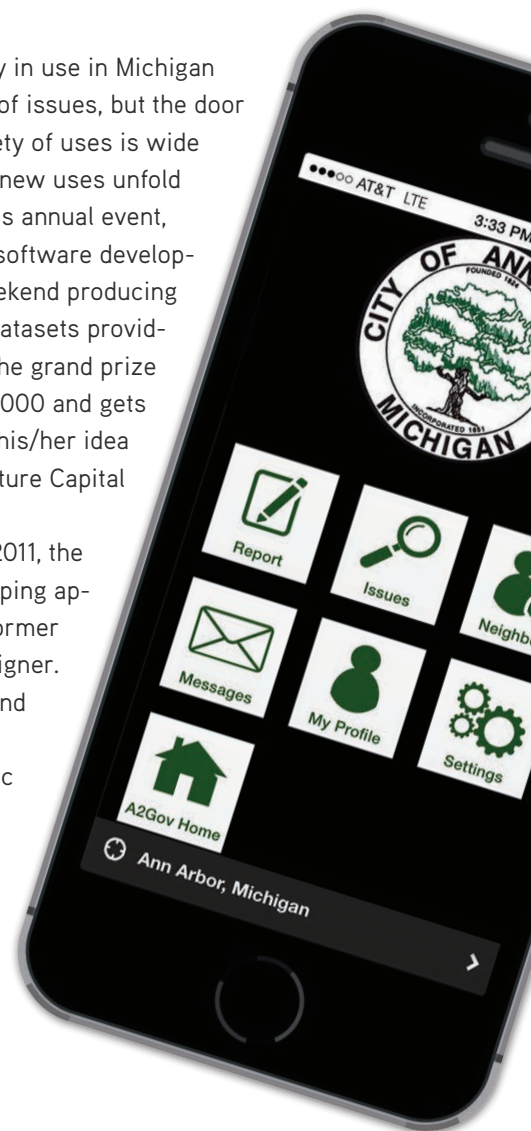
city departments and the public, and a notification is sent out when the issue is resolved.

"From an accountability standpoint, it's important for the public to know what issues have been reported and if the city is following through," said Duggan. "This is a transparent process from start to finish."

## Code Michigan

The civic apps currently in use in Michigan address a wide variety of issues, but the door to an even greater variety of uses is wide open. One place to see new uses unfold is Code Michigan. At this annual event, teams of civic-minded software developers spend an entire weekend producing mobile apps based on datasets provided by Code Michigan. The grand prize winner takes home \$15,000 and gets an opportunity to pitch his/her idea to the Renaissance Venture Capital Fund.

At the first event in 2011, the winning app was a mapping application created by a former Microsoft software designer. "It got so many 'oohs' and 'ahhs' from the crowd that it was the automatic




"From an accountability standpoint, it's important for the public to know what issues have been reported and if the city is following through. This is a transparent process from start to finish."

- Detroit Mayor  
Mike Duggan



winner,” said event coordinator James Wilfong, programmer analyst for the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget.

Last year, Michigan’s abundant snowfall was the basis for the winning app, SnowFi. Developed by teammates Eric Buehler, Josh Hulst, and Ryan Graffy, the app shows users where snow plows are located and which roads have been cleared for safer commutes. Their meeting with the venture capitalists gave them some hope that the SnowFi app might become publicly available down the road.

“They showed interest and gave us some good suggestions, so we need to develop it more,” said Hulst, co-founder of MichiganLabs. “This winter we saw how MDOT’s system works and we’ve talked about partnering with them.” 

*Lisa Donovan is the communications coordinator for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6318 or [ldonovan@mml.org](mailto:ldonovan@mml.org)*



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Access Berkley offers reporting and tracking features, and users can ask questions and report problems on: potholes; street sign damage; voter precincts; parks; code enforcement; and the Berkley CruiseFest.



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# No City Left Behind

By Brian Warkoczkeski

In many ways, broadband connectivity has become an essential element for daily living. It is used for communications, entertainment, data sharing, research, health sciences, Internet applications, and more. If you live in the metropolitan area of a major city, broadband is often plentiful; but in rural and underserved areas of Michigan, the availability of affordable broadband has been inadequate or non-existent.

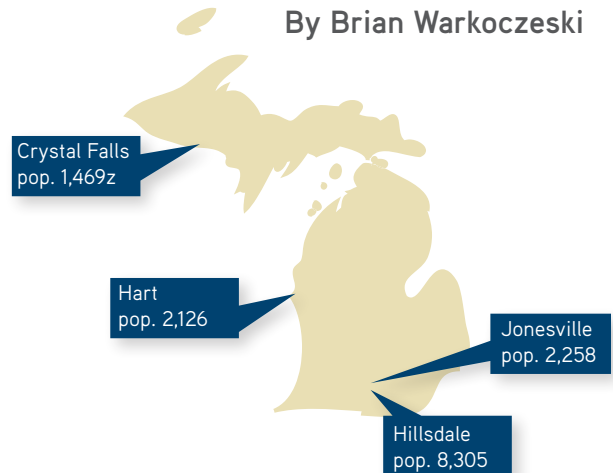
## Background

In 2009, Merit Network sought to improve broadband in Michigan through the aid of a government program. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, commonly known as the “Stimulus Package,” contained a \$7.2 billion investment in broadband infrastructure for communities across the nation. Merit submitted an application for each round of funding and received two stimulus grants for its REACH-3MC project (Rural, Education, Anchor, Community and Health care—Michigan Middle Mile Collaborative).

Round I of the project would build 1,017 miles of fiber-optic infrastructure in 32 counties of the Lower Peninsula, while Round II would construct 1,270 miles of fiber in 29 counties of the Northern Lower and Upper Peninsulas of Michigan, with additional connections in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Thousands of permits were acquired for construction, and at its peak, 40 construction crews were working simultaneously in parts of Michigan. Merit completed REACH-3MC in December 2014. When finished, Merit had constructed 2,287 miles of fiber-optic infrastructure, which is the equivalent of travelling from Ann Arbor to Orlando, Florida.

REACH-3MC was a “middle-mile” project, and the aim was not to directly connect every home and business in the network service area, but to build “backhaul” into a region.



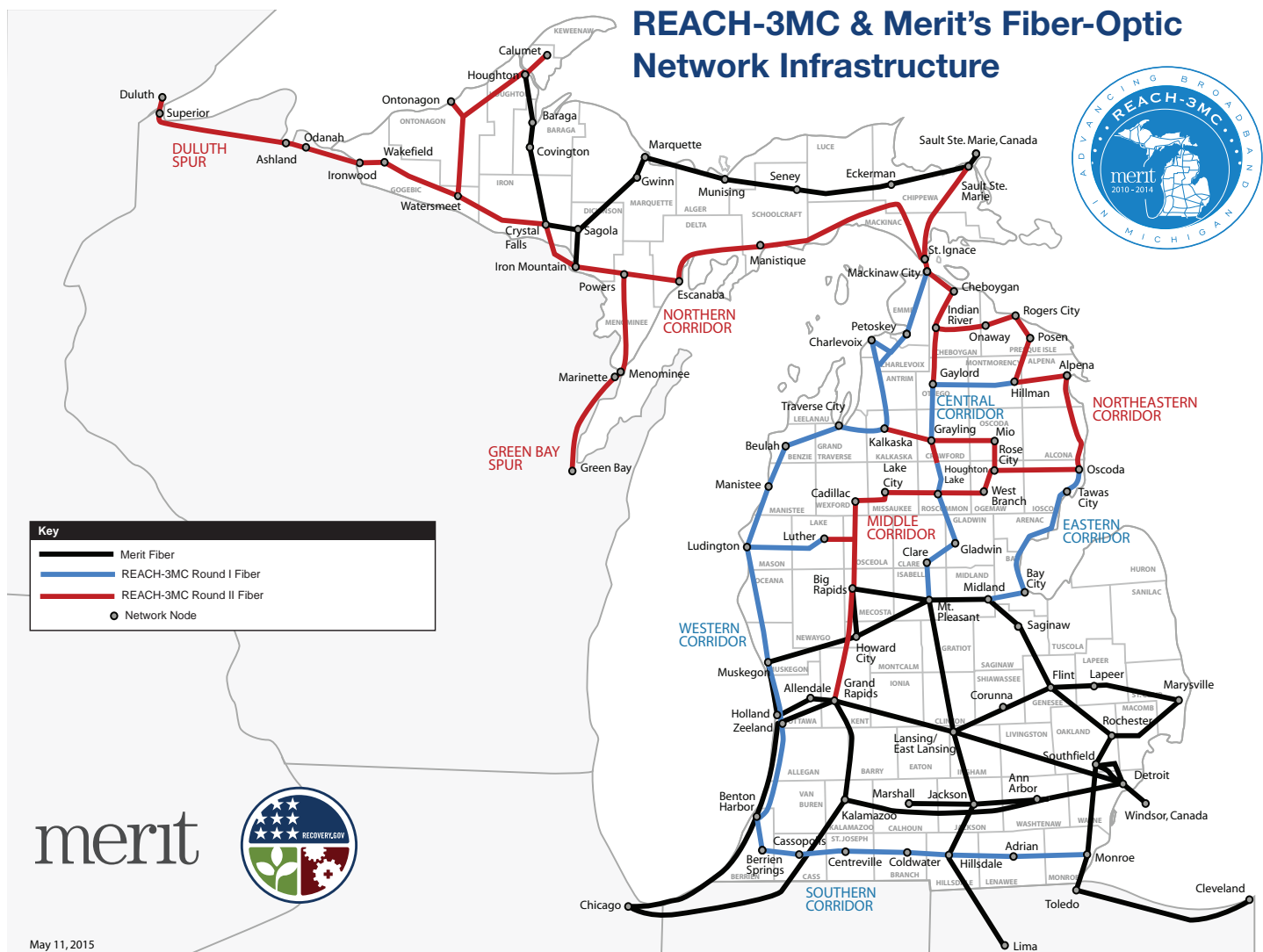
Like an interstate freeway, the open-access network has brought the big pipe to underserved areas of Michigan, and Local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can work with Merit to connect to the network to provide on-ramps to residences and businesses.

The project was tremendous for connecting community anchor institutions in unserved or underserved areas, such as local government, public safety, health care organizations, schools, and libraries. Merit connected 141 community anchor institutions and 77 additional organizations, which were added by constructing last-mile fiber to the network. Each connection is a minimum of 1 gigabit-per-second (Gbps).

Four of the municipalities connected by the REACH-3MC project were Crystal Falls, Hart, Hillsdale, and Jonesville. Each city is unique in how it was connected and how it has used its broadband resources.

## Crystal Falls

In November 2013, the city was connected by a 1 Gbps fiber-optic connection to Merit’s network. Reliability and speed



has led to greater efficiency and opened the door to new innovations for the city.

City Clerk Dorothea Olson said, "The way technology keeps improving around here, we've got smart meters now and we've got the ability to ready meters right from our offices. That's all part of the Internet stuff, so the possibilities are endless."

Crystal Falls District Community Library, Forest Park Public Schools, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, and Iron County Medical Care Facility were also connected to Merit's network during the REACH-3MC project.

### Hart

When the city of Hart connected to Merit's network in 2012, Hart Public Library and the Oceana County Administrative Building joined as well. The county building includes the sheriff's department, the jail, and circuit and district courts.

"The city is actually the smallest user right now, but we're working on projects to increase that," said City Manager Stan Rickard.

The city is looking to extend their network to other locations in the community, including a city-owned incubator project and the wastewater treatment plant. They are also interested in training city employees to work with fiber.

"The city owns the electric system and that gives us a great opportunity to cross-train our electric linemen, who are very highly skilled in linework. We just need to transfer that skill into fiber, and we're on the verge of taking the next step," Rickard stated.

### Hillsdale

Hillsdale is now a major hub on Merit's network with fiber connections from the north, south, east, and west. A fiber connection from OARnet, the Ohio research and education network, was also added.

"It put Hillsdale on the map, and by that I mean that we literally show up on the map of the fiber," stated Economic Development Director Mary Wolfram. "We're a node for that fiber, so we have four-way redundancy."

The city's manufacturing park was connected to the REACH-3MC network and now provides broadband connectivity to the park's businesses. The easy access to high-speed broadband makes the location ideal for an IT company, and the city is actively working to attract a corporate data center to the park.

The Hillsdale BPU is using the REACH-3MC fiber to improve city services. They're installing smart meters in the community's homes and are working with a REACH-3MC project participant to create a new fiber ring around the city. The commercial provider may also connect homes in Hillsdale with fiber.

## Jonesville

In Southern Michigan, the city of Jonesville connected the city hall, fire department, and police department to Merit's fiber network, each linked by 1 Gbps. They primarily use the broadband for their private Internet services and reporting.

At each of the locations, the city offers free public Wi-Fi, which is popular with residents. The Wi-Fi is also available in a downtown park, and visitors often use their laptops in the pavilion to access the connectivity.


The city has enjoyed the fast speeds and reliability of broadband. In the future, the city would like to provide broadband to its industrial park.

"Hopefully, if we're able to further extend the network, it will increase our marketability and services for the businesses in town," said City Manager Jeff Gray.

## Connecting Michigan

The construction and lighting of the REACH-3MC network is complete; however, Merit is still working to improve broadband availability across the state by connecting organizations to the network and by working with municipalities to expand broadband access in their communities.

"Municipalities are well positioned to help expand broadband services to their communities," said Elwood Downing, vice president of member outreach and engagement for Merit.

"Our goal is to work with cities, villages, townships, counties, community leaders, and providers to make sure the federally funded middle-mile infrastructure is leveraged so that no community is left behind!" 

---

*Brian Warkoczkeski is the web administrator and marketing/communication specialist for Merit Network. You may contact him at 734-527-5752 or [bwarko@merit.edu](mailto:bwarko@merit.edu)*



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Photo courtesy Traverse City Tourism


MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

CONVENTION

Downtown Traverse City  
September 16-18, 2015







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# CONVENTION

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The Michigan Municipal League 2015 Convention takes place in downtown Traverse City, amidst an array of shops, galleries, restaurants and the beautifully-restored State Theatre, home to the world-renowned Traverse City Film Festival. In this energetic environment, local leaders will learn strategic lessons on topics of vital importance to municipalities large and small.

Venture out into the Traverse City community on a mobile workshop. Discover the work of the doers and dreamers who are redefining what it means to be a city in today's global village. Sit down face-to-face with the peers and partners who are powering a statewide vision for change.

There is no place in the world like Traverse. And there is a Traverse City that many have yet to meet. Come see for yourself how Traverse City has transformed itself into a modern, dynamic place where arts, culture, and commerce complement its abundant recreational resources.

Join us in Traverse City, September 16-18. It's the place where the Michigan of tomorrow is being built today.



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



30x30

**James Freed**  
City Manager, Port Huron

James Freed, a 30-something, has a decade of public and private leadership experience under his belt. With a long career ahead of him, he has a unique perspective on the next 30 years of municipal government.



**The City Shaped**

**Joe Minicozzi**  
Principal, Urban3

Hear from Joe Minicozzi who has led pioneering studies on economic productivity in cities, which have affected the revaluation of public policy and a broader understanding of market dynamics created by tax policy.



**The Urban Consulate**

**Claire Nelson**  
Knight Foundation

Claire Nelson, founder of the Urban Consulate, will discuss a new project to foster civic and cultural exchange between cities, starting with Detroit, New Orleans, and Philadelphia.

## COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, September 16, 2:00 pm

Join us in this good-natured competition and cheer for Michigan's best. See the finalists unveil their winning presentations.

You be the judge. Your votes will decide which community takes home the Cup. After the general session, cast your vote at the official Community Excellence Award Voting Booth.

Don't miss the presentation on September 18, and be a part of the ninth annual Community Excellence Award Cup Presentation.

## WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

We recognize that creating great places takes a team of people, so we're asking our members to bring along other community leaders—economic development professionals, business leaders, and others. Team discounts will be available! Check [convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org) for further details.

## AGENDA

### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 8:30 am-5:30 pm | Registration Hours   |
| 9 am-Noon       | Convention Workshops   |
| 9 am            | Board of Trustees Meeting  |
| Noon            | Michigan Women in Municipal Government Lunch                                   |
| 2-3:45 pm       | Welcoming General Session<br>Community Excellence<br>"Race for the Cup" Awards |
| 4-5:15 pm       | Breakout Sessions  |
| 5:15-6:15 pm    | Elected Officials Academy<br>Board Meeting                                     |
| 6-8 pm          | Host City Reception  |
| 8:30 pm         | Foundation Fundraiser<br>Tavern Tour   |

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 7 am-5 pm                  | Registration Hours                                |
| 7:30-8:30 am               | Michigan Association of Mayors Breakfast          |
| 8:30-9:45 am               | Breakout Sessions                                 |
| 10-11:45 am                | General Session                                   |
| 11:45 am-Noon              | Delegate Check-in                                 |
| Noon-12:30 pm              | Annual Meeting                                    |
| 12:30-4:15 pm              | Lunch & Mobile Workshops                          |
| /// DINNER ON YOUR OWN /// |   |
| 6:00 pm                    | Foundation Fundraising<br>Winery Tasting and Tour |

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 7-11 am        | Registration Hours   |
| 7:45-8:45 am   | Continental Breakfast  |
| 9-10:15 am     | Breakout Sessions  |
| 9-10:15 am     | MBC-LEO Meeting  |
| 10:30-11:45 am | Closing General Session<br>Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup"<br>Winner Announced |
| 11:45 am       | Adjourn  |

REGISTER ONLINE  
[convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org)



# GENERAL INFORMATION

## HOW CAN I REGISTER?

### Online

All credit card payments are to be completed online via My League (mml.org). My League is your secure, interactive online League account. It's available to all members and nonmembers, with a quick and easy sign-up process.

### Via Printable Form

Visit mml.org to download and print a faxable registration form. Complete and fax to 734-669-4223, then mail with check payable to: Michigan Municipal League, PO Box 7409, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7409.

## HOUSING & TRAVEL

### Host Hotel

Park Place Hotel, 300 E. State St.  
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Phone: 231-946-5000  
Standard: \$129.95/night

### Overflow Hotel

West Bay Beach—a Holiday Inn Resort  
615 E. Front St, Traverse City, MI 49686  
Phone: 231-947-3700  
Single/Double: \$139/night  
Triple: \$149/night; Quad: \$159/night

Group room rate cutoff is August 17 (West Bay) and August 25 (Park Place) at 5:00 pm (EST). Hotel rate is subject to applicable state and local taxes (currently 11%).

### Reservation Process

Housing reservations will only be accepted for those who have registered for Convention. After registering for Convention, a confirmation email will be sent to you within 48 hours. The confirmation email will contain your registration information and your personalized housing registration code. The hotel requires that you provide your personalized code in order to make reservations during the League's Annual Convention.

We're excited to hold our Annual Convention in downtown Traverse City for the first time!

The city has a delightfully walkable downtown, and that's just what you'll get to experience this year. Bring comfortable shoes as sessions will be held at several locations within a few blocks of the Park Place Hotel. We'll also provide shuttle service for those who prefer that mode of transportation.

### Host City Reception

Wednesday, September 16, 6-8 pm, Open Space

Relax and enjoy an evening along the shores of Lake Michigan on West Grand Traverse Bay in the heart of Downtown Traverse City for a taste of the region's culinary and agricultural offerings. Come see why Traverse City is consistently voted as one of America's most charming small towns!

### Parade of Flags Waves Goodbye

Our members have traditionally shown their community pride at Convention in the Parade of Flags. This year, we have something new in store. So keep your flags at home and keep your eyes open at Convention.

---

## SPONSOR THE CONVENTION

Sponsoring the Annual Convention provides you with a unique opportunity to communicate with professionals from local government. When becoming our sponsor, we will do our utmost to satisfy your needs for involvement and exposure. Are you looking for networking and relationship building? Presentation opportunities? Company branding? Contact Terri Murphy at 734-669-6342 or [tmurphy@mml.org](mailto:tmurphy@mml.org) for more information.

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## FOUNDATION FUNDRAISING

### Tavern Tour

Wednesday, September 16, 8:30 pm / Cost: \$25

What better way to experience downtown Traverse City than enjoying a cocktail with your League family? This fundraiser will feature several of the outstanding downtown taverns complete with a chance to win prizes at the final destination. Join your League colleagues in exploring downtown while helping raise money for your foundation!

### Michigan Wine Tasting and Tour

Thursday, September 17, 6:00 pm / Cost: \$100

The Traverse City region has become internationally known for its wine. As a matter of fact the Old Mission Peninsula sits on the globe's 45th parallel, ideal for growing wine grapes. Join us at the stunning Chateau Chantal winery for a strolling dinner and a tour of the winery while enjoying one of the Old Mission Peninsula's best locations. It's the perfect way to spend the last night of the Convention!



# MICHIGAN'S FIRST GIGABIT COMMUNITY

Optic Network Positions Sebewaing at the Technological Forefront

By Lisa Donovan



Ziplining, swimming, and singing around the campfire are all part of the fun at faith-based Bay Shore Camp. But even as families are communing with God and nature and enjoying the camaraderie of fellow campers, their electronic devices are never far away.

As many as 700 Family Campers—and 3,000 guests at gospel concerts—want to text, email, and download videos as easily at the sprawling camp in the thumb community of Sebawaing as they do at home. Staffers, too, rely heavily on the Internet for everything from online registration to ordering food and supplies.

Jeff Parsons, executive director of the 100-year-old camp, was aware that their 100-megabit service from Comcast wasn't really doing the trick. So when Melanie McCoy, superintendent of Sebawaing Light and Water, told him that Sebawaing was now Michigan's first gigabit community and he could get the new fiber gigabit Internet service for only \$10 per month more, Parsons was hooked. Fast forward to February 20, when local, state, and federal representatives came to camp to celebrate the ribbon-cutting for Sebawaing's first gigabit business customer.

"The speed is remarkable," said Parsons. "We need to support WiFi service for cell phones, notebooks, laptops, and a whole host of devices over a 40-acre campground. It's been doing remarkably well handling the volume we have."

## Getting Up to Speed

Gigabit service is approximately 100 times faster than the average high-speed Internet connection. At that speed, connections can handle multiple streams of large-format, high-definition content like online video calls, movies, and interactive educational experiences.

In 2013, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genchowski issued the Gigabit City Challenge to bring at least one gigabit community to every state by 2015. He cited the ability of gigabit communities to spur innovators to create new businesses and industries, spark connectivity among citizens and services, and incentivize investment in high-tech industries. Sebawaing's gigabit service brings the U.S. one step closer to reaching that goal.

Indeed, economic development was one of the primary drivers for Sebawaing's construction of a fiber optic network. "We've lost some manufacturing jobs," said McCoy. "Companies of the future are small businesses that will benefit from a fiber network. We hope to wear out the big ribbon-cutting scissors."

Other small towns have already experienced tremendous gains from building a fiber network. Lafayette, Louisiana is



one of those towns, says Mike Watz, principal attorney for the Kitch firm in Detroit, who helped Sebawaing navigate all the telecommunications laws and regulations. Disney Pixar Studios was impressed enough with Lafayette's new fiber system to build a brand-new studio there.

"There's a huge advantage to having this type of service," said Khoury. "We hope this puts Sebawaing on the map as a leader in providing top-notch technology to residents and businesses."

## Why a Municipal Internet System?

As valuable as Sebawaing's fiber system is to the community, it still raises an interesting question. Why is a municipality building such a system when private companies like AT&T and Comcast exist for that purpose? According to Watz, the answer lies in the monopoly those companies hold on the industry and their ability to neutralize government regulators. They tend to build only as much fiber as they have to. Small communities like Sebawaing are usually not on their radar.

"Their real incentive is that they're making tons of money with the old system," said Watz. "Unless we force them to do something, they won't."

## Laying the Groundwork

For several years, Sebawaing's Light & Water Department had shared a T1 line, and then a fiber system, with a few local businesses. But neither system serviced residents who were clamoring for something better than the slow DSL service that was offered by the area's Internet providers.

In 2010, Sebawaing set out on a quest to find the best option for providing high-speed Internet that would benefit current and future residents and businesses. The answer turned out to be a Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) system, constructed by the village at a cost of \$1.5 million. The Light and Water Department had sufficient funds to loan to the village, so they were able to avoid the expense and risk of a bond. Village President Alexander Khoury credited the Light and Water Department with planning ten years ahead. "Technology is always changing," he said. "You have to take that into consideration."

The community's appetite for high-speed Internet was clear. More than 200 people were on the waiting list for installation before the system became operational in the fall. Price was certainly one of the appealing factors as the Light and Water Department had a goal of offering cheaper, faster service than the competition.

"One of the advantages of a municipal system is the value we bring to the community," said McCoy. "If we can provide electricity or Internet cheaper than other services, then that's more money that people can spend somewhere else in the community."




Their philosophy is reflected in their rate structure. Residential fiber Internet is available for \$35/month for 30-megabits up to \$160/month for 1-gigabit. Business packages start at \$75/month for 50-megabits, with customized pricing for 1-gigabit service.

Financial projections were based on connecting fifty percent of the village's residents and businesses to the new fiber system—about 500 customers. Almost 400 have already signed up, so they expect to reach their goal by the end of the year. At that rate, the village anticipates being able to pay for the project in 7-8 years.

"Everyone loves it," said Khoury. "That's the only subject I can bring up and always get positive comments."

James Jackson is one of those satisfied customers. He needs fast, reliable Internet for a variety of devices as well as for Extra Life, an online video game marathon that raises millions of dollars for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

"I love the service," said Jackson. "The bandwidth is very helpful for streaming video. This year, for the first time, I didn't have any problems for the whole 24 hours." 

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*Lisa Donovan is the communications coordinator for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6318 or [ldonovan@mml.org](mailto:ldonovan@mml.org)*

[FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski] cited the ability of gigabit communities to spur innovators to create new businesses and industries, spark connectivity among citizens and services, and incentivize investment in high-tech industries.



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From top to bottom: 1. Ribbon cutting ceremony at Bay Shore Camp, Sebewaing's first gigabit business customer. 2. (left) Superintendent of Water and Light Melanie McCoy and (right) Village President Alex Khoury. 3. Pete Smith at the gigabit server 4. Bay Shore campers

# Bay City Live Chat:

## Local Government and Media Collaboration

By Jessica Reed

Online technology has been uprooting, transforming, and improving the media industry before our eyes, creating a new class of engaged media participants. These participants are drawn to interaction—the ability to directly communicate with journalists and fellow content consumers from any location. Local governments are now harnessing those interactive platforms to create a new level of engagement with their residents.

Online civic engagement efforts are a natural step for local governments, allowing municipal officials to connect with people on venues they are already aware of. Next Steps Marketing encourages governments to utilize the platforms that residents already use and are likely to frequent, while offering an interactive component to keep the conversation going. According to Pew Research Center, 74 percent of Americans think that interactive online initiatives by governments increases overall accessibility. Furthermore, more than a third of adults report contacting their government online rather than using offline means, and online interaction is particularly essential for government to connect with young adults. The live chat strategy reaches out to residents on popular media sites, with the possibility of creating a dialogue.

### Bay City Live Chat

City Manager Richard Finn made partnership with *The Bay City Times* a high priority when he arrived in the city in March

2014. His goal was to find a way to engage residents and effectively provide information. Finn recognized that consistent communication from government was important to people and that he could have a broad reach by working with the local news. When *The Bay City Times* suggested using a live chat format to get the word out, Finn agreed to try it out—with the promise that the chat would also be reported in a traditional news articles.

A live chat is a real time two-way communication where attendees can listen to Finn, send in questions, and hear his response. The first 5-10 minutes of the session are reserved for Finn to give a broad update on the activities of the city before opening the forum up to general comments. *The Bay City Times* moderator then reviews and selects questions that residents send to the forum, and refers them to Finn. In this way, the chat session can be directed by residents' questions and allows people to participate from anywhere. The participants were appreciative, "The feedback was very supportive...people were happy to see that the city was reaching out," said Finn.

### Providing an Outlet

Finn has held at least four live chat sessions over the past few months to maintain communication with residents. Although designed as a venue for open public comment and timely updates, the chat proved useful in providing necessary information and permitting public comment about a proposed graffiti








Bay City Manager Rick Finn, left, and Commissioner Chris Girard participate in a live chat Tuesday, March 24, at *The Bay City Times*. (Yfat Yossifor | *The Bay City Times*) MLIVE.COM /Landov

ordinance. Residents were worried about the enforcement measures, and the live chat turned out to be a prime opportunity to explain the specifics of the ordinance.

*The Bay City Times* invited Commission President Christopher Girard to join Finn on the chat, bringing the leading elected and appointed official before the residents. The majority of the questions pertained to the graffiti ordinance, and led to a meaningful exchange. “There were some points made to us that we went back and looked at sections of the ordinance and

made some revisions based on that input. We’re listening very carefully to thoughts and ideas that people have and it does result in making some changes,” Finn shared. The fact that residents could not only learn, but comment and help shape policy, demonstrates the worth of using interactive online platforms.

## Upcoming Efforts and Innovations

In addition to the continued live chats, Bay City is undertaking a large communication campaign. “For anyone who wants to receive information from the city, we feel very strongly that there should be a mechanism to get the information out in a timely manner,” Finn reported as the guiding ideal of diversifying communication outlets. For example, Bay City launched the “Fix Bay City” app, which allows residents to report any issue they spot around the city. “We get 90 percent of the reports done in 1-3 days—the response time is remarkable.” The city is also targeting different preferences by offering traditional newsletters, automatic email updates, and text message notifications. Bay City is continuing to examine and improve communication strategies and expects to try out new methods in the future. 

*Jessica Reed is an administrative assistant for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6325 or [orjreed@mml.org](mailto:orjreed@mml.org).*

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# Clothes the Loop in Residential Waste Reduction:

## Reduce Your Trash by 10 Percent for Free

By Adam Winfield

Over the past couple of decades, the growth and adoption of “traditional” recycling initiatives has progressed at a fairly steady pace across Michigan and the U.S. as a whole. Once a curbside residential recycling model is in place, the conversation has orbited singularly around the subject of adoption—carts vs. bins, education and outreach, and refining the materials residents put in carts to improve quality of the collected materials. There has been limited conversation around expansion into different material categories to further reduce the massive volume of material flowing through our waste stream and into landfills.

### Clothing and Housewares—10 Percent of Trash Stream

Because of the access to low cost goods combined with constantly changing styles and trends, the proliferation of clothing and housewares in our residential waste stream now stands at approximately 10 percent of trash production. Through the integration of curbside clothing and housewares recycling, our communities can have a significant and immediate reduction in residential waste.

For obvious reasons, this has a dramatic environmental impact but it is also fiscally responsible. Every ton of material diverted from the waste stream saves on significant tipping fees and in the case of cities like Lansing, East Lansing, Wixom, South Lyon, and Walled Lake, it is a revenue producing program.

### Michigan Pilot Communities

Piloted in Wixom and South Lyon in early 2014 and expanded to Lansing, East Lansing, and Walled Lake in late 2014 with

Simple Recycling, curbside clothing and housewares recycling has proven to be a huge success.

In just a few months, over 200,000 pounds of material have been diverted from Michigan landfills and saved these cities thousands of dollars.

“We would love the opportunity to work with more communities in Michigan. This is a great program that is simple for residents and municipalities to implement and it’s completely free,” stated Adam Winfield, president of Simple Recycling.

### How It Works

Through the program, Simple Recycling will provide residents with custom printed recycling bags and free curbside pick up service. The items are collected on the resident’s regular recycling day, sorted and graded for condition before being reused, repurposed, or recycled.

Mike Csapo of Resource Recovery Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County (RRRASOC) explains, “The program basically works like this: Simple Recycling, at its own cost, sends out postcards and literature to community members...saying that the program is coming, this is what they’ll take, and this is how it works. Residents can then, at their own leisure, fill up bags and set them out at the curb on trash day along with their other recycling.”

Simple Recycling follows the existing recycling schedule, so residents don’t need to remember a “special” day. They are able to recycle more than just clothing as well. Items such as shoes, toys, small electronics, books, and even kitchenware are all recyclable through this program.

## Curbside Recycling vs. Charity Donation

What about the local charities that collect clothing? According to the Environmental Protection Agency, only 15 percent of clothing is donated or recycled when a curbside recycling program is not offered. That leaves 85 percent to go in the trash and end up in our landfills. This program gives residents an additional option to help discourage them from putting these reusable and recyclable materials in the trash.


"It's great when people donate to local charitable organizations and we hope they continue to do that, but in fact, a lot of times that doesn't happen and people just throw the items away," Lori Welch, environmental specialist for the city of Lansing said. "This is a really easy way for them to properly dispose of them."

"As Americans, we generate about 70 pounds per household of used clothing that is either usable, wearable, or recyclable and only about 15 percent of that gets donated," Csapo said. "We're looking for ways to capture that other 85 percent. We want to get that back into the value chain."

## Curbside Recycling vs. Parking Lot Collection Boxes

The proliferation of parking lot clothing collection boxes has exploded in recent years and become a hot button issue in many municipalities. The exploitation of difficult to enforce or non-existent regulations has led to thousands of collection boxes dotted throughout Michigan. "We do not operate parking lot recycling boxes, but their abundance points to the demand for convenience in clothing recycling. Simple Recycling takes it a step further by collecting a wider variety of materials and offering greater convenience for residents at their curb while working with the city to make sure it is done responsibly," Winfield said.

## How to Get Started

Simple Recycling is expanding collection operations throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and beyond. "From the time an agreement is signed, it typically takes between four to six weeks to prepare and mail out the program launch materials before the first day of pickup. It's a seamless process and our proven launch campaign ensures immediate and long lasting results," stated Winfield. 

*Interested in learning more about how to bring this service to your community? Contact Simple Recycling at [Info@SimpleRecycling.com](mailto:Info@SimpleRecycling.com).*

*Adam Winfield is the president of Simple Recycling. You may contact him at 866-835-5068 or [info@simplerecycling.com](mailto:info@simplerecycling.com)*

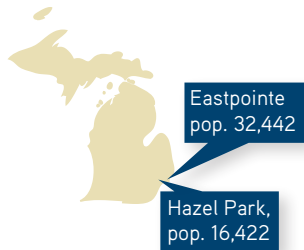
The parking lot recycling bins are often a thorn in municipalities' side since they are unregulated, and this service can help to alleviate the problem.



# VOTERS PASS EMERGENCY SERVICES MILLAGES FOR TWO BUILT OUT MICHIGAN CITIES

By Rick Haglund

**E**astpointe City Manager Steve Duchane grew angry one Sunday evening last year as he contemplated various ways to head off what he saw as impending financial doom in his Macomb County community. The city had cut costs, privatized services, and reformed its pension and retiree health care plans. Still, declining tax revenues and state-imposed caps on future revenue growth were making it hard for Eastpointe, a working-class community, to survive.



## Hatching a Plan to Pay for Emergency Services

Duchane was practically at his wit's end. "I was running out of ideas," he said. "But I was not going to let Eastpointe go down." Duchane had one last thought: What if he formed an authority with a similar community that could, with voter approval, raise a new millage to fund costly fire and rescue services in both cities? Such authorities to provide joint public safety services are allowed under PA 57 of 1988, which usually is used by adjoining communities to combine public safety services. Duchane had just the community in mind, although it was in neighboring Oakland County and was 10 miles from Eastpointe.

Hazel Park, like Eastpointe, was an older suburb that was fully developed and fighting for financial viability. Both communities were levying the maximum amount of mills allowed by law, but couldn't keep up with rising costs because of steep declines in property values since the Great Recession. Plus, Hazel Park City Manager Ed Klobucher and Duchane were friends, having served on the state Treasury task force

on municipal finance reform and other groups. Duchane and Klobucher arranged a lunch at a Warren restaurant, where they hashed out a plan that would lead to the South Macomb Oakland Regional Services Authority, known as SMORSA.

## Voters Approve a 14-Mill Levy

Voters in the two cities were asked in February to approve 14-mill levies to fund the authority. And they did, by wide margins. In Hazel Park, 73 percent of voters passed the millage issue. In East Pointe, 61 percent of voters approved it. "Our communities were in deep trouble because of the financial situations we were in," Klobucher said. "The large turnout and overwhelming approvals of the millages showed our residents are willing to pay for cost-effective, outstanding city services."

Unlike in other public safety authorities, firefighters and rescue squads in Eastpointe won't respond to calls in Hazel Park, or vice versa. SMORSA, rather, is an innovative funding mechanism that helps the two cities maintain their own fire departments and free up funds for other services. The communities also are sharing administrative services and are planning some joint purchasing under the authority.

"I think it's one of the most unique enterprises I've seen in a long time," said Bill Anderson, a specialist in local government finance and operations at the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. "These are communities with similar tax structures, economic bases, and needs," he said. "They really attacked the problem and came up with a very innovative solution."

The authority, which was authorized for 20 years, is composed of three members—Duchane, Klobucher and, in alternating years, the treasurers of Oakland and Macomb counties. Eastpointe is levying the full 14 mills to fund its 18-member fire department, costing the average homeowner in the city about \$300 more a year in property taxes. Property owners





1



2

SMORSA is an innovative funding mechanism that helps Hazel Park and Eastpointe maintain their own fire departments and free up funds for other services.

From left to right: 1. Hazel Park City Manager Ed Klobucher 2. Eastpointe City Manager Steve Duchane.

in Hazel Park will see a net 7-mill increase because of a 9.8 mill public safety special assessment passed by voters in 2011. The city is reducing that assessment to 2.8 mills. The average homeowner will see a property tax increase of \$139 in the first year.

## Successful Millages Don't Fix Underlying Problem


Eastpointe is expected to gain an additional \$5.8 million through the authority in the first year, while Hazel Park is projected to receive \$2.3 million. But Duchane and Klobucher said the new cash, while welcome, doesn't solve all of their problems. The general cost of providing services to citizens continues to outpace tax revenue growth. "This is not a wind-fall that we have by the tail," Duchane said. "It's going to be subject to (Headlee Amendment) rollbacks and strong management for years to come."

Both communities, which rely heavily on property tax revenues, have seen steep declines in property values since the nation's housing meltdown nearly a decade ago. Eastpointe's

property values have fallen 50 percent since the start of the recession. And because of state limitations on the growth of taxable property values, it will likely take 22 years for Eastpointe to get back to 2009 taxable value levels, Duchane said. One mill of property tax used to generate \$800,000 in revenue for Eastpointe, he said. Today, that mill provides just \$400,000.

The only way for a municipality to significantly increase its property tax base is through new construction, Duchane and Klobucher said. That's nearly impossible in older, fully developed suburbs like Eastpointe and Hazel Park. Property values in Hazel Park have risen 7 percent this year, Klobucher said. But under Proposal A, the taxable value of property in the city can only rise at the rate of inflation, or about 1.5 percent this year. "We've done what we can to control costs, but our pension and health care costs are rising much higher than the rate of inflation," he said.

SMORSA could be a model for other communities looking for ways to pay for public safety services, SEMCOG's Anderson said. And several communities have inquired about joining SMORSA, according to Klobucher. But the real answer in paying for public safety and other municipal services is fixing what Duchane and Klobucher repeatedly said was a broken municipal finance model in Michigan. There seems to be little interest in Lansing, which is focused on trying to shrink government, in working with local governments to put them on a stronger financial footing.

"The same problems exist in every community in metro Detroit," Klobucher said. "They're screaming for action from the state. Unfortunately, we're not seeing any." 

### PA 57 OF 1988

#### Emergency Services to Municipalities

AN ACT to provide for the incorporation by 2 or more municipalities of certain authorities for the purpose of providing emergency services to municipalities; to provide for the powers and duties of authorities and of certain state and local agencies and officers; to provide for certain condemnation proceedings; to provide for fees; to provide for the levy of property taxes for certain purposes; and to prescribe penalties and provide remedies.

(michiganlegislature.org)

Rick Haglund is a freelance writer. You may contact him at 248-761-4594 or [haglund.rick@gmail.com](mailto:haglund.rick@gmail.com)

# Hubbard Farms Emergency Alert System

By League Staff

**H**istoric Hubbard Farms neighborhood in Detroit struggled with a rise in petty property crimes and home invasions, in particular vagrants who preyed on vacant houses for either scrapping or squatting. Residents, frustrated by poor police response times, utilized free flash mob cell phone technology to mobilize themselves to help one another and secure vacant properties in their community.

## Accomplishments

- Created a system where neighbors can notify each other of emergencies through a simple text message system;
- Averted several home invasions, preventing the theft or damage of tens of thousands of dollars in personal property;
- Identified multiple perpetrators and assisted police in at least four arrests;
- Built a sense of empowerment in a neighborhood struggling with crime; and
- Strengthened community connections that have led to new neighborhood social events, like strolling dinners and meet-ups.

## Budget/Equipment

There was no cost to the initiative, outside of individuals' cell-phone bills. To participate, individuals must have a cellphone with texting capabilities.



## Organization

The organizer creates an account on the website GroupMe ([groupme.com](http://groupme.com)). The organizer then adds participants through the GroupMe site.

## Participants

There is a limit of 100 people allowed in the system through GroupMe.

## Actions Taken

### 1) SET UP SYSTEM

Visit GroupMe ([www.groupme.com](http://www.groupme.com)), or equivalent flashmob/mobile organizing software, to set up an account for your group.

### 2) SOLICIT NEIGHBORS

Tap in to existing communication methods in your community, such as neighborhood email listserves, neighborhood fliers, or traditional door knocking.

### 3) REGISTER PARTICIPANTS

Through the GroupMe website, insert participants' phone numbers. They will receive a text message confirmation and a notice will go out to the entire group.

### 4) DEFINE ACTIONABLE EMERGENCIES

From the beginning it's important that a core group of participants establish what types of emergencies the group is willing to respond to. The Hubbard Farms Text Group typically responds to:

- Home security systems going off and the owner is not able to immediately respond;
- Squatters present in a vacant building;
- Petty crime such as theft, or breaking or entering, when witnessed; and

- Emergency boarding up of vacant homes.  
The group does not respond to instances that present an immediate threat to anyone's safety, including drug deals or gun violence.

#### 5) STAY SAFE

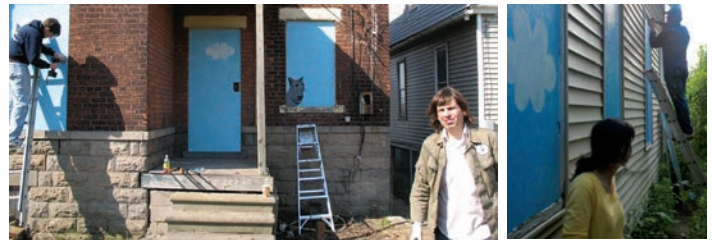
Establish ground rules that include prohibiting confrontation. The role of responders is primarily to assist if someone is in immediate danger or stay at the scene until the police arrive to be a witness.

#### 6) ALWAYS CALL 911

This system is not intended to replace calls to 911. It is important to stress to participants to call 911 first, and then contact the neighborhood group through the text messaging system.

### Lessons Learned


- Establish appropriate messages to share over the texting service. Since each text may be costing participants, its important only essential texts pertaining to the emergency and the immediate response are used.
- People will not always understand the system and how it is used, especially at first. It is



important to have patience and an organizer that keeps the group focused and true to its original purpose.

- Make sure people understand that they will regularly be receiving text messages and should consider their phone package before joining.

### Similar Projects

Neighbors in the West Village of Detroit utilized a similar system in 2012 to stop the scrapping of a historic mansion in their neighborhood. 

*For more information, contact Heather Van Poucker, director of information and policy research for the League, at 734-669-6326 or [hvanpoucker@mml.org](mailto:hvanpoucker@mml.org). To see a full listing of the League's Case Studies, please visit [placemaking.mml.org](http://placemaking.mml.org)*



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Sue Jeffers is a legal consultant to the League. You may contact her at [sjeffers@mml.org](mailto:sjeffers@mml.org).

# Police shooting does not result in excessive force

## FACTS:

In 2009 Los Angeles police issued an arrest warrant against Abram Bynum on charges of forcible rape, assault with a deadly weapon, and kidnapping. Because Bynum had moved to Columbus, Ohio, the Columbus police were called to assist with the arrest and, on July 7, began surveillance of Bynum's apartment with instructions to arrest him if he left the apartment. When Bynum left the apartment and began to drive away, marked police cars followed. After a chase through city streets, Bynum entered Interstate 70, crossed the median, and accelerated head on into a semitrailer.

After the collision, police car video shows that four officers approached Bynum's badly damaged car. An officer radioed that Bynum appeared unconscious in the driver's seat. Moments later, Bynum regained consciousness, reached toward the floorboard, extended his arms and clasped his hands in a shooting posture aimed at the officers. After being told not "to do it," Bynum repeated his movements. Officers then fired their guns. Bynum again clasped his hands in the shooting posture and the officers responded with a second volley of shots, killing Bynum. A total of 80 shots were fired, 23 of which struck Bynum. Despite Bynum's actions, no gun was found in the vehicle. His mother sued, claiming that the use of force was excessive and that deadly force may not be used simply to prevent the escape of a felony suspect.

## QUESTION:

Did the police officers use excessive (deadly) force simply to prevent the escape of a felony suspect in violation of the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Tennessee v Garner*?

## ANSWER ACCORDING TO THE FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT:

The district court refused to grant qualified immunity to the police officers, finding that there was a "genuine issue of material fact as whether the [officers'] actions were objectively reasonable."

## ANSWER ACCORDING TO THE SIXTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS:

The Court reversed finding that the totality of the circumstances gave the officers probable cause to believe that Bynum threatened their safety. The Court contrasted the officer's conduct before and after Bynum's return to consciousness finding that the actions of Bynum resulted in the shooting. The Court found that the officers were not intent upon preventing his escape but rather knew that Bynum could not escape, given his injuries and the damage to his vehicle.

*Pollard v City of Columbus, et al., Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 13-4142 (2015)*

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.





# Left in the Dark?

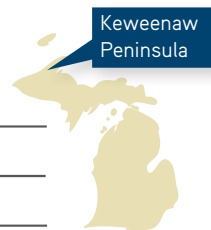
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# INNOVATION SHORE



## MTEC SmartZone Helps Transform the U.P.

By Karyn Olssen

“Yoopers” living in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula (U.P.) have built a legacy around Lake Superior—their culture rich in mining, great fishing, pasties, and even flannel. The tough, “can-do” spirit that it takes to bear the U.P.’s long winters is what now drives innovation throughout the region. Through the start and growth of high-tech companies, the U.P. is quickly transforming into “innovation shore.”

What drives this change? The work and collaboration between MTEC SmartZone and the U.P.’s three state universities—Michigan Technological University, Northern Michigan University, and Lake Superior State University.

### What is MTEC SmartZone?

MTEC SmartZone is a business incubator located in the remote Keweenaw Peninsula near Michigan Tech’s campus. Since its creation in 2002, MTEC SmartZone’s mission has



been to create high-tech jobs throughout the region. MTEC SmartZone has exceeded its own expectations and the goals of the state. Programs and projects have brought in \$24 for every state dollar invested. Last year, this infused more than 19 million new dollars into a community of just 10,000 people.

When Marilyn Clark became CEO of MTEC SmartZone in 2013, she made it a priority to further develop intense training programs for entrepreneurs, improve community access to business counseling, and support the ecosystem through special projects that create jobs.

## SmartStart

SmartStart was one of the programs created through a Michigan Economic Development Corporation grant. These hands-on classes have been attended by more than 70 people from the community and Michigan Tech who had ideas to start companies. Approximately 30 of those people formed successful companies that today, continue to grow and create new jobs.

As a result of MTEC SmartZone's programs, 83 high-tech jobs were created during its last fiscal year. These 83 jobs contribute to the local economy, providing substantial opportunities for many people, for years to come. Since 2003, more than 500 technology jobs have emerged from businesses that access services from MTEC SmartZone.

## Success Story

One great community success story comes from a recent MTEC SmartZone "graduate," Lasalletech. Lasalletech is a software company that services the international electronic trading industry. Lasalletech was founded in 2007 by Jacob Northey, who had a passion to create quality, high-tech jobs, while raising the integrity of the industry. MTEC SmartZone contributed significantly to Lasalletech's growth, providing affordable office space and helping to form a partnership with Michigan Tech. In addition, Lasalletech received individualized business training and funding from MTEC SmartZone to address sales and marketing challenges, which immediately resulted in new markets and customers.

Lasalletech quickly created seven new local family-sustaining jobs. With the recent sale to a Swedish company, Lasalletech also gained international attention. As part of the sale agreement, Northey remains committed to his community promise. The seven current staff members continue to work in the Hancock office, raising their families in the community and contributing to the local economy. All of the global IT work is being done out of the Hancock branch.


"Lasalletech is a perfect example of MTEC SmartZone's mission to accelerate business growth and support companies from start-up to graduation," said Marilyn Clark, MTEC SmartZone CEO. "While we support these businesses with programs, funding, and grants, it's really the daily commitment by entrepreneurs that continues to build and grow successful companies."

## Attraction Strategy

Another unique business model that has created hundreds of jobs in the community is MTEC SmartZone's attraction strategy. This program encourages larger companies to open satellite offices locally to hire Michigan Tech student talent who

work on real-world engineering projects. These companies have experienced significant cost savings and growth while achieving quality work. The students make valuable connections and explore opportunities for future employment.

Systems Control, another growing U.P. company headquartered in nearby Iron Mountain, recently opened a satellite office at MTEC SmartZone's Lakeshore Center. Systems Control currently employs nearly 500 people and projects that number to reach 1,000 in the next five years. Attracting engineering talent is a critical priority for Systems Control. Their presence at MTEC SmartZone has allowed them to expand upon its partnership with Michigan Tech. In addition to that immediate success, the company has secured a local site manager with years of experience growing companies.

MTEC SmartZone continues to achieve successes and redefine the region's economy in Michigan's remote U.P. 

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For more information about MTEC SmartZone, visit [mtecsz.com](http://mtecsz.com).

Karyn Olsson is the CEO of Marketing Department Inc. You may reach her at [karyno@marketingdepartmentinc.com](mailto:karyno@marketingdepartmentinc.com).

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**Q:** We have an employee interested in running for a seat on city council. Are there any rules or prohibitions against this?

**A:** Michigan's Incompatible Public Offices statute (PA 566 of 1978) prohibits a public officer or public employee from holding two public offices if one office is subordinate to another. In essence, if the employee won the seat, he/she would then be his/her own boss—and would have to resign from employment. Some cities have charter provisions addressing this situation, for example St. Clair Shores' charter states:

"No person shall simultaneously hold two city office(s) or city office and a city employment, nor shall any person simultaneously hold elective city office or city employment and an elective county and school district office."

For questions concerning city charters, explore the League's city charter database. For more information on ethics, please see the League's One Pager *Plus* Fact Sheets, available at [mml.org](http://mml.org):

- Ethics: Contracts of Public Servants with Public Entities
- Ethics: Incompatible Public Offices—2010 Updates
- Ethics: Misconduct in Office by Public Officers
- Ethics: Standards of Conduct for Public Officers/  
Employees

**Q:** What is the city charter database?

**A:** The charter database is a glimpse into the unique governing documents of Michigan's cities. This database is a one-of-a-kind compilation of 40 variables in 272 city charters.


**Q:** How do I use the city charter database?

**A:** Search for charter provisions by region, population range, or county. For example, if you are amending your charter and want to know if other cities have a provision you are looking for (method of filling council vacancies, purchasing limits, fiscal year, etc.) you can choose your criteria from a drop down menu and find the data in the charter database. We have also included digital pdfs of charters (when available) so you can also search a specific city's charter to pinpoint the text of a provision you are interested in.

**Q:** We would like to start a city Facebook page, but we're worried about people posting negative comments. Do you have any suggestions?

**A:** A report from The Center For Digital Government, contains this advice: "Don't censor comments. Nothing supports the government-as-Big-Brother stereotype more than censoring or disabling comments. Social media is a place to take public feedback, even when it's negative. Instead, provide a commenting policy—such as no use of profanity or hate speech—and moderate comments when necessary. Don't be afraid to allow and respond to citizen complaints." (Next Generation Government, 2014, p5).

**Q:** As a councilmember, I sometimes use my home computer and personal email account to conduct city business. Am I creating public records?

**A:** Email messages are public records if they are created or received as part of performing official duties. The Michigan Freedom of Information Act defines a public record as "a writing prepared, owned, used in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created." Records created in the performance of an official function must be managed the same way as those created and received using city computer resources. For more information, please see the League's One Pager Plus Fact Sheet: Email and Retention of Records, available 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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A vibrant downtown and a sense of place are crucial to a community's identity and health. The city of Grandville is one of the few Grand Rapids inner ring suburbs that still has a traditional downtown. In recent years, Grandville's downtown was becoming more aged and losing many of the attributes that made it a traditional downtown. A 2012 streetscape project addressed several key objectives identified by a Downtown Master Plan, including: creating a safer, more accessible, and pedestrian-friendly downtown; improving downtown parking; revitalizing the core of downtown; improving aesthetics in the downtown corridor; and making downtown more of a destination.

The downtown streetscape project included giving Chicago Drive, formerly M-21, a road diet—narrowing it from four lanes to two, and adding a center turn lane. Furthermore, the city put in benches, banners, flower pots, and brick pavers; added on-street parking; and relocated overhead power lines. Funding for the \$5 million project came from a mix of Transportation Enhancement grant dollars, TIF bonds, and DDA fund balance.

The concept of the Chicago Drive streetscape was met with resistance by the community. Folks were afraid that the project would bring traffic to a standstill and negatively impact downtown businesses. For six years, the DDA took every opportunity to inform and educate the public about the positive impacts of streetscapes and ultimately gained enough support to move forward with the project.

The investment in downtown Grandville has begun to pay off and benefit the community. The streetscape has made downtown Grandville the place for families and visitors alike.



Grandville  
pop. 15,738

# Grandville