

# the review

March/April 2015

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

## FLINT FARMERS' MARKET

## FLINT FOOD WORKS

The team leading Flint's emerging food and entrepreneurial culture

## FARMERS MARKETS

ROYAL OAK KALAMAZOO MUNISING PORT AUSTIN

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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### On the Cover:

Flint Farmers' Market was voted America's Most Loved Farm Market in 2009. The team running the market, pictured from left to



24 Cover Story

right, back row, are: Richard Ramsdell, market manager, Sean Gartland, culinary director/management team; and pictured from left to right, bottom row: Karianne Martus, marketing director/management team; Janell Baumgart, event and community outreach director.

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michigan municipal league

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 89, Number 2

### 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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\$24 per year for six issues. Payable in advance by check, money order, Visa/MasterCard/American Express. Make checks payable to Michigan Municipal League. Phone 734-669-6371; fax 734-669-4223 or mail new subscription requests & checks to the Michigan Municipal League, P.O. Box 7409, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7409.

*The Review* (ISSN 0026-2331) is published bi-monthly by the Michigan Municipal League, 1675 Green Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2530. Periodicals postage is paid at Ann Arbor MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE REVIEW, 1675 Green Rd, ANN ARBOR MI 48105-2530.



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## Farmers Markets: Highly Visible and Hugely Popular Once Again

Which came first, the city or the farmers market?

Like the proverbial chicken and egg, I'm not sure there is a right answer. You really can't separate the two. The existence of one pretty much requires the other. Here's what the history books say about it:

The ancient village of Uruk in Mesopotamia became what's now considered the world's oldest city around 3450 B.C. The first farmers markets are thought to have originated in Egypt over 5,000 years ago when farmers along the Nile brought their fresh produce to sell.

See what I mean?

From those earliest roots of civilization, food has helped define a place and its people. Climate and geography dictate which plants and animals will grow...and how those food sources are acquired and eaten help to shape the local culture. We are what we eat.

By popular definition, a farmers market is a place where the food goods are produced locally and vendors sell their own products. So it makes perfect sense that a farmers market can be the perfect catalyst for creating an authentic sense of place.

For a while it looked like we'd forgotten all that. Vibrant cities and farmers markets gave way to suburban superstores and urban food deserts...while fast food chains tried to make it all look pretty much alike.


I'm happy to say it looks like we're coming back from that cultural brink. Today there are farmers markets all over the world again. The smallest ones might be no more than three or four vendors on a sidewalk. Tokyo, Japan has the world's largest with over 1,700 stalls.

Here in Michigan, farmers markets are once again a highly visible and hugely popular part of the urban landscape. Each has its own unique atmosphere, vendors, produce, and products. In fact, I'd wager that a good foodie could guess which city they're in just by wandering through its farmers market. And we are not alone.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the number of operating farmers markets in the U.S. has grown from 1,755 in 1994 to 4,685 in 2008 and 5,274 in 2009. That's a rise of 300 percent in a 15-year span. The USDA projects they will continue to grow at a healthy 10 percent per year.

The "why" isn't surprising. Devotees will tell you there's nothing more personal and social than belonging to a local food community. A farmers market can be a magnet and focal point for everything that's unique about a city or village.

Here in these pages you'll learn plenty about the rebirth of the local farmers market, the new breed of producers and consumers who have embraced it, and the role they all play in strengthening a community's sense of place. You'll also read about Newberry's new year-round ice rink that builds on the village's core image as a winter sports mecca. And you'll learn what the MPlace Initiative is doing to help Michigan communities reinvent and revitalize themselves through PlacePlans, a joint effort between Michigan State University and the Michigan Municipal League, funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

Hopefully you'll also join us to network with your peers at the League's Capital Conference, March 24-25 in Lansing. Hot topics: crowdfunding, transportation TIF, economic development, municipal finance, personal property tax (PPT), and energy and green initiatives. Be a part of the League's proactive legislative agenda in 2015. It's your future we're fighting for. 

### 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).



*Daniel P. Gilmartin*

Daniel P. Gilmartin  
League executive director and CEO  
734-669-6302; [dpg@mml.org](mailto:dpg@mml.org)



# MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS

By League Staff

The number of documented Michigan farmers markets has more than doubled since 2006. Not only are farmers markets growing in popularity, they're also becoming more accessible and affordable to those most in need, according to the Michigan Farmers Market Association. Today, there are at least 320 farmers markets of all varieties. There are huge markets like the historic Eastern Market in Detroit and small, yet vibrant markets in rural communities such as Fremont, Gaylord, and Suttons Bay. While many of the state's markets are seasonal—running from the spring to fall—there are a number of year-round markets. Some of the markets have fresh new looks, such as the newly relocated and expanded Flint Farmers Market and the year-old Downtown Market in Grand Rapids, one of the first LEED certified urban markets in the U.S. More and more Michigan communities start up local markets each year and while many are a success, some struggle over common pitfalls.

In 2006, when the Michigan Farmers Market Association came into existence, there were 147 known Michigan farmers markets. In 2014, there are at least 320 markets. That's a 117-percent increase in eight years.

Main reasons for the growth include increased consumer interest in healthy foods, buying local, and a desire to understand production practices. Consumers are asking more questions about food in terms of farming. Also, farmers are becoming more interested in direct marketing options, which tend to be more profitable.

## Community Gathering Spots

Markets are creating a sense of place for some communities, particularly those that don't have an easily identifiable downtown area or gathering place. Farmers markets are becoming the focal point/gathering spot for some of these areas. In

addition, markets are revitalizing some communities by providing an economic boost. They can lead to increased foot traffic which can help existing businesses and inspire new ones to open. Anecdotal evidence suggests farmers markets can positively contribute to home values and rental unit occupancy rates.

## Business Incubators

Markets have become business incubators. There are numerous examples of some permanent and highly successful restaurants in various communities that started out at a farmers market on a folding table under a tent. Increase in programs and activities and overall creativity is taking place in more and more farmers markets, including cooking demonstrations; business incubator efforts; family- and youth-focused activities; and live music.

## Legislation Benefitting Farmers Markets

Michigan's Cottage Food Law, PA 113 of 2010, which took effect in July 2010, exempts a "cottage food operation" from the licensing and inspection provisions of the Michigan Food Law. A cottage food operation still has to comply with the labeling, adulteration, and other provisions found in the Michigan Food Law, as well as other applicable state or federal laws, or local ordinances ([michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov)). Supported by a group of pro-farmers market stakeholders, the Cottage Food Law allows preparation of non-potentially hazardous foods in a home kitchen without a license. Common products are cookies, breads, cupcakes, and jams and jellies.





# FARMERS MARKET PARTICIPATION

• There has been a **117%**  
**INCREASE IN FARMERS MARKETS**  
in the state in the last eight years

• About **25%** of the state's  
markets are run by a **LOCAL UNIT  
OF GOVERNMENT** such as the city  
council or village or township  
board, downtown development  
authority, or parks and recreation  
departments.

• About **25%** of the state's  
markets are organized and run by  
**NONPROFIT OR FAITH-BASED  
MANAGEMENT GROUPS**, including  
neighborhood associations, local  
chambers of commerce, and area  
services groups like the Rotary  
Club and Jaycees.

• Some markets are run by vendor  
association groups, informal  
networks of volunteers, or  
independent management boards.

• Some markets aren't really  
operated by anyone and were formed  
by a group of people who showed up  
at a local spot and started their  
own market.



The law has helped many people start up low-risk business endeavors for the low cost of a 10-foot by 10-foot tent, table, and table cloth. Successful passage of a law in 2013 allows wine makers to offer tastings and sell their wine at farmers markets. A similar effort was undertaken for microbrewers of beer. A nine-bill package, passed in 2014, doubles the amount of beer microbrewers may produce, from 30,000 barrels per year to 60,000. Additionally, small microbreweries that produce less than 1,000 barrels of beer per year are now able to distribute their product directly to retailers under certain conditions ([michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov)).

## Bridge Cards

Markets are becoming more accessible to those in need. In 2006, only 3 out of 147 Michigan farmers markets accepted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Bridge Cards. In 2014, 143 out of 320 markets accepted SNAP benefits. This means that a much larger portion of the state's families most in need had free access to fresh, healthy and locally grown foods. Farmers markets in Michigan are national leaders in their acceptance of SNAP benefits. As the data shows, markets continue to grow the program, with benefits to Michigan families, farmers, and communities. More Michigan farmers and small businesses at farmers markets are getting access to federal food assistance dollars.

In 2013, 84 farmers markets reported 42,435 SNAP Bridge Card transactions during 2013. There was an average of 544 transactions per market. During the 2013 season, 111 Michigan farmers markets reported \$1.2 million in SNAP Bridge Card sales. SNAP sales at individual markets ranged from \$0 in sales to \$296,404 in sales. Overall, SNAP sales reported by farmers markets increase by about 10 percent between 2012 and 2013.

Of the farmers markets that compared 2013 sales to 2012 sales, 45 percent reported that SNAP sales had increased; 39 percent reported that SNAP sales decreased, and 14 percent reported steady SNAP sales or lack of data to compare sales.

## Funding

The goal of most markets is to be self-supporting. But, where does the funding come from? How is it sustained? Diversified revenue streams are essential. Farmers markets' revenue includes:

- Vendor fees;
- Merchandise sales;
- Fundraisers;
- Community support through "Friends of the Market"-type groups;
- Sponsorships from local businesses and organizations, including local banks and credit unions;
- Sponsorship and support from downtown development authorities, chambers of commerce, and local units of governments; and
- Grants.

## Conclusion

Farmers markets across Michigan come in all shapes and sizes. There are tiny seasonal markets with as few as four vendors operating out of the trunks of their cars and pickup trucks, and there are huge year-round markets selling everything from apples to sea urchin. Overall, the challenges markets face are dynamic and diverse, meaning no single challenge confronts every market. Farmers markets work to find a balance between supporting multiple vendors' small businesses, meeting the varied interests and priorities of market shoppers, and supporting the goals of the community while creating a welcoming, vibrant place that serves as an access point for local food. 

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*For more information, contact Heather Van Poucker, director of information & 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).*



# 90-Year-Old Royal Oak Farmers Market

Blossoms into  
Regional Attraction



Royal Oak  
pop. 57,236

In 1925, when a few dozen farmers arrived to offer their produce curbside at the new farmers market in Royal Oak, who could have imagined that 90 years later it would evolve into one of the trendiest social gathering spaces in Oakland County?

While visitors continue to gobble up fresh fruits and veggies on Fridays and Saturdays at one of the few year-round farmers markets in Michigan, the 23,000 square-foot space has ripened into a regional attraction that hosts a weekly antique & collectible market, monthly food truck rallies, and a variety of concerts, fundraisers, and family events.

"We're the real deal. We take pride in what we offer," said Market Manager Shelly Mazur, who personally visits and inspects farms to make sure they are growing their own produce. She also watches over the flea market to make sure offerings are authentic. Whether it's an Art Deco wall mirror or a vintage "Lost in Space" robot toy, it has to be legitimate, she said.

By Judy Davids

"I think any city that boasts a strong farmers market has a strong sense of community. I think it's that sense of community that makes the market so warm and inviting for events, too."

-Matt Flynn, Ultimate Fun Productions

### Making Families Plum Happy

While farmers have been coming to downtown Royal Oak for nearly a century, and the flea market has existed for more than four decades, the Royal Oak Farmers Market has grown into something more than a just a way for shoppers to spend a lazy weekend morning.

With its high ceilings and exposed chords of steel trusses, the market is a remarkable space that is ideal for event planners looking for "something different or eclectic," said Mazur.

"We host loads of events, including a variety of family events," Mazur said. "When we host food truck rallies on the second Wednesday of each month, it can look like stroller central. We give kids chalk to draw on the concrete floors and let them run around. It's OK. Parents love it."

It's not unusual at the monthly rally to have a few thousand foodies sampling the latest culinary trends from Metro Detroit's finest food trucks while kids get their faces painted, play, and giggle with delight. Concerts such as Kids Club Live, Lettuce Rock, and the annual Bestest Concert Ever provide other opportunities for parents and children to eat, play, and unwind to tunes.

Last year, the market further established its place as a family-friendly destination by opening its doors to a summer day camp for budding young artists.



Photo courtesy of Ultimate Fun Productions



## Growing a Sense of Community

In 1927, when the original building was constructed to replace the curbside market, it was considered one of the most modern buildings of its time. Over the century, the market has undergone a series of facelifts, including adding an outdoor colonnade, stained glass windows, that depict scenes of early Royal Oak, and two cupolas adorning the roofs of the market's east and west porches.

"I think any city that boasts a strong farmers market has a strong sense of community," said Matt Flynn of Ultimate Fun Productions. "I think it's that sense of community that makes the market so warm and inviting for events, too."

Flynn books the Royal Oak Farmers Market to host events such as Bacon Bash, Mac N' Brews, and Indulgence. Bacon Fest is a bonanza of all things sweet and savory and wrapped in bacon; Mac N' Brew offers a sample of more than 20 of Metro Detroit's best macaroni and cheese dishes; while Indulgence is touted as the sweetest party in town with its samplings of cakes, chocolates, confections, flavored liqueurs, and more.

Visitors from the tri-county area are typically wrapped around the market building to get into one of these events that have tickets priced in the \$40 to \$60 range. To the delight of the market manager, a portion of the proceeds of all Flynn's events and others go to charity.

With its .54 acres of floor space, the market is magnificent yet not intimidating, Flynn said.

"It all goes back to that sense of community."

## Weddings are a Blooming Business


While public events attract visitors from across metro Detroit, it's the private events such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs, anniversaries, and retirement parties that fill the market's calendar, according to Mazur.

In 1996, the first wedding took place at the market as hundreds of delighted onlookers watched Betsy Perry and Carl Gustafson say their "I dos" next to apples, potatoes, and celery during normal market hours. Today, it's nothing for the market to transform on any given Saturday from a produce paradise with thousands of shoppers to a heavenly wedding reception with an intimate guest list.

"We've seen brides spend upwards of \$15,000 to transform the market with spectacular lighting and drapery," Mazur said. "Others delight their wedding guests by simply bringing in a few food trucks. The possibilities are endless."

The market currently has events booked every Saturday evening in 2015 and about half the Saturdays in 2016 are filled. Fridays nights are almost as difficult to book, said Mazur.

With all its success, for Mazur it all goes back to the many farmers through the years that have helped the Royal Oak Farmers Market blossom into the gem it is today.

"At the end of the day, we pride ourselves as being one of the best farmers markets in the state," she said. 

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For more information about the Royal Oak Farmers Market visit [romi.gov/farmersmarket](http://romi.gov/farmersmarket).

Judy Davids is the community engagement specialist for Royal Oak. You may contact her at 248-246-3201 or [judyd@romi.gov](mailto:judyd@romi.gov).

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# KALAMAZOO:



Kalamazoo  
pop. 74,262

## Farmers Market as Community Core

By Elizabeth Philips Foley

**T**he Kalamazoo Farmers Market has been owned and operated by the city since 1887 and is part of its parks and recreation department. It has been on its current site since 1947. The past few seasons have seen an explosion at the market in the number of vendors, the variety of produce and products for sale, and the sheer influx of customers. According to a report compiled by city staffers in July 2013, nearly 6,000 people visit the market every Saturday in the summer, with 92 covered stalls and a courtyard of daily vendors using canopy tents.

"It was this whole momentum where everybody wanted to go there, and the more people came, the more vendors wanted to be there with more things," said local farmer Pat Smith-Kirklin. "Now it has become a very important local institution. It really is a center of community. You can feel it. It's powerful."

In 2012, results of a city survey led to proposed plans for a \$1.5 million expansion to add 26 more vendor stalls and 52 more parking spaces, with larger aisles and more public space for entertainment, for a total of 188 stalls and 220 parking spaces at the same 4.12-acre site. But the plan was pushed to the back burner as the city concentrated on more pressing fiscal needs.

### Farmers Market Spurs Neighborhood Revitalization

Meanwhile, the city has experienced a groundswell of revitalization in the neighborhood surrounding the market. The Marketplace Project is a collaboration between the city, Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority, and the Home Builders Association of Greater Kalamazoo. A decade ago, the area was a rundown urban streetscape of vacant lots and abandoned buildings that had housed an adult bookstore and nude dance club. With a \$15.8 million grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and MSHDA, the group developed the seven-acre vacant parcel across from the market into a walkable neighborhood of high-quality new homes that have breathed fresh life into the city's central downtown corridor.

The momentum has continued to spread in an ever-widening ripple effect of community redevelopment and economic investment.

"The market wasn't the driver to create the Marketplace neighborhood—we already owned the land and had been trying to redevelop it for years—but the market and neighborhood enhance one another," said Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell. "It creates a central social space with major community impact. It's part of the fabric of our community."

### Food Co-op Takes Up Operation of Farmers Market

The People's Food Co-op of Kalamazoo is now taking the market to the next level. The co-op is a consumer-owned co-operative grocery store that began during the popular natural foods movement of the late '60s and early '70s. Today, the co-op has more than 1,700 community members and is at the heart of Kalamazoo's organic, natural, and local foods industries. While the Kalamazoo Farmers Market is still owned by the city, the People's Food Co-op took over the actual operation in May of 2013. Under a contract valid through 2015 with three one-year renewal options, the co-op pays the city \$17,000 annually and is responsible for all aspects of management including overseeing about 100 seasonal and 25 daily vendors. The city continues to maintain the building and pay utility costs. The co-op's Chris Broadbent was appointed as the market's full-time manager. The co-op is also charged with raising funds for the proposed expansion in the city's master plan.

So why would a grocery store want to help boost competition from a farmers market?

"To answer that, you have to look at our mission statement. We exist to create and support access to food that's healthy for people and the economy. So we support many things like CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) and the farmers market that in a traditional economic sense would be seen as directly in competition with us," said Co-op General Manager Christopher Dilley.



## KALAMAZOO PLACEPLAN

PlacePlans is a joint effort between Michigan State University and the League, funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) through the Mlplace initiative, to help communities design and plan for transformative placemaking projects. The Kalamazoo project engaged Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) and a range of resident, business, and institutional partners to plan for an improved transportation network around KVCC's new healthy living campus.



"The market wasn't the driver to create the Marketplace neighborhood—we already owned the land and had been trying to redevelop it for years—but the market and neighborhood enhance one another. It creates a central social space with major community impact. It's part of the fabric of our community."

-Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell

### Community Buzz

Over at the Farmers Market, positive changes were visible as soon as the "doors" opened for the 2013 season, such as prominent signs on the stalls identifying each vendor as a grower or producer, an artisan, or a broker or reseller. It's created a happy buzz among consumers and vendors alike.

Broadbent is also working on ways to boost activity at the market beyond the Saturday crowds to Tuesdays and Thursdays. Regular vendors paid \$485 per eight-foot table for the 2013 season. Daily vendors pay from \$60 up to be under an awning and use electricity on a Saturday. Dilley said that there is a constant waiting list for both and the market will definitely expand and improve under the co-op's management. But how that fits with the city's master plan is yet to be determined.

"We could raze the structure there and completely replace it with a new one that hopefully, would last another 60 years. On the flip side, we hear from some folks in the neighborhood that market days are kind of unbearable for them, and there are other neighborhoods in other parts of the city that would love to host a market as well. Everyone needs the time to have their input heard. We're hoping to have several productive, open conversations with the community before we can completely get behind a plan."


"The simple fact that there's so much passion around the market's fate is an indication of just how strong the local food movement has grown and how it has helped foster a new shared economy here," said Dilley.

### A "Place" for Foodies

In a relatively short time, Kalamazoo's local food movement has become an economic driver sparking an ever-widening circle of entrepreneurs in an ever-expanding array of creative ventures. Fair Food Matters, a local nonprofit, operates the Can Do Kitchen, which allows cottage food industry entrepreneurs to use a commercial grade kitchen to create their products for sale on the open market. Kalamazoo Valley Community College is partnering with Bronson Healthcare Group and the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to create a culinary and community wellness campus focused on sustainable food production. In 2014, the city was chosen as a PlacePlans project, a joint effort between Michigan State University and the League (see text box).

The city changed an ordinance that allows food trucks to operate in the downtown area. There are now many "pop-up restaurants" using trucks, trailers, and bodegas that operate throughout the city on a temporary basis.

Several city departments work cooperatively to develop new events that attract residents to parks and non-traditional venues, such as Lunchtime Live in Bronson Park every Friday from mid-July through late August.

"The folks that work in the industry of food are using their talents and abilities to impact our city in a different way," said Mayor Hopewell. "We are getting our arms around this local food piece, and you can see it everywhere in the dynamics of what's happening downtown. It is part of our masterpiece in progress, and people have grown to love us for the amazingness of what we do." 

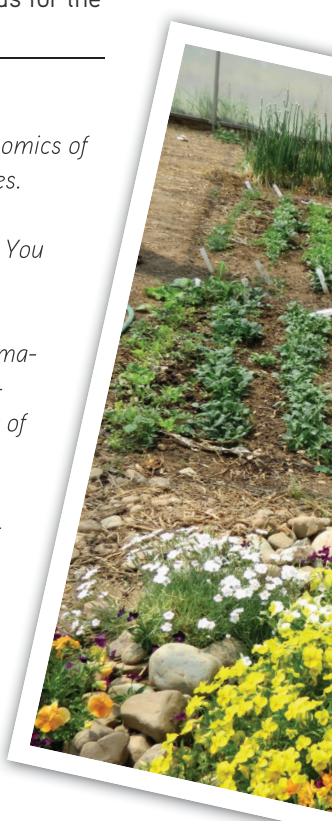
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*Excerpted from the League's book, The Economics of Place: The Art of Building Great Communities.*

*Elizabeth Philips Foley is a freelance writer. You may contact her at [eshaw@mml.org](mailto:eshaw@mml.org).*

*1. Andrea Augustine and Sean Fletcher, Kalamazoo's Farmers Market and Local Food Movement Internal Staff Report Prepared for City of Kalamazoo (July 24, 2013).*

*2. Yvonne Zipp, [mlive.com](http://www.mlive.com), "KVCC and Partners Will Create New Culinary Campus Focused on Food Sustainability and Wellness," May 14, 2013, accessed, May 12, 2014, [http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2013/05/kvcc\\_and\\_partners\\_to\\_create\\_ne.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2013/05/kvcc_and_partners_to_create_ne.html).*



## PLACEPLAN KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The plan recommends a new look at Portage Street as the spine of the Edison Neighborhood and the emerging health & wellness district. Rather than focusing exclusively on high-speed traffic to the detriment of the surrounding neighborhood, a three-lane Portage Street could support the revitalization of the Washington Square area and provide better neighborhood connections without significantly reducing through-traffic capacity. The plan also includes recommendations for KVCC and the other “eds and meds” in the area to support multiple transportation options for their staff, students, patients, and visitors. Additionally, the plan considers the role of the farmers market in the neighborhood, and opportunities to allow further growth of the successful market. Finally, the plan outlines a range of opportunities to build on Kalamazoo’s existing cultural, entrepreneurial, and environmental assets to strengthen the neighborhood as a whole.



### 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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# INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

## Sails into the Munising Farmers' + Artisans' Market

By Lisa Donovan

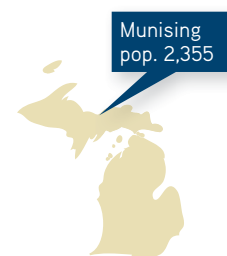
**"K**onnichiwa," "Guten tag," and "G-day, mate" are just a few of the global greetings regularly showered on vendors at the Munising Farmers' and Artisans' Market. The market's location near the dock for the Pictured Rocks cruises is perfect for attracting travelers from around the world on Tuesday afternoons.

"Lots of tourists come over to our booths at the market," said Janet Rondeau, who grows blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries at Rondeau's Ruff Acres, about 50 miles away in Cooks, Michigan. "It's easy for them to pick up a pint of berries and go on their way."

Tourists, often looking for a souvenir, are also very interested in the artwork displayed at the market. Lake Superior Jewelry's handcrafted metal creations featuring the shapes and stones of the Upper Peninsula often catch their eye. For the past four years, owners Donna and David Shields' booth at the market has helped them develop new and repeat customers.

"It has helped our business grow," said Donna Shields.

"Customers see our products at the market, then look for us later online. It's a matter of being recognized."



### Strong Community Support

The first seeds for the market were planted in 2008, when a partnership between the Michigan State University Extension and local vendors took shape at Bayshore Park and Marina. "The intent of everyone involved was to promote local commerce as well as give our small waterfront community a new flavor," said Munising City Manager Devin Olson. "No other market in the state has such a picturesque backdrop as ours, with sailboat masts, clear blue lake water, and the western end of the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore."

Produce growers were the first to set up shop, along with artists that created pottery and original paintings. Since then, the selection has expanded to include everything from local honey and maple syrup to handcrafted jewelry, wood bowls,

soap, and body care products. There's even a kettle corn maker and the Cooking Carberry's, who use a wood-fire oven to bake mouth-watering pizzas.

As popular as the artists are with tourists, the farmers are equally appreciated by local residents. "I've seen more and more local people coming," said Donna Shields. "They stand in line waiting for the opening bell to ring, especially to get baked goods before they run out."

Aromatic goods from Kathy Lepisto's Bakery Barn are a real crowd pleaser. Each week, she bakes and sells out of 150 cinnamon buns and 60-80 loaves of cardamom, rhubarb, banana, apple, and blueberry bread.

"I really enjoy getting to know the customers and other vendors," said Lepisto, who also sells her baked goods from a little red barn at her home in Rock, Michigan. "I've met people from all over the world, like China, Russia, and Romania. It's very exciting!"

"The community really embraces the market," said Treasa Sowa, who has managed the market for the past four years. "There are loyal customers who come every week to buy things from our farmers. They know the quality is good and they come to know the vendors. The farmers look forward to it, too."

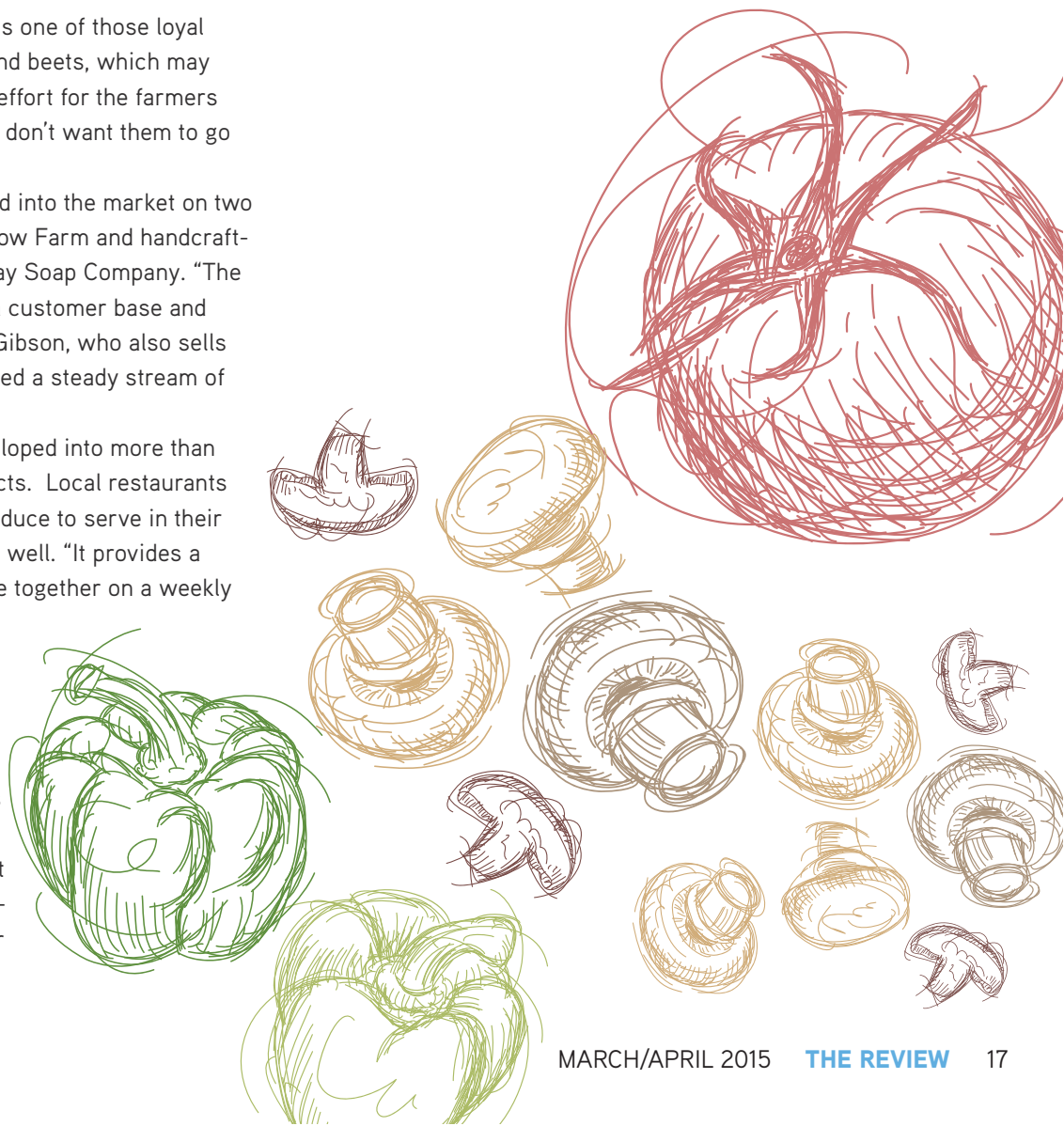
Eighty five-year-old Norma Harger is one of those loyal customers. Her favorites are greens and beets, which may account for her longevity. "It's a lot of effort for the farmers to lug all their stuff to the market and I don't want them to go away," she quipped.

Two years ago, Wendy Gibson delved into the market on two fronts: vegetables through Sleepy Hollow Farm and handcrafted, scented soaps through Superior Bay Soap Company. "The first year, it's all about trying to build a customer base and get exposure for your products," said Gibson, who also sells her soaps online. "Last summer I noticed a steady stream of repeat buyers looking for us."

Over the years, the market has developed into more than just a place for residents to buy products. Local restaurants also rely on it as a source for local produce to serve in their dishes. And there's a social benefit as well. "It provides a community outlet for residents to come together on a weekly basis and catch up," said Olson.

Throughout the summer, the market gets an attendance boost from the Tuesday evening concert series staged by Alger Parks and Recreation in Bayshore Park. Many concert-goers wander through the market before the concerts. And this year, the market got a seasonal boost by setting up shop indoors at the Central Community Center in November and December.

The market's location near the dock for the Pictured Rocks cruises is perfect for attracting travelers from around the world. Tourists, often looking for a souvenir, are also very interested in the artwork displayed at the market.




## Making the Market Accessible

For most of her life, Sowa has been immersed in the farming lifestyle, raising dairy cows and sheep. But in recent years, she has turned her attention to vegetables, and that's what she sells at the market. But even with all that experience, Sowa decided to kick it up a notch by completing the Market Manager Certificate Program offered by the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MFMA). "It's good to learn new things and be connected with other markets to know what they're doing," she said.

Through her association with MFMA, Sowa became more familiar with food assistance programs, such as Double Up Food Bucks, that make fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible to everyone through participating farmers markets.

Sowa and Gibson also got involved in MFMA's Hoophouses for Health program, which is designed to introduce vulnerable families to local farmers markets. Munising is one of only 14 farmers markets in the state to be approved for the program. Hoophouses extend the growing season and allow Michigan farmers to grow cold-tolerant vegetables through the winter months. With Hoophouses for Health vouchers, families can buy from participating farmers at approved farmers markets.

"The market is a good thing. We get compliments from people in the community," said Sowa. "But there's still room for growth. Not everyone has embraced the idea of going to the market instead of the grocery store."

And what's on the horizon for the Munising market? Olson would like to work with organizers on acquiring grants to create a dedicated space that will nurture future growth. 

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*Lisa Donovan is a 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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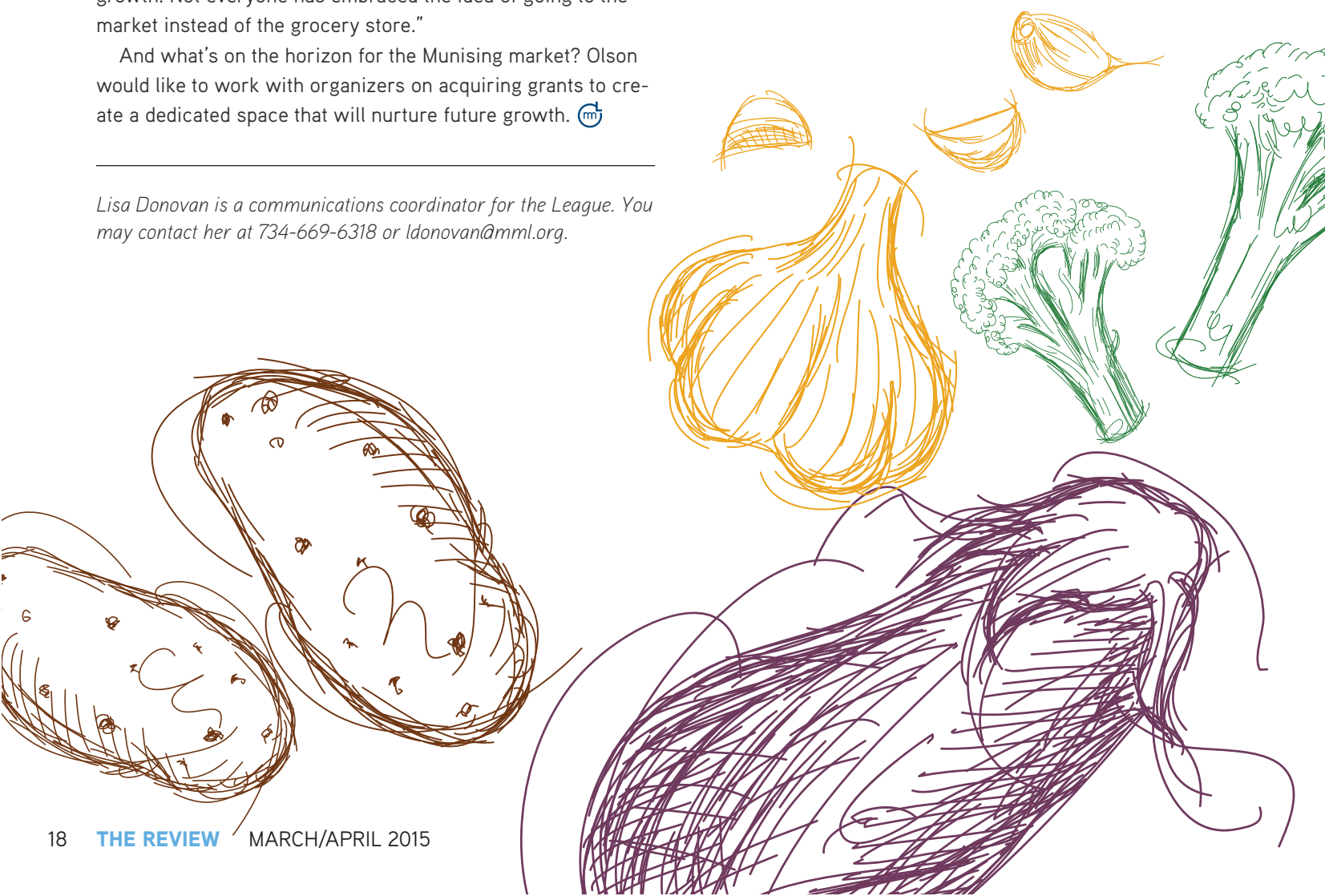
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# WHAT HAPPENED TO PORT AUSTIN?

By Judy Binkley

What happened to Port Austin? John and Lisa Pridnia, that's what. Retired State Senator John Pridnia and his wife Lisa settled in Port Austin, attracted by its natural beauty, breathtaking shoreline, small town atmosphere, and friendly folks. But something was missing. After much soul searching, they realized that right in the heart of farm country, there was no designated place to purchase fresh home grown produce. Port Austin should have a farmers market!

Of course, you have to know John and Lisa—what a team! Every community has a few people like them, and if they don't, they sure wish they did...the self-motivated, highly driven individuals that make "stuff" happen.

## Finding a Walkable Location

John began by picking a suitable location. There was a lot of thought behind that decision. It had to be highly visible and in the downtown area. He wanted "the market" to be within walking distance of local stores and restaurants. It would be a win-win situation for everyone—people would come downtown, visit the market, walk to the other stores in the community, stop, shop, and have breakfast or lunch.

Guess what? That is exactly what happened! The market gives the local farmers a place to offer their products, consumers a place to purchase them, and at the same time provides economic growth to local business.

Ten years ago, John hit the pavement and went door to door to each business and farmer within a 20-mile radius and sometimes beyond...convincing anyone and everyone from jam-making grandmas to people selling kites, fish, or yard swings that it would be worth their while to join the market. One of John's goals was to offer a great variety of items and make the market a fun place with something that would appeal to everyone.

With a lot of determination and hard work, the Pridnia's vision became reality, and a tremendous success for the

community. Now, in its 11th year, the market has a huge array of flowers, fish (smoked and fresh), vegetables, baked goods, jewelry, purses, yard furniture and ornaments, dried and fresh flower arrangements, puppies, rabbits—you name it. Many local artists display their wares: jewelry, paintings, and wood displays. In addition, it gives local entrepreneurs a venue to test their products.



Port Austin  
pop. 664

"The farmers market brings people into the area that wouldn't normally visit Port Austin. It has become one of our main show pieces. It brings thousands of people to Port Austin (tens of thousands on large weekends). Local businesses have seen tremendous increases from the added flow of people."

-Port Austin Village Trustee Casey Bruce

"The farmers market has been wonderful not only for the village, but for my business as well. It brings many new faces to my door, some of whom are now dear friends, creating an atmosphere that is easy to return to, time and again. It is increasing revenue for my company and the entire village—not just seasonally, but year round."

-Carol Budry, owner/proprietor of the Lighthouse Café

### From Nothing to "THE Place to Be"

The market has grown from 65 vendors to a list of 700. Some vendors are seasonal and not available every weekend. On average, each Saturday there are anywhere from 150 to 250 vendors on site. There is something for everyone.

The market has not only become a place to buy and sell, it is "the place" to be. It is a social event for everyone—young, old, local resident, or tourist. It is a place to catch up on local events, visit with neighbors, reunite with old friends, make new ones, and maybe even get some good gossip. It's where you find everyone on Saturday morning from May to October.

John and Lisa's ideas are endless and only exceeded by their energy. One Saturday is totally dedicated to children in the form of the Annual "Kids Day." Activities include: face painting, hair braiding, petting zoo, dance instructions, and a

local fire truck, just to mention a few. Another week is dedicated to antique farm equipment.


### Volunteers

The market is run like a well-oiled machine. John and Lisa are at the market location bright and early every Saturday morning, 5:30 am to be exact. They set up tables, trash receptacles, direct vendors where to unload, where to park their vehicle, and do whatever else needs to be done. The Pridnias, however, will be the first to tell you that this tremendous undertaking could not be possible without many volunteers. Every week there are usually six people who give of their time to make the market run, and, more important, their Saturday morning sleep-in. On holiday weekends there are even more—often fifteen or more dedicated people show up to do whatever is necessary to make the market work. At the close of the market at 1:00 pm, another group of volunteers appear to clean up. By 2:00 pm, you would never know anything took place—it's like magic. The only tip-off is the location looks better than when it started.

The only food concession is supplied by a Christian Youth Group. Under adult supervision, the youth prepare hot dogs, nachos, coffee, and other delicacies. The profits help send the children on trips and other activities. Every weekend the local riding stable provides free horse-drawn wagon rides throughout the village. To keep things lively, music to suit just about everyone's taste is piped throughout the market, and whenever possible live entertainment is provided.

It is truly amazing what a couple of dedicated people with a vision can do for a community. The market has grown to overflowing capacity and is a tremendous asset to the community. Port Austin is alive again. What a great success story. And, guess what? This little farmers market has been named one of the top 10 in the state by *Travel Michigan*.

Thanks John, Lisa, and your band of volunteers for giving everyone another reason to love Port Austin. If you don't live there, you'll surely want to visit often.

The opening of the market each year is as anticipated as seeing that first robin in spring. Port Austin just can't wait. 

*Judy Binkley is the retired Port Austin Village Clerk. You may contact her at [jbinkley08@centurytel.net](mailto:jbinkley08@centurytel.net).*

*Reprinted from The Review, September/October 2010.*





# Port Austin Farmer's



# EXPLAINING THE MAY 5 ROAD FUNDING BALLOT PROPOSAL

By Chris Hackbarth and John LaMacchia II

**O**n the last session day of the year, the Legislature voted “Yes” on a complex proposal designed to increase investment in Michigan’s transportation infrastructure by at least \$1.3 billion. However, for this plan to come to fruition, Michigan voters must approve a ballot question authorizing an increase in the sales tax from 6 percent to 7 percent.

For many years—and over the final months of 2014, with a greater sense of urgency—the Legislature has been debating possible solutions to the declining nature of Michigan’s current transportation revenue sources.

## Differing Viewpoints Culminate in 5-Point Guideline

After competing plans were finally passed by the House and the Senate, negotiations were conducted between the Republican and Democratic legislative leaders of the House and Senate, and the governor. Each of these parties brought a specific viewpoint to the table, and those ideals were codified in a five-point guideline document that they all agreed to try and accommodate within the negotiations.

These five guidelines stipulated that the final agreement would:

1. Provide new revenue for roads and bridges;
2. Protect funding for schools, local government, and public transit;
3. Require that all taxes paid at the pump support transportation funding;
4. Keep Michigan’s gas prices competitive; and
5. Provide tax relief for lower-income Michigan residents.

In the end, in order to achieve each of these goals, a complicated solution that relies on both statutory and constitutional changes was agreed upon.

## Proposed Statutory Changes

The statutory changes would eliminate the sales tax paid on motor fuel, ensuring all taxes paid at the pump would go to transportation. This change means a decrease in revenue for schools and local government, which would need to be restored elsewhere. The other key piece of the package is a

structural change in the way gas tax is calculated. The combination of removing sales tax at the pump with the restructured gas tax will result in new revenue for transportation, with minimal impact on price to the consumer. Through changes to the Michigan Vehicle Code, drivers will no longer receive a “depreciation discount” on their annual vehicle registration, and large commercial trucks will pay a higher annual registration fee. The final statutory change is aimed at providing tax relief for lower-income residents by restoring Michigan’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to previously approved levels.

## Ballot Proposal (Constitutional Change)

To replace the sales tax revenue that helps fund schools and local governments, the Legislature, with bi-partisan support, voted to put before Michigan residents a constitutional amendment to raise the sales tax by a penny, from 6 percent to 7 percent on May 5th of this year. Because this whole proposal is tied together, none of the statutory changes described above will go into effect if the ballot question is voted down in May. This would put us back at square one with no Plan B for solving the state’s road funding problem and dim prospects for another solution as comprehensive for communities.

## Fiscal Benefits

So, what are the fiscal benefits of this plan?

### Transportation funding is increased by \$1.3 billion annually

- \$1.2 billion directed to roads and bridges
  - Roughly \$235 million annually will go to cities and villages (this amount equates to a 66-percent increase in road funding for municipalities)
- \$112 million additional for transit and rail
- All taxes paid at the pump go to transportation funding

### The sales tax increase provides an additional:

- \$300 million for the School Aid Fund (approximately \$200 per pupil)
- \$100 million in new Constitutional Revenue Sharing dollars


### The restoration of the EITC offers \$260 million in tax relief



Photo on the far left: The League's John LaMacchia II was among the dignitaries invited to the official signing of a package of bills on a comprehensive long-term road funding solution approved by the Legislature in December. Although the League would have liked the Legislature to solve this problem independently, they approved a ballot proposal that will be put before the voters in May 2015.

## Advocating a "Yes" Vote on May 5

The League has consistently advocated that investing in Michigan's infrastructure and communities are two of the most important factors in attracting and retaining talent and improving the state's economy. This proposal offers an unprecedented opportunity to advance both of those goals. The League's Board of Trustees has voted to support the ballot proposal, and encourages all municipalities to help spread the message to residents by advocating for a "Yes" vote on May 5th (see "Campaigning With A Purpose: Public Employees/Officials Support of Ballot Proposals," *The Review*, January/February 2015, for guidelines). This "Yes" vote will go a long way toward providing a long-term solution to Michigan's infrastruc-

ture needs, invest real dollars in transit, and constitutionally guarantee \$100 million more annually in revenue sharing for our communities. 

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*For more information on the May 5th ballot proposal, please visit the League's Inside 208 Legislative Blog at [mml.org](http://mml.org), or contact John LaMacchia II.*

*Chris Hackbarth is the director of state affairs for the League. You may contact him at 517-908-0304 or [chackbarth@mml.org](mailto:chackbarth@mml.org).*

*John LaMacchia II is a legislative associate for the League. You may contact him at 517-908-0303 or [jlamacchia@mml.org](mailto:jlamacchia@mml.org).*



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# FLINT FOOD WORKS

By Rick Haglund



Culinary Director  
Sean Gartland  
in the Flint Food  
Works commercial  
kitchen



If Flint someday becomes known as a foodie haven, Flint Food Works likely will be credited with providing some basic ingredients. This culinary incubator gives entrepreneurs a low-cost place to launch their businesses by using its commercial kitchens for food preparation.



Budding business owners also get valuable advice from Sean Gartland, the culinary director of Flint Food Works and the Flint Farmers' Market. "Without Flint Food Works, we would not exist. That's how important it is to us," said Theodore Mays, who with his wife owns aMAYSing Cheesecakes in Flint. His small operation makes 30 flavors of cheesecakes from scratch. Mays said he and his wife could not have done it without Flint Food Works' low-cost kitchen rental and Gartland's counsel. "Sean Gartland helps me tremendously," he said. "He's a blessing to us."

Flint Food Works began operations last July at the Flint Farmers' Market with a \$175,000 grant from the Mott Foundation and currently has eight users of its two fully equipped kitchens, Gartland said. Some of them sell their food products at the Flint Farmers' Market. The incubator also rents freezer, refrigerator, and other food storage space to start-up companies. One kitchen, which has two convection ovens, is designed for baking and pastry making. The other is for general food preparation. The incubator charges \$15 an hour for kitchen use and between \$7 and \$17 a month for food storage. Businesses must be licensed and insured to use the kitchens. "We're getting more interest in our facilities every day," he said.

The Flint Farmers' Market, one of the oldest and largest in the state, moved downtown last June into the former Flint Journal printing plant. The loading dock area of the plant was converted into the 600 square-foot kitchen incubator.

## Entrepreneurship

Gartland is planning a food business seminar series for entrepreneurs to start this spring in partnership with Michigan State University Extension. "There will be a wide range of educational opportunities," he said. "We want to keep the energy going throughout the year. Flint Food Works also has received a \$10,000 grant from the United Way of Genesee County that will be used to fund microgrants to about a half-dozen startup food businesses.

Gartland is a Flint native who graduated from Carman-Ainsworth High School and earned his culinary arts degree from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I. He worked at a variety of restaurants throughout the Midwest before returning to Flint with his wife several years ago to be closer to family.

## The Kitchen Incubator Model

Business incubators, which provide space and services to new companies, have been around for decades. But culinary, or kitchen incubators, are relatively new to Michigan. Ron Steiner, a retired Michigan State University Extension educator, started the state's first kitchen incubator, The Starting Block, in Hart in Oceana County in 2006. Steiner, a Genesee County native who provided early startup advice to Flint Food Works, said there are about eight kitchen incubators in the



# FLINT

## • farmers' • MARKET




- Attracts 270,000 visitors a year and brings in an estimated \$4-5 million for its 30-50 vendors.**
- 
- Provides a public meeting facility and office space for health, education, or food-related businesses.**
- 
- Provides walking distance access to healthy foods and community-centered programs and events for approximately 25,000 college students, 5,000 downtown workers, and thousands of city residents.**
- 
- Pioneered the electronic administration of the Fair Food Network's Double Up program, making it even easier for low income residents to get access to fresh, healthy foods.**
- 
- Voted America's Most Loved Farm Market in a 2009 nationwide poll, and was on CNN's Top Ten list of markets to visit around the country.**



Photo courtesy of Pop Mod Photo



## RELOCATION OF THE FARMERS' MARKET

Moving the Farmers' Market was part of a \$28 million Health District redevelopment project which included:



Demolishing Genesee Towers (a vacant bank building under serious disrepair)



Redeveloping the former Flint Journal administration building for Michigan State University's graduate program in public health and mixed-use condominiums



Repurposing The Flint Journal print facility into a public market




state. Incubators allow entrepreneurs to start their businesses quickly without having to first obtain financing, Steiner said. "The incubator model is great," he said. "You can start your business with no capital investment. That's the key."

Incubators take away the fear that many entrepreneurs have of losing investment and repaying loans should their businesses fail, Steiner said. The incubator model also appeals to food entrepreneurs who often start out part time on a shoestring budget. "I was very excited. I was just waiting for it to open up," said Christina Yancho of Tasty Acre Foods in Grand Blanc. Yancho, who also works as a greenhouse technician, had been producing a pancake mix from her home kitchen and selling it at farmers markets and craft shows under Michigan's Cottage Food Law. "I wanted to get out of my own kitchen and expand marketing opportunities," she said. "Flint Food Works is really helping me."

### Helping Businesses Develop

In addition to giving her access to a commercial kitchen, Yancho said the incubator has provided her with invaluable guidance in developing her business. "I received a nice packet of guidelines that really helped clarify best practices in preparing food," she said. And Gartland has steered her to educational programs that she believes will help her grow her business. "I've learned a lot about food science and food packaging," she said.

Yancho said she's planning to start a microfarm where she can grow foods that can be processed at the incubator, such as dried vegetable soup and marinade mixes, and sell them at specialty food stores. She is among many potential food entrepreneurs that could be nurtured in Flint, where industrial abandonment has created large tracts of vacant land that are starting to be used for community gardens and urban farms. "We have all this empty land in Flint where we could grow more food," Gartland said. "A lot of it has the potential to be turned into value-added products. We need people to pick up that shovel and grow those products." He and others attribute the city's blossoming food culture, in part, to an organization called Edible Flint, a coalition of groups and individuals that promotes access to healthy food, the reuse of vacant land for agriculture, and education about creating local food systems.

Flint's emerging food and entrepreneurial cultures figured prominently in the Mott Foundation's decision to award the \$175,000 grant to Flint Food Works. "It just made sense to support the merging of those two cultures in the Flint Food Works," said Alicia Kitsuse, a program officer at the Mott Foundation. The grant provides salaries, benefits, and operational funds for one year and could be renewed, she said. "These are still very early days, but ultimately I think they'll be very successful," Kitsuse said. 

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



Photo courtesy of Pop Mod Photo



Photo courtesy of Pop Mod Photo



Incubators take away the fear that many entrepreneurs have of losing investment and repaying loans should their businesses fail. The incubator model also appeals to food entrepreneurs who often start out part time on a shoestring budget.

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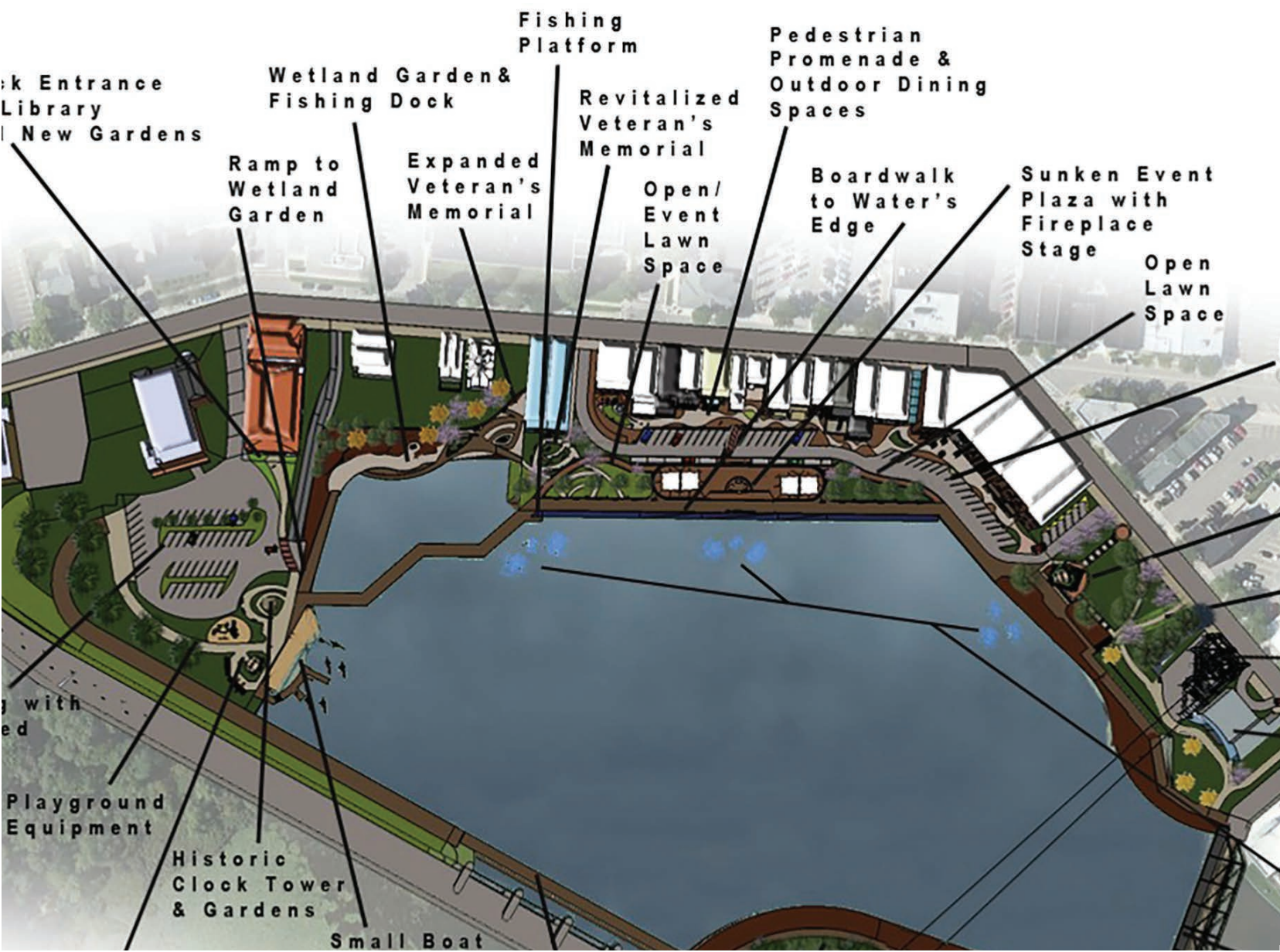
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# PLACEPLANS INVIGORATE ALLEGAN AND CADILLAC

By Elizabeth Philips Foley

Cadillac  
pop. 10,355

Allegan  
pop. 4,998



The city of Allegan will soon break ground on the next phase of a downtown riverfront redevelopment that is literally turning the city's face in a new direction, thanks to a \$250,000 Core Communities grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

A similar MEDC grant will provide \$200,000 to kick-start the city of Cadillac's new Heritage Plaza, destined to become the vibrant hub of a revitalized city center.

Both are shining examples of how PlacePlans is working to transform Michigan communities. PlacePlans is a joint effort between Michigan State University and the Michigan Municipal League, funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) through the Mlplace initiative. The program provides technical support to identify a community's unique place-based assets, with the tools and strategies to best leverage them into truly transformative placemaking projects.

## Downtown Allegan Riverfront Development

In late 2012, one of the first communities chosen to participate in the PlacePlans pilot program was Allegan: a 4.1-square-mile city along the Kalamazoo River in southwest Michigan



**Expanded Parking**

**Gazabo Stage with Shaded Lawn Seating**

**Public Garden Space**

**ZipLine & Ropes Course**

**Mixed-Use Development Opportunities**

**Existing Fountains with Colored Lights**



with a manufacturing-based economy. Experts from the MSU School of Planning, Design and Construction joined staff from the League and the city to sketch out a process for engaging the community in developing a new vision for the downtown riverfront.

Through a series of public meetings and one-on-one interviews with key leaders, a concept to reimagine Allegan's downtown historic district grew. The objectives: enhance the city's natural beauty, capitalize on historic districts, jump-start economic development, and maximize the potential of the regional festivals and events for which Allegan is known. The shared vision: an animated and colorful riverfront with sidewalk cafes and coffee shops; an eclectic mix of restaurants, shops, and apartments; improved lighting to make the entire downtown more welcoming at night; and a green landscape with active public spaces surrounding the water's edge.

Allegan committed significant city dollars and manpower, and set the table for success with the right policies and priorities. But the task of redeveloping the riverfront as the city's greatest physical, economic, and cultural asset required a public coalition far beyond the doors of city hall: it also includes an active Downtown Development Authority, committed local business owners and Chamber of Commerce, and a strong community foundation and fraternal organizations, all focused on regional economic success.

Allegan's riverfront redesign project wrapped up on June 18, 2013 before a crowd of more than 160. City Manager Rob Hillard helped celebrate the event with a Clark Kent/Superman style reveal of a T-shirt emblazoned with the logo of the city's new public relations campaign, Positively Allegan.

"The Positively Allegan campaign and website has connected many organizations to partner in this success," said Hillard. "The giving process is a two-way effort to create positive momentum for the community."

All the civic engagement and community partnerships paid off with an entire city energized for positive change. In November of 2013, Allegan voters overwhelmingly approved taking \$500,000 from the city's \$3-million sinking fund to use as grant-matching money. In all, nearly \$1 million in riverfront redevelopment projects will connect the central business district with the Kalamazoo River.

Today, the first visible signs of Allegan's reimagined riverfront are shining as brightly as the sparkling lights that now adorn the city's historic Second Street Bridge.

- \$90,000 in city funds to re-landscape and redesign Veterans Memorial Park.
- \$61,200 in LED lighting and software for the Second Street Bridge.
- In 2015, the \$250,000 MEDC grant and matching funds will convert an underused parking area into an 11,600 square foot events plaza and stage that can accommo-



date an audience of 400 people. The city has also applied for a matching grant of \$81,000 from the state Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs for a sound system and stage lighting.

- Matching funds are ready and waiting for \$300,000 in grants from the state's National Resources Trust Fund and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to construct a handicap-accessible canoe and kayak launch.

The next phase will seek out groups willing to support projects such as public art, a clock tower, restroom facilities, and landscaping. Entrepreneurs are already looking at redeveloping riverfront buildings with a new orientation that replaces rear parking lots and loading docks with back porches facing out onto the water. One such proposal would combine three buildings into street-level office space with condominiums above.

## Cadillac Heritage Plaza

By 2013, the growing list of PlacePlans communities included Cadillac: a midsize city of 10,000 surrounded by the forests and inland lakes of northern Lower Michigan.


Cadillac's public and private sectors were already committed to a wide range of redevelopment activities working in harmony toward a revitalized downtown. The PlacePlans concept would transform a nondescript parking lot and park into a year-round downtown destination evoking all the historical charm and sophistication that make the city unique. The lake-side block would become a vibrant hub connecting downtown businesses and Lake Cadillac, acting as a magnet to draw in visitors and residents alike.

The \$200,000 Core Communities grant will help create a multi-use, multi-seasonal space for public events and gatherings. Summer will find the plaza filled with art fairs and concerts, a children's splash pad and playscape, and plenty of benches and shaded spaces to enjoy a sunny day. In the winter, an outdoor fireplace will warm the edges of a skating rink while holiday festivals light up the air.

The reimagined plaza will also serve as the catalyst for mixed-use development expanding outward from that central core. With the help of charitable organizations and other partners, the city is building the social network necessary to encourage private investment and future economic development.

The future is promising thanks to loyal allies like the Cadillac Area Community Foundation, Downtown Development

Authority, Cadillac Area Chamber of Commerce, Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau, Rotary Club of Cadillac, and The Downtown Fund, a private group. All have provided generous support in the past for matching funds, and plenty of volunteer muscle to get the job done.

"We are discussing with various stakeholders time lines for specific improvements to the downtown city park ranging from one to five years as funding sources are identified," said Community Development Analyst Mike Coy. "Every person... can potentially play a role in facilitating the PlacePlan project in some capacity." 

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*Elizabeth Philips Foley is a freelance writer. You may contact her at [eshaw@mml.org](mailto:eshaw@mml.org).*



# 2015 PLACE PLANS

Seven Michigan cities have been selected to receive technical assistance with key economic development projects designed to attract and retain residents and employers.

PlacePlans is a joint effort between the League and Michigan State University to help communities design and plan for transformative placemaking projects. The PlacePlans are done with support from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and Governor Snyder's Mlplace Partnership.

This is the third round of the PlacePlans work. The program began in 2012 with projects in Allegan, Alpena, Dearborn, and Sault Ste. Marie and continued in 2014 with projects in Cadillac, Detroit, Flint, Holland, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Marquette, and Midland.

"With this announcement, in just three short years we are very pleased to help nearly 20 communities throughout Michigan with projects that will benefit their cities for years to come," said Dan Gilmartin, CEO and Executive Director of the League. "The League has long supported the concept of placemaking, which is creating communities where people want to live, work and play. The PlacePlans actually create realistic, tangible designs to make placemaking possible."

## BENTON HARBOR

Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park is the primary public green and downtown community gathering space. Creating an inclusive civic engagement process to gather public input on a new design concept to activate the park is a key goal.

## BOYNE CITY

Boyne City's waterfront along Lake Charlevoix is underutilized—properties are disconnected from each other and from the downtown area. A design plan for Sunset Park and surrounding spaces would create attractive connections and paths to link parks, beaches, downtown businesses, and the historic walking tour.

## LATHRUP VILLAGE

The property surrounding city hall currently hosts a weekly farmers market, summer concerts, and other public events, but demand has outgrown capacity. Additionally, the city has set the stage for creation of a true "village center" as a walkable destination. A strategic new design for the public space in combination with a public/private partnership will help the entire parcel become a community hub.

## MONROE

Monroe is working to convert an underutilized alley into a pedestrian connector to unify the downtown area. A design recognizing the community's history and culture would create a connection between museums, retail, restaurants, parking areas, and more, as well as provide opportunities for the businesses and cultural institutions along

the alley to activate their own properties.

## NILES

The Saint Joseph River has been a primary recreational destination since the 1990s. The city has identified parcels that both take advantage of the river and enhance connections from the surrounding neighborhoods. The city is seeking support in understanding development opportunities as well as area planning that links these and existing waterfront amenities to the successful Main Street district.

## SAGINAW

A broad cast of business and institutional actors have identified place-based investment in downtown and adjacent neighborhoods as important to the city's success, but do not have a clear set of shared priorities. A strategic placemaking goal-setting process will bring these groups together to develop an action plan before moving to implement specific projects.

## TRAVERSE CITY

In downtown's west end, several projects are underway to address issues such as pedestrian and motorized infrastructure and poor connectivity. The area lacks a true destination or gathering space—designs for a vacant parcel would transform the site into a community space, providing a focal point for this emerging district and a connection to the heart of downtown.

# urban. homesteading

## the keeping of poultry and animals

By David Jirousek

Urban homesteading is a newly coined term used to describe the recent trend of sustainable food production in urban and suburban environments that moves households towards self-sufficiency. Individual, family, and community food production pre-dates factory farming and industrial agricultural practices. It is a practice that brings people closer to their food source and allows for a deeper understanding of food systems and nutrition. As city and village dwellers more frequently plant gardens and raise chickens and other small animals, urban populations are learning seemingly forgotten skills. Growing one's own food, or supplementing a traditional food source, even in an urban sprawl that may be situated just a short distance from bustling freeways, can be a sustainable, practical and successful method of food production. However, it is critical that households with an interest in urban homesteading become familiar with, and closely follow their local jurisdictions codes and rules with respect to growing one's own food within their city or village limits.

With the upswing of interest in urban homesteading comes the potential for criticism, fear of negative neighborhood impacts, and sometimes even strong disagreement. In jurisdictions across the country, it is now much more common for a code official or zoning administrator to receive inquiries concerning local codes and rules, mainly regarding the keeping of poultry and smaller breeds of livestock, such as goats and pigs.

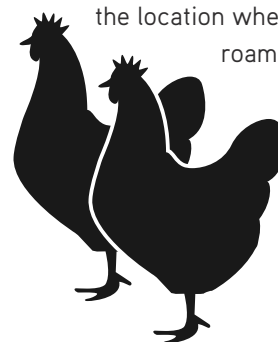
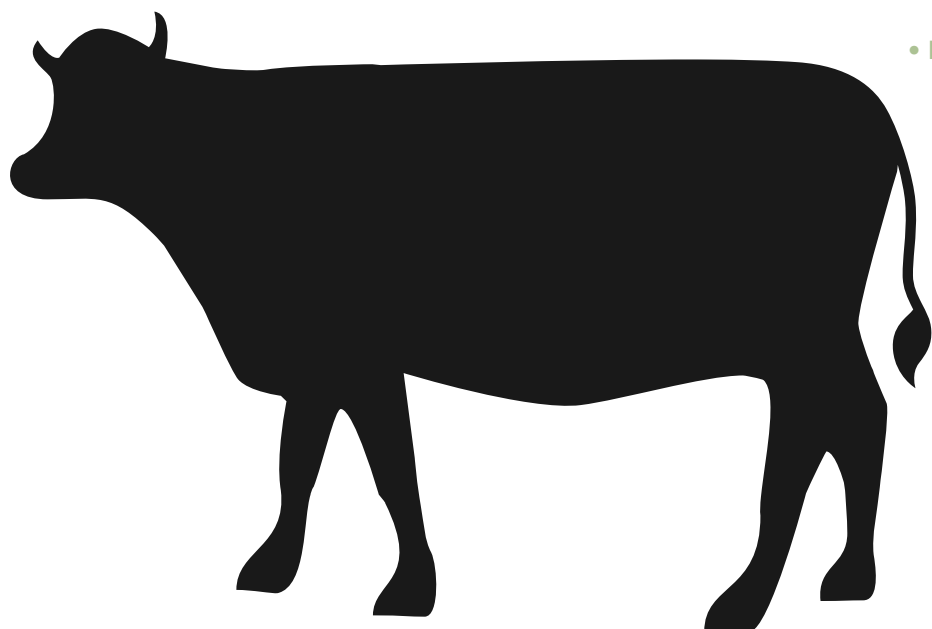
In Michigan, changes to the State of Michigan's Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs) were adopted in 2014. With this, local control of backyard chickens and other animals has been confirmed. No longer can owners of new or expanding livestock operations, even as small as an egg stand, be protected by the Right to Farm Act if the area is deemed as "primarily residential" by the conditions listed in the GAAMPs manual. Sites are primarily residential if there are more than 13 non-farm residences with 1/8 mile of the site or have any non-farm residence within 250 feet of the livestock facility.<sup>1</sup>

Many local governments now find themselves in the position to make important, and sometimes controversial, policy decisions concerning the keeping of animals and family food production. As a result, there are a number of efforts to develop template regulations for local consideration. When local governments are open to investigating the possibility of allowing urban livestock, or have made a policy decision in support of the act, it is important to have a good set of planning practices already in place. Good planning practices start with a review of methods to balance urban homesteading with valid community concerns. Some of the components of local regulations include the following:

- **DEFINITIONS:** Include clear definitions for all animal types. Clarity is essential to distinguish between what is a proper fit for a community and what is not.


- **LOCATION:** Certain zoning districts may be considered more appropriate than others. As an alternative, limiting factors may also be lot size, minimum setbacks, or available open yard space.

- **CONFINEMENT:** Communities must consider issues of confinement, whether or not to place restrictions on the location where animals may roam, graze, feed, or be housed.



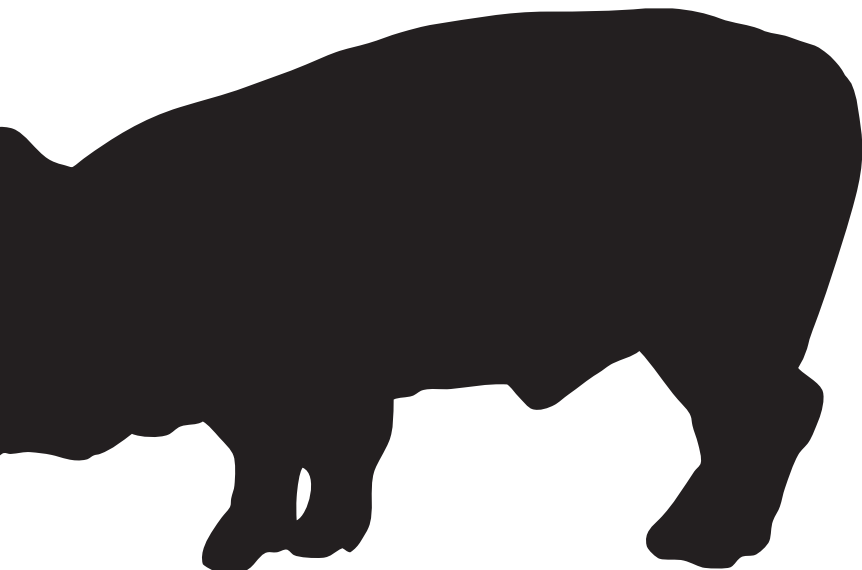
- **MANURE MANAGEMENT:** Manure management and general sanitation in residential areas are a significant concern, especially when best practices are not followed.

- **NUMBER AND TYPE:** Different species of poultry and animals have different needs relative to the amount of space available for adequate and humane living conditions. Additionally, the “density” of animals on a property can directly affect the quality of life of neighbors, in addition to the well-being of the animal. The urban environment itself is likely more appropriate for poultry and small animals over larger breeds of livestock.

This list of considerations is certainly not exhaustive. There are also a number of state and local agencies, nonprofits, community groups, and other organizations that have the technical expertise to assist with specifics of local regulations concerning urban homesteading. However, it is the role of the planner and code enforcement official, along with the appointed and elected officials, to review recent practices and available technical expertise. Similar to the development of all regulations that balance personal property rights, sustainability, and the public interest, urban homesteading can be accommodated if embraced by the community. Among many exciting and interesting trends in our communities, the revival of urban homesteading is one to watch. 

*David Jirousek, AICP, is a senior planner for LSL Planning, a SAFEbuilt company. You may contact him at 616-336-8176 or [jirousek@lsplanning.com](mailto:jirousek@lsplanning.com).*

*1. Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for Site Selection and Odor Control for New and Expanding Livestock Facilities. Michigan Commission of Agriculture & Rural Development. April 2014.*



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## CASE STUDY

# Main Street Community Partnership

By League Staff

Inspired by a presentation about the power of investing in your own community instead of Wall Street, a group of 22 Adrian residents and leaders chipped in funds to buy and rehabilitate a historic but long-neglected structure on their main street.



It was a presentation by Amy Cortese, the author of *Lo-cavesting*, that inspired four local business and civic leaders to get together and identify ways they could promote greater investment in their own community. The group identified the soon-to-be-foreclosed mixed-use building at 120 E Maumee. The building had not been maintained to the standards they expected of a prominent downtown building, nor was it being best utilized as a mixed-use building offering quality housing. The initial group of four decided to invite 10 other individuals apiece to an informal meeting over coffee to discuss their idea, the need, and gauge others' interest. Out of these initial meetings, 22 people agreed to invest \$2,000 each into a limited-liability partnership with the purpose of acquiring and redeveloping the property.

The individual investments and the collateral provided by the original four investors was enough to secure a mortgage from a local bank that covered the cost of acquisition and rehabilitation of the structure. In the year since acquiring the building, the group has improved the condition of most of the apartments, found higher quality tenants, and expanded the first floor retail.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Got over 20 local residents to agree to invest in an underutilized, 7,400 sq ft building on Main Street.
- Made façade and structural improvements to the building to ensure its long-term viability while enhancing its appearance and that of downtown as a whole.



- Provided a stable landlord to a long-term and expanding first floor retailer. Structured an option for the retailer to acquire ownership of his space over time.
- Updated second floor apartments, improving the housing stock and quality of renters in downtown Adrian.
- Through the donated work of partners, the project has exceeded initial financial projections.

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## BUDGET

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The building was acquired for \$80,000. The group secured a \$60,000 mortgage to make improvements to the building.

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## ORGANIZATION

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The partnership is organized under a limited-liability corporation. The group is structured around a four-person management group that oversees the improvements and management of the building. The 22-person group meets regularly to discuss the progress of redevelopment and status of tenants.

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## EQUIPMENT

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Professionals were contracted for façade work, but most general contracting was overseen by partners who had building experience, in order to keep costs down.

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## PARTICIPANTS

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The investors are a diverse group of civic-minded individuals, ranging in age from their 30s to 70s, and include local business owners, retirees, a city councilmember, and other residents who had \$2,000 to invest and were not expecting an immediate return on their investment.

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## ACTIONS TAKEN

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**Identify the Need:** First step is recognizing a problem building and deciding if it is an important project to the viability of the community. If the property is in better condition and under better ownership, would it markedly improve your community and surrounding area?

**Develop a Core Group:** At the heart of any large ownership group is a small core of dedicated individuals committed to seeing the project through and in the process taking on more responsibility and potentially greater risk. In Adrian, four individuals were key leaders of the project and LLC, and pledged to back the mortgage. This core group is responsible for setting the general goals of the project to be presented to potential partners.

**Identify Potential Members:** The core group needs to identify other civic-minded individuals in the community who want to see good things happen in their community and have the ability to make investments without the guarantee of an immediate return. It is also helpful to identify potential partners that not only bring money but beneficial skills and connections, such as backgrounds in construction or lending.

**Informational Meetings:** Once the core group has reached out to potential members, start holding frequent and informal meetings to discuss the potential project, what members would want to see out of the project as individuals and as a community, as well as ways to make the project as successful as possible.


**Due Diligence:** Like any real estate project, it is important to study the viability of the actual structure and ensure that its redevelopment is financially possible.

**Lock Down Partners and Proceed:** Once the property has been surveyed and a financial pro-forma has been constructed by the core group, present the findings to the potential investors. At this point, it is important to quickly determine who will be participating in the project and for them to financially commit to the group. Once your partners have made their financial contributions, proceed with acquisition and redevelopment.

**Stay in Touch:** It is essential to the success of the project to keep the members of your group abreast of all pertinent things pertaining to the project. Hold regular meetings to inform them of progress on the project and future plans, as well as allow opportunities for input as decided by the group when the LLC was formed.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- Your investors have to be city-minded individuals who truly believe in your downtown. You should be confident in the investment like any other financial undertaking, but it's important that everyone understand that the driving force behind the project is as much, if not more so, improving your city as profit.
- Keep everyday decision-making to as small a group as possible, but create a formal mechanism for individual investors to weigh-in on large decisions and continue to feel a sense of ownership.
- Make sure the core group comes to an agreement on the size of the overall ownership group that they are comfortable with. While it is great to have a large group of individuals who are financially invested in making the project a success and have resources beyond finances to contribute, too many cooks in the kitchen, even if they don't have a formal leadership role, has the potential to become overbearing. 

For more information, contact Heather Van Poucker, director of information & 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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# Claim resulting from city's construction of drainage infrastructure denied

## FACTS:

Lawrence Fingerle's home is located in an Ann Arbor subdivision that has historically been prone to flooding. In the early 1990s, after hiring a private engineering firm that suggested construction of a relief storm sewer of a particular size, the city built drainage infrastructure to service the area, without any legal duty to do so. Even with the improvements, the area continued to flood. Nonetheless, the plaintiff claims that he was unaware of the risk of flooding and built a finished basement with a large egress window directly across from a private retention basin that overflowed in past rain events. In 2010, an intense rainstorm caused flooding and entered the plaintiff's home through the egress window. The plaintiff claimed that he would not have suffered damage had the city built the infrastructure of the size based on representations of the engineering firm contracted by the city.

Plaintiff sued the city under a statutory exception, i.e., the Sewage Act, to the governmental tort liability act (MCL 691.1407(1) et seq.). The Sewage Act makes governmental agencies liable for damage caused by certain sewer disposal system events.

## QUESTION:

Has the plaintiff stated a claim that the city, based on its construction of drainage infrastructure, be held liable under the Sewage Act for damages caused by flooding of rainwater?

### ANSWER ACCORDING TO THE TRIAL COURT:

The trial court denied the city's motion to dismiss the plaintiff's claim under the Sewage Act and held that plaintiff should be able to proceed to trial.

### ANSWER ACCORDING TO THE MICHIGAN

**COURT OF APPEALS:** The city is not obliged under the Sewage Act to deal in any way with the consequences of rain that naturally flows from a higher to a lower elevation.

The Sewage Act provides limited and strictly circumscribed tort liability for sewage-related events, not contract-based liability for natural rainwater flooding. Since the causative event was rain and not sewage and because the plaintiff's claims sound in contract and not in tort, the plaintiff has no claim under the Sewage Act. In a concurring opinion, Judge O'Connell addressed the issues under the governmental tort liability act rather than the Sewage Act.

### ANSWER ACCORDING TO THE DISSENTING OPINION OF THE COURT OF APPEALS:

Judge Beckering dissented, stating that plaintiff stated a claim based on a breach of duty by the city once it "voluntarily assumed a function that it was under no legal obligation to assume." Having done so, the dissent argues, the city had a duty to take steps to correct or remedy known defects in the system that it had constructed.

*Fingerle v City of Ann Arbor*, No. 310352 (Dec. 2, 2014).

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



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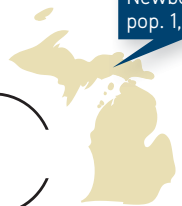
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# NEWBERRY TORC

Newberry  
pop. 1,519



By Elizabeth Philips Foley

**N**ewberry residents are definitely not skating on thin ice these days.

Instead, they're gliding on brand new panels of synthetic ice—a next-generation polymer material which can be used year-round, lasts up to 10 years per side, and requires almost no maintenance. The innovative panels are the first piece of the proposed Tahquamenon Outdoor Recreation Complex (TORC), a massive placemaking project that is still in development.

"It is a revitalization of our community. We believe embracing the natural world and increasing people's access and enjoyment of it will draw more people both as visitors and as residents," said village councilmember and project leader Sharon Brown. "We've seen an outward migration of our

population as many communities have. We're really looking to turn that around."

The panels have been temporarily installed at the Barn, the village's existing natural ice rink built in 1939. With youth hockey on the rise and outdoor recreation a major draw throughout the Upper Peninsula, the Tahquamenon Area Recreation Authority (TARA) was formed in 2008 to respond to the need for a much larger, year-round facility that would allow them to schedule larger hockey tournaments as well as offering more outdoor recreational amenities.

TARA is comprised of the Village of Newberry, Luce County, Pentland Township, McMillan Township, Newberry Chamber of Commerce, Helen Newberry Joy Hospital, Tahquamenon Area Schools, Tahquamenon Area Youth Hockey Association,



and one at-large representative of the public. In this innovative partnership, the village is the property owner and grant recipient, while the recreation authority is the property developer.

The TORC is being built just north of downtown and within the village limits of Newberry and will house the only NHL-size synthetic ice rink in the country. The 45-acre site was historically used for charcoal and pig iron manufacturing, and was the focus of a \$1.5 million Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) cleanup project in 2003. The lobby will feature a display of the site's history, said Brown, further enhancing the community's sense of place.

Some construction is already underway for the facility, which will also include an outdoor recreation park offering a sports field, skate park, disk golf, and fitness trail. The hope is to eventually connect it to the village's existing sidewalk system.


"It's within walking distance so the project is also a revitalization of downtown," said Brown. "Like everyone else, we want those young professionals looking to move to a community to raise their family, but it's historically hard for us to draw professionals like doctors. We believe having this available in our village is going to be a real draw."

Meanwhile, they've hired two sports management graduates from Ohio University to run the Barn and build a business model for the TORC.

"This season at the Barn is our marketing plan to showcase the product and show we can run a professional facility correctly, and be self-sufficient," said Brown.

The TORC's economic impact should mean new revenue for the area's restaurants, stores, service stations, and motels, said Village Manager Charles Cleaver. It will also enhance the quality of life for residents and provide a vibrant new focal point for a wide range of activities.

The first stage of the project, which includes the synthetic ice panels, was funded by \$435,000 in DEQ brownfield redevelopment funds plus a \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The community raised over \$300,000 for matching funds, engineering, and consulting costs. Fundraising is underway for an additional \$1.5 million needed to complete the facility. The hope is to have a building up next fall.

"We're planning to use crowdfunding so we're pretty excited about that," said Brown. "Please follow the project and view videos of the synthetic ice product on facebook/torcitup and torcitup.com." 

*Elizabeth Philips Foley is a freelance writer. You may contact her at [eshaw@mml.org](mailto:eshaw@mml.org).*

"Like everyone else, we want those young professionals looking to move to a community to raise their family...We believe having this available in our village is going to be a real draw."

**-Newberry Councilmember  
Sharon Brown**



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# 2014 WAGE & SALARY RESULTS

*Now Ready!*

The League's Statewide Pay and Benefits Survey of 143 job titles is available to full member communities that participated in the survey, with automatic access provided to managers, department heads, and elected officials.

The data is the most comprehensive statewide public sector benchmark information of its kind. The searchable database allows users to search by position, population, location, and perform side-by-side comparisons of results from selected municipalities.

*The Michigan Municipal League conducts this wage and salary survey for the benefit of our member communities, and it is intended to be used by management employees, their designees, or elected officials working on behalf of member communities for official city/village/township business.*

**Q:** What happened to EVIP, and how does that affect enforcement of PA 152?

**A:** For fiscal year (FY) 2015, the Legislature established the City, Village, and Township Revenue Sharing (CVTRS) program, a simplified version of the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP). Eligible local units must meet all of the requirements of Accountability and Transparency in order to receive the full CVTRS payments (form #4886, citizen's guide, dashboard, debt service report, projected budget report). A Consolidation of Services Plan and an Unfunded Accrued Liability Plan are not required under the CVTRS program. See the Michigan Department of Treasury (MDOT) website for details, FAQs, forms, and other critical information.

Prior to CVTRS replacing EVIP, a public employer was subject to a 10-percent reduction in economic vitality incentive program payments for non-compliance with PA 152. PA 152 establishes "hard caps" for the amount a public employer may spend on employee benefits. PA 152 also allows a local unit to annually opt into an 80-percent cap, or opt out altogether. According to MDOT's PA 152 FAQs, this penalty would not apply beyond September 30, 2012. However, noncompliance with 2011 Public Act 152 would subject the public employer to other sanctions generally available to enforce a law, such as the potential reduction or loss of funding from MDOT distributions.

**Q:** What do I do if I find a FOIA request in my spam folder?

**A:** If you, or any public employee, find a FOIA request in a spam or junk folder, process the request as you would any other. The time you have to respond is counted from one day after you or an employee becomes aware of the request. Be sure to record both the original date the request was sent, the day the community became aware of the request, and the reason for the delay.

**Q:** I recently heard the term "open data." What is it, and where can I get more information about it?

**A:** Open data is a new idea in Michigan but there are many statewide and local communities adopting policies to open-up their data. To break down the definition: data can be a variety of things local governments keep record of, like crime statistics, vacant property records, and traffic accidents. Making this data open (available for the public to access and use) can help increase government efficiency and boost civic participation. Open data can allow citizens, business owners, developers, and others to access public information and come up with creative solutions to the complex problems their communities face. For more information and links to additional resources, visit the League's newly compiled open data resource page at [mml.org](http://mml.org).

**Q:** I've heard about recent regulatory changes affecting storm and wastewater management. What do I need to know?

**A:** In a recent policy shift, the U.S. EPA expressed its commitment to work with communities to develop and implement integrated planning approaches to wastewater and stormwater management. The EPA has a "new attitude" about green infrastructure—allowing communities to use low impact design techniques to meet Clean Water Act (CWA) water quality objectives. In addition to cost and environmental benefits, regulatory benefits include renegotiating CWA permits and the extension of compliance schedules in consent decrees. In 2014, EPA took this support a step further and established a "Green Infrastructure Collaborative" to promote and support implementation of green infrastructure solutions. To learn more about technical assistance and funding opportunities, visit [water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/](http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/). MDEQ also has a number of green infrastructure resources on its website: [michigan.gov/deq](http://michigan.gov/deq).

**Q:** What do municipalities need to know about recent changes to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?

**A:** There were many changes that, fortunately, don't go into effect until July 1, 2015. Under the new law, municipalities must adopt "Procedures and Guidelines" describing fees associated with FOIA requests—in fact, municipalities cannot charge fees unless they have "Procedures and Guidelines" in place. The following areas will be significantly changed under the new law:

- requests;
- responses;
- deposits;
- fee calculations (including detailed itemizations); and
- avenues for challenging and appealing the public body's denial of a request.

The League is preparing a One Pager Plus Fact Sheet on the FOIA changes—please visit [mml.org](http://mml.org) for the Fact Sheet and to check for upcoming FOIA trainings.

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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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## FENTON FIRE HALL

The city of Fenton is located in Genesee County with small parts of the city in Oakland and Livingston counties. In 1972, an urban renewal referendum was passed by 211 votes, that divided the city and destroyed a portion of the downtown area. While some important buildings remained, namely the Saarinen designed Fenton Community Center and Old Fire Hall, the remainder of downtown was split into two halves.

Since 1938, the old fire hall had served as a home to the brave volunteer firefighters of Fenton, and as a hub at the city's center, housing pancake breakfasts, parades, and community gatherings. In 2002, the fire department moved from the station that had long been outgrown, and the building sat empty for 10 years. At that time, the city and the Downtown Development Authority worked together to search for a partner to repurpose the building.

In 2012, the owners of the Union Joints Restaurant Group began work on the old fire hall, and a year later, opened the Fenton Fire Hall Kitchen and Taproom, a fire-themed restaurant.

A restaurant can bring people together and the Fenton Fire Hall has done that in many ways. The Fire Hall has become one of the catalysts in the revitalization of downtown Fenton.

It serves as a bridge on the banks of the Shiawassee River, tying the bustling Dibbleville district to the Cornerstone development on the north part of the downtown. The businesses are recharged and downtown is thriving.

The Fenton Fire Hall is no longer just a part of the community's past, it's a part of Fenton's future and a paragon of downtown placemaking.



# Fenton