

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

▶ ▶ ▶ September/October 2008

Shaping the Future of Detroit

"I wanted to be a part of
Detroit's **transformation.**"
— Ryan Cooley

Creating
Communities for
the Next 50 Years

Viva! Marquette

Community Design:

Smart Growth
Urban Design
Walkability
Bike Lanes
Form-Based Codes



The Michigan Municipal League is the Michigan association of cities, villages and urban townships. A nonpartisan advocacy organization, the League works through cooperative efforts to strengthen the quality of municipal government and administration by providing technical assistance and information to local officials regarding municipal issues.

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The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League.

Volume 81, Number 4

Feature Articles



5 Creating Communities for the Next 50 Years— League Public Policy Forums Educate and Inspire

Colleen Layton, Arnold Weinfeld, and Andrea Messinger



8 Bicycle Wheels Keep Rolling in Battle Creek

Max Phares and Leah Groya



12 Walking through Detroit's History

Francis Grunow



14 Walk and Bike to a More Prosperous Michigan

Sarah Panken



17 Creating a Form-Based Code in Grand Rapids

Suzanne M. Schulz



21 New Tools for Your Resident-Retention Toolbox?

Happy Homeowners, Businesses Stay Home
Tom Huggler



22 Smart Growth

John Iacoangeli



24 Viva! Marquette

Caroline Weber Kennedy



26 Urban Design—Creating Mainstreet Novi

Charles Smith and Courtney Piotrowski



28 Tom Friedman on Education in the 'Flat World'

A discussion with author Daniel Pink on curiosity, passion, and the politics of school reform in the global marketplace.



38 The League Announces 2008 Finalists for the Community Excellence Award

Seven Regional Projects Vie for Your Vote, Top Honor Announced at the League's Annual Convention



Executive Director's Message

By Daniel P. Gilmartin

Designing a "Sense of Place"

We're all tired of hearing about Michigan's economic woes and, no question, we have some serious challenges ahead. But, as the old adage clearly states, "in crisis there is opportunity." So as we search for new and creative ways to improve our economy, we in local government find ourselves front and center as place makers in the new economy. With a clear and empirical understanding that the presence of vibrant communities is essential for any modern thriving economy, this is local governments' collective opportunity to play shortstop and bat lead-off in a new economic strategy for our state. Are we ready?

You've been hearing a lot about the importance of walkable urbanism and design these days. Creating a unique "sense of place" has become part of our vernacular. One of the ways we can create these vibrant places is through solid design. Let's face it, this state is in trouble, and collectively, we need to figure out how we're going to craft a collection of vibrant places that people want to call home. The reality is that we are losing 46 percent of our college grads to other states. Two-thirds of 24-35 year olds are choosing where to live first, then, looking for a job. And since technology also allows people to work from anywhere, we all need to be asking ourselves what it is that's going to make them choose Michigan? Among other things, they want to live in pedestrian-friendly downtowns, have access to technology and transportation, have the option to rent, and have places to socialize.


The news, however, isn't all bad. Although our macro focus is on the young and talented leaving Michigan and the effect it's having on the economy, it's important that we highlight and celebrate those individuals who have decided to return as well. Ryan Cooley, featured on our cover, is one of those individuals. After finishing high school in Marysville, Michigan, Ryan, like so many ambitious young people, headed to Chicago. But instead of staying there, he went against the trend and moved back to Detroit to join O'Connor Real Estate.

In 1994, when Ryan moved to Chicago to attend DePaul Business School, Chicago's State Street resembled parts of Detroit as it is today. There were vacant lots and storefronts, and Marshall Fields was struggling to survive. However,

where it was once only 50 percent occupied, today there are no vacancies. In 2001 when Ryan moved to the Wicker Park neighborhood northwest of the Loop, he couldn't find a cab to take him there, though condos were selling for \$350,000. As young people moved into the neighborhood, the handful of bars and restaurants grew to more than thirty venues, and the vacant land disappeared. Armed with that experience, Ryan brought his enthusiasm back home and he is striving to be a part of the same transformation for Detroit.

Ryan shared his story at the League's first Public Policy Forum held in Detroit in February at the Detroit Institute of Arts. He offered several reasons why he chose Detroit:

- the strong character of Detroit and its unique style,
- a sense of community in Corktown that he didn't experience in Chicago,
- a higher quality of life—where you can still afford to work and live in close proximity,
- a low barrier of entry into the business market,
- a great cost of living—the ability to launch his own real estate business,
- and, most importantly—to be a part of something bigger than himself.

Our challenge as community leaders is to capitalize on our unique assets and work to attract more Ryan Cooleys to our hometowns—people who will provide talent and creativity to help spur economic growth in Michigan and create vibrant places that will compete nationally and globally. To do this, we may need to throw out some old maxims about how we create communities, and instead look to change the DNA of how we think and act as communities and regions. Design defines and communities count, especially in the new economic competition for people and jobs. I hope this issue of *The Review* will shine some light on the economic and cultural importance of our communities and provide inspiration and direction for local leaders to make Michigan's communities great places for the 21st century. 

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Departments

3 Executive Director's Message

Designing a "Sense of Place"
Daniel P. Gilmartin

16 Meet a Millennial

36 Greener Communities. Greener Michigan.

Emily Norton

37 Legislator Salute—Rep. Marie Donigan

40 Legal Spotlight

A Short Course in "Future Interests": The Bane of Every Aspiring Attorney
Sue Jeffers

41 Legislator Salute—Sen. Jason Allen

42 Municipal Marketplace

47 Municipal Q&A

Mary Charles

Creating Communities for the Next 50 Years— League Public Policy Forums Educate and Inspire

By Colleen Layton, Arnold Weinfeld and Andrea Messinger



Putting communities at the center of Michigan's economic turnaround has its challenges and opportunities—both of which start by understanding and cultivating “sense of place.” A four-part series of public policy forums, made possible by a Michigan State Housing Development Authority grant, brought experts from think tanks, universities and research-based fields across the country to educate and inspire community leaders and to get them thinking differently about Michigan's future. As we told League members who participated in these events—be inspired, be informed, be ambassadors of the message we are about to share . . .

Millennials Are a Big Deal

Attracting and retaining young talent is key to building prosperity in a global, knowledge-based economy. And by young talent, we mean millennials. Born 1977 to 1996, they make up the second largest population segment after the baby boomers. Research indicates these highly educated, highly entrepreneurial college grads look for a place to live and then look for a job—in other words, they don't follow employers, employers follow them. According to Michigan Future, Inc., 46 percent of Michigan's spring 2007 graduates moved to core cities like Chicago, Minneapolis and Madison. It's time our communities start giving millennials what they've been raised to expect—diversity, urbanism, a green conscious, the ability to walk amongst vibrant downtowns, entrepreneurs and anchor institutions. Our opportunity: Millennials seek a lifestyle and sense of place only communities can provide.

Design is Not Optional

Design is attracting and retaining talent and creating vibrant downtowns.

Communities are shooting themselves in the foot with municipal zoning rules that segregate uses and create urban sprawl instead of developing requirements that foster creating places people want—lofts above downtown shops, outside seating, tables on the sidewalks. One solution is the use of form-based codes—they require greater control of form and less control of use, allowing public space to take shape and create “sense of place.” The goal is “walkable urbanism”—pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use places that will create a vibrant downtown. Our opportunity: Unused space lends itself to the concept of urban design. Look around your community to find areas where people can stumble into fun, where they can walk to work or home to informal third places—the gritty and unkempt Ann Arbor warehouse where we held our final forum is a great example.



Civic and Social Networking: Eat or Be Eaten


Detroit native Sarah Szurpicki left Michigan for higher education on the east coast. Years later, Sarah and a like-minded friend from Pittsburgh returned to their hometowns to start the Great Lakes Urban Exchange (GLUE), a grassroots

organization that fosters the creation of civically engaged social networks in cities across the midwest and northeast. Like GLUE, people everywhere are talking about communities in ways never imagined just a few short years ago....through blogs, YouTube and other social networking sites. Due to the ubiquitous use of the web, communities can proactively control their message, however, those that do not take to the world of social networking stand to lose whatever voice they have. Communities need to rethink the way they do business to incorporate Web 2.0-friendly communication. Opportunity: The most popular and effective social networking tools are free; harnessing their value is proving priceless.

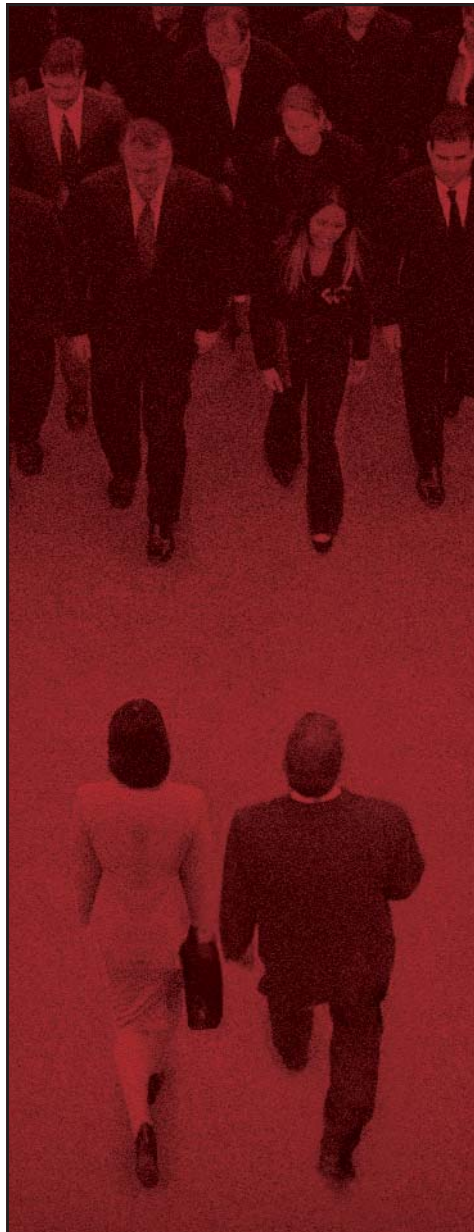
We Should Care

Mom wasn't kidding when she said "darling, you are the future." Young, talented people are the world's most sought-after resource—for the sake of this great state, let's give them what they want—vibrant communities. We will be carrying this message forward in everything the League does. Through Annual Convention, Capital Conference, Regional Education Seminars, educational programming, the Elected Officials Academy curriculum and more, expect information to help you create communities for the next 50 years, not the past 50 years.

Can't Get Enough . . .

Visit www.mml.org today for information from the Public Policy Forums including related presentation materials, summaries and video, and to register for the League's Annual Convention, October 1-4, which features sessions like: A Tool for Creating a Sense of Place, Public Policy Forum Attendee Perspective, and The Missing Link—An Urban Agenda. 





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Bicycle Wheels Keep Rolling in Battle Creek

By Max Phares and Leah Groya

Community master plans can collect a lot of dust before seeing the light of day. The cost and desire to implement a community's vision can be prohibitive, particularly during challenging economic times when budget competition from common infrastructure needs is high. The dust never had a chance to settle in Battle Creek—the city has made tremendous progress bringing their Non-Motorized Transportation Network Master Plan to life.

Battle Creek realized that its streets could be better utilized to promote an active and healthy lifestyle for residents. The community of 53,000 had an extensive linear park system along the Kalamazoo River but lacked non-motorized connections between the parks and neighborhoods and between schools and neighborhoods. Connections from the city's pedestrian-friendly downtown to outlying areas also did not exist.

Seeking to create a non-motorized network that safely connects pedestrians and bikers from their origins to desired destinations, the city worked with Wade Trim planners and engineers to develop a 20-year Non-Motorized Transportation Network Master Plan.

Public Engagement Validates Desired Connections

The plan was developed during 2005 and 2006 using a context-sensitive approach that featured strong stakeholder involvement. Many modes of non-motorized transportation are addressed including pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian and canoe. It includes connections throughout the entire city and links to adjacent communities within Calhoun County and the region. Existing infrastructure resources were used to develop an efficient system that would minimize disruption to the community and be compatible with the human and natural environments.

Extensive public participation activities included an online survey and two workshops that helped identify preferred routes, corridors, destinations, and facilities. Participants then placed Post-it Notes on a map of the city to indicate where they would like to see bike lanes and connections added. Input was also obtained from surrounding communities, Calhoun County, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the public school districts, neighborhood planning groups, Battle Creek Area Transportation Study, and a number of special interest groups and individuals.

The plan includes an existing conditions analysis including primary destinations within the community; maps and graphics illustrating preferred locations for off-road trails and on-road bike lanes; and design considerations and typical cross-sections for various conditions found within the city. The plan also contained short-term priority projects, recommended actions and an implementation strategy, including estimates of probable costs and potential funding strategies.

Community Enthusiasm Boosts Implementation

Priority projects were identified using the following criteria:

- Ease of implementation (projects with few design conflicts and low costs)
- Coincides with other projects (such as road resurfacing)
- Provides connections to important designations and transportation modes
- Includes school-related usage

Based on these criteria, all projects in the non-motorized system were classified as short, intermediate, or long-term. In addition to projects that provided connections for non-motorized traffic, other recommendations included developing a City Bike Rack Program for public parks and major facilities, including schools; working with state and local groups to expand opportunities for safe, low-impact water recreation on the city's rivers; setting up a dedicated maintenance program for non-motorist facilities, and developing a coordinated sign and way-finding system.



Battle Creek's commitment to create an alternative transportation system promotes healthy lifestyle opportunities for residents and visitors.



A variety of stakeholders were involved in developing the plan.



Incorporating new bike lanes when city streets were resurfaced proved an effective implementation strategy; 128 bike lane miles have been added in three years.



On-road bike lanes provide non-motorized connections along the city's existing linear park system.

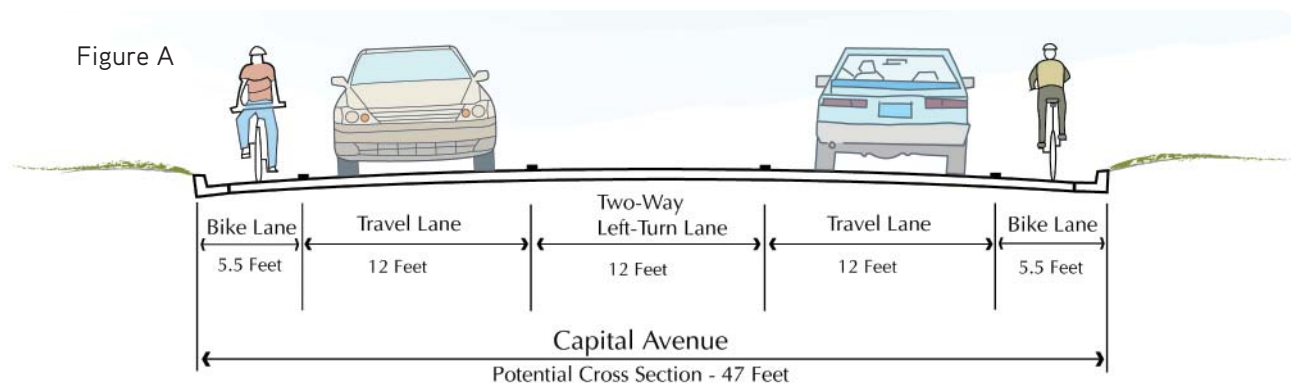
Enthusiasm throughout the community and with city officials was so high that implementation of a pilot program began before the final plan was completed. During the fall of 2005 Wade Trim was retained to layout pavement markings and signing for bike lanes.

Implementation was of particular concern because it required reducing the number of vehicle through lanes from four to two and installing a center two-way, left-turn lane to provide space for bike lanes. This important north-south corridor carries both residential and commercial traffic to and from the downtown area. While the lane reductions did reduce the vehicular level of service, corridor safety has been improved and public response to the new bike route has been positive.

Street Resurfacing Proves Ideal Catalyst

While implementation was a major focus from day one, the street resurfacing program provided a tangible catalyst to incorporate the city's new bike lanes. All projects on the city's ongoing street resurfacing program were reviewed. Resurfacing projects that included non-motorized facilities such as bike lanes were identified and flagged for implementation. As each resurfacing project was bid, the non-motorized elements such as widening the shoulder, changing the pavement markings to include bike lanes, etc., were included in the design. In addition to construction cost savings achieved by combining the two projects into one, the visual appearance of the final product was much more pleasing than a retrofit.

The city's resurfacing schedule continued to advance the addition of bike lanes. To date, 128 bike lane miles have been implemented on 19 streets. Many of the streets are 38-feet wide from curb to curb. Some sections had two through lanes with parking on both sides. During resurfacing, several design options were used depending upon the need to accommodate parking and left-turn vehicles. For example, one alternative,



Lane reductions enabled bike lanes to be implemented on Capital Avenue, a major route to downtown.


where there are numerous left-turns, utilized two through lanes, a center left-turn lane, and bike lanes. In the second alternative, where it is necessary to provide on-street parking, there are two through lanes, one parking lane, and bike lanes. The third alternative, where on-street parking is not needed, includes two wide through lanes and bike lanes. (Figure B)

Comments from the public continue to be positive. Concerns primarily came from citizens when on-street parking was changed in front of their homes. In some cases, on-street parking on both sides of the street was limited to parking on one side in order to accommodate the bike lanes. Discussions with the home owners, explaining the change, how it impacted them, and why changes were made, aided in addressing most concerns. Occasionally, motorists have been observed parking in the bike lane, but it has not become a problem.

Figure B: Concepts were developed for various road widths and conditions within the city to illustrate alternatives to accommodate on-road bike lanes.

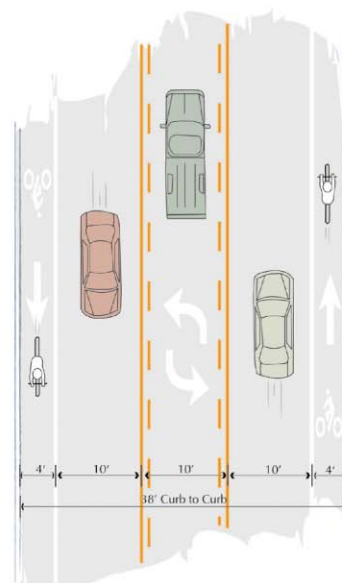
Key Lessons Learned During the Program Include:

- Community involvement from the beginning to the end of the plan development is essential to produce an effective, implementable plan.
- Test the waters of public concern by implementing several inexpensive bike lanes or trail connections on a pilot basis. This provides the opportunity for the public to get a feel for the impacts of the feature without major construction that cannot be easily changed.
- The visual features of a road corridor are an important consideration when adding a non-motorist accommodation such as a bike lane. Incorporating these features during a resurfacing project not only saves construction costs, but increases the aesthetics of the finished product.

Battle Creek's Non-Motorized Transportation Network Master Plan supports a healthy, vibrant community image and reflects the community's values. With additional non-motorized facilities planned, the system will be an important community asset for years to come. 

Max Phares is traffic manager for the city of Battle Creek. You may reach him at 269-966-3343 or MVPhares@ci.battle-creek.mi.us. Leah Groya, AICP, LEED-AP, is a planner in the Environmental Design Group at Wade Trim. You may reach her at 734-947-9700 or lgroya@wadetrim.com.

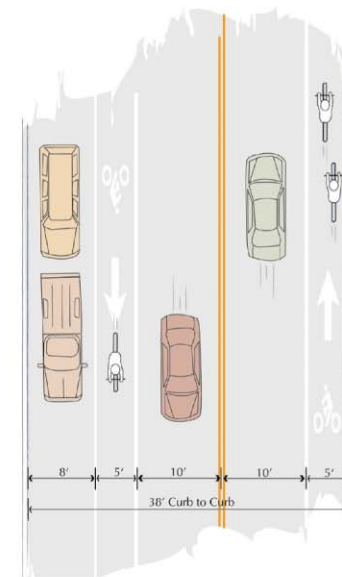
Figure B



38' Wide Curb to Curb

Alternative 1:

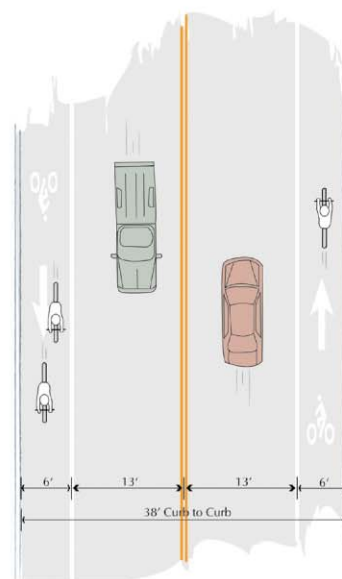
- No Parking
- (2) 10' Travel Lanes
- 10' Center Lane
- 4' Bike Lanes
- Speed Limit 35 mph or less
- Low truck volumes



38' Wide Curb to Curb

Alternative 2:

- Parking One Side
- (2) 10' Travel Lanes
- 5' Bike Lanes
- Speed Limit 35 mph or less
- Low truck volumes



38' Wide Curb to Curb

Alternative 3:

- No Parking
- (2) 13' Travel Lanes
- 6' Bike Lanes
- Speed Limit 45 mph or less

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Walking through Detroit's History

by Francis Grunow

To say that Detroit is a walker's paradise is something of an overstatement. Unfortunately, we don't have La Rambla, Champs-Élysées or Fifth Avenue to remind us of how being alive in a city can transform what most of us consider exercise into sheer pleasure. Distance magically shrinks in great urban places that have a lot of "stuff" to see along the way. Impressive buildings (both large and small) provide the backdrop to lively streetscapes that catch the eye and stir the imagination.

Urban Texture

To say that Detroit has the bones of a walker's paradise is most certainly an understatement. We've got great building blocks—landmarks that other cities, including places like Barcelona, Paris and New York would kill to get their hands on. To be sure, we've got our share of interesting urban texture, from numerous residential historic districts to all manner of businesses, churches, and institutions, each speaking volumes to our city's rich cultural heritage.

What Detroit tends to miss is the in-between space that ties our districts and landmarks together in a cohesive way. And so, our city's great walk, say down Woodward, from the Cultural Center to the river, is diminished. It takes more imagination to be inspired, and there is less impetus to try.

Preservation Wayne: The Start

From its beginnings over 30 years ago, Preservation Wayne understood that in its quest to preserve, promote, and protect the buildings that define Detroit, people must be given the opportunity and the tools to experience the built environment if they are to understand their place within it. And while the concept of the guided walking tour is not new, its use as a vehicle to get people engaged in their environment was, and continues to be, a novel way to achieve the goal.

As part of its strategy to save Wayne State's historic Mackenzie House and other important Cultural Center icons in the 1970s, Preservation



Wayne leadership recognized that an effective way to get people to care about a building or neighborhood was to literally get people into that building or neighborhood. Numerous tours were held in and around campus, and through houses like Mackenzie, to build awareness. Doing this meant people could physically connect to a house or building; learn about its history, its context, and why it was important.

After several initial battles, and for many years to follow, Preservation Wayne shifted its focus to East Ferry Avenue, to advocate for the street's reuse and restoration. The stately mansions and homes that lined this street, located one block north of the Detroit Institute of Arts, were largely vacant and underutilized, and their future was far from certain.

East Ferry Avenue represented a rare opportunity for Preservation Wayne. The buildings along its five blocks between Woodward and I-75 were largely intact and were generally of a very high quality



Cultural Center Tour

of construction, representing several architectural styles. In the first block off Woodward in fact, several mansions of exquisite detail and craftsmanship remained in remarkably good shape.

Moreover, the story of the people of East Ferry was a compelling one, with the narrative of Detroit's industrial elite intermingling with the progressions of an upper middle class Jewish population, and subsequent African-American community that flourished in the 1920s-60s, utilizing many of the homes for business, educational, fraternal and institutional use.

Telling a Story Through Walking Tours

With East Ferry's combination of architecture and history as a basis, Preservation Wayne developed walking tours that exposed people to a part of the city many had never been. The tour became as much about making a case for saving East Ferry as it was about telling the street's story over and over again. In time, as more people learned about East Ferry, a common vision began to emerge that would eventually see the street placed on the national register, as well as a master planning effort in the mid 1990s that helped inspire what would become the Inn on Ferry Street by 2002.

In the new millennium, Preservation Wayne continued to build its tour program. Today, five neighborhoods are explored every week: Downtown, Eastern Market, Midtown, the Cultural Center, and the site of automotive heritage at Milwaukee Junction. From the height of a 40-story building in the Financial District to the independent produce stalls of Eastern Market's Shed 2, the tours offer a sense of the city's range of scope and activity. From the incredible story of automotive innovation at Ford's Piquette Plant, to the Beaux Arts beauty of the Detroit Public Library, to the Victorian cobblestones of West Canfield, the tours offer a sense of the city's endeavor, culture and residential past and possibilities.




Annual Theatre Tour

Other periodic tours, such as this summer's Movie Palaces tour on August 9, give people a rare, behind-the-scenes glimpse of Detroit's entertainment district. The dots were connected in the area around Grand Circus Park, with guides offering backstage access and a wealth of information about venues such as the Fillmore (formerly the State Theatre), former Michigan Theatre, Detroit Opera House, Music Hall, Gem and Century, Fox and City theaters.

Seeing Detroit in a New Light

By and large, the people that seek out to know Detroit through walking tours acknowledge the city in a new way. Often comments like "I had no idea," or "I never looked at it that way," are heard between tour stops, and in many cases the spaces between places do manage to shrink in people's minds.

After seven years and thousands of satisfied customers, Preservation Wayne's Detroit Heritage Tour Series is going strong, with departures every Saturday morning at 10 a.m. and Tuesday evenings at 5:30 p.m. until the end of September. Please visit www.preservationwayne.org for more information. 

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Walk and Bike to a More Prosperous Michigan

By Sarah Panken



Imagine

Imagine if your day was like this: you walk with your children to school before heading to work, and along the way stop to talk with neighbors. At lunch, you go to the park to enjoy clean air and the scenic stream before walking to local businesses to run errands. After work, you bike past street art on your way to meet your family at the recreation center for a family fitness class. While this type of day may not be typical, wouldn't you want to live in a community where it's possible?

Traditionally, when people think about health, they think about health care. While this is an important component of a healthy community, a healthy community is one that embraces the belief that health is more than merely an absence of disease; it includes maintaining a high quality of life and productivity.

An Active Living Community

Many Michigan communities are using innovative strategies to cultivate prosperity despite the stagnant economy. There is a wide range of approaches, but designing an active living community, where residents have the opportunity to walk or bike to work, school, or to run errands, as well as recreate in a safe and secure environment, is one part of creating a more livable, sustainable, and economically viable community.

Walkable, Bikeable Communities Can Experience a Range of Benefits

A stronger local economy. Communities with amenities such as sidewalks, recreational fields, and bike paths and trails experience higher real estate values.

Increased safety and security. Communities that provide adequate facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists reduce the risk of injury and fatality for those who walk and bike.

Enhanced community connections. When people walk, bike, and participate in recreation programs, they come into contact with one another on a regular basis. This can create stronger ties and a sense of community.

Greater social equity. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 1/3 of Michigan residents do not drive because they are too young, too old, or have a disability. Providing these populations with the means to get to work, school or

the grocery store is an important component of ensuring safe and convenient opportunities for all residents to be active and independent.

A Cleaner Environment

Communities designed so that people can park their cars and walk, bike, or use public transportation can reduce their carbon footprint and pollution output to create a cleaner environment.

These benefits add up to one thing: a good quality of life for Michigan residents. The following examples highlight what two communities have done to promote active living.

Muskegon

Muskegon has created an environment that supports walking and biking. A former industrial community, Muskegon is in the process of re-inventing itself as a premier tourist destination. With the help of a community visioning process, the city has initiated several

projects that emphasize good design principles and will result in Muskegon becoming a more active community. The reconstruction of Western Avenue has turned the site of a defunct covered mall into a pedestrian-friendly, aesthetically pleasing environment. The design includes new buildings, infill development, 10' sidewalks that accommodate sidewalk furniture, street buffer strips with trees, pedestrian crosswalks, a boulevard, decorative lighting, and a traffic circle at the intersection of Western Avenue and Third Street.

Promoting Active Communities (PAC)

A session on this topic will be offered at our Convention on Mackinac Island, October 1-4, describing the PAC Program, the role it plays in positive community change in the realm of health and the built environment, and the integral role local government leaders play in using this tool to help their communities become models of active living. A panel of local government officials who have participated in the PAC program will discuss their experiences.



Relaxing at Muskegon's Heritage Landing

Traverse City

Traverse City promotes active living and educates residents about how they can integrate physical activity into their daily routines. Programs like “Smart Commute” showcase and encourage the use of alternative transportation to travel to and from work. The weeklong celebration challenges residents to bicycle, walk, carpool or use the local public transportation system. This program educates residents on the benefits of incorporating physical activity into their daily routines and provides a platform for residents to gain valuable knowledge and skills that equip them to lead an active lifestyle. The event started 13 years ago and in 2007, grew to approximately 1,000 employees from over 40 local businesses that walked, carpooled, or rode public transit to work.



Traverse City Smart Commute

Design Elements

No specific template exists for what an active community must look like, but in general, they have these characteristics:

- Transportation networks that accommodate all modes of travel, not just cars.
- A comprehensive network of connected non-motorized facilities (on and off road).
- Compact, dense, and diverse development.
- A master plan, zoning ordinance, or site plan review process that supports creating a walkable, bikeable environment.
- Aesthetics matter (don't ignore the finishing touches like landscaping and street furniture).

Sarah Panken is the active communities coordinator for the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness. You may reach her at 517-347-7891 or slpanken@michiganfitness.org.

To learn more, see the Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities at www.mihealthtools.org/communities/

Getting Started

Interested in promoting active living in your community but unsure how to proceed? Fortunately, there are tools available that can help you realize your vision. The Promoting Active Communities (PAC) Program is like no other in the country. This unique program consists of:


- A FREE online self-assessment tool.
- An award system to recognize Michigan communities that make it easier for residents to lead a physically active lifestyle.

Each PAC assessment section is scored, and a personalized community report is created that can be used for planning purposes.

Every Michigan city, village and township interested in creating an active living community is encouraged to complete the PAC online assessment. Since 2003, 82 percent of people who have been directly involved in completing the PAC assessment have been affiliated with a local government office.

To get your community involved with the PAC Program, simply follow these steps:

- Discuss strategies to initiate participation in the PAC Program with community leaders or an existing community coalition.
- Form an appropriate team of community members.
- Visit the Promoting Active Communities website to preview the online assessment & register your community at: <http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities>.

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports and the Michigan Fitness Foundation envision a physically educated population with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a healthy, vigorous and safe lifestyle in communities designed to support physical activity. 

For more information, visit www.michiganfitness.org.



Meet a Millennial




I am Jessica Decker. I was born and raised in Michigan and currently live in Lansing. I own and operate Decker's Coffee Co.—a unique coffee shop in downtown Lansing. I recognized the opportunity in downtown Lansing, evidenced first with the numerous lofts being built, then with other upstart

businesses opening and the overall beautification that was taking place. I knew that now was the time to open my business in the downtown area. I wanted to be a part of the energy and growth that was taking place here. It wasn't easy, but with a great mentor, and many friends, I achieved my goal.



The city of Lansing was very easy to work with in receiving necessary permits and answering my questions. Before I knew it, my doors were open. It's now been over a year, and each day gets better and better. I moved downtown to be close to the business and so far, it is my most favorite place that I have ever lived. Everything I need is readily available. My neighbors and other local business owners are great people. And at night, downtown is so beautiful.

People that inspire me are those that are willing to take a risk and learn about something new. Not only in business, but in their dreams; whether that is getting an education, taking surfing lessons, art classes, or organizing a fundraiser. Personally, I enjoy making people happy and being involved in the community. It intrigues me when people understand the importance of helping the community, shopping locally, and donating personal time and money for others.

I love Michigan because my family is here. I also love the people that live, work and visit this city. They are the reason I chose to stay in Michigan. I love that I can go up north and run into friends and customers. I love that when you need a helping hand, people come forward. I love that I can be in the city, yet drive a short distance to go fishing, camping, hiking, and swimming. Michigan is my home, and I will stay here for the rest of my life. 



If you are interested in visiting Decker's Coffee Co. it is located at:
220 S. Washington Square, Lansing Michigan, 48933



Creating a Form-Based Code in Grand Rapids

by Suzanne M. Schulz

A 40-year old master plan and an antiquated zoning ordinance can equate to development that is not serving the best interests of a community. Those would, of course, be the first items on a city planner's list—but when developers and regular citizens start to charge City Hall...well, Houston you've got a problem. Now, couple the crisis with rising fuel prices, talk of "carbon footprints," changing demographics, and the desire to be relevant in the New Economy, and simple amendments to plans and regulations don't seem to be enough. A complete make-over is needed. The city of Grand Rapids just did that with an overhaul of its master plan and zoning ordinance.

New Master Plan

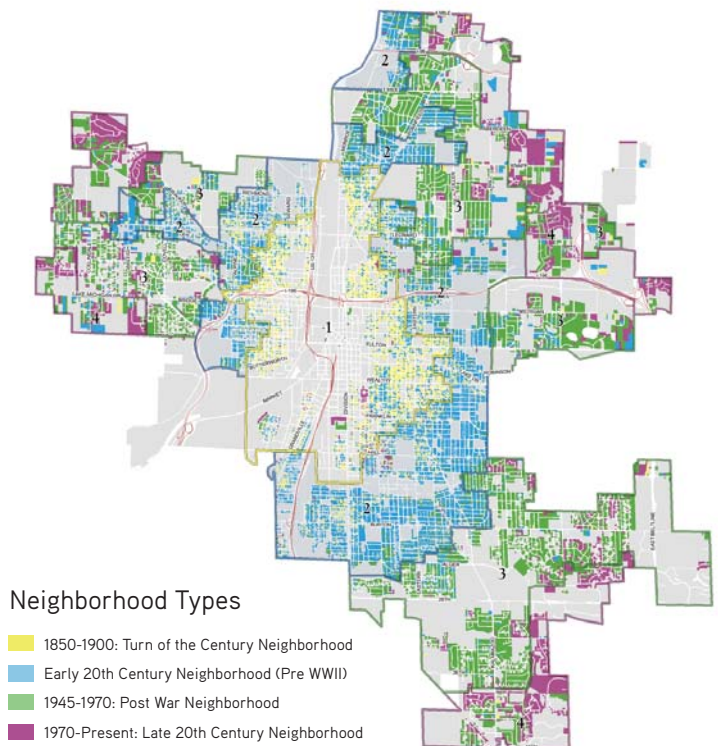
By the year 2000, Grand Rapids' master plan had been amended more than 40 times. The city's Residential Area Priority Team had identified that inconsistent land use decisions were chipping away at neighborhood cohesiveness. The Right Place Program (an economic development advocacy group) and the Frey Foundation noted that economic development opportunities were being lost or not fulfilling their full potential. The need for a new plan was identified.

After an 18-month process and nearly 250 community meetings, the city commission adopted a new Smart Growth-based comprehensive master plan. This plan created a new vision for the city that focused on building great neighborhoods, vital business districts, a strong economy, balanced transportation, a city that enriches our lives, a city in balance with nature to achieve these visions through partnerships.

One key finding of the master plan process was the concept that residents and business owners appreciated the "character" of their neighborhood. The challenge was to quantify this character in a meaningful way that would not prove to be over-burdensome to the city's administrative staff and yet provide the basis for a form-based ordinance.

Smart Growth Vision

Grand Rapids used Smart Growth principles as the foundation on which to build its community vision and corresponding land use regulations. Extensive public engagement methods were used throughout the master plan and zoning re-writes to solicit input from the community, test ideas and resolve issues. In every interaction, the tenets of Smart Growth were reinforced. Citizens expressed a strong desire to create a compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented community with a broad range of housing and transportation choices and a strong sense of place.



Neighborhood Types

1850-1900: Turn of the Century Neighborhood
Early 20th Century Neighborhood (Pre WWII)
1945-1970: Post War Neighborhood
1970-Present: Late 20th Century Neighborhood

A development era map was created using the city's GIS; year of construction information was derived from assessor's data.

Defining "Form"

A Neighborhood Pattern Workbook was created to engage citizens in a discussion about their neighborhood's character. The workbook described four neighborhood types. Eventually, these districts were refined to comprise three neighborhood classifications in the zoning ordinance. The findings of the workbook provided planners with a clear definition of the classifications and the metrics needed to define the "form" of each area. While the ordinance was being written, an interim zone district, known as the Planned Redevelopment District (PRD), was utilized to test regulatory concepts and demonstrate how plan goals would be realized; almost immediately impacting the built environment after the master planning process.

Ordinance Format

Zone districts are not done as overlay districts, but rather the neighborhood character designation (created using the Pattern Workbook) is the zone district. All ordinance requirements are based on this premise. For example, there are two residential categories in the new ordinance, Low-Density Residential (LDR) and Mixed-Density Residential (MDR), but there are six residential zone districts classified as Traditional Neighborhood (LDR/MDR), Mid-20th Century Neighborhood (LDR/MDR) and Modern Neighborhood (LDR/MDR). Building placement, lot sizes, entry locations, porch depth, façade transparency, accessory structures and other requirements are suited to fit the neighborhood classification. Commercial district designations are managed in the same way.

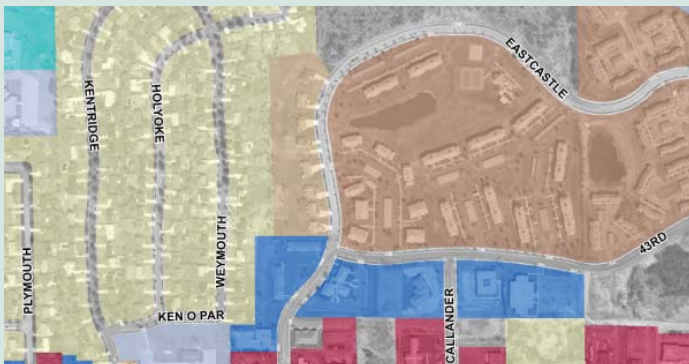
Neighborhood types were evaluated based on patterns in land use, street type, block size, parking location, materials, windows, entry orientation, lot width, building setbacks and height. This evaluation set the metrics for the ordinance's neighborhood classifications.



Turn of the century land use



Turn of the century street pattern



Late 20th century land use



Late 20th century street pattern

All development types are allowed in some way. For example, large lot development is permitted in the Modern Neighborhood with restrictions. The citizens of Grand Rapids stated that they “liked where they live”—and in some cases that means people like living near the infamous 28th Street corridor. The ordinance, however, is structured in a way that will allow more recent, unsustainable types of development to transition into a more compact development pattern that will meet the community’s goals.

In truth, the zoning ordinance is a hybrid code that pulls elements of form-based, performance-based and Euclidian regulations. The mixed-use neighborhood types require a heavy emphasis on performance-based measures to prevent potential detrimental impacts. Traditional regulations that are more Euclidian in nature are needed depending upon the circumstance.

Ordinance language tries to strike a balance between what is reasonable and implementable for a 44 square-mile community that is 97 percent built-out and a limited staff of six planners. Flexibility is built in with the use of administrative departures which are situational but tied to defined standards. All development reviews that satisfy the code are approved administratively. A project only goes to the Planning Commission if a zone change or special land use is required.



Buildings in the Traditional Neighborhood classification are required to be placed at the sidewalk with recessed door entries, hidden parking, and 60-percent window transparency.

Information is conveyed in table format wherever possible, which provides the opportunity to combine multiple districts under one article. The table layout also allows one to see the transition in densities and building form between the neighborhood classifications.

The city of Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance requires:

A healthy community. Sidewalks, pedestrian connections and bicycle parking are required for every commercial development.

A green community. Credit is given for full on-site stormwater retention and the ability to meet LEED requirements. Just enough greenspace is required as part of the overall percentage of a development project to encourage green roofs, urban open spaces and landscape planters.

An accessible community. Building designs in the Traditional Neighborhood classification provide an improved environment for persons with disabilities by including recessed door entries and predictable building placement.

A safe community. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards to improve building transparency, lighting, and access are used to create a safe environment.

An equal community. Residential neighborhoods that have the least capacity to contest potentially deleterious uses are now on equal footing with more able and affluent neighborhoods because similar uses are allowed in all residential zone districts.

A transit-friendly community. Higher density residential uses and mixed-uses are encouraged along major transportation corridors to support businesses and transit ridership.

An affordable community. Accessory dwelling units, higher housing densities and varying forms of housing types are permitted in all residential zone districts.

A collaborative process. Developers are required to meet with neighborhood groups to plan large-scale redevelopment projects and to seek neighborhood input prior to any public hearing on a project.

A community with an identity. Neighborhood classifications describe three different neighborhood character types within the city. These neighborhood classifications provide the basis for all residential and mixed-use commercial zone districts in the city to create a strong sense of place.

Key Ordinance Recommendations

Grand Rapids' new zoning ordinance became effective on November 5, 2007. The tenets of Smart Growth, LEED-ND criteria, Transect and Transit-Oriented Design (TOD) concepts, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards and the community's master plan vision served as the basis for this code.

In short, the ordinance does the following:

- Allows mixed-use development by right in all of the city's commercial districts;
- Permits high density development in appropriate residential and mixed-use areas;
- Treats all neighborhoods of varying incomes and racial compositions equally;
- Provides for accessory dwelling units, row houses, town houses, and high-rises;
- Requires pedestrian- and transit-oriented development, including sidewalks and bicycle parking;
- Reduces all traditional parking requirements;
- Insists on neighborhood input for large redevelopment projects through the creation of an area-specific planning process; and
- Permits development by right where all zoning requirements are satisfied.


A Viable Future

New development projects are now constructed with greater window transparency, less parking, higher quality materials, green elements and pedestrian-oriented building placement. The most visible change in the built environment has been the impact on new construction in locations that are considered to be in the "Traditional Neighborhood" (pre-WWII). Previously identified as community renewal areas in the city's 1969 zoning ordinance, these areas were impacted by "garage" houses on infill lots and large parking lots in front of commercial buildings. Buildings are now required to frame the street and parking lots are required to be hidden or screened by one of five landscape screening methods. This arrangement of buildings and parking areas will create a more pedestrian and transit-oriented city.



New residential structures must fit the character of the existing neighborhood, including building materials and placement. This infill development is located at the edge of downtown with a density of 20 units/acre.

Grand Rapids' future economic, environmental and social sustainability is tied to the city's physical development patterns. Mixed-use development will reduce automobile trips and miles traveled, improve air quality and create a vibrant community. The reassignment of uses in residential zone districts now distributes alternative forms of housing equally; economically challenged neighborhoods no longer bear the sole responsibility of providing group housing arrangements. The ordinance provides for transit-oriented development and a range of housing types that will create the competitive living environments which will attract a contributing work force.

The city's new plan and ordinance are now serving the best interests of the community, and the reward in economic redevelopment has been impressive. Permit numbers are up, blighted properties are being redeveloped, and our neighborhoods are becoming vibrant, cohesive places. 

Suzanne M. Schulz, AICP, is planning director for the city of Grand Rapids. You may reach her at 616-456-3031 or ssschulz@grcity.us.



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IT'S THE PEOPLE

New Tools for Your Resident-Retention Toolbox?

Happy Homeowners, Businesses Stay Home

By Tom Huggler

Preserving Your Tax Base and Promoting Trust through Citizen Research

William SaintAmour will review the 2008 findings from the statewide Cobalt Citizen Satisfaction Survey of local government satisfaction at the 2008 Annual Convention on Mackinac Island, October 1-4.

While Michigan seeks solutions to a troubled economy, a new resource can help local governments preserve their tax base by retaining both constituents and businesses. The not-for-profit Cobalt Community Research project helps communities identify residents' expectations and how well government performs those services they consider important.

The project is a resident benchmarking survey called the Cobalt Citizen Satisfaction Index, which uses the methodology of the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). This trusted independent assessment has long been the world-class standard for measuring customer satisfaction in both the public and private sectors. "The credibility of the data is unmatched," said William SaintAmour, executive director of Lansing-based Cobalt Community Research, "and it helps participating communities to focus time and budget where the return is strongest."

SaintAmour partnered with the CFI Group to develop the survey model. Focus groups participating in the development of Cobalt's survey included city and township managers and finance directors from seven municipalities, ranging from small townships in the U.P. to large cities in southeast Michigan. The surveys typically ask 25 questions and take residents about 10 minutes each to complete.

The survey programs cost as little as \$2,500 and require very little staff time. In addition to identifying what citizens want and expect from local government, the Cobalt measuring stick identifies improvement opportunities that can have both high impact and high yield.

"Local governments can use the surveys to help them focus efforts and find best practices," SaintAmour said. "They also can benchmark their own performance with that of similarly situated governments to understand where they are weak,

where they are strong, and how they stack against the broader public and private sectors." The program provides a credible tool to report progress and promote citizen trust.


The 2008 Michigan Baseline Survey

Cobalt Community Research launched a baseline statewide survey in March of 2008 to measure citizen satisfaction and address multiple aspects of respondents' home communities. The survey was sent to Michigan residents age 18 or older by mail, and over 300 responded.

On a scale of zero to 100, Michigan local governments overall received the following scores:

• Great Place to Live:	65
• Public Schools:	60
• Utility Services:	75
• Property Taxes:	56
• Parks and Recreation:	66
• Library:	75
• Community Health Care:	68
• Quality of Life:	50
• Community Events:	48
• Community Environment:	48
• Leadership:	46
• Cost of Living:	51

Residents scored their likelihood of recommending their community to others at 62. Residents scored "How likely is it that you will be living in your community five years from now?" as a 68. Other scores included: Willingness to volunteer—42 and Support for the current administration—50. The Cobalt Index showed an overall satisfaction with local community score of 50. This figure compares to an ACSI overall satisfaction with government score of 68 and an ACSI rating of 75.2 for the private sector. Scores of 50 or less are low, according to ACSI's 20 years of survey data.

SaintAmour said the Cobalt surveys provide key data to support quality decision making by local governments. "They couldn't come at a better time," he said. "If survey results help a community retain just one resident for one year, the cost is justified." With the baseline study completed, local governments are encouraged to participate in this non-profit project; participation includes the survey and online access to results and benchmarks. The survey can be conducted by mail, email or phone, and it offers the opportunity to add additional questions specific to the needs of the community in a cost-effective way. In addition to targeted community surveys, the Cobalt/CFI group provides focus groups and facilitates meetings using a wireless audience response system. 

For more information, go to cobaltcommunityresearch.org or call 877-888-0209.

Tom Huggler is a freelance writer who lives in Sunfield, Michigan. You may reach him at 517-566-7334 or HugglerTom@cs.com.



Smart Growth

By John Iacoangeli

The concept of Smart Growth began to take shape in the early 1970s in response to the cost of acquiring urban land for highway expansion and the resulting disruption to neighborhoods and central cities. Smart Growth promotes the development and redevelopment of cities as an alternative to the practice of urban sprawl. The goals associated with Smart Growth include compact and higher density development, expanding choices for transportation and housing, walkable and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods and cities, the idea of using urban design to create a place and strengthen community, and the preservation of cultural and natural resources. Agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Urban Land Institute, American Association of Planning, American Institute of Architects, and the U.S. Green Building Council promote Smart Growth and its respective elements.

The Ten Principles of Smart Growth Include:

1. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices. Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.
2. Create walkable neighborhoods. Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth.
3. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration. Growth can create great places to live, work and play—if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow.
4. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place. Smart Growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and

construction which respond to community values.

5. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.

For a community to be successful in implementing Smart Growth, it must be embraced by the private sector.

6. Mix land uses. Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live.
7. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.

Open space preservation supports Smart Growth goals by preserving critical environmental areas, improving quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

8. Provide a variety of transportation choices. Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key aim of Smart Growth.
9. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.

Smart Growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that

existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space on the urban fringe.

10. Take advantage of compact building design. Smart Growth provides a means for communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

Throughout Michigan, municipalities are incorporating some, if not all, of these principles into their master plans.

Village of Onkama and Onkama Township, Manistee County

Two local governments that share one of Michigan's crown jewels, a high-quality inland lake (Portage Lake) connected to Lake Michigan, are in the midst of a community-driven process to develop a joint master plan encompassing their communities. This plan is a joint effort aimed at protecting and sustaining their quality of life and economic well-being. The master plan will be a 'blueprint' that guides development of the Onkama community and how it will manage its resources. It will also serve to establish priorities for public or private funding. The plan will provide the framework that the community can utilize to preserve its natural features, build strong neighborhoods, increase commerce, plan for public services, and guide new development.

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Village of Dexter, Washtenaw County

The village of Dexter and Dexter Downtown Development Authority (DDA) worked to jointly redevelop a parcel in downtown Dexter. After both groups purchased the property, the village turned their interest over to the DDA to coordinate the redevelopment of the parcel. Utilizing the village zoning ordinance for the downtown, which allows for mixed-use development, the DDA procured an interested developer for the project. The new building, known as the Monument Park Building, is a mixed-use development with a first floor restaurant and upper story offices. The project utilized brownfield tax credits and followed the village zoning ordinance, which required new construction to meet the U.S. Secretary of the Interior guidelines for new construction in historic areas. Many Smart Growth principles were incorporated into this project, including mixed-use development, community collaboration, walkability, and creating a sense of place.



Village of Bellevue and Bellevue Township, Eaton County

These Eaton County municipalities became the first units of government in the state to form a joint Planning Commission. The rationale behind the partnership was to protect and enhance the economic condition of the village as the center of trade and commerce and the protection of agricultural properties in the township. The joint master plan envisioned growth inside the village to parallel the investment in public infrastructure as an alternative to sporadic sprawl in the township.

City of Pleasant Ridge, Oakland County

Located in south Oakland County this community of 2,500 residents was recently listed in *This Old House* magazine as one of ten most desirable neighborhoods in the United States. The community is walkable, tree-lined, compact, and protective of its architectural character and heritage. Two-thirds of the buildings in the community are listed on National Register of Historic Places and the




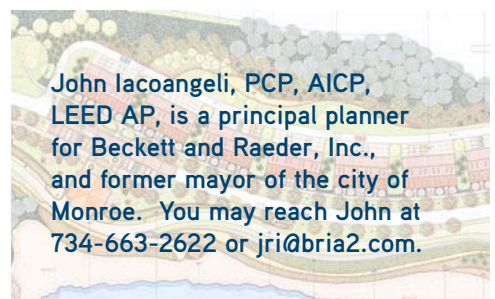
balance of the community will be submitted for nomination late 2008. Several years ago, the city and the Pleasant Ridge Downtown Development Authority collaborated with a developer to redevelop a former gas station site on Woodward Avenue for a residential development known as Maywood Townhomes. Project objectives were to provide a different form of housing not found in the Pleasant Ridge market, redevelopment of an underutilized property, and foster the community's sense of place as a livable and active urban area.

City of Monroe, Monroe County

The city of Monroe Brownfield Redevelopment Authority was responsible for the redevelopment of the former North Side Consolidated Paper Plant. This project has been ongoing since the mid 1990s and involved the demolition of an abandoned paper mill, planning for a neighborhood, remediation and redevelopment of the property. In concert with the developer, Crosswinds Communities, Monroe has created a new residential neighborhood, known as Mason Run, and creatively changed the character and appeal of this portion of the city. The property is located near downtown Monroe and very walkable to many public and private venues, includes parks and open spaces, and the architecture of the new homes is based on the architectural style of historic properties in Monroe's National Historic districts.



Regardless of the terminology, New Urbanism, Smart Growth, sustainability, Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), these ideas all focus on using our resources wisely, reinvesting in our existing communities, conserving our natural resources and preserving our cultural resources. Implementation of these objectives will create more livable and enriched communities in Michigan. 



Viva! Marquette

By Caroline Weber Kennedy

Marquette's long-term vision of community design and public investment strategy yields ever-increasing returns in private dollars, dramatically improves the lifestyle of residents, and makes the city a major draw for the millennial generation. The payoffs have never been more evident than in the past year, especially along the lower harbor. This space exudes mixed-use success—new restaurants with views of the water overlook public green space, and new living space in former warehouse-type buildings is full. People are biking, skating and walking in this aesthetic environment to accessible “third place” venues.

First and second places are home and work. Third places are where millennials spend their social time, also known as 1000 nights—two nights a week, 50 weeks of the year, for the 10 years from the time they enter the workforce until the time they start families.



Marquette's lower harbor ore dock is no longer operational, but this doesn't mean there aren't big plans for its future. In the meantime, the city made the somewhat controversial decision to remove the historic railroad trestle spanning Front Street, leading to the dock. Removal of the trestle visually opened the entrance to Marquette's downtown and the former railroad right of way, now known as Rosewood Walkway, naturally connects the waterfront area to the back of downtown and the exciting Marquette Commons.

The stylized benches gracing Rosewood Walkway and the Commons were fashioned by a local artisan from the metal remains of the historic trestle. No two are alike. They're modern, urban and the very essence of adaptive reuse of historic icons. They are functional art, and attention-grabbing educational links to the city's proud past. The Commons features ice skating and music in winter, a farmer's market and band programs in summer. It's a draw to downtown, where businesses have opened their back entrances creating an easily walkable community—even in the harshest of winter weather.






Three new restaurants opened this spring, joining the popular Up Front & Company—which was one of the first wildly successful adaptive reuses of historic buildings in the immediate vicinity; the dream of a determined man with a deep affection for the area and jazz alike, who literally saved the building within days of the wrecking ball. Of the newer eateries, the second-story Waterfront Restaurant features fine dining in a casual atmosphere, while downstairs L’Attitudes carries more tapas-type fare and an awesome martini menu. Elizabeth’s Chop House features outdoor balcony dining overlooking the harbor. These venues are conveniently located for Marquette’s countless outdoor enthusiasts—either as a destination or as a spontaneous stop for respite.

The lower harbor park, it is worth noting, was once the site of cinder ponds. Marquette began brownfield redevelopment before most, so it’s important to remember that this area changed in long-term phases and was intentionally positioned for the type of development opportunities the city now enjoys. Lakeshore Boulevard also features a series of attractive condominiums—owned mostly by out-of-town big-city dwellers with an appreciation for Marquette’s quality of life. This is one fine example of public investment paying off in private dollars. The original units were all virtually sold before they were complete; and a mere five years later, are commanding more than a one-third return on investment, even in today’s economy.

From the lower harbor to the south entrance of the city is Marquette’s current big project, a former railroad brownfield site now known as Founder’s Landing. Parallel lanes and bridges—one for vehicular traffic and one closer to the water for pedestrian and bike traffic—afford the same panoramic waterfront views as the downtown harbor area. The bridges span a creek draining into Lake Superior, where a natural wildlife area is maintained. Bikers frequently stop and enjoy warming themselves on a nearby outcropping of stones, worn smooth by Superior’s waves. Future development at Founders Landing includes a plan to retain the public access, with additional mixed-use retail, hotel/convention and residential space.



If you haven’t been to Marquette as recently as the past year, you’ll be surprised by the continual progress. But remember—it happened deliberately. It happened by design. 

Caroline Weber Kennedy is manager of Field Operations for the League. You may contact her at 906-428-0100 or ckennedy@mml.org.



Urban Design—Creating Mainstreet Novi

By Charles Smith and Courtney Piotrowski

At a time when communities across Michigan are struggling to attract new residents and investment, one suburban Detroit community stands apart as a shining example of downtown success.

Through the creative use of urban design and public-private co-operation, the city of Novi has overcome the obstacles slowing growth in many communities. Instead, Novi has created a distinctive “sense of place,” and positioned itself as a desirable destination for businesses, residents and visitors.



This aerial perspective sketch illustrates how a diverse mix of architectural styles, building sizes and materials creates a strong sense of place.

MainStreet Novi

Located at the city’s central intersection of Novi Road and Grand River Avenue, MainStreet Novi includes 125,000 sq. ft. of retail and restaurant space, 125,000 sq. ft. of office space, and 80,000 sq. ft. of medical office buildings and 401 lofts and brownstone condominiums. The collection of mixed-use buildings and venues includes chain and independent businesses, day and nighttime uses, destinations for residents and visitors, and amenities for all age ranges. Nearing the end of its planning phase, MainStreet has already had a significant impact on Novi’s image and enhanced the value of the entire community.

A Downtown Vision

With a population of 54,000, Novi is a major and influential suburb of Detroit, enjoying strong residential and retail sectors. But without a downtown to define its image and serve as a central gathering space, many saw the city as merely a string of shopping centers and subdivisions. As a result, city officials seeking to unite the community with a downtown core, attempted the development of MainStreet Novi nearly two decades ago.

While the first attempt to develop the project as a downtown on the edge of a shopping center gave shape to the vision,

it came up short. The early plan laid a foundation for an entertainment-based lifestyle center, but failed to create a unique sense of place or replicate the feel of an historic downtown. The district’s lack of a strong identity was further diluted by an ordinance not allowing for the mix of residential unit sizes—essential to attracting the range of residents that make a community interesting, diverse, and ultimately sustainable. Furthermore, an emphasis on large-scale office space left the district and its businesses nearly vacant after office hours.

Fast forward to the summer of 2008. Developer David Nona of Triangle Development and the city are now about to break ground on phases one through three of the new MainStreet Novi. With planning and design guidance from McKenna Associates over the past three years, Triangle Development and the city have laid the groundwork for a thriving downtown district that fulfills the needs of both businesses and citizens.

Among the important steps planners took was a significant revision of the city zoning ordinance to allow for smaller studio-sized apartments and condominiums. A variety of housing types available at a range of prices will attract the type of residents (young, single professionals, and recent graduates) who most patronize the MainStreet entertainment establishments. Furthermore, the additional residents will naturally provide foot traffic to ensure the district’s vibrancy during daytime, evening, night, and weekend hours.



Different building materials and storefront appearances help to create a more authentic downtown feel, provide visual interest, and encourage foot traffic.

Success through Design

All the while, Nona’s design team was working to create a physical vision for MainStreet Novi that would set the district apart and create a sense of a true urban space.

The vision for MainStreet Novi includes pocket parks and plazas throughout the new downtown, with at least one outdoor gathering or dining space associated with each building. These civic spaces are a vital part of the development's green infrastructure. A public plaza and outdoor, landscaped amphitheater anchor the project and provide venues for special events and informal gathering. These spaces graciously weave the natural environment into public uses, creating a sense of place that provides MainStreet with a competitive edge over similar developments.

Urban design also distinguishes MainStreet Novi. Physical elements—like unique pavers and paving patterns, lighting, site furniture, ornamental landscaping and building materials—create a visually cohesive district. Though sometimes overlooked by municipalities when planning for urban development, these elements provide subtle but important visual cues that buildings and spaces are part of a unified district.

Walkability

Perhaps the most important ingredient to MainStreet Novi's success is its accessibility to the pedestrian. Suburban communities typically cater to the automobile. But MainStreet Novi defies this model as a pedestrian-friendly, walkable district with amenities at every turn.



Walkability is enhanced by wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and interesting and open ground-floor facades that invite strolling, sitting, shopping or socializing.



Green spaces, street trees, outdoor seating areas, and landscaping all help to encourage pedestrian traffic and unite the individual buildings within the district.

McKenna's design team paid careful attention to pedestrian-friendly details including wide sidewalks, outdoor seating areas, informal gathering spaces, pocket parks, plazas, benches, public art, wayfinding signage, and other details that welcome and make pedestrians more comfortable. Internal streets are designed to slow traffic with on-street parking. The long-term plan calls for parking underground, while in the short-term, surface lots are screened to minimize the imposition of automobiles on walkers' streetscape experience.


Often urban design is under-appreciated as little more than construction detailing. But creating an authentic urban feel requires both physical design and an appropriate mix of land uses. Physical design helps distinguish spaces and can even define a district. But the vibrancy that characterizes urban places can only come when land uses include the true urban mix: residential, retail, entertainment, and office.

Public-Private Cooperation

MainStreet Novi's initially slow beginning was the result of zoning regulations that prohibited the very type of housing necessary to attract the demographic on which the district is most dependent. Amendments to the zoning ordinance freed the developer to better respond to market demands while providing the city a more sustainable development.

Like most successful life-style centers, MainStreet Novi incorporates a blend of housing, restaurants, retail and public spaces. Developers typically cannot accomplish these complex mixed-use projects without cooperation from city hall on zoning, land assembly, and parking.

Competitive Edge for Novi

Novi faces the same challenges many suburban communities confront across Michigan—namely retaining local businesses and residents while attracting new talent and investment. In the end, a new downtown, a central gathering place and a distinctive civic identity will make Novi even more competitive as it seeks to attract residents, visitors, jobs and investors. 

Tom Friedman on Education in the 'Flat World'

A discussion with author Daniel Pink on curiosity, passion and the politics of school reform in the global marketplace

Annual Convention Keynote: Daniel Pink – Attend the League's Annual Convention, October 1-4 on Mackinac Island, and find out why Daniel Pink, best-selling author of *A Whole New Mind*, says the future belongs to a different kind of person with a different kind of mind. In his entertaining and provocative keynote presentation, Pink surveys evidence from around the world to reveal how certain sources are nudging us into an era defined not by traditional “knowledge workers,” but by creators and empathizers. He will explain what this transformation means for your community and offer tools and tips to help local leaders navigate this new terrain.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus set out to demonstrate that the world was round. Five hundred plus years later, Thomas Friedman set his sights on explaining that the real new world had a different shape. In his book *The World Is Flat*, Friedman describes how 10 forces are “flattening” the 21st century—making it easier for people in India, China and around the world to compete with Americans and others who had triumphed the century before.

The book has become a huge best-seller in the United States and abroad. And a phrase that once suggested cluelessness—the world is flat—became a marker of sophistication. Educators across America read the work, discussed its arguments and reflected on what it meant for their schools. Meanwhile, Friedman, whose day job is penning a foreign affairs column for *The New York Times*, began hearing from readers who urged him to expand the book. And what readers most wanted to hear about was education, something that Friedman, whose wife is a long-time public school teacher in suburban Maryland and whose daughter is a first-year teacher in Washington, D.C., was all too happy to explore.

Version 2.0, as he calls it, came out in 2006. The paperback edition, Version 3.0, was published in the past year. Today, even as Friedman works on a new book—about environmental technology, economics and geopolitics—*The World Is Flat* continues to reverberate in education circles. It remains a staple in the bedside reading piles of many superintendents.

We sent Daniel Pink—himself the author of another best-selling book that's been embraced by educators, *A Whole New Mind*—to talk with Friedman in his office at the *Times*' Washington bureau. What followed was a wide-ranging conversation about schools, parents, mash-ups, horizontal thinking and the value of “yes, but” teaching.

Daniel Pink: Tom, in the newest editions of *The World Is Flat*, most of the additions have to do with education. Why is that?

Thomas Friedman: That's the question I was asked the most. “Okay, Tom. I'll buy that the world is flat. What do I tell my kids?”

Pink: So what's the answer? What should we be telling our kids?

Friedman: It's really several things. In the latest edition, I added a whole section on why liberal arts are more important than ever. It's not that I don't think math and science are important. They still are. But more than ever our secret sauce comes from our ability to integrate art, science, music and literature with the hard sciences. That's what produces an iPod revolution or a Google.

Pink: It's the combination of the left brain and the right brain. Left-brain thinking—rule-based, linear, SAT-style thinking—used to be enough. Now right-brain thinking—artistry, empathy, narrative, synthesis—is the big differentiator.



Daniel Pink. Dave Aleman, photographer

Friedman: Exactly. You know, I just came back from China and they're always proud of how many engineers they're educating. They are and bless them for it. But they're not educating rounded engineers. I hope we are.

Pink: You write in *The World Is Flat* about Georgia Tech emphasizing art and music for engineers. Is that the right approach?

Friedman: Yes. The Georgia Tech model says your job is most likely not going to be a pure engineering job. Let's say you work for CNN as a computer specialist. It's very likely you will be asked to integrate different kinds of content with different kinds of technology platforms. If schools can

Changing Paradigm: “Green” Plastic Trash Bags

New line of BioBags could mean less landfill space in Michigan

Paper or plastic? The natural assumption is that paper is the more environmentally friendly material. But, a Michigan plastics manufacturer is working to change the way people think about plastic film and bags, thanks to a new line of biodegradable products.

Plascon Biodegradable is a line of plastic film and bags made from an innovative, environmentally safe material that biodegrades within nine months to five years under common conditions. The BioFilm and BioBags are the result of new technology that enables a fully biodegradable product with no toxic residue when decomposed.

The technology comes in the form of an additive that is combined with other plastic resins to render the products biodegradable while maintaining their other desired characteristics – strength and shelf life. This new technology differs significantly from other “degradable plastics” in that it does not replace traditional plastic resins but instead enhances them. The end result is that BioBags don’t sacrifice quality and are better for the environment than traditionally manufactured plastic bags, and in many ways, paper.

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The new BioBags could be a breakthrough for local governments looking for solutions to landfill and land use issues, said Plascon President David Peterson.

“Plastic bags take up five times less landfill space than paper,” Peterson pointed out. “Given the relatively short and non-toxic biodegradation process of BioBags, landfill space could be significantly reduced with use of this material. Just the State of Michigan alone sends about 20 semi-truckloads, or 750,000 pounds of plastic trash can liners to landfills. Imagine the impact with widespread use of BioBags by state and local governments.”

Plascon is embarking on a statewide effort to make local governments and consumers aware of the “green” benefits of BioBags and BioFilm, while busting the myth that plastic bags are bad for the environment. “We’d like every township, county and municipality to consider making BioBags a part of their green program,” added Peterson.

Headquartered in Traverse City, Plascon has five divisions dedicated to supplying municipalities and businesses with a variety of plastic and manufacturing solutions. Plascon also specializes in employment programs for disabled persons and turnkey manufacturing programs for correctional facilities.

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actually produce people who are good synthesizers, they’re going to be more effective and innovative workers.

Pink: What are some other additions you’ve made as you’ve thought more about education and learning?

Friedman: The need for navigation skills.

Pink: What do you mean by that?

Friedman: My friend Joel Cawley from IBM was telling me that his daughter, who was in junior high, came home one day and said, “Dad, my teacher has banned Wikipedia. She says that we cannot cite Wikipedia in any papers because it’s unreliable.” Joel said he thought that was a real mistake, that kids should be forced to learn how to navigate, how to judge what’s in Wikipedia. They should be

taught to triangulate it with what’s in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and what’s in other sources. One of the scary things to me about the Internet is that it’s an open sewer of untreated, unfiltered information. If kids don’t know how to navigate—to know if something is really true and not just to grab the latest thing off Wikipedia—they’re going to have a problem in life.

Pink: Once again, it goes back to integration. Or what I’ve called symphony, which is the ability to fit the pieces together.

Friedman: Absolutely. My friend Rob Watson—a great environmentalist who founded the LEED building concept—Rob likes to say that integration is the new specialty. The generalist is really going to come back. The great generalist—someone who has a renaissance view

of the world—is more likely to spark an innovation than the pure engineer.

Pink: Let’s take this to the people who are reading this interview—school superintendents and administrators. Right now we frog-march kids from math to science to English—and too rarely make the connections among the disciplines. In your travels have you seen any examples of a smarter approach?

Friedman: I’ll give you one of my favorite examples: Rainforest Math. There’s so much one can learn from the laws of nature—not just biology, but Einstein, Newton, physics. And you drive both environmentalism and you drive math. So it’s those kinds of intersections that are going to produce the most innovative students.

Pink: So how do we bring that into the system? There's team teaching, integrating the arts into the curriculum, writing across subject areas. What else?

Friedman: I think you've got to force it a little like Georgia Tech did and say: "You are going to study computing, and you are going to study screenwriting." Then the assignment in the class is: Write an online play with what you've learned.

Pink: That makes sense. Instruction in the subject matter areas, but then leave the execution to the students. And give them a fair amount of autonomy along the way.

Friedman: Right. The assignment can be: "Mash these two together."

Pink: And these kids get mash-ups.

Friedman: Oh, they get mash-ups. They do it naturally. And today, he who mashes best will mash most and be wealthiest.

Pink: Which country is the best masher on the planet?

Friedman: Oh, we are still. It's not even close. But that's why we have to keep our country open. You know, Dan, I've been saying to people: "I used to be a free trader. I'm not anymore. Now, I'm a radical free trader."

Pink: Why?

Friedman: Because if we live in a flat world where whatever can be done will be done, guess who's going to win? People who get the signals first, who do it before it's done to them.

Pink: Okay. Integration. Right-brain thinking. Getting signals first. What else should schools be thinking about?

Pink: What's your take on how that is going in the U.S. schools compared with education systems in other countries?

Friedman: What's happening, I believe in the world, is a global convergence. China's trying to get more innovative. And we're trying to get more rigorous. But I'd rather have our problem than theirs because I think this right-brain stuff is very culture-bound and often hard to teach.



Thomas Friedman at a book signing. Alissa Arford-Leyl, photographer

Friedman: I've added something I got from my friend Ramalinga Raju from Satyam, the Indian company. We decided that the greatest economic competition in the world going forward is not going to be between countries and countries. And it's not going to be between companies and companies. The greatest economic competition going forward is going to be between you and your own imagination. Your ability to act on your imagination is going to be so decisive in driving your future and the standard of living in your country. So the school, the state, the country that empowers, nurtures, enables imagination among its students and citizens, that's who's going to be the winner.

Pink: Let's go to math and science for a moment. I find that in conversations about education, math and science is a showstopper. It's a trump card. You slap it down—"But what about math and science?"—and then all of sudden any discussion about the arts or synthesis or empathy just ceases. Your thoughts?

Friedman: My favorite story is about [Apple CEO] Steve Jobs' speech at Stanford's graduation. He says, "You know, I dropped out of Reed College and had nothing to do so I took a course in calligraphy. And it all went into the Mac keyboard!" That was not an algorithm. That was a question of style and it helped define Apple's niche. Now, that's not to put down algorithms. Apple needed those algorithms to enable it all

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to happen. It's just you've got to have both. It's about integrating the two.

Pink: Right. What's needed, some might say, is a whole new mind.

Friedman (laughing): Yeah, exactly.

Pink: Let's go back to Steve Jobs because I think it's an interesting example. He took that course in calligraphy because he was curious about it. How are we doing on that dimension, on putting kids in contexts that allow them both to be curious and allow them to get the benefits of curiosity?

Friedman: We could be doing better. As you know, my equation is $CQ + PQ > IQ$. Curiosity Quotient plus Passion Quotient is more important than Intelligence Quotient.

Pink: Amen. You show me a curious, intrinsically motivated kid—and I'll show you someone who'll leave the kid who merely complies with the rules and studies for the SAT in the dust.

Friedman: I didn't even get 600 on my math SATs. But I'm a really lateral thinker and I really get energized by people who think laterally because I think that's where the breakthroughs are. This way of thinking is partly innate, but also something that can be acquired. But it's got to be taught. Do you know what the hardest word in journalism is?

Pink: What?

Friedman: Yes.

Pink: Yes? What do you mean?

Friedman: Some editors say, "No, that's not a story, that's no good." But others say, "Yes, but you might want to just formulate it over there or put these two things together. Yes, that's a great idea, go for it." You empower someone that way. They'll get the right answer. But "no"—just that one less letter—it seems to come off the lips so much easier for people. "No, that doesn't work. No, you shouldn't do that." Whereas, "Yes, Timmy, that's a beautiful idea, but why don't you bring a little bit of the science into it now and bring it together with the English?" That kid will go back and surprise you.

Pink: Great point. I think we need a lot more "yes, but" teaching. You've also made a very strong and compelling argument that what might be most important is learning how to learn. How can schools equip more kids with this capacity?

Friedman: Ultimately that almost becomes a psychologist's question: How do you stimulate curiosity? I will learn how to learn if I'm curious.

Pink: But if there's a curiosity deficit, that's peculiar. Kids seem hardwired to explore and investigate. Something happens to them along the way.

Friedman: We beat it out of them.

Pink: When you say "we," whom do you mean? Teachers? Principals? Parents?

Friedman: Well, the system. I don't want to blame anyone. Because of the walls and the silos we've built in, to be curious that means you've got

to cut across them. Curiosity is all horizontal, but specialties are vertical. And specialties protect themselves. So if I can't move horizontally to take me where my curiosity is taking me, I have got a real problem.

Pink: If you look at it in a systemic way, it doesn't make any sense at all. Human beings are naturally curious, I think. Curiosity is probably an evolutionary adaptation. It has to be. You're more likely to survive if you're curious about whether there's a saber-toothed tiger around the corner. The guy who's not curious becomes lunch. So we have these innately curious little humans. They hit a system that suffocates the curiosity. And now we're saying, "Oh, by the way, now that you're 18 or 19, time to be curious again."

Friedman: Exactly.

Pink: It seems at best misaligned, at worst insane.

Friedman: And that's why the Steve Jobses and the Bill Gateses drop out. What does it tell you when two of our greatest innovators are both college dropouts? Something's not quite right about the system.

Pink: Does this call into question the concept of the "school" as we typically think of it? In a world where information was scarce, schools operated as kind of a repository of that precious resource. But now information is abundant. A school doesn't have to harvest and distribute this scarce resource. It has to serve some other kind of function.

Friedman: Right. When information is really abundant, when we can literally pluck it out of the air, you need people to sift it, sort it and connect it.

Pink: Sifters, sorters, connectors, "yes but-ers." That's a nice way to describe a teacher's role today. Now let me ask you a question that's tinged a little bit with politics. Neither one of us are educators. But we've both had the good fortune to talk to lots of teachers, principals and superintendents over the last year. I suspect that being a sifter, a sorter and a yes but-er in a world of No Child Left Behind is pretty difficult.

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Friedman: It is, although it's not impossible. My wife teaches 1st-grade reading and is under the strictures of No Child Left Behind. She's got her handheld device that she's always going around with testing and whatnot. But I know from her staying up late doing lessons that she's trying to stimulate all those other parts of kids' minds. So again, you don't want to go to either extreme here. You can't be a really good connector if you don't know algorithms and calculus. But you can't be a connector if you only know algorithms and calculus. So it's really striking a balance. And the question is, in the last decade, have we gotten out of balance?

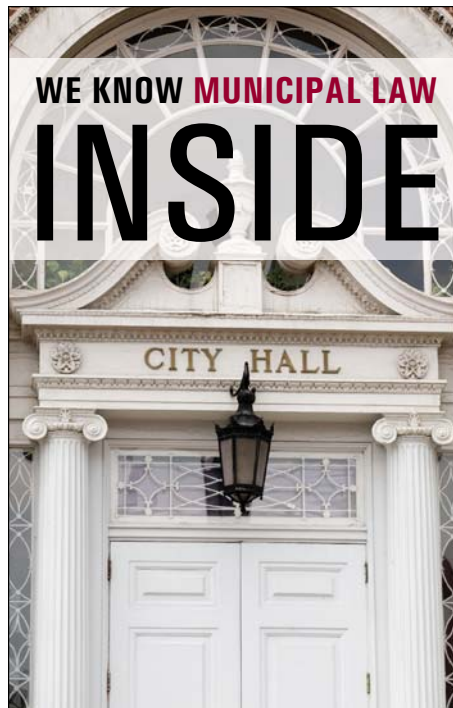
Pink: I think the answer is yes. You've got schools moving ever more toward routines, right answers, and standardization—at precisely the moment that the wider world is moving toward novelty, nuance and customization. It's scary. And it's not the fault of teachers, principals and superintendents. In fact, the more time I spend in schools, the more I realize how heroic the work they're doing really is.

Friedman: Absolutely.

Pink: It's such a massively screwed-up system that it's inspiring that they're willing to show up every day to push the boulder a little further up the mountain. But that leads me to another question—one that I don't think is asked often enough: Are we asking too much of schools?

Friedman: Absolutely. My wife and I talk about this a lot. Someone asked her the other day if she were to write a book on education what would it be about? And she said: It would be a book on parenting. So many parents are sending their kids to these schools to be parented, to be taught some really basic attitudinal things and behavioral things. We're not going to get better educators and better schools without better parents. There's no way.

Pink: How do you move in that direction? I feel like schools have become the receptacle of all our unmet social needs and social problems.



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Friedman: Right. And then we blame the teachers. We blame the teachers union.

Pink: We've got hungry kids? Feed them in school. We've got kids who don't have a sound moral sensibility? Time for character education. We've got kids who don't know the birds and the bees? We require sex education. Is there a way to arrest that and say that schools should be about education and learning—and not these other problems?

Friedman: I think it comes back to parenting. And parenting is so much about role models. My wife is a parent a lot like her mother was. She's a parent a lot like her grandmother was. I can see that. I have a feeling my daughters will be parents just like my wife was. So the question is: How do you get those role models out there—especially in disadvantaged communities? It's a real problem, a real challenge.

Pink: You've got two daughters. One is a college sophomore and the other is a



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new teacher with Teach for America. As a parent, what did you do to encourage the sorts of behaviors and attitudes that you think are important?

Friedman: First of all, I never told my kids what they should study. My parents didn't. That's how I ended up studying Arabic at the University of Minnesota in 1975. So I'm a real big believer that you should do what you love and follow your nose. That's No. 1. My youngest daughter is interested in multiculturalism, black-Jewish understanding issues, minority understanding issues and how to break down barriers between groups. I don't know anything about that, but I am just her total backer in that. My oldest daughter is interested in fashion design. She started a fashion magazine at Yale, the first student fashion magazine. She was also interested in urban design, and she got interested in India through that. Whatever they wanted to do. My only stricture was do it well.

Pink: What else is in the Friedman parenting plan?

Friedman: I've always encouraged them to write. You can be the smartest, most capable person, but if you can't express yourself in words on paper, you'll have a real liability in competing.

Pink: Let's go to a couple of more questions before we wrap up. Think about the daunting job of being a school superintendent. Having traveled the world and having a keen sense of how the economy works, what advice would you give to superintendents about how they can move the rock a little bit up the hill?

Friedman: You know, I have great respect for the superintendent of schools here in Montgomery County, Md., Jerry Weast. I think superintendents have a hard job because they have so many different constituencies—teachers, parents, students ...


Pink: Who are never happy at the same time.

Friedman: Exactly. Maybe the most important piece of advice is: Know what you believe and stick with it. Don't let people knock you off your game, because it's so easy to do in this world. The teachers and administrators I remember most and respected best were people who were real pillars of integrity, rectitude and toughness. You've got to stand your ground.

Pink: Good advice. One more question. Education reform is in the air. It's something that we have a sense in our

gut is important for this country. How much does whom we elect as president in November matter in that regard?

Friedman: A great deal. The president has to be someone who inspires on the big issues, one who can lay out projects that really stimulate education all the way down the line. Today, the president's got to be our chief education officer.

Pink: Chief education officer. I love it. From your lips to the candidates' ears. 



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Thomas Friedman is a columnist for The New York Times, and author of *The World is Flat*. Daniel Pink is author of *A Whole New Mind*.

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The League is pleased to announce the publication of an important resource for local government officials who are considering adopting or revising ethics standards in their community. *The Ethics Handbook for Michigan Municipalities* is the culmination of a comprehensive project by the Ethics Roundtable of the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys chaired by DeWitt City Attorney Dan Matson. Through his leadership and the work of several contributors including editor Mary Grover, the handbook was successfully completed.

The handbook will be a powerful resource for municipal leaders to engage in community dialogue to choose the best approach locally for maintaining high ethical standards in Michigan municipalities.

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Greener Communities. Greener Michigan.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently launched the ENERGY STAR "Low Carbon IT Campaign." The Low Carbon IT Campaign is a nationwide effort to assist and recognize organizations, including municipalities, that reduce the energy consumed by their computers and monitors.

Electricity use by 120-volt wall plugs accounts for a substantial portion of a typical office building's electricity use. Often more than half of this plug load is from desktop computers and monitors. For a variety of reasons, more and more facilities are leaving their computers on most of the time. One way to save energy is by choosing ENERGY STAR monitors and computers. Another way is to activate the built-in "sleep" features on all monitors, PCs and laptop computers. By setting monitors and computers to go into "sleep" mode after several minutes of inactivity, enterprises can cut power use by as much as 70 percent.


There are several types of computer power management or "sleep" features on Windows PCs. To maximize power savings, EPA recommends setting computers to enter system standby or hibernate after 30 to 60 minutes of inactivity. To save even more, set monitors to enter sleep mode after 5 to 20 minutes of inactivity. The lower the setting, the more energy you save. On laptops, be sure to activate these settings in the AC power profile—not just the DC (battery power) profile. Generally speaking, you can ignore the "turn off hard disks" feature, as it saves very little energy.

There are many ways to activate sleep features across entire networks of computers, including free solutions that utilize open source software and/or tools that you may already have at your disposal.

Traverse City Area Public Schools is one Michigan organization that is saving energy after activating computer power management features on 2,200 monitors and computers. This effort is yielding approximately \$100,000 a year in savings for the school district. Another Michigan company, PMA Consultants of Detroit, has activated power management on 40 desktops and 125 notebook computers.

U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR program offers free assistance to any organization interested in power managing networked computers. The best place to start is www.energystar.gov/powermanagement, where you will find savings calculators, case studies, implementation resources, and more. EPA's ENERGY STAR Program also provides free technical consultations over the phone to help organizations get started.

Lastly, EPA provides national recognition for organizations that pledge to activate computer power management settings through the ENERGY STAR Low Carbon IT Campaign. This national program helps municipalities save energy and money, quantify carbon savings, and meet environmental goals.

ENERGY STAR was introduced by the EPA in 1992 as a voluntary market-based partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency. Today, ENERGY STAR offers businesses and consumers energy-efficient solutions to save energy, money and help protect the environment for future generations. More than 12,000 organizations are ENERGY STAR partners committed to improving the energy efficiency of products, homes, buildings and businesses. For more information about ENERGY STAR, visit www.energystar.gov or call toll-free 1-888-STAR-YES (1-888-782-7937). 



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Legislator Salute



Marie Donigan, State Rep.

26th House District- Royal Oak


The chief focus of her work has been improving quality of life for Michigan residents, particularly in the areas of education, health care, public transit and the economy.

Rep. Marie Donigan (D-Royal Oak) represents part of Oakland County, including the cities of Madison Heights and Royal Oak. She is committed to developing a world-class public transportation system in Michigan. She has advocated transit as a solution that will meet the needs of residents in urban, rural and suburban communities and create and support vibrant, prosperous communities that attract talented young people and the companies that will support their careers.

Donigan initiated a bipartisan Public Transit Legislative Caucus to improve public transportation and economic development in Michigan and sponsored legislation to create transit-oriented development to create transit revitalization investment zones.

A close ally to the League, Donigan has responded to the state's shrinking public safety force by supporting increases in revenue sharing. She is also a natural resources advocate, and works to make Michigan the cleanest, healthiest state in the nation.

A Royal Oak native, Donigan worked as a landscape architect in private practice for several years before joining the city of Farmington Hills Department of Planning and Community Development. She was serving her second term as a Royal Oak City Commissioner when she was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 2004.

Donigan also co-chaired the Royal Oak Area Democratic Club, building the club from just a few members to several dozen in order to fight for progressive causes. 

Legislative Committees:

- Great Lakes and Environment (Vice Chair)
- Ethics and Elections
- Health Policy
- Transportation
- Transportation (Public Transit Subcommittee Chair)

Contact Rep. Donigan

N0790 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
Phone: 517-373-3818
mariedonigan@house.mi.gov

Rep. Donigan's Priorities:

- Develop a world-class public transportation system
- Increase public safety
- Protect the state's natural resources

The League Announces 2008 Finalists for the Community Excellence Award

Seven Regional Projects Vie for Your Vote, Top Honor Announced at the League's Annual Convention

The 2008 Community Excellence Award Race for the Cup is on! Our seven regional finalists will present their projects at the League's Annual Convention, October 1-4 on Mackinac Island, and they need your vote—that's right, you decide the winner! The Award Cup will be passed on to the reigning champion at the Convention's final event. Don't miss it, register for the Annual Convention today!

By increasing the visibility of entrepreneurial and innovative solutions through the Community Excellence Award, the League strives to educate its members and inspire them to remain focused on their passion for the areas they represent.

Congratulations to our Regional Finalists!

Region 1 – Oak Park

Blight-Prevention "Kidsbuild" Project

A collaborative blight-prevention strategy that provided high school students enrolled in a building trades course the opportunity for hands-on experience in rehabilitating a residential duplex destroyed by fire.

An attractive, highly marketable, virtually new residential structure now exists where a fire-gutted abandoned shell once stood, and the property will return to the city's tax rolls!

Region 2 – Jackson

Armory Arts Village, a Unique Place to Live Your Art

An 1830s state penitentiary turned creative mixed-use neighborhood rebranded the city of Jackson and the surrounding community as a national hotbed of creative activity. A dynamic setting that offers affordable living and workspace, Armory Arts Village is home to artistic and entrepreneurial-types from around the country who work and thrive as part of Jackson's newfound culture.

Region 3 – Zeeland

"Feel the Zeel" Innovative Branding Campaign

You'll find it on storefronts, sidewalks and bumper stickers, and talk about it in conversations everywhere—Feel the Zeel, an edgy yet playful marketing/branding campaign is everywhere in the city of Zeeland, including the hearts and minds of the welcoming and passionate resident, business owner and community organization proud to call Zeeland their home!

Region 4 – AuGres

Community Library/Cultural Arts Center

Vision and leadership transformed a condemned building into a vibrant community asset when the city and area volunteers teamed up to create the AuGres Community Library/Cultural Arts Center. Connected to the city campground and recreation area by a pedestrian bridge, the new Center offers several programs and a cultural/arts meeting space for the public.

Region 5 – Marysville

Convinces Chrysler to Build New Plant in Record Time

When Chrysler announced possible locations for a new plant, the clock started counting down from 60 days. Motivated by the 750 to 900 progressive jobs and spinoff business this plant would bring, the city coordinated with government units and the private sector in record time, convincing Chrysler to make Marysville its new home in only sixty days!

Region 6 – Elk Rapids


Community Character Counts Project

Through creative research and collaboration, a Character Counts Council (CCC) worked to define a unified vision for the village of Elk Rapids and the surrounding area. Vacant

buildings came to life after the CCC developed a 'one-stop shop' to assist new and expanding businesses, distinguishing Elk Rapids as a community that helps, not hinders, entrepreneurial businesses.

Region 7 – Hancock/Houghton

SmartZone Project

Rather than compete over resources to grow their local economy one community at a time, the two most northern cities joined forces to promote regional growth. Separated by the Portage Canal and joined by the Portage Lift Bridge, Hancock and Houghton implemented a SmartZone Project bringing 160 high-tech jobs at 12 companies in five years. 





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Legal Spotlight

By Sue Jeffers

A Short Course in “Future Interests”: The Bane of Every Aspiring Attorney

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.

Editor’s Note:

The Michigan Court of Appeals recently issued its decision in a dispute involving the proposed sale of the Rackham Golf Course by the city of Detroit. In a nutshell, the Court held that language in the deed which conveyed the property to the city’s predecessor in title and in the deed which conveyed the property to the city of Detroit in 1924 required that 1) the property be sold only to another public entity provided that the city first secure waivers from those holding reversionary interests in the property and 2) the property be used only as a public golf course. The case highlights the legal significance of specific language contained in a deed of conveyance, which ordinarily is a very “short” and concise document.

Facts:

The land comprising the Rackham Golf Course which is within the city limits of Huntington Woods was originally part of a recorded plat identified as the “Bronx Subdivision.” In 1922, the portion of the plat now comprising the golf course was vacated by an order of the Oakland County Circuit Court. The land was then conveyed to Horace and Mary Rackham by a deed (the Baker deed) containing language that “the land transferred by this deed shall be used only as a public park or golf course or for other similar purposes.” The Rackhams then constructed a golf course on the property.

In 1924 the Rackhams deeded the property to the city of Detroit. The deed (the Rackham deed) included several conditions, along with a reversionary clause. One of the conditions in the deed stated that the land “shall be perpetually maintained . . . as a public golf course for the use of the public.” The deed also provided that if a condition is broken, “the estate . . . shall be forfeited and . . . shall revert to the [Rackhams, their heirs and assigns] who shall thereupon have the right to re-enter and re-possess the [land].”

In 2006, after receiving two unsolicited bids to purchase the land (including one from the city of Huntington Woods and another from a residential developer), the city of Detroit issued a formal Request For Proposal (RFP) for the sale of the property. The city of Huntington Woods and several individuals sued, requesting a declaratory judgment that the city of Detroit was precluded from selling the property to a private entity and that the property could only be used as a golf course. The city of Detroit countered that there was no prohibition against selling the property subject to the conditions outlined in the deed to the Rackhams.

Question No. 1:

Was the language in the Baker deed that the land was only to be used as a public park or golf course binding on all subsequent owners of the property?

Answer according to the Trial Court:

Yes. The language is a restrictive covenant which “runs with land” and not just a statement of purpose which would not limit the conveyance.

Answer according to the Court of Appeals:


Yes. Even though the language in the deed did not contain the usually required “reverter clause,” i.e. a return of the property to the donor if the condition is broken, the Court looked to the intent of the parties, including the vacation of the property from the residential plat in 1922.

Question No. 2:

May the property be sold only to a public entity?

Answer according to the Trial Court: (Issue not fully addressed by the Trial Court)

Answer according to the Court of Appeals:

Yes. The language contained in the Rackham deed that the property be maintained as “a public golf course for the use of the public” evokes an intent to require that the sale be made only to another public entity. 

City of Huntington Woods v City of Detroit, No. 276021 (July 15, 2008)

Sue Jeffers is associate general counsel for the League. You may contact her at 734-669-6306 or sjeffers@mml.org.



Jason Allen, State Rep.

37th Senate District—Traverse City

Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) was elected to Michigan's 37th State Senate District in 2002 and re-elected in 2006, representing Grand Traverse, Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Chippewa and Mackinac counties.

The League appreciates a close working relationship with Allen and his staff. A leader in the Senate, Allen has spearheaded a number of statewide initiatives to stimulate Michigan's economy and create jobs; initiatives that center on revitalizing cities and downtowns as locations for business investment and growth, tool and die manufacturing, venture capital investment, research and development and re-authorization of the Michigan Economic Growth Authority.

Hearing consistently that entrepreneurs want communities that combine quality of work, family and social life experiences, Allen and the Commerce and Tourism Committee developed a 15-bill bipartisan package of legislation to provide the necessary framework. He worked closely with the League to ensure these bills would benefit communities without any negative unintended consequences.


The legislation will allow communities to take advantage of the Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Act to renovate or rehab housing options, including downtown hotels and residential apartments, condos and lofts. Downtown development authorities will be encouraged to assist potential retailers to improve storefronts and facilities to promote business development. Local governments, regional planners and entrepreneurs can use the programs in this legislative package to provide the incentives and encouragement needed to strengthen downtowns.

Allen has also sponsored policy, in conjunction with the League, to allow for creative new ways to combat invasive species in Michigan's inland lakes.

A lifelong Traverse City resident, Allen served in the Michigan House of Representatives 104th District from 1999 through 2002. Before state office, Allen graduated from Miami

University of Ohio and returned home to work with his father in the family menswear business. He is currently the vice president of sales at the Captain's Quarters.

He was also on the Grand Traverse County Board of Commission, the Great Lakes Community Health Board and the Northwestern Michigan Council of Governments, a 10-county multi-jurisdictional agency dedicated to law enforcement, planning and economic development.


Today, Allen remains active in his community. He is a member of the Central United Methodist Church, the Traverse City Rotary Club, and the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce and belongs to multiple local and civic organizations. 


Contact Sen. Allen

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Phone: 517-373-2413
senjallen@senate.michigan.gov
www.senate.michigan.gov

Legislative Committees:

- Commerce and Tourism Committee (Chair)
- Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs Committee (Chair)
- Economic Development & Regulatory Reform
- Health Policy; and Local, Urban and State Affairs
- Legislative Council, Senate majority whip.




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Municipal Q&A

Coordinated by Mary Charles

Q: Do I have to have a password to access the League's website?

Passwords are now only required to access the fiscal database and the Wage and Salary Survey.

We have recently removed the password requirement for most of our website including these areas: publications, "Frequently Asked Questions," and sample policies and ordinances. A password is still required to access the fiscal database and the Wage and Salary Survey. Furthermore, access to the Survey still requires that your community has participated in the survey.

We hope this enables our members to find the information they need more quickly and maneuver through our site with fewer places to get "hung up."

Q: When a councilmember asks to be on public record, or makes a comment, do we have to put it in the minutes?

The Open Meetings Act only requires that the minutes include "the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose or purposes for which a closed session is held. The minutes shall include all roll call votes taken at the meeting." (MCL 15.269) Whether or not you include any discussion or comments will depend on your local charter and council rules. Your municipal attorney can help sort it out if you have additional questions.

Q: Council has placed a proposal on the ballot in the upcoming election. Can we use city funds to support this issue?

Generally, the Michigan Campaign Finance Act prohibits a public body or individual acting for a public body from using public resources to engage in electioneering activities, including advocating a position on a ballot question. Two exceptions are: 1) the expression of views by certain elected or appointed public officials and 2) the production or dissemination of information in the regular course of business. (MCL 168.257) Because of the complexities of this area, you should always consult with your attorney in decisions affecting election questions.

Q: If a position is paid on a salary basis, isn't it exempt from paid overtime?

Not necessarily. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires, at a minimum, that non-exempt employees be paid overtime pay at time and one-half the regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 hours in a workweek.

However, Section 13(a)(1) of the FLSA provides exemptions from overtime pay for individuals employed as bona fide executive, administrative, professional, outside sales and certain computer employees. To qualify for an exemption, employees must meet certain tests regarding their job duties and be paid on a salary basis at not less than \$455 per week. Job titles do not determine exempt status. In order for an exemption to apply, an employee's


specific job duties and salary must meet all the requirements of the regulations.

Being paid on a "salary basis" means an employee regularly receives a predetermined amount of compensation each pay period and that amount cannot be reduced because of variations in the quality or quantity of the employee's work.

Deductions from pay for exempt employees are permissible when the exempt employee:

- Is absent from work for one or more full days for personal reasons other than sickness or disability;
- Is absent for one or more full days due to sickness or disability if the deduction is made in accordance with a bona fide plan, policy or practice of providing compensation for salary lost due to illness;
- Receives offset amounts as jury or witness fees, or for military pay;
- Is penalized in good faith for infractions of safety rules of major significance; or
- Is suspended without pay for disciplinary reasons for one or more full days imposed in good faith for workplace conduct rule infractions.

Also, an employer is not required to pay the full salary in the initial or terminal week of employment, or for weeks in which an exempt employee takes unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Visit www.dol.gov for detailed information on the FLSA and complete fact sheets. Source: U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheets 

FOCUS ON

Lathrup Village



Lathrup Village is an affluent and diverse community located in the center of the city of Southfield in southeast Michigan. The city of Lathrup Village combines an historic past (historic designation in 2000) with a dynamic present. Beautiful homes and friendly neighbors provide an ideal living environment for convenient small city living while being close to large city amenities.

Lathrup Village is a living monument to Louise Lathrup Kelley who conceived and carried out the city's unique development. In 1923 she acquired 1,000 acres in Southfield Township. The area was known as the "Lathrup Townsite" where a controlled building plan was followed restricting all subdivisions to high quality brick houses with attached garages.

Lathrup Village, incorporated in 1953, is a small city with a big heart. The city is fortunate to have a large number of volunteers—whether working at Art in the Park, the Home and Garden Tour (June), Autumn Nights Celebration and Fall

Family Fest (September) or Light up Lathrup/Santa Visit with real reindeer (December). Lathrup Village is proud of its large volunteer base.

Lathrup Village also has a varied number of community organizations: Homeowners Association, Gardeners, and the Historical Society to name a few. A unique organization is the Lathrup Village Supper Club. Once a month from September to May members come together to share a meal and fellowship. The Supper Club embraces the true Lathrup Village spirit.

Lathrup Village now looks to the future with redevelopment efforts under way for its business district. Michigan First Credit Union recently located and built its headquarters here. Lathrup Village is in the process of updating its master plan as Louise Lathrup Kelley originally envisioned with the creation of an authentic "Center City."

Better Communities. Better Michigan.

Please send address and recipient corrections to Susan Vasher at MML, P.O. Box 1487, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1487; phone 800-653-2483; fax 734-662-8083, or email svasher@mml.org. Thank you.