

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

May/June 2012

PLACE

The Revitalization of Midtown

“IT’S REALLY GREAT TO HAVE AN
ENGAGED COMMUNITY
THAT CARES ABOUT WHAT’S HAPPENING.”

—SUE MOSEY President of Midtown Detroit, Inc.

CAPITAL
CONFERENCE
HIGHLIGHTS

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BARODA

KEEPING HARBOR
SPRINGS SPECIAL

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Sue Mosey is the president of Midtown Detroit, Inc., an organization working to revitalize and brand Detroit's midtown neighborhood. She's at the Fourteen East coffee shop in the historic Park Shelton building in Midtown.

Cover photo by
Ara Howrani of
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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 85, Number 3

Better Communities. Better Michigan.

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. Our goals are to aid them in creating desirable and unique places through legislative and judicial advocacy; to provide educational opportunities for elected and appointed officials; and to assist municipal leaders in administering community services. Our mission is that of a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

DANIEL P. GILMARTIN

Placemaking and Economic Development

Summer is just around the corner. If you're like me, you're eagerly anticipating spending more time outdoors, walking or riding your bike to a neighborhood ice cream store, dining outdoors, or taking the family to a music event in the park. These are the types of experiences and places that define community, make it unique, and give us a sense of belonging. This is what we call having a "sense of place."

The League has always been about investing in our communities. But our narrative has changed. Over the past decade, we have seen a huge shift from an industrial economy to a new economy that requires a more educated workforce. With almost half of college graduates leaving our state, and two-thirds of those moving without jobs, this changes the way we need to think about our communities and regions. Young people (and boomers, I might add) are looking for a style of living that includes walkability, arts and culture, and a green environment. The competition for attracting and retaining a talented workforce is no longer with neighboring communities or states, but with the global community. Add in the power of social media, and you accelerate everything!

If we had talked about placemaking a few years ago, it might have felt like we were on a feel-good social mission, but today it has become an economic necessity. Communities and regions are our economic engine and the need to invest in them is critical or Michigan will lose out big time. So what is placemaking? We see placemaking as the art of indentifying unique community assets to create and develop strategies and outcomes around quality of life and economic sustainability that best connects people with their place.

Some interesting data from the University of Michigan's CLOSEUP survey of local government found that almost half of our cities are engaged in placemaking programs/projects for economic development purposes, with 62 percent of respondents saying that they have some or complete confidence in placemaking as an economic development tool. Twenty-five percent of village respondents reported that they are engaged in economic development placemaking programs, with 44 percent of those having some or complete confidence in placemaking as an economic development tool. (To see the full report, go to closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/spring-2009-data/q14.htm.)

Fred Kent, president and CEO of Project for Public Spaces, recently told me that he sees Michigan as a leader in placemaking, and this comes from the guru of placemaking himself! In this issue, you will see some inspiring placemaking initiatives. Alpena is part of a collaboration to create an arts and culture hub in northeast Michigan, and Harbor

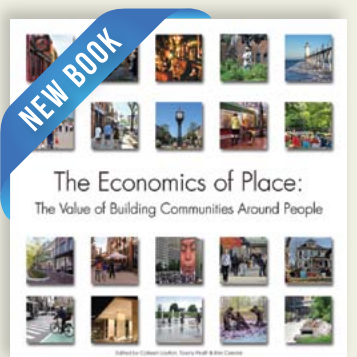
Spring's placemaking committee has energized its DDA and resulted in two new restaurants. Examples abound all over Michigan.

The state has been doing its share as well—passing Complete Streets legislation; a governor who talks about placemaking and has created an internal government placemaking committee; and a proposed reinstatement of funding for arts and culuture after a decade of cuts. The League has been working hard to lead this charge by partnering with organizations and individuals around the state and country to foster new and creative ways to redefine and economically strengthen our state through placemaking.

So as you begin to enjoy the onset of summer, look around your community and ask yourself what makes you proud to live there, what places and activities impact your daily life, and what you can do to make it even better!

The Economics of Place

The Michigan Municipal League believes that our communities are at the core of our state's economic turnaround, and that "place" is the huge economic driver. In 2011, the League published *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, which further details what Michigan must do to create the types of places people want to live, work, play, and raise families. The book, available at Amazon.com and economicsofplace.com, was unveiled at the League's Convention in October during a news conference that featured Governor Rick Snyder. It's time to start talking about the importance of place as the economic development strategy that will create a positive, dynamic future for Michigan.



Daniel P. Gilmartin

Daniel P. Gilmartin
League executive director and CEO
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What Is PLACE?

By Heather Van Poucker

Place is a cultural exploration.

Place can be a small thing with a big impact.



Blue Water Bridge in Port Huron

Photo by Rita Ernest

Place is more than just a location. It is people, involvement, and community.

Place matters. If we had said those two words a few years ago, most would've had no idea what we were talking about. Today, the terms "place" and "placemaking" are part of the everyday vernacular.

Entrepreneurship

In the new economy, we need to focus on growing jobs in our communities by ones and twos for long-term sustainability.

Diversity/Multiculturalism

Our global economy is fueled by the talent and ingenuity of people from around the world. Welcoming those from different backgrounds can result in a whole new level of innovation.

Messaging & Technology

Technology allows people to connect and collaborate like never before. Communities have a powerful opportunity to engage with their citizenry and beyond.

Transit

People are choosing to live, play, and work in communities that embrace all modes of transportation—walking, biking, and public transit.

Education (K-16)

Our educational institutions are key to growing a knowledge-based state. Leveraging these institutional resources is critical.

How neighborhoods, communities, regions, and states deal with these issues is limited only by their willingness to pioneer solutions for implementation. Swapping entrenched sacred cows for innovative strategies, creating new methods for delivering traditional government services, and fostering effective community engagement should be the measuring stick for which we all live by.



League Trustees response to "What is your favorite place, and why?"

My favorite place is our downtown, especially the Mill Pond. Generations of families play at the Imagination Station, get ice cream, and enjoy being together. My other favorite place is our property up north—we go to Charlevoix to picnic and play at Lake Michigan. (Our youngest grandson from Oklahoma calls it the "ocean"...but we don't correct him.)

Ricci Bandkau, Mayor, Brighton

Lakes have always been my favorite places. I grew up near Lake Michigan and now live near Lake Huron. There is nothing better than watching the sunset or the sunrise over the lake. Summer picnics with campfires, volleyball, boating, swimming—people are happier near water.

Deb Greene, Mayor Pro Tem, Rogers City

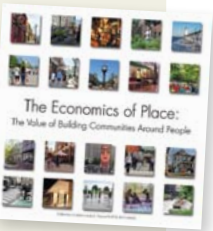
My favorite place is Sunday Lake. It has a day-use facility with a park, tennis courts, little league field, and campground nearby. Additionally, a lighted walking trail surrounds the lake, providing a beautiful experience for residents and visitors. In spring 2013, construction will begin on a new community building providing a panoramic view of the lake and hills, making Sunday Lake and everything that surrounds it truly someplace special.

Dick Bolen, Mayor, Wakefield

One spot has a special place in my heart—the Armory Arts Village. Originally a state penitentiary, it was renovated into an artist colony. Jackson won the League's Community Excellence Award Cup in 2008 for this project. My wife and I had our wedding reception there. Art displays served as decorations, and tours were conducted for our guests.

Dan Greer, Councilmember, Jackson

Want more? Read "Building Place: The Key to Healthy, Sustainable Communities," by Dan Burden, from the League place-making book. Burden is an international authority on livable and sustainable communities, healthy streets, traffic calming, and bicycle and pedestrian programs.



A vision to behold...water flowing from Lake Huron under the Blue Water Bridge into the St. Clair River by Thomas Edison Park. Whether you walk along the riverfront, drive on the parkway, bike, rollerskate, or gaze at the many freighters, sailboats, and cruisers, you will never find a more beautiful and serene view. This is one of my favorite places. It keeps my husband and I in Port Huron. It is also where my husband proposed to me.

Pauline Repp, Mayor, Port Huron

My favorite main street spot is a wonderful juxtaposition of charming, old store fronts and modern office buildings. My favorite parks range from a pocket lot on a neighborhood corner to a renowned arboretum to a premier baseball complex. Each one of these spots has a special identity, a feeling, a character that makes me want to come back—often!

Susan Baldwin, Mayor, Battle Creek

Heather Van Poucker is the director of Information and Policy Research for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6326 or hvanpoucker@mml.org.

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Old Town's committed volunteers, tireless grassroots leaders, and an interesting mix of businesses, entertainment, and cultural events have helped Old Town Lansing thrive despite the challenging economy.

By Louise Grandwohl

I Love Old Town



In 1996, the Mainstreet program was established in Old Town. Since then, crime rates have fallen to the lowest in the city, building vacancy has dropped from 90 percent to less than 10 percent, and Old Town is proud to be a home to some of the finest art and entertainment venues in mid-Michigan. In 2006, Old Town was named a Michigan Main Street program area under Governor Granholm's Cool Cities Initiative; it continues to operate under Main Street's Four-Point Approach.



As you enter the small community known as Old Town Lansing, you cannot help but get wrapped up in the timeless scenery, historic architecture, and artistic flair that dwell within the streets. But Lansing's Old Town goes beyond sights and sounds—it's the people, the relationships, the hospitality, and the dedication of residents that has made Old Town flourish. The neighborhood's story is filled with hope, determination, sadness, and success. It is what has crafted Old Town into the unique destination it is today.

URBAN PIONEERS

Built in the mid-to-late nineteenth century as Lansing's original downtown, Old Town fell into a period of neglect and abandonment starting in the 1960s. Yet within this dismal period, dedicated people, including the late Robert Busby, decided that the decay of Old Town was unacceptable. Busby and others took matters into their own hands. For the last 30 years, these "urban pioneers" have been working hard to revitalize Old Town to make it a better place to live, work, and shop.

In 1996, Old Town Lansing was one of six sites chosen to participate in the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI) demonstration project. The initiative represented a coalition

between two national organizations active in community rehabilitation: the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the National Main Street Center. The Old Town Lansing project was designed to encourage the economic redevelopment of the neighborhood business districts utilizing the skills and experience of both organizations in neighborhood and commercial revitalization. Notably, the Old Town Main Street program is one of the only NMSI project sites not residing within an already established community development corporation.

MAIN STREET APPROACH

Today, the Old Town Main Street program is referred to as the Old Town Commercial Association (OTCA). OTCA is a non-profit organization focusing on community development, economic revitalization, and follows the Main Street Four-Point Approach®. This is a proven methodology for historic pre-

servation-based economic development that was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation 30 years ago. It is used in more than 2,000 communities throughout the U.S.

Since the program's installation, Old Town's crime rates have fallen to the lowest in the city; building vacancy has dropped from 90 percent to less than 10 percent; and Old Town is now home to some of the finest art and entertainment venues in mid-Michigan. As a result, Old Town has become one of the highest concentrations of arts and creative service businesses in the state. In 2006, Old Town was named a Michigan Main Street program area under Governor Granholm's Cool Cities Initiative and continues to operate under Main Street's Four-Point Approach.

In 2011, The National Trust for Historic Preservation announced OTCA as the winner of the 2011 Great American Main Street Awards®. Recognized as a leader following the Main Street Four-Point Approach®, embracing sound historic preservation ethics, and building strategic partnerships, Old Town Main Street was honored at the Main Street Awards Ceremony during the National Main Streets Conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

MAIN STREET COMMITTEE SYSTEM

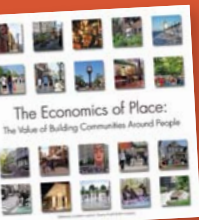
Old Town utilizes the Main Street Four-Point Approach® philosophy through its committees to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort. Old Town's promo-



tions committee focuses on marketing Old Town's unique characteristics to residents, visitors, investors and business owners. The committee also develops a positive, promotional strategy through advertising, retail activities, special events and marketing campaigns to encourage commercial activity and investment in the area. In 2011, OTCA had record-high festival attendance, doubling from the previous season. The festivals and promotions are not only a draw to visitors, but bring the entire neighborhood and community together. Every volunteer, vendor, sponsor, and resident leader plays a key part in making Old Town events come to fruition.

The organization committee focuses on involving all of the community's stakeholders to work toward a common goal and





Want more?
Read "Place
Management:
Society's
Missing Level
of Government,"

by Chris Leinberger, from
the League placemaking book.
Leinberger is a land use
strategist, teacher, developer,
researcher and author,
balances business realities
with social and environ-
mental issues.



Together with several other partners, such as the Old Town Business and Art Development Association, the city of Lansing, the Principal Shopping District, the Lansing Economic Development Corporation, the Turner-Dodge House and others, Old Town has become a thriving environment of art, festivals, boutiques, and creative businesses and residents dedicated to the revitalization of this historic district.

driving the volunteer-based Old Town program. The organization committee coordinates the events which help fund the OTCA—the force behind the revitalization of the Old Town district.

Old Town's design committee focuses on enhancing Old Town's physical environment by capitalizing on its best assets including historic buildings, and creating an inviting atmosphere through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, streetscapes, and landscaping. The design committee also focuses on instilling good maintenance practices in the historic commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of Old Town through the rehabilitation of historic buildings, encouragement of appropriate new construction, and development of sensitive design management systems and the integration of long-term planning.


Old Town's economic restructuring committee focuses on strengthening the Old Town community's existing economic base while also expanding and diversifying it. By helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new businesses to respond to today's market, this committee helps convert unused spaces into productive properties and sharpens the competitiveness of business enterprises.

The Residents of Old Town Group is made up of residents, property owners, and local police officers interested in working to remedy issues that directly affect Old Town residents with

solutions such as the neighborhood watch, farmers market, and community garden. OTCA is the only Main Street program in the state that maintains a residents committee.

Together with partners Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art, the city of Lansing, Downtown Lansing Inc., the Lansing Economic Development Corporation, the Turner-Dodge House and others, Old Town has become a thriving environment of art, festivals, boutiques, and creative businesses and residents, dedicated to the revitalization of this historic district.

Old Town's committed volunteers, tireless grassroots leaders, and an interesting mix of businesses, entertainment and cultural events have helped Old Town Lansing thrive despite the challenging economy. From its neglected past to its bustling present, the phrase "I love Old Town" has become a theme to residents, business owners, and visitors who experience and share in the spirit of this community.

To explore Old Town, visit iloveoldtown.org. 

Louise Gradwohl is the executive director of Old Town Commercial Association. You may reach her at 517-485-4283 or louise@oldtownmainstreet.org.

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Local Business-Owners Bring PLACEMAKING TO HARBOR SPRINGS

By Kathryn Breighner

In March 2011, eight business leaders from Harbor Springs attended the Placemaking Summit hosted by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments in Traverse City featuring Fred Kent, president of the Project for Public Spaces. The Summit turned out to be a game changer for Harbor Springs as it launched a very active Placemaking Committee.

Harbor Springs has been a destination for visitors and permanent and seasonal residents for decades. In recent years, the downturn in the economy combined with lifestyle changes in seasonal and tourist populations have led many business owners in Harbor Springs to look for innovative ways to create a more vibrant downtown and surrounding community.

Keep Harbor Springs Special

"Those of us who went to the Placemaking Summit are all business owners, community leaders, and residents," said Kathryn Breighner, co-chairperson of the Harbor Springs Placemaking Committee. "We wanted to learn about new ideas for downtown communities and came away with excitement

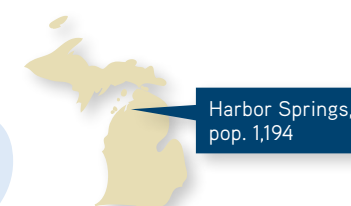
"In May 2011, we hosted a full house at a community forum held in the Harbor Springs City Hall for a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) issues identification session," said Jody Ewbank, co-chair of the Placemaking Committee. "A month later we held another session to present the top five topics and outline the many organizations in Harbor Springs that are working on these topics."

Project for Public Spaces Visits

In August 2011, Fred Kent visited Harbor Springs and spoke to several hundred people about placemaking and Harbor Springs. Fred's visit was funded by the Chamber, HARBOR, Inc., the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation, city of Harbor Springs, and the Bank of Northern Michigan.

"Fred brought his enthusiasm to Harbor Springs and explained to the community how important placemaking is in making a place one where people want to live, work, and play," said Scott Herceg, executive director of the Harbor Springs Chamber of Commerce.

The committee defines placemaking as a multi-faceted approach related to planning design and management of public spaces; listening to those who work, live, and play in that space; creating a common vision; capitalizing on community assets, inspirations and potential; and creating good public spaces promoting health and happiness.



about how special Harbor Springs is and what we can do to make it an even better place. During the past year, we came to see placemaking as more than a business-creating concept, but as a way of furthering Harbor Springs as a place that is special for everyone who lives or visits here."

The Harbor Springs Placemaking Committee is not connected directly to any organization. Representatives from the city, the Harbor Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, and HARBOR, Inc. (a regional planning organization) are ex-officio members of the committee. The committee meets monthly with this mission: to inspire both residents and visitors to identify the area as home, and to foster a sense of pride and responsibility by facilitating communication and opportunities with the community.

Defining Placemaking

With many in the community not understanding what placemaking is, the committee defines it as a multi-faceted approach related to planning design and management of public spaces; listening to those who work, live, and play in that space; creating a common vision; capitalizing on community assets, inspirations and potential; and creating good public spaces promoting health and happiness.

The committee invited assistance from the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) and Michigan State University Extension. With the help of NLEA, the committee held a "Downtown Development Authority 101" session for the business community.



A group of Harbor Springs business leaders attended a placemaking summit hosted by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. The Summit turned out to be a game changer for Harbor Springs, launching a very active placemaking committee.

The DDA Resurfaces

As a result of the interest that the placemaking process brought to Harbor Springs, the long dormant Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was revitalized in the summer of 2011. "The DDA had not met since 2003," said Tom Richards, Harbor Springs city manager. "The DDA now meets regularly and is working on three projects: gathering updated economic indicator reports for our community, writing a new DDA plan, and overseeing possible changes on our waterfront, with the goal of creating a more flexible, multi-purpose gathering space for use by the general public and for community events."


"With the DDA back in action and focused on our downtown, the Placemaking Committee's role will be to keep placemaking concepts in the forefront as the DDA considers projects," said Breighner who also is vice chairperson of the DDA. With the city reviewing the master plan in 2012, the committee will work to keep placemaking integral to the plan.

Placemaking is not intended to simply bring visitors to communities, but to create and maintain special places for people to live and work. "Harbor Springs has a different business and residential climate than many Michigan communities because we have both year-round and seasonal residents," said Breighner. "It is important for all who call Harbor Springs home to be a part of the placemaking conversation. There are some who do not like the idea of any change. It is a constant challenge to remind people that placemaking is not about chan-

ging the character of Harbor Springs, but about focusing on our strengths while we create and sustain public spaces that build our community while strengthening what is already special using placemaking principals as our guide."

"The buzz that took place because of our public gatherings helped spur decisions for two new restaurants in Harbor Springs," said Ewbank. "Placemaking efforts have also begun in Petoskey to host a Placemaking Summit in May at North Central Michigan College."

"In the past year, hundreds of people have been included in community conversations about the future of Harbor Springs. One of our responsibilities is to connect ideas with people that want to make them happen. The Placemaking Committee's role is not to complete projects or take stands on issues, but to connect people with projects that further placemaking principals. For example, one of the early wishes by the community was for better broadband service. HARBOR, Inc. has been actively working on that project, so we connected others wanting to work on this project with HARBOR, Inc."

"At some point in time when placemaking principles are fully embraced in Harbor Springs, we might be less visible than now," said Breighner. "But until then, we have a lot of work to do." 

Kathryn Breighner is the publisher of Concierge Publications and co-chairperson of the Harbor Springs Placemaking Committee.

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CAPITAL CONFERENCE 2012 HIGHLIGHTS



CAPITAL CONFERENCE

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Personal Property Tax (PPT) Hot Topic at Capital Conference
League President Karen Majewski, addressing over 400 municipal leaders, said "Our most pressing issue revolves around the effort to reform personal property tax." The League is leading a "Replace Don't Erase" campaign to get guaranteed funding replacement should PPT be eliminated.



Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett (p 16 upper left) described how place-making helped his city reinvent itself—using a voter approved sales tax (a penny on the dollar) to redevelop the river front and refurbish and build new schools. The Conference also featured sessions on brownfield tax credits, transportation, the environment, health care, labor, and EVIP.

CAPITAL CONFERENCE



2012 REGIONAL COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS RECOGNIZED

During regional meetings at the Michigan Municipal League's Capital Conference, 20 communities presented nominations of outstanding community projects and seven finalists were selected:

- Region 1: Utica's riverwalk
- Region 2: Baroda's gateway to wine country campaign
- Region 3: Grandville's clean water plant
- Region 4: Durand's streetscape and railroad image preservation project
- Region 5: Port Huron's parks and recreation collaborative
- Region 6: Alpena's arts and culture partnership
- Region 7: Bessemer's water distribution improvement partnership

The seven winners will now move on to the final round for the statewide winner at the League's Annual Convention on Mackinac Island, October 3-5.

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FROM BUSTED TO BARODA BURGERS

Baroda,
pop. 873

BY CHARLES ECKENSTAHLER

Welcome to Baroda, a community with country charm. Not long ago, the friendly country charm was threatened with the closing of Bill's Tap, a regionally known gathering place and the hometown eatery of the 'townies.'

"The Tap's closing had a major impact on the community, more so on the attitude and promise of a successful future held by local residents," according to Village President Bob Getz.

Since the early 1970s, the Tap, with its reputation for superior dining, drew customers from southwest Michigan, northern Indiana, and Chicago notables—including governors, judges, and TV personalities. Baroda was known as "the place to dine" while providing the economic life blood for other downtown businesses.

Without the Tap, prospects for downtown development were glum. Even with a carefully prepared Downtown Development Authority (DDA) development plan calling for streetscape and building façade improvements, little interest was shown by private businesses until late summer 2009 when Founder's Winery opened.

"We knew we needed to do something, something that would spark private sector interest. Our DDA had saved almost \$300,000 for streetscape and road improvements. Baroda was ready to take some bold action," notes Getz.

The Round Barn Brewery opened on March 6 2010, filling a vacant 10,000-square-foot building just down the road from village hall. Beer production will begin in July, and a brew pub and restaurant are in the works for 2013.

BEFORE



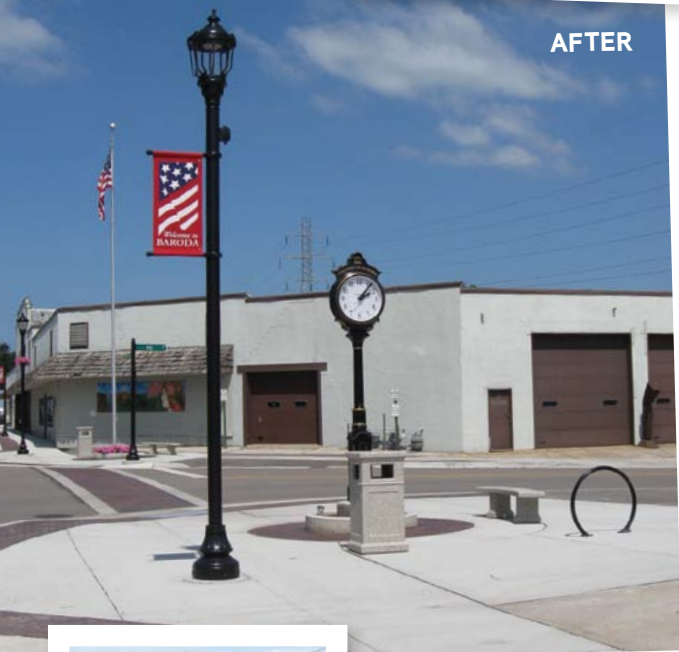
AFTER



In 1980, Baroda was the tool and die capital of southwest Michigan, with eight businesses employing over 220 workers. Four remain today, employing 61 people—a loss of 70 percent of the tool and die workforce.



AFTER



Baroda is planning its future around southwest Michigan's wine country tourists and visitors by transforming its downtown through road improvements, a streetscape, and public art, and reinvigorating The Baroda Tap & Grille and Founders Winery (both recipients of the village's revolving loan fund).



Baroda's Development Strategy

In its first bold move, the village council sought funds from MDOT for three road improvement projects: improving the two entryways into downtown and streetscaping of a downtown intersection. In Phase 2, the village is seeking funding to make streetscape improvements in front of all commercial downtown businesses. Getz notes, "While public investment gives notice the village is ready to do something, we knew that streetscape improvements alone would not revitalize the downtown. We wanted to make another 'bold move'—something to stimulate private sector business investment."

The village first focused on the use of Commercial Rehabilitation Tax Abatements, setting up two tax abatement districts—one for the downtown and a second for the Lemon Creek entryway. Property owners can qualify for a 10 year 100 percent abatement of local taxes on increased assessed value due rehabilitation of their buildings. By asking existing and potential new business owners, "What we can do to help?" Baroda found a second need. Businesses owners were ready to invest in Baroda but could not get all the financing they needed. Redevelopment of downtown Baroda could be successfully started if the village could provide some companion financing along with commercial lenders to these businesses.

RBEG Makes Private Business Investment Happen

Enter the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG), a grant that established the Baroda Revolving Loan Program. According to Lisa Epple, Area Specialist of the USDA-Rural Development, "an RBEG provides funding for rural communities to lend, typically at reduced rates and flexible terms to create new business investment and jobs. Upon repayment of the initial loans to the local community, it allows the community to establish a long-term lending program to keep growing small businesses."

The award of an RBEG in February 2010 offered Baroda a chance to set up a revolving loan program (RLF). The \$50,000 of RBEG funds supplemented with \$16,000 of village DDA funds reserved for downtown development seemed the "right tool at the right time," according to Getz.

Baroda Tap & Grille

"The Baroda Burger is on the menu; a new hometown delight" notes, Jim Demski a retired farmer/businessman who purchased Bill's Tap from the former owner. Demski, using a commercial loan and a \$55,000 Baroda RLF loan to replace the roof and add windows to the building, opened on May 30, 2010. "We cleaned up the appearance of the first building in our downtown," Getz says with pride. "Baroda Tap and Grille not only serves good food but is a symbol of the rebirth of the downtown."

Founder's Winery


Aptly named Founder's Winery, owner Len Olson can be characterized as a "founder" of the southwestern Michigan wine tasting experience of today. After a career spanning several decades, Olson is back to his roots—over 40 years ago he began a career of consecutively organizing and opening various wineries, including one of the first wineries in the Baroda area.

Olson, with his son Gunner, saw an opportunity to locate a new winery in the heart of southwestern Michigan's wine country. They set up in an empty portion of the Baroda City Mills building, now a partially occupied warehouse across the street from the new Baroda Tap & Grille.

"Opening a winery tasting room in a rented old concrete block warehouse building is a big decision. We put our money first into equipment and renovating the warehouse space into a tasting room. Our goal is to do a \$15,000 façade makeover, dependant on receipt of additional commercial financing and our first year's profits," notes Olson. He approached the Baroda RLF for assistance. Getz notes, "We are going to help renovate a second building this year with an \$11,000 loan to Founder's Winery to reface and create a welcome entry façade—basically repurposing the old warehouse into a commercial use property." On March 6, council welcomed the village's newest business—the Round Barn Brewery which will fill a vacant 10,000-square foot building just down the road from village hall. "This is wonderful news for Baroda," Council President Bob Getz said, beaming.



Getz and the village council have a vision of Baroda—different than what you see today. Getz says, "Come back in a year—you'll be standing in line to get into the Baroda Tap & Grille so you might as well walk over to Founder's Winery and sample some of southwestern Michigan's fine wines. You'll be passing a few other new businesses by then—maybe another winery and eatery and a few specialty shops on your walk-about. You might even be a participant in a farm-to-table feast."

The reinvention of Baroda is picking up steam—the village premiered a promotional video, "Baroda...Home of Casual Country Charm" on January 15, 2012. The Small Town Rural Development Conference is using it as part of its conference proceedings, and Village President Getz presented the reinvention of Baroda at the LaPorte Indiana Leadership Council small community conference on April 14, 2012. 

Chuck Eckenstahler (AICP Retired) is an advisor to McKenna Associates. He teaches economic development at Purdue North Central, Westville, Indiana and also serves on the faculty of the Lowell Stahl Center for Commercial Real Estate Studies at Lewis University, Oakbrook, Illinois. You may contact him at 219-861-2077 or pctecken@comcast.net.

Want more? Read "The Role of Place in Economic Gardening," by Rob Fowler and Mark Clevey from the League placemaking book.

Fowler is the president and CEO of the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM), and Clevey is the primary author of SBAM's Annual Michigan Entrepreneurship Score Card and Economic Gardening and Entrepreneurship Consultant.



Wightman and Associates

Wightman and Associates provided design and construction engineering for Baroda's First Street streetscape project. The project is approximately 1,300 feet long and includes decorative LED lighting with turn of the century style poles, new concrete curb and gutter, storm sewer modifications, HMA resurfacing, decorative concrete crosswalks, decorative stamped sidewalks, ADA ramps, minor water main improvements, and irrigation for new trees and hanging baskets.



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MIDTOWN DETROIT

Neighborhood Placemaking



By Rene Rosencrantz Wheaton

Comerica Park, the Spirit of Detroit, and the Ren Cen—Detroit has its share of easily identified landmarks, but what of its neighborhoods? Do they get recognized?

People are starting to take notice of Midtown Detroit. Years of work to revitalize and brand the area has started to pay dividends.

“In the early 1990s the neighborhood really started redeveloping,” said Susan Mosey, president of Midtown Detroit, Inc. “There was more housing and more institutional investments taking place but no one had a good sense of the district’s identity.”

In 2000, efforts began in earnest to give the area of Detroit, which has such prominent residents as the Detroit Medical Center (DMC), Wayne State University and the Detroit Art Institute, a name.

Getting those institutions, along with other area stakeholders, on board with the Midtown moniker was an important step in the process. “Early on we basically had no budget, but it was important to get all those different elements on board,” Mosey said. “People from the big anchor institutions to the small entrepreneurs all played a part.”

BRANDING MIDTOWN

The branding has gotten much more sophisticated since those early days and now includes a new logo that captures the spirit of the Midtown. Strategic marketing and communications efforts are now being made to increase traffic, revenue flow, promote the area, and increase development and investment to the area by increasing Midtown’s geographic profile.

Some of the area’s assets are pretty easy to recognize—higher education, cutting-edge medicine and the arts—but others can be fleshed out more for the public through the branding campaign.

Being in Midtown Detroit puts you within walking distance of 10 theaters, 9 museums, over 40 restaurants, 12 galleries, and boutique shopping.

BUILDING A WEB PRESENCE

Mosey said Midtown Detroit, Inc. will soon be launching a new website, complete with mobile apps, that will help highlight the growing list of assets—Henry Ford Health Center, Tech Town, and New Center Council—the area has to offer.

There continues to be a lot of players in the Midtown Detroit revitalization efforts. In fact, Midtown Detroit, Inc., which was preceded by the University Cultural Center Association, is comprised of more than 100 stakeholders. The budget has gotten larger since those early days too, with more than \$1.8 billion in investments in the area since 2000.

MIDTOWN LOOP GREENWAY

One of the big investments has been the creation of Midtown Loop Greenway, a greenway trail that will follow existing street patterns along Kirby Street, John R. Street, Canfield Street and Cass Avenue, and connect the campuses of Wayne State and the Detroit Medical Center.



Sue Mosey in Midtown’s Green Alley. The alley is a demonstration project that uses sustainable products like old brick pavers and induction lighting.

“The Green Alley, formerly one of Midtown’s worst segments of alley, is now a greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists. The area has been attracting a young demographic that expect walkability and alternative modes of transportation.”

Want more? Read “Detroit: The Democratic City,” by Phillip Cooley, from the League placemaking book. Cooley is a part owner of

Slows Bar B Q and a General Contractor with O’Connor Development. He serves on the board of

Greening of Detroit, Roosevelt Park Conservancy, Center for Community Based Enterprise, and co-chairs the Mayor’s Advisory Task Force for the DetroitWorks project.



The UCCA has over 60 members representing the area’s academic, cultural, medical and service institutions, corporations, businesses, and community organizations. UCCA committees are responsible for the completion and/or operation of over 30 programs and projects in the Midtown district.



“It’s an ambitious project with plans for 1.8 miles worth of trails and LED pedestrian lighting, native plantings, seating, public art, and dog stations,” Mosey said.

The first phase of the Green Loop, near the Detroit Art Institute, has been completed, and work on the second phase will incorporate the area near the new Whole Foods Market, at John R and Mack. Plans are to have Whole Foods Market open in the spring of 2013.

The project fits in with the sustainability efforts that have been taking place in Midtown and with the efforts to make the community more walkable.

GREEN ALLEY

Another project that fits with those ideals is the Green Alley, which was a project created in partnership with Green Garage,

a nonprofit organization that is focused on building skills, jobs, services, and products with green goals. The project took one of the district’s worst segments of alley and turned it into a greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists.

“It is a demonstration project that uses sustainable products like old brick pavers and induction lighting,” Mosey said. “It’s a prototype for what we want to do with other alleys in our neighborhoods.”

The area has been attracting a young demographic that expects to have walkability and alternative modes of transportation.

“Making the area usable for pedestrians and bikers is a key fundamental in attracting people to the corridor,” Mosey said. “So far, people have been responding to the work that has been done. I’ve definitely noticed more pedestrian traffic.”

LIVE MIDTOWN

As if that wasn’t enough, the Midtown area also has an incentive program called Live Midtown, which offers financial funds to people who choose to live in the Midtown area and who work at the DMC, Henry Ford Health System, or Wayne State. While Midtown Detroit has a wealth of assets, Mosey admits it has its fair share of difficulties, including crime, both real and perceived, to overcome. “We have a lot of security efforts in place,” said Mosey. “We are lucky enough to have the Wayne State police force within two minutes of anywhere in Midtown.”

Midtown Detroit, Inc. also has grant programs that will provide businesses with security upgrades like cameras, lighting, and alarm systems.

“Wayne State police will also come and do an audit of a business’s security needs,” she said.

Government grants and institutional investments have been invaluable to the Midtown area, but the people of the community have been the lifeblood of the revitalization efforts.

“We’ve had a tremendous response from people,” Mosey said. “There’s a lot of diversity here. There are newcomers that want to create connections to help with the rebuilding of Detroit, and there are people who have been here a long time that are welcoming the opportunity to get involved. It’s really great to have an engaged community that cares about what’s happening.”



The Live Midtown incentive program offers funds to people who work at the DMC, Henry Ford Health System, or Wayne State University and choose to live in the Midtown area.

For more information on Midtown Detroit, Inc.’s many initiatives, visit their website at detroitmidtown.com. For more on the Live Midtown program visit livemidtown.org.

Rene Rosencrantz Wheaton is a freelance writer. You may contact her at 810-444-3827.

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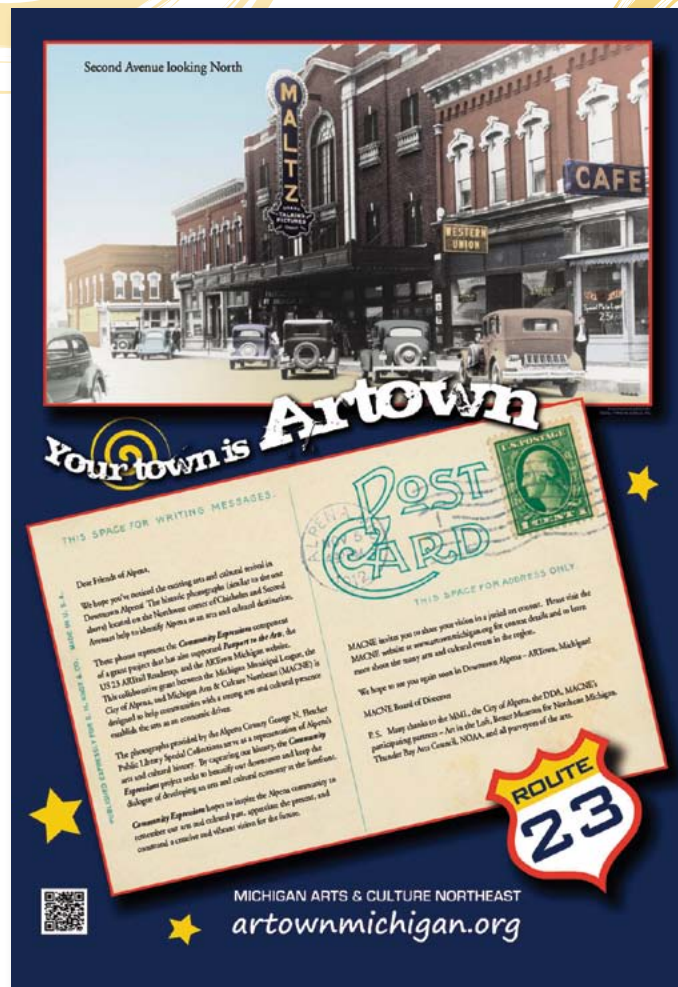
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ARTown Celebrates

Three Years of Successful Collaboration

By Mary Ellen Jones



ARTown is a nonprofit corporation founded by four independent nonprofit arts, culture, and history-orientated organizations. It promotes collaboration while highlighting and marketing the area's art, culture, history, and heritage.

Northeast Michigan is on the road to becoming an arts and cultural destination along US 23. In three years, 75 individual artists, councils, galleries, historical societies, theaters, museums, dance studios, musicians, writers, lecture series, libraries, and concert series have been identified. What started as a small, informal committee of individuals interested in a grassroots promotion of arts and culture blossomed into Michigan Arts and Culture Northeast (MACNE), a 501c6 nonprofit corporation with a \$20,000 grant from Michigan Municipal League and the city of Alpena.

Our celebration included Dr. Julie Avery, recently retired curator of Rural Life and Culture at the MSU Museum, returning to the region to lead a second roundtable discussion on where we started, what we've achieved, and how to drive economic development through arts and culture. Avery commented, "Most counties don't have this richness of diversity in the arts. It is a huge asset." Suggestions toward future collaboration include: engaging more youth in the arts; branding the region when it comes to the arts; creating an arts festival similar to ArtPrize in Grand Rapids; "colorizing" or eliminating blighted areas in our communities with visible art installations; educating the public on the importance of the arts and its' long-lasting value; and expanding and improving the MACNE website.



Overview

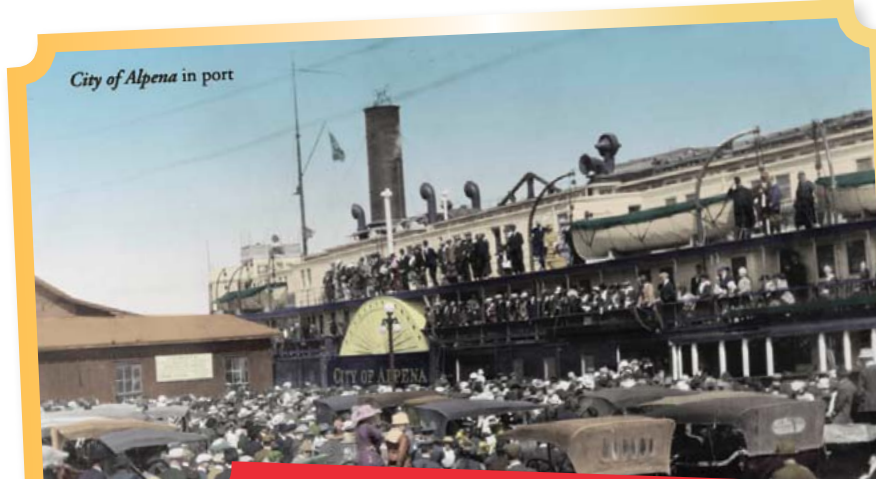
If you hear "arts and culture" and Alpena or Northeast Michigan doesn't come to mind, think again! Arts, culture, and history have an enduring presence in Northeast Michigan, and MACNE-ARTown Michigan is evidence of that. This nonprofit corporation is led by Besser Museum for NE Michigan, Art in the Loft, Thunder Bay Arts Council, and Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Sparked by the Michigan Municipal League's Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3) pilot project (see page 30), the city of Alpena became a formal partner in MACNE, which also includes 44+ other organizations and individual artists from around the region. Through their powerful collaboration they are accomplishing what one group could not do alone.

Passport to the Arts

MACNE's flagship project is an actual passport that serves as a comprehensive regional arts/culture calendar for nearly 200 events/activities in the summer season. The kick-off event began with a progressive dinner and entertainment with patrons visiting all four nonprofits. For the public—the passport program is a contest: 10 stamps of attendance are required to be eligible for a grand prize to an arts and cultural destination (NY in 2009, Mackinac Island in 2010, and ArtPrize in 2011). For our partners—the passport program is an opportunity to market events collectively, to create excitement around a summer program for the public, and to collaborate with other arts and culture businesses, individuals, and venues. Partners join for a fee of \$100 and receive cross-promotional posters, brochures, and press releases all branded with the ARTown logo. Partnerships with our local media gave us a weekly presence with *The Alpena News*' "Where Art Thou" contest, numerous articles on our events and MACNE in general. Alpena 52's online events calendar highlighted our weekly events and devoted an entire magazine to Passport.

ARTown Website

Our website is a communication hub for myriad arts, culture, humanities, and history organizations in the region, and a mechanism to collectively promote programs and events. The Alpena County Public Library gifted us the initial design of our website, and the League grant enabled us to set aside a fund to update and maintain it. In 2010, MACNE contracted with a local web



ARTown projects include a variety of hands-on creative and cultural experiences—currently there are four scrims (art and photography printed on all-weather fabric for enormous outdoor displays) of historic photographs installed on the Royal Knight Theater building.

designer to 'go green' and allow our partners to register, pay, and upload their events directly into an online passport calendar. Our goal is to have our partners take ownership of the website and become true collaborative partners. The calendar is fluid—it can be corrected, and events may be added or canceled. Some of the issues we faced with the paper passport were schedule changes—once we published the passport, we were done for the season. Now, with an electronic calendar of events, the passport becomes a year-round, downloadable document for the public to customize as needed for a day, a week, or month-long trip to the region.

The ARTrail Roadmap

The Artrail Roadmap is a locally designed and printed regional roadmap and reference guide highlighting 44 arts, culture, natural resources, historical sites and related attractions along the US 23 corridor from Standish to Mackinaw City. This beautiful, stylized laminated map was created for tourists. Visitors can pick it up at all 14 Michigan Welcome Centers, and Regional Chambers and Convention and Visitor Bureaus across the state. Our goal is to show visitors there are clusters of arts and cultural sites along US 23.

ABOUT 21C3

The Michigan Municipal League identified eight essential assets that make communities vibrant places in the 21st century. Research shows that physical design & walkability, green initiatives, cultural economic development, entrepreneurship, multiculturalism, messaging & technology, transit, and education are essential to a community's livelihood.

PILOT PROJECTS


Experts agree that investing in communities is one of the most critical elements of any long-term economic development strategy. We believe this is especially true in Michigan, and that "place" matters more than ever.

To prove it, we began our pilot project series. Five pilot communities—Alpena, Lapeer, Lathrup Village, Sault Ste. Marie, and Ypsilanti—have put theory into action to demonstrate the impact of these principles and their applicability regardless of size or location. Through their demonstration projects, communities across the state will better understand how to leverage a unique sense of place in a community to enhance quality of life and attract the people and businesses that will fuel the 21st century economy.

Community Expressions

Community Expressions is a variety of hands-on creative and cultural experiences for the community including the installation of building scrimms (art and photography is printed on all weather fabric for enormous outdoor displays). Currently there are four scrimms of old historic photographs of downtown Alpena installed on the Royal Knight Theater building. MACNE also sponsored and announced the winner of a public contest to produce an additional building wrap covering a blank wall of a downtown building. This beautiful chalk pastel rendering of artist Brooke Stevens' vibrant downtown is rich in the arts. Her winning drawing will be installed in the spring.

MACNE did not re-invent the wheel. All of these diverse arts and cultural assets have been in the community for years. We simply joined forces, came up with a solid plan to collaborate on a shared project, and promoted these assets for our local community and beyond. These projects, including the Passport program, can be easily duplicated in your community.

Go to artownmichigan.org or pick up an ARTrail Roadmap and next time you're on the east side, take the slow route along our beautiful coastline and experience the arts and cultural gems that make up US 23. 

Mary Ellen Jones serves on the MACNE Board. You may reach her at mejonmv@gmail.com.



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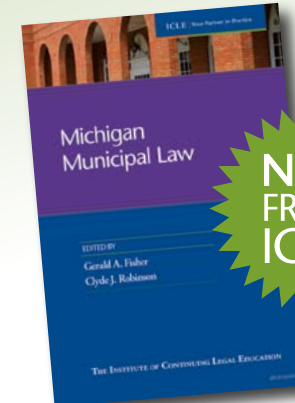
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Aanii and Welcome

Growing Multiculturalism
in Your Community

A drum beats steadily while a male voice is humbly raised in acknowledgment of man's relationship with earth and all living creatures. The words acknowledge how the past influences today and how today will influence tomorrow. To characterize this as a prayer ceremony does not adequately define this Native American tradition. It is a request for a blessing upon an event and the people gathered there. What is surprising and delightful is that I have not sought out this experience—it was graciously gifted to the Michigan Port Collaborative meeting attendees in Sault Ste. Marie. It has provided me with a new view of the city as a multicultural community. Multiculturalism is one of the eight key assets of a successful 21st century community.

START WITH HERITAGE, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

I contacted Cecil Pavlat, who gave the blessing, to find out how the Sault Tribe culture has become such an integral part of Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding area. Pavlat is the cultural repatriation specialist of a five-county area and has worked in the position for 12 years. (Repatriation, by the way, means to return something cultural to its origins.) Pavlat tells me building relationships is how cultural amalgamation occurs. I say amalgamation because the goal is not be assimilated and absorbed within one culture, but for two or more distinct cultures to create a richer, more unique whole. It helps that Linda Hoath, director of the Sault Convention and Visitors Bureau also used to work for the tribe, and so a strong bond has developed within the community. The city regularly invites the tribe to participate in city events, as does the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

I ask Pavlat why we don't see more multi-culturalism in our state. From his perspective, Native Americans are unlikely to insert themselves into a community, but rather must be invited. It is up to the city or village to pursue a relationship with tribal leaders. And while racial undertones are not as obvious as they once were, it is vitally important to maintain personal interaction. It is the responsibility of leaders in both cultures to educate. The ceremonies, explains Pavlat, are one way the Native American culture gains recognition. He suggests beginning with the history and heritage within your community. American history, he gently points out, did not begin in 1492. Anishinaabe History goes back thousands of years, not hun-



Top: Cecil Pavlat, cultural repatriation specialist for the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians, with his grandchildren at an annual Pow Wow. Bottom: Four spirit houses surround a Sacred Mountain Ash at the Ancient Burial Grounds in the Sault. The spirit houses represent each cardinal direction and also Father, Mother, Daughter, Son, for all the unknown who are buried there.

dreds. Sault Ste. Marie holds the distinction of being the first incorporated city in Michigan. But before the Soo was known for its locks, and before Europeans developed a trade route here, the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians referred to this place as Baawating, Place of the Rapids, and the gathering place of the Great Lakes Basin for all tribes.


SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

Celebrating and growing multi-culturalism in your community is important to attracting the talented workforce we are seeking in Michigan. Young adults enjoy and seek wide varieties of food, music, art, and customs. And maybe more importantly, having a welcoming image also attracts the educated immigrant workforce that so many of our communities need. So, multi-culturalism isn't just for big cities anymore and it's far more than a feel-good thing to do. It can have significant economic impact.

Native Americans are unlikely to insert themselves into a community, but rather must be invited. The city or village must be accepting and it is up to them to pursue a relationship with tribal leaders.

REACH OUT AND LEARN

In conclusion, city or village leadership should reach out first. Invite various ethnic groups to participate in planned events and celebrations in your community. But be thoughtful. As Cecil diplomatically advises me, the 4th of July—"our" nation's Independence Day—is not much of a celebratory occasion for the Indian nation. And on New Year's Eve, the Sault Tribe holds a Powwow as an alternative option, as alcohol has not been a good thing for his people. I admit I may not have thought that far ahead before extending an invitation. But Cecil also counsels, "Do not be afraid to ask. Ignorance should not hold the negative connotation it has today. It is an opportunity to learn." For example, on Beaver Island is an ancient medicine wheel and several satellites aligned to the stars and where the sun rises. Celebratory times for Native Americans include the summer solstice and the equinox. Find out celebratory times for the subcultures within your community and honor them.

Whichever cultural groups you identify in your community, we encourage you to take leadership in this area. Talk about small steps, big impact! This is one everyone can do at virtually no cost. My two young sons are from India. Namaskar! This means "my spirit welcomes and respects the spirit within you." What a great place to start. And Gchi-Miigwech—Ojibwe for Great Thanks—in any language, are sure to follow. 

Caroline Weber Kennedy is manager of field operations for the League. You may contact her at 906-428-0100 or ckennedy@mmml.org.

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Placemaking through Community Art

By Judith Peterson

The Panels

The panels, a description of the contents, and the artists are:

1. Houpert Winery Fire Artist Jody Tucker

Originally grapes were handpicked by local residents. Pay was by the basket or lug. The first grapes were planted in Lawton shortly after the Civil War and were sold and packed for the fresh market. With the turn of the century, grape juice and wine became the market of choice. Lawton was a pioneer in commercial grape production and processing in the state.

2. Honee Bear Canning Artist Sandee Willis

The Honee Bear Canning Company, founded in 1946, is the world's largest canner of asparagus. The Packer Family has its origins in Lawton with a store on Main Street. The store marketed hides and fresh produce, among other things.

3. Adams Hardware Artist Vicki Downs

Adams Hardware was founded in 1860, and celebrated 150 years in business in 2010.

4. Hauling Grapes and Town Hall Artist Anne Shaver

The red brick town hall was built in the 1800s and used as an opera house as well as for official town business. It had hardwood floors for dancing, a stage for performances, a spectator's balcony, and a bell tower for emergency communication.

5. The Depot Artist Susan Appleby

The depot was built in 1846 and was called Paw Paw Station because of a connecting railway with the village of Paw Paw. It served Lawton with passenger and freight for over 100 years. It now belongs to the American Legion. At one time, there was enough traveler traffic to support the three story Hotel Giddings.

6. Eaton Manufacturing and Welch's Artist Ashlea Beal

The Eaton Manufacturing Building was originally the J. Hungerford Smith Grape Juice Company. Eaton took over in 1951 and employed up to 175 workers. Eaton closed in the mid-1960s. Welch Grape Juice Company took over the Wilson Grape Juice Company plant in 1919 and is currently the world's largest processor of grape juice products.

7. Main Street looking north Artist Jody Borowiak

Main Street changed many times since the early 1900s and at various times included hardware, dry goods, grocery, piano, furniture, and drug

stores, banks, a Ford dealership, tobacco shops, jewelers, a news stand, barbershop, restaurants, florists, a newspaper, and numerous other establishments.

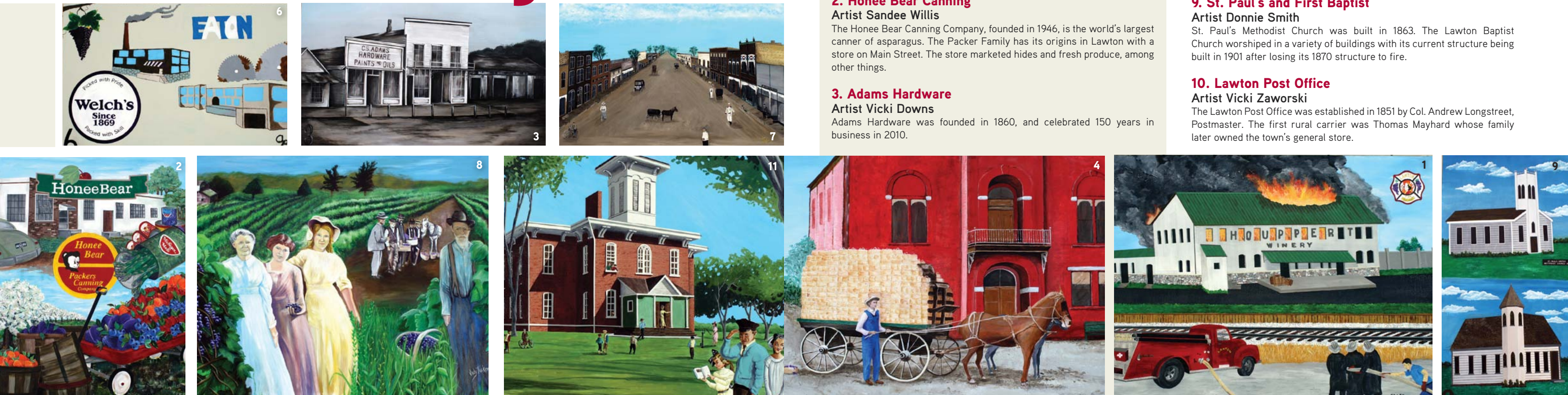
8. Grape Pickers Artist Jody Tucker

St. Paul's Methodist Church was built in 1863. The Lawton Baptist Church worshiped in a variety of buildings with its current structure being built in 1901 after losing its 1870 structure to fire.

9. St. Paul's and First Baptist Artist Donnie Smith

The Lawton Post Office was established in 1851 by Col. Andrew Longstreet, Postmaster. The first rural carrier was Thomas Mayhard whose family later owned the town's general store.

10. Lawton Post Office Artist Vicki Zaworski



When local businesswoman Amy Atwater opened her business in downtown Lawton, she noticed how stark and barren the wall between her building and village hall looked. She approached the village council with an idea to improve the south side of village hall with a mural. Intrigued, the council asked Atwater to garner additional community interest. She returned with local artist Sandee Willis and muralist Linda Valentino-Walker, who provided sketches and proposals. The village president referred the idea to the public works committee for further action.

The committee began meeting to discuss various options. First was an expansion of the committee to include fire department representatives, community representatives, and local people interested in the history and heritage of Lawton. The committee relied on people we like to call our "consultants"—such as local historians and the director of the Paw Paw Area Art Association who gave us ideas and concepts for murals.

Community Support

The committee discussed the possibility of applying for a state grant for the project, but instead determined that we had the resources, people, and will to create and complete the mural right here in our community. The committee held a community input meeting to determine the special, unique characteristics of the village that could be portrayed in a mural. The outcome was a list of 12 major events, buildings, and historical scenes that celebrated our heritage. It was also decided not to paint directly on the wall but to enlist the assistance of local artists, each of which would paint a scene on a polymer board panel which would then be hung on the south wall.

A call was sent out through the art association and the *Lawton Free Reader* (a local monthly paper) and local artists stepped forward to participate in this community event. Eventually 11 artists were chosen to paint 12 panels.


Continued on page 36



Go-To People

This community is blessed with a wonderful location, beautiful vistas, and warm, generous people. As always in a project like this, there are a few who become the go-to people—those you can count on to provide help when asked. Tim Washburn and Bruce Marks helped with the selection of the historic photos, provision of the photos for the artists’ use, and the community planning event. They even went to Kalamazoo County to pick up the panels and provided a place for us to apply the gesso coat.

Sandee Willis was always available to help, from painting on gesso (thanks Vicki Downs for showing us how it is done!), attending all the meetings, enlisting artists in the cause, and helping to raise money by going from business to business with me. And then we found George Graff! A newbie to the area, George has done so much to make this project a success—he came up with the concept for the frames, constructed them, applied the finish coat to all the panels (in his garage), brought them back, then hung them. If you want a go-to guy for a project, ask George!

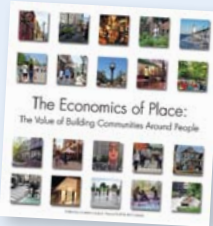
The murals were unveiled on Memorial Day 2011, during the annual community barbecue lunch. 

*Judith Peterson serves on the Lawton village council.
You may reach her at JdthPet@aol.com.*



“The committee determined that we had the resources, people, and will to create and complete the mural right here in our community.”

Want more? Read “Building Cultural Economic Development: An Economic Force Waiting to be Harnessed,” by Dr. Bill Anderson, from the League placemaking book. Anderson was the founding director of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries.



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The Donald P. Althoff Scholarship Golf Outing will be held June 12, 2012, at Lyon Oaks Golf Course. If you are interested, please e-mail Drew Dunsky, Risk Manager, Road Commission for Oakland County, adunsky@rcoc.org.

TOOLS of PLACE MAKING

The 2011 Convention was all about building Michigan’s future through building a sense of place. The 2012 Capital Conference showed the power of politics to help or hinder local placemaking efforts. Now we’ll give you the tools you need to bring placemaking home to *your* community.



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The Michigan Association of Mayors (MAM) is the official nonpartisan organization of Michigan’s chief elected officials. Representing 109 Michigan communities, MAM works to assist the chief elected officials of cities and villages; advance the various interests and operations of communities represented by its members and all Michigan communities; promote cooperation among communities statewide; and advocate local interests at the state and federal level.

Mayor’s Role in MAM

MAM members speak with a unified voice on organizational policies and goals and contribute to the development of policy by attending the annual business meeting. MAM policies and programs are developed and guided by the board of directors. During the annual business meeting, MAM members recommend policy positions, and are given the opportunity to discuss and then vote on each policy resolution; each community represented casts one vote. The policy positions adopted at the annual meeting collectively represent the views of MAM and are distributed to the Michigan State Legislature and MAM membership. In addition to the ongoing work of the board of directors, mayors and village presidents are invited and encouraged to partake in advocacy activities at the capitol and other organized events.

Events

MAM hosts its business meeting each fall in conjunction with the Michigan Municipal League Annual Convention, as well as an annual summer workshop and capitol reception. Aside from the capitol reception in Lansing, events are hosted in a different Michigan community each year and additional meetings and events are organized by the MAM board of directors.



Professional Development

MAM forums such as workshops, conferences, exchange day and annual capitol reception, provide great opportunities for special focus and discussion on particular policies and governing.

Awards & Recognition

MAM offers the Advocate of the Year Award to recognize mayors and village presidents for excellence in their profession. The award is presented once a year to a peer-nominated individual, who, during the course of his/her career, made outstanding contributions to local government.

Policy Development

Through affiliation with the Michigan Municipal League, MAM advocates policy positions that reflect the interests of Michigan communities.



MAM Listserv

This email-networking tool enables MAM members to communicate and collaborate with the entire association. Membership is limited to members of the MAM.

Mayors’ Exchange


Mayors’ Exchange Day, created by MAM in celebration of Michigan Week (mid-May), is an opportunity for members to explore and celebrate other Michigan communities.

Capitol Reception

Each spring, MAM members gather at the capitol for a lunch reception with their state legislators to discuss issues vital to Michigan’s communities. The reception increases the visibility of participating members and assists them with building and maintaining key relationships.



Summer Workshop

Learn from experts in related fields, understand the latest local government research, and prepare for the future of the public service profession by participating in the MAM Summer Workshop. This inspiring two-day event has taken on a variety of issues in communities across the state. The 2012 workshop will be held in Traverse City on August 8-10. 

2011, Port Huron—Placemaking: Creating a Catalyst for Change

Municipal leaders are leading the way in reinventing their communities to survive and thrive in the 21st century. At the 2011 summer workshop attendees got an inside look at successful 21c3 projects, and learned how to grow their own local entrepreneurs, develop green initiatives, and repurpose commercial industrial strips. Attendees also saw how civic engagement can help reach those goals faster and easier.



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Are a city and its employees liable for the death of a person killed by guy wire strung across the sidewalk?

FACTS:

On May 24, 2006, at 11:00 pm, John Crnkovich died of head and neck trauma after striking a guy wire strung from a utility pole across a sidewalk and anchored on the opposite side of the sidewalk. The sidewalk was part of a sidewalk construction project in the city of Royal Oak. At the time of the accident, Crnkovich was riding a motorized scooter, without lights or a helmet, and had a blood alcohol level of 0.13. The personal representative of his estate sued DTE, the city, the city engineers involved in the design and oversight of the project, and the construction company installing the sidewalk.

The sidewalk improvement project began in 2005. Throughout construction, there were numerous discussions about the existence of DTE's guy wire and the need for DTE to move it. Ultimately, the city instructed the construction company to asphalt that portion of the sidewalk until the guy wire could be removed. Barricades and flags were used to warn of the guy wire; but over the course of the year, they were repeatedly moved by people using the sidewalk.

With respect to the city and its employees, the issue of governmental immunity is applicable. One exception to governmental immunity is the highway exception which provides that a "governmental agency having jurisdiction over a highway shall maintain the highway in reasonable repair so that it is reasonably safe and convenient for public travel." The statute includes a sidewalk within the definition of highway but specifically excludes a utility pole. The Michigan Supreme Court has ruled that in order to show that a governmental agency has failed to maintain a highway in reasonable repair requires a plaintiff to demonstrate that a "defect" exists in the highway. The city argued that the sidewalk itself was not defective.

Governmental immunity applies to a governmental employee if the employee was acting within the scope of employment, the agency was engaged in a governmental function, and the employee's conduct did not amount to gross negligence that is the proximate cause of the injury.

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.

Sue Jeffers is a legal consultant to the League. You may reach her at sjeffers@mml.org.

QUESTION 1:

Is a guy wire strung across the sidewalk a "defect" exposing the city to liability and to a jury trial?

Answer according to the trial court:

Yes. The claim against the city was not barred by governmental immunity and the matter could be heard by a jury.

Answer according to the Court of Appeals:

Yes. Though utility poles are specifically excluded from the definition of highway, the anchor and guy wire in this case were actually part of the sidewalk. According to the court, the city had a duty to rectify the defect after it decided to pave the sidewalk, incorporating the anchor and guy wire into the sidewalk.

Answer according to the Michigan Supreme Court:

No. There was no defect in the sidewalk as contemplated by the language of the statute. As such, the city was governmentally immune.

QUESTION 2:

Did the actions of the city engineers rise to such a level that a jury could determine if they were grossly negligent and that their actions were the proximate cause of Crnkovich's injuries?

Answer according to the trial court:

Yes. The claims against the employees were not barred by governmental immunity.

Answer according to the Court of Appeals:

Yes. The claims against the employees were not barred by governmental immunity and a jury could decide those issues.

Answer according to the Michigan Supreme Court:

No. The Court relied upon the dissenting opinion in the Court of Appeals' decision. The dissent stated that even though a jury might conclude that the employees were grossly negligent, their conduct could not be construed as "the proximate cause of the injury or damage."

LaMeau v Estate of Crnkovich, No. 141559-60 (2011).

The Michigan Municipal League's Legal Defense Fund filed a co-amicus brief with the League's Liability & Property Pool, the Public Corporation Law Section, and the Michigan Townships Association with the Michigan Supreme Court.



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Michigan's Fireworks Safety Act and its Impact on Municipalities

Q: What are the changes to the fireworks laws?

A: The Michigan Fireworks Safety Act became effective on January 1, 2012. The new statute makes the sale, use, and possession of "consumer fireworks" legal. Consumer fireworks are fireworks that are designed to produce visible and/or audible effects by combustion, such as firecrackers, Roman candles, and bottle rockets. The seller of consumer fireworks must annually obtain a consumer fireworks certificate issued by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs and pay the required fee—\$1,000 for each retail location that is a permanent building or \$600 for each retail location that is not a permanent building. This consumer fireworks certificate must be obtained by April 1 each year in which consumer fireworks are to be sold. The statute also creates a Fireworks Safety Fee, to be collected on all retail sales and forwarded to fireworks safety fund, which will be used for firefighter training, grants to local units and other uses to carry out the Act. The statute also imposes criminal sanctions and civil fines for violating the Act. Additionally, the Act requires retail locations to have fire suppression systems, a valid federal taxpayer identification number, and insurance coverage of not less than \$10,000,000 during periods of fireworks sales.

Q: What are the most significant impacts to my municipality under the new Act?

A: Municipalities may not enact or enforce an ordinance, code, or regulation pertaining to or in any manner regulating the sale, display, storage, transportation, or distribution of fireworks regulated under the Act. However, municipalities are permitted to enact ordinances regulating the ignition, discharge, and use of consumer fireworks. Additionally, municipalities are not permitted to regulate the use of consumer fireworks on the day preceding, the day of, or the day after a national holiday. While municipalities are not permitted to regulate the use of consumer fireworks on the day preceding, the day of, or the day after a national holiday, local noise ordinances may still be enforceable regardless of the day. An individual may not use consumer fireworks or low-impact fireworks (ground and hand held sparkling devices) while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. A minor may not purchase consumer fireworks.



Q: Will the use of fireworks be permitted on private property without approval by the municipality?

A: This depends on the type of fireworks being used and when they are used. Display fireworks are large fireworks devices that are explosive materials intended for use in fireworks displays and designed to produce visible and audible effects by combustions, deflagration, or detonation. Their use requires an approval process by the local unit of government, which includes meeting insurance and operator competency standards. This part of the law has not changed. The use of consumer fireworks on private property is permitted so long as the use is not in violation with any other section of the Act and locally enacted ordinances. However, persons are prohibited from using consumer fireworks on public property, school property, church property, or the property of another person without that organization's or person's express permission. The Act does not specifically address whether a city or village could prohibit the use of consumer fireworks in a public park on a national holiday.

If your municipality has adopted a fireworks ordinance under the guidelines of this new Act, please email it to kcekola@mml.org and the League will post it on its website at mml.org.

Municipal Q & A guest contributors:

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West Branch



West Branch,
pop. 2,139

West Branch is known as the city with a smile as depicted on the water tower alongside the northern Michigan stretches of I-75. The smiles extend well into the roots of this rural agricultural community, reaching back to its logging days over a century ago. Steeped in history and a colorful past, the area supports a considerable increase in summer population as visitors seek a variety of recreational activities in the area lakes, streams, hills, and forests. Other amenities like golfing at five area golf courses, an outlet center, and dining and shopping in the turn of the century Victorian Downtown, increase the list of activities for the entire family.



It is the sense of the past, when the farmers and townspeople came together on Friday evenings, that inspired Fabulous Fridays, themed events held each Friday evening throughout the summer. Now in its fifth year, the organizers of Fabulous Fridays are ramping up for another record breaking season. Hailed as a hallmark of the community, these events range in themes like Gone Country, Big Boys and Their Toys, singing competitions, and a tribute to local heroes with an event called Heroes in Uniform. Last season a Supermoto motorcycle race held on the downtown streets brought in racers from all over the country and more than three thousand spectators!

Organized by the West Branch Area Retail Merchants Association, with assistance from the city and many local organizations, Fabulous Fridays brings vibrancy to the downtown area since all the events are held on the streets and within the downtown businesses. Over the last four seasons and 54 events, more than 22,000 people have attended and participated in the multitude of activities.



Whether you are visiting or passing through West Branch, we are certain that the community will welcome you and our enthusiasm will impress you! Join us this summer where all Fridays are Fabulous!

For downtown events, see WestBranchEvents.com. For area events, visit wbacc.com and the city's website at westbranch.com. 