

# the review

September/October 2014

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

## IRONWOOD

2013 COMMUNITY  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARD WINNER

+ 2014  
CONVENTION  
PREVIEW

“THIS **AWARD** WILL  
INCREASE AWARENESS  
OF THE **GREAT THINGS**  
THAT **IRONWOOD** AND  
THE U.P. HAVE **TO OFFER.**”

—IRONWOOD MAYOR KIM CORCORAN

# FOCUS ON THE U.P.

L'ANSE • ISHPEMING • ST. IGNACE • SAULT STE. MARIE • MARQUETTE



# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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### On the Cover:

The city of Ironwood won the 2013 Community Excellence Award Cup for its placemaking effort centered on the revitalization of a railroad depot into a park which will also serve as a trailhead for non-motorized and motorized trails crossing the region.

In the park, from left to right: Sam Davey, Park and Recreation chair and project driver; Bob Burchell, Planning Commission member and former mayor, also a project driver; Mayor Kim Corcoran; Yellow Lab...Lacy Corcoran, park enthusiast; and Parks Manager Neil Corcoran.

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michigan municipal league

# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 87, Number 5

### Better Communities. Better Michigan.

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

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## Crossing the Big Mac

Less than 9,000 feet separate the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan.

That's about 25 football fields placed end-to-end. A pretty good runner can do it in under 10 minutes; an average walker in 20. It's not even close to the Guinness World Record for surviving a fall without a parachute (33,333 feet, by a Yugoslavian flight attendant in 1972). And there's eight times as much water separating Great Britain and France, even at the narrowest point of the English Channel (21 miles).

So why do so many Michiganders make such a big deal out of crossing the Mackinac Bridge (Big Mac) in either direction? It's not like we need a passport to do it. We've been a unified state since 1837 and the last I heard, nobody's been *seriously* talking secession since they built the bridge in 1957.

But there's something within the Michigan mythos that has always given the U.P. the enduring image of a distant land and culture, somehow a place apart and more than a little unknown. It holds nearly a third of the state's entire land area, but only contains 3 percent of our population. It's big and beautiful and wild and remote, and rich in natural resources.

So if you've never been or haven't been there lately, it's time to cross that bridge and come to it. There's a lot of good stuff happening all over the U.P. Some of it might surprise you. Most of it will amaze and inspire you. And once you've seen it all, you'll never look at it quite the same way again.

The U.P. has long been a hotspot for outdoor recreationists and sports enthusiasts, but they're taking it to a new level everywhere you look. The Noquemanon Trail Network (article on page 37) has expanded and improved its mountain biking trail system into a four-season, land-and-water silent sports activity hub throughout Marquette and Alger counties for everything from the new fat tire snow bikes to horses and kayaks. Conservative estimates for hotel sales during just two major recreational events contributed nearly \$3.8 million to the local economy from 2009-2012.

Now in its fifth year, the CopperDog 150 sled dog race draws competitive mushers from all over the Midwest and the world to Calumet. Each year the event raises about \$80,000, and


most of that flows right back into the community. They've even launched an educational conference to help other communities replicate their success.

For more than a century, Marquette's harbor was an industrial shipping port, noisy and polluted and no place for anyone but sailors and dock workers. Today, it's been reimagined into a scenic waterfront destination lined with green public spaces, attractive homes and retail shops, scenic vistas, and non-motorized trails linking it all to a greater downtown that's colorful and eclectic and filled with life.

Creative partnerships with the local university and Native American community are taking Sault Ste. Marie's ongoing revitalization to a new level rich with history, culture, and creativity.

Similar placemaking projects are transforming the downtowns and economies of communities like Ironwood, St. Ignace, and L'Anse, just to name a few.

There's probably no one who knows all this better than Caroline Kennedy, the League's former field operations manager for the U.P. Caroline recently moved on to a new life's adventure in Traverse City, but she leaves behind a legacy of good work and friendships for the League and its northern-most members. Let's hope we can all continue to build on that solid foundation and keep moving forward together, as one community of communities, upper and lower alike.

So what are you waiting for? Come cross that bridge and join us at the League's 2014 Convention, October 15-17 in Marquette. There's a whole new world to discover right at our own back door, less than 9,000 feet away. 



Daniel P. Gilmartin  
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# HOW THE U.P.

## Can Fight Population Decline and Foster Economic Development

By Brian Martucci

**T**he 2010 census confirmed what leaders across the U.P. already know: the region, like many rural areas, continues to lose population. The trend is partly due to the U.P.'s demographics, which skew older than the country's urban areas, and partly due to residual effects from the loss of major employers like K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base. It's likely to persist for the foreseeable future, whether due to the apparent final closing of the Empire Mine in Marquette County or the potential loss of a lucrative military contract at Marinette Marine, which would affect Menominee County.

But the U.P. has a bounty of natural—beyond traditional resources like timber and iron ore—and human assets that have yet to be tapped. So what are the region's business leaders, economic development authorities, local governments, and tourism agencies doing to stem the negative effects of population decline and attract or retain residents? More than you might think.

### Focusing on Economic Gardening

Stemming population decline is inextricably bound up with economic development, so the folks on the front lines of these efforts work closely with local business leaders.

"85 to 90 percent of economic development, not just in the U.P. but in any rural area, consists of business retention and expansion, not attraction," says Bruce Orttenger, president

and CEO of the Dickinson County Partnership. "Prior to 2005 [when Orttenger helped draw a call-center firm to Iron Mountain], we hadn't attracted a company that wasn't directly related to or spun off from an existing business in the area," he says.

It's a common misconception that people in Orttenger's position constantly gladhand and network at conventions and tradeshows across the country. That requires expensive travel, and fierce competition from other regions of the country lessens its effectiveness. Economic gardening, the practice of providing local businesses with access to local infrastructure, facilitating public-private partnerships, and removing red tape where possible, is far more efficient.

Delta County Economic Development Alliance Director Vicki Schwab is evangelical about its possibilities. She touts a recent Michigan Economic Development Corporation Tribal Affairs Division grant to fund a feasibility study for yellow perch aquaculture, which is already practiced on a small scale. Eventually, a more robust aquaculture industry could create dozens or hundreds of jobs in Delta County.

Schwab also relies on MEDC's economic gardening services for second-stage companies. Delta County employers like Analex and Creative Composites have taken advantage of the grant to improve their logistics and shipping operations or update their websites through local vendors, both of which



represent investments that create or support jobs in the U.P. MEDC also supports the outreach efforts of local manufacturers that rely on exports. According to Schwab, exports accounted for \$18 million in economic activity across the U.P. in 2013 alone, and more than two million pounds of cargo left Escanaba's airport that year.

## Creating Synergies

In parts of the U.P., business-attraction efforts have borne fruit in one economic niche: remote customer service. Jokes about the Yooper dialect aside, Orttenburger's work with Issues & Answers, the Virginia-based call center operator that opened a branch in Iron Mountain (there's one in Escanaba too), revealed a preference for the "neutral" Upper Midwestern accent in employees who communicate with clients across the country. Southern and Northeastern accents, apparently, are harder to understand and may have negative connotations. The new Issues & Answers facility created 70 jobs in Iron Mountain alone, raising the possibility of substantial job (and population) growth in areas that can successfully attract similar businesses.

In Escanaba, Schwab is leveraging existing business assets to create new synergies—and jobs. Excellent road connections to downstate Michigan and eastern Wisconsin were pivotal in attracting Bells' new Upper Hand Brewing facility, which will bring several dozen employees, to the area.

Meanwhile, Ohio-based NewPage Corporation, whose paper plant is Delta County's single largest employer, recently partnered with Omya Worldwide, one of its biggest suppliers, to improve its operational efficiency.

Omya makes precipitated calcium carbonate, or PCC, which whitens and strengthens paper. Since NewPage needs up to 150 tons of PCC per day, the companies decided to bring Omya's PCC production plant, and seven associated employees, to a vacant space on NewPage's campus. The kicker: the plant will use some of the NewPage plant's carbon dioxide emissions to produce its PCC, making the move a win-win for the local economy and environment.

## Playing Up Natural Assets

The U.P.'s natural beauty is even responsible, albeit indirectly, for one of the biggest outside investments of the past decade. According to Orttenburger, the natural amenities of the Keweenaw Peninsula wowed D.A. Glass's Polish executives and helped convince them

to open a 50,000 square foot facility near Calumet. Within three years, that project is projected to support up to 200 new jobs, many of which may be held by new arrivals.

In Marquette County, the still-expanding Noquemanon Trail Network has turned the central U.P. into a noted destination for mountain bikers, cross-country skiers, and other "silent sports" participants (see article on page 37). This has been a huge boon for population-retention efforts, as outdoorsy NMU students who can't live without the trails choose to stay in the area after graduation.

## Finding New Uses for Old Places

Gogebic County, Michigan's westernmost, has been particularly hard-hit by population loss, dropping 5.4 percent in the 2010 census. But that hasn't stopped the city of Ironwood, the county's largest, from undertaking an ambitious, employment-driven downtown redevelopment plan.

With a state grant, the city purchased the historic, centrally located City Centre building in 2010 and leased it to Downtown Art Place, a local nonprofit that works closely with the Historic Ironwood Theater company to promote Ironwood as a regional center for the arts. Using donations from local patrons and additional grants, DAP added a host of new fixtures and outfitted the place with an art gallery, studios (available to local artists at subsidized rates), and classroom spaces. Twenty artists, many of whom previously used home studios, currently work in the building.

"That's 20 jobs added in our downtown core," says Tim Erickson, director of Ironwood's Chamber of Commerce,



*"85 to 90 percent of economic development, not just in the U.P. but in any rural area, consists of business retention and expansion, not attraction," says Bruce Orttenburger, president and CEO of the Dickinson County Partnership.*

who's bullish on the prospect of similar public-private partnerships in Ironwood and other Gogebic County towns. Coupled with the area's considerable outdoor assets, additional efforts to accommodate local artists could successfully attract active, artsy types from nearby Wisconsin, Minnesota and beyond, says Ironwood Community Development Director Michael Brown. Ironwood's catchy "Live Where You Play" slogan seems to anticipate this.

Although the Iron Mountain area hasn't scored a high-profile "win" in this department, Orttenger notes its downtown area was recently designated a historic district by the state of Michigan. This makes it easier for local developers to leverage tax credits for refurbishing old buildings and creating jobs.



*The new Issues & Answers facility created 70 jobs in Iron Mountain alone, raising the possibility of substantial job (and population) growth in areas that can successfully attract similar businesses.*


Some U.P. communities have traveled farther on this path than others. In Marquette, one of a handful of places to see population growth between 2000 and 2010, real estate development has quickened to a trot as local leaders awoken to the area's tremendous appeal to outdoorsy outsiders.

With help from the Marquette Downtown Development Authority, a local businessman is plowing ahead with ambitious plans for the city's cherished Delft Theater. Since 2005, several construction and beautification projects have opened up the city's Lake Superior waterfront, drawing tourists (and permanent residents, thanks to dozens of new residential units). Up in Houghton, another U.P. locale to add people of late, MTEC SmartZone

has helped to create more than 400 jobs since the turn of the millennium, many of which have utilized space in the city's formerly disused power station.

## Forging Ahead

Like many rural areas of the United States, the U.P. has seen its share of economic ups and downs. Rural depopulation is among the country's most serious demographic challenges, and it won't go away tomorrow. But the efforts of local governments, partnerships and businesses, coupled with help from well-meaning outside organizations, are clearly creating opportunities for both natives and those who choose to relocate here.

"You do the best you can with what you have," says Orttenger. And the U.P. has a lot. 


*This article was reprinted with permission from the Upper Peninsula's Second Wave online publication.*

*Brian Martucci writes about business, finance, food, drink and anything else that catches his fancy. You can find him on Twitter @Brian\_Martucci.*

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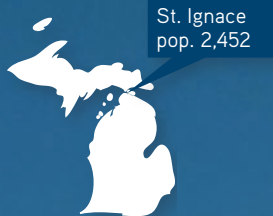


# ST. IGNACE

## COMMITTS WATERFRONT TO PUBLIC USE

By Deb Evashevski

**S**t. Ignace is located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, just north of the Mackinac Bridge. Downtown St. Ignace is nestled along the shores of Lake Huron, and the city takes pride in keeping that shoreline open and accessible to the public. One of those open and accessible public areas is the newest downtown, waterfront development—Chief Wawatam Park.



The property on which the park is located is connected to the rest of the downtown area and to two other public waterfront parks by nearly 6,000 linear feet of public boardwalk. The boardwalk was built in phases beginning in the early 1980s, with one of the newest sections running adjacent to the Chief Wawatam Park and leading out to the Wawatam Lighthouse.

### HISTORY

Previously owned by the railroad, this property served as the railroad's connecting point to the Lower Peninsula across the Straits of Mackinac, until the building of the Mackinac Bridge opened the area to trucking. Railroads were completed on both sides of the Straits of Mackinac in 1881. The railroad cars were shuttled back and forth by a ferry boat system while the heavy locomotives remained on the land to position and then haul away the freight and passenger cars along the tracks that were located on this property.

One of those railroad ferries was the Chief Wawatam, which operated in the Straits from 1911 to 1984, making it the longest-lasting of the car ferries. Wawatam was an Ojibwa chief who lived in the area during the 1700s. Ferry use dropped dramatically with the opening of the Mackinac Bridge in 1957. In 1984, the dock collapsed and the Chief Wawatam stopped running altogether.



## DEVELOPMENT

The property was eventually given to the city by the Star Line Ferry Company with limited use restrictions placed on it by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Since the city was only able to develop the land for a public marina and public park purposes, the creative wheels began to turn. In 2003, the city used the property for breakwall construction in conjunction with the expansion of the adjacent marina. In 2006, a 52-foot lighthouse was erected at the end of the property and the Huron Boardwalk was extended out to meet it, allowing the public to walk out to, and around, the lighthouse. Actual park construction took place in 2010 and 2011, but the planning and grant writing started long before. It was important to city leaders to provide outdoor recreational opportunity, to educate the public about the history of the area, and to develop the area as family friendly.

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The first project component to be built was a brick walkway that would lead into the park at three different access points from the new boardwalk, encircling the entire property. For safety purposes, a decorative perimeter fence similar to the adjacent boardwalk railing was constructed along the walkway to restrict access to the steep embankment near the waterfront. A 36x10 foot fishing/viewing platform was

constructed, connecting the brick walkway with handicapped accessible ramping. Special care was taken to add handicapped accessible benches and tackle box tables on the platform.

## EDUCATION

The educational portion of the development took much more thought and planning. It was important to relay the story of the property and its significance to the history of the area. Authentic railroad tracks were laid in place by the department of public works where they were once located, allowing our young visitors an opportunity to experience “walking the tracks,” as their grandparents once did. To assist in laying the tracks, actual railroad tools were borrowed from an operational railroad company.

Equally important was the need to tell the history of the car ferry Chief Wawatam itself, for which the park was named. Once the Chief Wawatam was decommissioned, all of its parts were dismantled and turned over to the State of Michigan and stored in warehouses nearby. A loan agreement was drawn up, allowing the city to borrow and use certain items from the “Chief,” such as the whistle, the chadburn (a communications device used by the pilot to order the vessel powered at a certain speed), a pressure gauge, and a direction indicator. All of the items were then incorporated into a six-sided kiosk signage display.

“Through the efforts of our DDA Director, Deb Evashevski, and her tenacious grant writing, we have a beautiful downtown waterfront park for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.” —Mayor Paul Grondin



Photo by Ruth LaChapelle






*St. Ignace added a 20x60 foot nautically themed children's splash pad to its park development plans in the hopes of better attracting families to the park. Officials say it was a great addition to the park, and well worth the work of further fundraising to see it happen.*

To portray the earlier historical significance of the name Chief Wawatam, an authentic six-foot likeness was carved and painted to depict an actual Ojibwa Chief by that name that lived in the straits area during the 1700s. The wooden statue was carved from a white pine log that was donated by the owner of an area saw mill. The likeness was painstakingly researched, carved, and painted by local Native American husband and wife artists Tom and Sally Paquin. The statue stands majestically at the main entrance of the park where many park visitors pose for photos to take home as mementos.

## CREATING FAMILY FUN

As the development progressed, a 20x60 foot nautically themed children's splash pad was added to the plans in the hopes of better attracting families to the park. Although this was an unanticipated expense, it was worth the extra work of further fundraising. With all of the families that it now attracts, it was a great addition to the park.

All park amenities—picnic tables, benches and trash receptacles—are constructed of indestructible plastic lumber. To help save money on these, the public was given the opportunity to purchase an engraved bench that would be placed in the park. The landscaping and lighting add to the beauty and ambiance of the park, making it a must visit downtown destination.

Thanks to the dozen state, county, city, tribal and local organizations and private individuals that contributed close to \$300,000 toward the development of this park, an unsightly property is now a vibrant downtown, public, waterfront park. 

*Deb Evashevski is the director of the St. Ignace Downtown Development Authority. You may contact her at 906-643-8252 or [dda@lighthouse.net](mailto:dda@lighthouse.net).*

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Photo by Zach Jay, Mining Journal

# Ishpeming's

## DDA Grant Jumpstarts Local Events

BY LISA DONOVAN

Ishpeming  
pop. 6,470



Helmet-clad mountain bikers dashed off the downtown Ishpeming starting line and sped into the beautiful, yet rugged, terrain surrounding the city. The 120 participants in last year's inaugural Red Earth Classic raced through forests, grappled with steep hills, and splashed through icy creeks with victory in mind.

The Red Earth Classic's mission to make Ishpeming and Negaunee a premier mountain biking destination made them a natural fit for the Ishpeming Downtown Development Authority's Arts, Cultural, Recreational and Festival Events Grant. "We have, and are, spending a lot of money to make the downtown district as attractive and professional on race weekend as possible," said Justin Koski, who created the Red Earth Classic along with Matt Palomaki.



Last year's grant of \$500 helped the Red Earth's organizers create trail signage to guide racers through the Red Earth Loop. This year, 300 mountain bikers are expected to participate—almost triple the number from 2013—and many of them will be traveling three or more hours to reach Ishpeming.

"The grant is one of the best things we're doing right now," said Stacey Willey, vice chair of the Ishpeming Downtown Development Authority (DDA). "We helped the Red Earth Classic get started last year and it has grown exponentially."

### How the Grant Started

The DDA's events grant program grew out of a professional study conducted for the city about 10 years ago which indicated that events are what attract new people to small communities like Ishpeming. With that in mind, the DDA designed the current grant program about two years ago to support events that attract residents and visitors, use local resources, and generate economic activity for the city.

"The most important factor is the impact on the economy—whether the event is going to bring people and business to town," said City Manager Mark Slown. "This community has struggled, so they pay attention to what works and what doesn't."

### Grant Eligibility

To qualify for a grant, organizations must meet very specific eligibility criteria. The event must have good potential to attract residents and visitors, and have a positive economic impact on Ishpeming. It must also use local services and businesses. And preference is shown to events that showcase local arts, recreation, and talent, and have plans to be ongoing year after year.

A striking feature of the grant is that funds are not distributed to the event organizations, but rather are paid directly to the local businesses from which the organizations have ordered products and services. "It's really amazing to see the ripple effect

that comes from a grant like this," said Kori Tossava, executive director of the Greater Ishpeming-Negaunee Area Chamber of Commerce. "It has a huge economic effect on local businesses and on our city's morale. It gets people to go in and talk to businesses that have been downtown for 100 years and those that have just popped up. Hopefully they realize the quality and service they can get by sticking close to home."

Each year, the DDA has been budgeting \$5,000 for the events grant. Of the dozen or so organizations that apply, about half meet the eligibility requirements and are generally awarded \$500–\$1,000. "Very small amounts are leveraged so that we can get something accomplished," said DDA Chairman David Aeh. "The grants are invaluable because they can make the difference between having the event and not having the event."

**"It's really amazing to see the ripple effect that comes from a grant like this. It has a huge economic effect on local businesses and on our city's morale."**

—Kori Tossava, executive director of the Greater Ishpeming-Negaunee Area Chamber of Commerce



Photo by Adelle Whitefoot, Mining Journal

*One of the most colorful events to benefit from a DDA grant is the Arctic Blast Color Dash. As many as 300 participants have strapped on snowshoes for a 5K or Kids' 1K, and were showered with colored powder!*

## Community Impact

One of the most colorful events to benefit from a DDA grant is the Arctic Blast Color Dash, organized by the Greater Ishpeming-Negaunee Area Chamber of Commerce. For the past two winters, the Chamber has invited people to strap on their snowshoes for a 5K or Kids' 1K, and prepare to be showered with colored powder! Five color stations are manned by volunteers from local nonprofits that benefit from funds raised through the Dash. As many as 300 people come out and enjoy the last burst of winter on the trails through Ishpeming Woods.

"The grant has been a huge assistance to the Chamber," said Tossava. "All of our events are fund-raisers, and the more money we can raise from grants, registrations, and sponsorships, the more money goes back into the community."


The Ishpeming Business Association's annual Festival of Treasures, another recipient of a DDA grant, also brings big crowds to the community. On



Photo by Zach Jay, Mining Journal

July 3, downtown becomes a lively street fair full of arts and crafts booths, live music, kids' activities, and food—everything from Croatian Chicken to elephant ears. Special sidewalk sales attract new and old customers into local businesses. The festival also has a way of drawing Ishpeming alumni back to once again enjoy their hometown and reminisce with former classmates. Many stick around for Ishpeming's 4th of July parade, community picnic, and fireworks show.

Throughout the summer, the city's grant-supported Thursday night concert series entices swarms of people to bring their lawn chairs downtown and get lost in the music. Bands playing everything from folk and blues to good old rock and roll get their feet tapping. "The level of talent has increased 10-fold in the 10 years we've been holding these concerts," said Willey.

Other events that received grants this year include the Northern Lights Rave Run, the Iron Range Roll bike race, and the Range Area Mountain Bike Association's trail-building activities. "It's really gratifying to see how well these activities have been received and drawn locals and people from outside the area," said Aeh. "The events attract attention and enhance the community's self-image and their image in the eyes of other communities." 

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

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# L'ANSE

## A REVIVAL ON THE COVE



By Bill Olsen

The village of L'Anse is located on beautiful Lake Superior, has a protected bay full of fish, and a sandy shore that makes for idyllic living. The village's name comes from French fur traders who saw it for what it was: "The Cove." By the turn of the 21st century, downtown L'Anse looked exactly how it had during the Eisenhower Administration. The village could have changed its name to *L'Anse Temps Oublié*—The Cove Time Forgot.



After more than 60 years of wear and tear, the once vibrant hub of trade appeared to be dying a slow death. By 2003, the dilapidated vibe of the downtown so alarmed local residents that the village's Downtown Development Authority organized an "intervention." The first meeting was held in June 2003. Steve Koski, the owner of Indian Country Sports and a member of the DDA, remembers the time well. "The downtown was in trouble and we all knew it. The good thing about people around here, especially business owners—we are willing to do whatever it takes to turn things around." The DDA hired local firm, U.P. Engineers & Architects, Inc. (UPEA), to assist residents in coming up with a plan. In January 2004, the Village of L'Anse Downtown Redevelopment Plan was made public. The list of improvements was long, and the estimated construction costs were more than \$5 million. For a community the size of L'Anse, it was a small fortune.

### Addressing Flooding

A fundamental problem with the downtown was that it was prone to flooding. Businesses with bank loans had to carry flood insurance—which can be an extra burden—to say nothing of what a foot of water on your retail floor will do to customer traffic and product inventory. The village applied to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers for funding assistance. Their solution was a river basin under the downtown that moves stormwater directly into Lake Superior before it causes problems. The project was designed to withstand a 500-year

flood event. As a result, FEMA redrew their flood maps, and the onerous requirement for flood insurance was removed.

Next on the improvement list was updating sidewalks, streets, and lighting, to bring the look of the downtown into the 21st century. Once again, resources were an obstacle. So, other infrastructure needs were assessed as well—the village didn't want to finish a new roadway one day only to have to rip it up the next because of a broken water main.

### Help for Improvements

Some areas of the village were ready for new water and sewer infrastructure. The village turned to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for assistance. "It came in spades," said UPEA Professional Engineer Jim Koskiniemi. "The agencies provided the village with grants and low interest loans. It was almost too good to be true." Koskiniemi said that in 2005, Rural Development offered generous grants, which were somewhat unusual at the time, and allowed user



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**

*After more than 60 years of wear and tear, their once vibrant hub of trade appeared to be dying a slow death. Improvements included updating sidewalks, streets, and lighting to bring the look of the downtown into the 21st century.*



rates to stay affordable. To assist with the sidewalks, streetscaping, and lighting, the village also applied for a Community Development Block Grant, which are federal dollars administered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The village also applied for enhancement funds through State of Michigan Department of Transportation. Again, very generous grants that amounted to \$690,000 made the project possible. CDBG provided the village with \$440,000 and MDOT kicked in \$250,000. "L'Anse was in the right place at the right time," Koskiniemi said. Construction on the streetscape began in the spring of 2006, and was completed by autumn.

## A 21st Century Downtown

The turnaround was stunning. The downtown went from depressing to impressive. "People regularly tell me what a 'wonderful downtown' we have," said L'Anse Village Manager Bob LaFave, who was hired about a year after the major improvements were completed. LaFave said countless

visitors now take the time to drive the one mile off U.S. 41, the main thoroughfare that bypasses the downtown. LaFave said the waterfront and magnificent Lake Superior are assets of the downtown that most communities, even if they're on the water, don't use like L'Anse does. "We've used our connection to the water as a springboard for just about everything we do." This year the village opened a splash park on the waterfront that on a hot summer day is filled with ecstatic kids. The village also hopes to renovate its marina. And a bridge that was constructed in 1918 that connects the region's largest employer, CertainTeed, with the downtown was recently replaced.

## Replacing a Failing Bridge

The bridge project brought a smile to the village manager's face. After an inspection found the bridge to be on the verge of catastrophic failure, LaFave made phone calls seeking funding. He called CertainTeed officials, the primary beneficiaries of the bridge. They were certain they did not



*L'Anse's downtown turnaround was stunning. "People regularly tell me what a 'wonderful downtown' we have," said L'Anse Village Manager Bob LaFave. Countless visitors, including many Michigan Tech alumni on their way to visit their alma mater, now take the time to drive the one mile off U.S. 41, the main thoroughfare that bypasses the down town. "The most common thing we hear is that when they were students, they never stopped," LaFave continued. "And now, when they're looking for places to visit with their families, they say 'What a pleasant surprise. We'll be back.'"*





own the bridge. Village employees were equally sure that the village did not own it. And, the state had never even heard of the Falls Creek Bridge, declaring that it could not possibly own it since the bridge is on a village street.

And there the matter stood until LaFave heard of the commemorative plaque adorning the old bridge: "Trunk Line Bridge No. 130, 1918, Built by State Highway Dep't." He sent a photograph of the plaque to state officials. The CertainTeed facility was looking to do a jobs retention and job creation project which the state and the village eagerly assisted with. As part of that project, the state and the company donated any ownership to the bridge they may have had and provided clear title to the village. The state then made resources available to replace the bridge.



**"Our goal is to not just survive, but to grow a little bit. If a new employer were to call and say 'We want to locate here,' we can accommodate them. We are ready."**

—Village Manager Bob LaFave

### Attracting Employers and Residents

"Our goal is to not just survive, but to grow a little bit." The word "growth" has not been commonly heard in the U.P. in some years. LaFave explained that when the Warden Power Plant began operations a few years ago, the village had infrastructure in place to accommodate 50 new jobs. "If a new employer were to call and say 'We want to locate here,' we can accommodate them. We are ready."

Coaxing new employers to the village is perhaps LaFave's most important task. "If our young people leave because they want to discover what it's like to live in a bigger city, that's fine. We understand that. But if they leave because they can't find a family-supporting job, that is not okay." The infrastructure

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business alliance program

improvements the village continues to make represent the local, state, and federal commitments to L'Anse's future, LaFave said.

"When the village was founded more than 100 years ago, we had 2,000–2,500 residents," LaFave said. "The population is about the same today. We have stability, and in this age of global markets, that's saying a lot." 

*Bill Olsen is a marketing manager at U.P. Engineers & Architects, Inc. You may contact him at 906-482-4810 or [billo@upea.com](mailto:billo@upea.com).*

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By Justin Knepper

# MALONEY ALLEY

## CONNECTING SOO LOCKS TO DOWNTOWN



composed of a number of vacant and under-utilized properties, as well as a large swath of vacant parking lot.

The city has targeted significant investment in the Maloney Alley area since the late 1990s, encouraging “back door” entrances to businesses from north of the Alley. More recently, businesses have inquired about the potential for expanding outdoor seating into this area. The project is part of an ongoing interest within the city to more effectively utilize this space as a connector between attractions, and also as an attraction in itself.

The proposed area is a 6.4-acre site comprised of five privately owned properties. The five buildings within the project area include the former Chippewa

Sault Ste. Marie  
pop. 14,144



In October 2012, the city of Sault Ste. Marie was selected to receive technical placemaking assistance from a team of Michigan State University (MSU) and Michigan Municipal League professionals. The area selected for a “placemaking makeover” is known by locals in Sault Ste. Marie as Maloney Alley.

Maloney Alley, in the heart of downtown, would serve as a focal point in the community, acting as a bridge between

the Soo Locks tourist attractions and more traditional downtown uses. In doing so, the Alley will fulfill a need for such a space that was recently identified in a survey conducted by Lake Superior State University students. The Alley development project will also complement past and ongoing investments and partnerships fostered by the city in the effort to revitalize and enhance its downtown. The vicinity around Maloney Alley is currently



County Mental Health Center, mBank, Atto Building, Lockview Laundromat, and the former Soo Co-op Grocery Store. The mBank and Laundromat sites are occupied and expect to retain their current uses. The Soo Locks are located one-half block north of the Alley. The city's more traditional downtown is one-half block to the south. Local stakeholders are supportive of a plan that will ensure year-round and mixed uses, day and evening activities, and sufficient parking.

The assistance from the League and MSU took place in the form of several public meetings through which a community vision was established and a final report with recommendations on how to make the project a reality was presented.

The first meeting, which was held in late November 2012 before a crowd of approximately 65 interested residents, was intended to introduce the design team to the community, to engage the attendees as to their future vision for the space, and to hear their opinions about the city as a whole.

At that meeting, numerous ideas were discussed ranging from using the space for a band shell to a big box retailer and nearly everything in between. After two more community meetings, the final, agreed upon vision included the demoli-

tion of a number of vacant properties in the area; new mixed-use developments to support the nearby main streets with downtown living options; public space featuring sports courts in the summer that could be converted to outdoor ice rinks in the winter; a plaza; and rear store improvements to the restaurants and pubs bordering the alley.

The Maloney Alley Visioning Plan was finalized by the designers from MSU and the League in the spring of 2013, and was greeted with tremendous excitement from the public. The resulting plan emphasizes the creation of a public gathering space for the community that would generate interest and activity in the downtown core to strengthen the local economy. Upon its creation, the Alley will be used by Sault Ste. Marie as a space for both planned and sponta-

*Continued on page 22.*

## PLACEPLANS

Successful placemaking is a dynamic, strategic approach to community development and economic revitalization based on an individual community's strengths within core "quality of life" areas. PlacePlans is a joint effort between Michigan State University and the Michigan Municipal League, funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) through the MIPlace initiative, to help communities design and plan for transformative placemaking projects.

The PlacePlans process is customized to each project and community, but each involves an intensive community engagement strategy, including a public visioning



*The Maloney Alley Visioning Plan was greeted with tremendous excitement from the public. The plan emphasizes the creation of a public gathering space that will provide a visual and physical connection to the Soo Locks, the downtown, farmers markets, and shops and restaurants.*

session, several public meetings to provide specific input and feedback on plans and designs, and direct work with key community stakeholders along the way. The PlacePlan projects will positively impact each community's ability to leverage their place-based assets as economic drivers, and will provide lessons for communities across Michigan. Please visit [placemaking.mml.org](http://placemaking.mml.org) to see the works in progress, and follow our placemaking blog, and the League's social networks—Twitter and Facebook.


neous year-round activities. It will provide a visual and physical connection to other assets including the Soo Locks, the downtown, farmers markets, and shops and restaurants along Portage Avenue and Ashmun Street.

However, one year later, people are beginning to ask: "Is the Maloney Alley project ever going to happen?" This is because major visible change has not taken place yet. It has been necessary to remind people that multi-million dollar development, as outlined in the visioning plan, can take years to come to fruition. The properties in question have been abandoned for more than 20 years, and things don't tend to happen overnight in the U.P.



But behind the scenes, Knepper and other staff at the city, the DDA, and the League, are working hand-in-hand to clear the way for development.

A major hurdle preventing developers from seriously considering the Maloney Alley project was a lack of market research that demonstrated demand for downtown housing. To address this issue, the DDA applied for "Target Market Analysis" funding from the Michigan Housing and Development Authority, and recently received results showing that downtown Sault Ste. Marie can support more than 200 new residential units over the next seven years.

Other areas being addressed include continual marketing of the area; working with the various property owners on clean-up projects; re-activating parking lots; considering the space for festivals and events; and regularly meeting with potential developers. 

*Justin Knepper is the downtown manager for the Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Development Authority. You may contact him at 906-635-6973 or [jkneppe@saultcity.com](mailto:jkneppe@saultcity.com).*

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# COVER STORY







Photo by Samjd3

Ironwood  
pop. 5,387



# DEPOT PARK TAKES HOME THE CUP

By Elizabeth Ann-Philips Foley

**H**ow do you find a city that's barely on the Michigan map? Any Ironwood resident will tell you: head north across the Mackinac Bridge, turn left and drive six hours until you hit Wisconsin. Then stop and turn around, you just passed Ironwood.

But for local officials seeking to revitalize the small northern Michigan town, the challenge wasn't finding Ironwood, it was how to give people a reason to come in the first place—and maybe even to settle down and stay once they arrive. The 2013 Community Excellence Award (CEA) winner Depot Park project is the story of how Ironwood went from boom town to bust and back again, on its way to better than ever before.

"I am so proud of my community and this CEA award. A CEA award is not a matter of how big your city is or how much money you spend, it's about a project that comes from the heart," said Mayor Kim Corcoran. "It was wonderful to see the city team up with a variety of community members to achieve a common goal of creating a new gathering place for all to enjoy."



*The city of Ironwood was the 2013 winner of the Community Excellence Award. The city will keep the cup for a year then pass it on to the 2014 winner at the League's Annual Convention in Marquette.*



Photo by Samjd3

When grant funds ran out, private citizens banded together to donate time and money to develop volleyball courts and to lay pavers and sod, even taking turns watering the grass until it took hold.

## City History

Back in the 1880s, the logging and mining industries were booming in the U.P. By the 1920s, Ironwood's population had soared above 16,000 and the downtown was alive. Supplies and people flowed nonstop along the local railway. The depot was the pulsing heart of downtown, where families saw their men off to war and gathered for social events, even hosting a presidential campaign stop in 1896. Ironwood was the place to be in the western U.P.

But over the next few decades the mining industry faded, with the last mine closing in the 1960s. The once-bustling depot was now silent, boarded up, and abandoned. The city's population had shrunk to just over 5,000. Many downtown businesses had either shut their doors or moved out to the highway to catch the eye of passing motorists on their way to somewhere else.

Something had to be done to revitalize the downtown and give Ironwood back its sense of place.

## Blueprints for Michigan Downtowns

In 2008, city officials teamed up with the Downtown Ironwood Development Authority (DIDA) to invest in Virginia-based consulting firm HyettPalma's Blueprints for Michigan Downtowns, a grant-funded program offered through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Michigan Municipal League (MML) to assist communities in their downtown revitalization efforts.

The place-based plan included several streetscape concepts and a toolkit to promote business growth. The concept centered on the creation of a "focus block" that could be developed into a community gathering spot. While the original depot station was not part of the revitalization, it added wholeness to the project, which was named Depot Park.



Photo by Samjd3

## The Makeover

Funding included the Michigan DNR Trust Fund, Community Development Block Grants, and a Downtown Infrastructure Grant. By using the funds from one grant to supply the matching funds for another, the city was able to parlay \$91,000 of city matching dollars into \$1.2 million of development funds. Residents and local organizations also donated to the project.

A cross street was closed to traffic to allow two city blocks to be merged into the focus area that received about \$450,000 of the funds. A MDNR Trust Fund Grant helped to buy some railroad property and in the initial clean-up. It also included refurbishing area around the original 1880s depot, which now





houses the Ironwood Historical Society and Chamber of Commerce.

The makeover featured a pavilion with all the fixings including restrooms and a food prep area. The pavilion is now booked up almost every weekend for parties and other events. The Ironwood school system provides free lunches for area youth in the pavilion through the summer, and also plans to provide a movie night there. Other park improvements included new lighting, flowers, trees, bike racks, banners, benches, wayfinding signs, a walking track, and revamped parking lots.

The parking lot also serves as the trailhead for the region's massive network of recreational trails for hikers, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, and ATV-ers. The first person to officially hike the trail started from Detroit in April of 2013 and arrived in Ironwood in July. In August of 2013, Governor Rick Snyder attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony to dedicate the new Depot Park.

"It was an honor to work with such energetic and dedicated people, from the city of Ironwood and our community to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Going from a vision to actually see the park completed is very rewarding for all," said Lee-Ann Garske, a member of DIDA and project driver for the Depot Park Project.

## Community Impact

Community support has been the best part, said Corcoran. When grant funds ran out, private citizens banded together to donate time and money to develop volleyball courts and to lay pavers and sod, even taking turns watering the grass until it took hold. When summer storms destroyed some of the community's large trees, they were carved into iconic statues of a train conductor, a logger, and a miner to stand watch over the park.

Even though the park has only been open a short time, the positive impacts are already visible, Corcoran said.

"Our Community Development staff has been busy generating events at the Depot. One event is our weekly farmers/artisans market on Fridays which we hope will evolve to include music later in the evening," she said. "The Depot Park is also home to a big car show and Festival Ironwood, a four-day celebration that includes food, fun, music, history, and many other cool things. The volleyball courts are in constant use by all age groups. And our pavilion is now being sought out for parties and fundraisers."


Future amenities will include playground equipment, a large awning, benches, and grills.

"The plan is to also add WiFi and an art park for local artists to display their creations," said Corcoran. "We will also



Photo by Samjd3

augment signage and lighting from the highways to our city center as an increased effort to guide people to downtown."

Corcoran said, word is spreading fast beyond the local population, with kudos from visitors such as an ATV group that has now made Ironwood a regular stop on the trail system. "It looks like we are on the right path to getting people downtown to spend a little time and a little money. We might even be on the right path to getting people to come live where they play!" 

---

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



*Festival Ironwood is "a four-day celebration that includes food, fun, music, history, and many other cool things," said Mayor Kim Corcoran. This year, 65 riders took part in the Wednesday evening ride.*

# Health-Conscious Projects Gain National Recognition



# MARQUETTE

By Lisa Donovan

Marquette  
pop. 21,355



## Farmers Market

Marquette Commons is a beehive of activity on Saturdays. From May through October, throngs of people fill the pedestrian plaza to enjoy the brightly colored local produce, booths with everything from honey and wine to handcrafted jewelry, and live music performances. The popular downtown Marquette farmers market is just one of the health-oriented initiatives that garnered Marquette a finalist position for the 2014 All-America City Award.

"We want to get the word out that the market sells fresh, locally grown food and it's accessible to everyone, no matter what your income," said Samantha Collins, promotions and events coordinator for the Marquette Downtown Development Authority. Collins was part of the 11-member team that represented Marquette at the All-America City Awards competition in Denver.

## Food Co-op: From Seed to Plate

The Marquette Food Co-op is another important element in the city's emphasis on healthy living through food. This community-owned store specializes in wholesome, natural and organic foods—many of which are locally grown—as well as cooking classes, workshops, and farm tours.

"From seed to plate, we'll help you," said Sarah Monte, the co-op's education coordinator, who was also a member of the team that traveled to Denver. Business has been so brisk in recent years that the co-op recently moved into a revitalized downtown building, tripling its retail space.

## Transforming the Shoreline

Reclaiming and supporting the natural environment is also essential to the community's health and vitality. In recent years, the city has been working to transform their shoreline



from an industrial harbor to an attractive destination for residents and visitors alike. Two developments now underway—Founders Landing and Liberty Way—will bring in new residential and commercial projects, a public boardwalk, and a connection to the city bike path.

Another property, willed to the city by a long-time resident, has 1,500 ft. of Lake Superior frontage and will be named Clark Park in the citizen's honor. And the city's purchase of the 2,400-acre Heartwood Forestland property became the backbone of the Noquemanon Trail Network (NTN), a recreational trail for hikers, bikers, and skiers (see case study on page 37). NTN hosts events such as the Ore to Shore Mountain Bike Epic and the Noquemanon Ski Marathon, which bring in competitors and visitors from across the country and add over \$1 million to the local economy.

### Library as Community Health Hub

Serving as a cultural and educational hub is another way the city contributes to its citizens' health and well-being. Since 2009, the Peter White Public Library's Your Mind Matters program has enlightened the community on numerous issues relating to mental health. The month-long series of programs includes Lunch and Learns, movies, and exhibits.

"The greatest thing is when community members come in and are raving about the program. It brings more people into the library to see all the resources available to them," said Dominic Davis, the library's administrative assistant and a member of the All-America City Award delegation.


Mental health is also the focus of LIVEWISE, a YMCA program aimed at building confidence, hope, and healthy lives for individuals experiencing early stage Alzheimer's. LIVEWISE guides patients and caregivers through a 16-week program focusing on how to best handle the disease.

"We've gotten very good feedback from the community. We get direct referrals from physicians now, and we're becoming a normal part of



Alzheimer's treatment in Marquette," said Lisa Coombs Gerou, CEO of the YMCA of Marquette County, and another member of the All-America City Award team.

Although the Marquette team didn't walk away with the top prize at this year's All-America City competition, everyone agreed that they built strong connections with each other in the process. "Our goal was to win the award, although being a finalist was great," said Assistant City Manager Kyle Whitney. "But the real benefit as a community was to go to Denver and see the great things other communities are doing and network locally and regionally. That's an asset that will serve us well into the future."

"Any competition like this causes the community to sharpen," added Mayor Pro Tem Fred Stonehouse. "We learn to do things better, and deliver better services to our citizens." 

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



"...the real benefit [of the competition] as a community was to go to Denver and see the great things other communities are doing and network locally and regionally. That's an asset that will serve us well into the future."

—Assistant City Manager Kyle Whitney

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# MARQUETTE

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## PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOPS

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

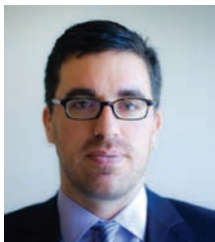
Special opportunities to enhance your community know-how will be available before the League's Convention officially begins. These pre-convention workshops are specifically designed to give you the detailed information you need to do a top-notch job for your community. These workshops are available for an additional fee of \$75 each.

**Achieving Council Efficiency**  
9:00 am-Noon

**Illegal Expenditures: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You**  
9:00 am-Noon

**Presque Isle Park Color Walking Tour**  
9:00 am-Noon

**Municipalities "On The Rocks"**  
9:00 am-Noon



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Jamie Bennett**  
Executive Director, ArtPlace America  
*The Role of the Arts in Creative Placemaking*  
The arts are key to shaping the social, physical, and economic futures of communities.



**Catherine Bracy**  
Director of Community Organizing, Code For America  
*Why Good Hackers Make Good Citizens*  
Hacking can be a force for good when people are involved in improving their communities.

## AGENDA

### Tuesday, October 14

Travel day to Marquette  
*The League is providing bus transportation for an additional fee. Visit [convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org) for more info.*

### Wednesday, October 15

8:30 am-5:30 pm	Registration Hours
9 am-Noon	Pre-Convention Workshops
9 am	Board of Trustees Meeting
Noon	Michigan Women in Municipal Government Lunch
2-3:45 pm	Welcoming General Session Parade of Flags Community Excellence Awards
4-5:15 pm	Breakout Sessions
5:15-6:15 pm	Elected Officials Academy Board Meeting
6-8 pm	Host City Reception

### Thursday, October 16

7 am-5 pm	Registration Hours
7:30-8:30 am	Michigan Association of Mayors Breakfast
8:30-9:45 am	General Session
10-11:15 am	Breakout Sessions
11:15 am-Noon	Delegate Check-in Annual Meeting
Noon-4 pm	Lunch & Mobile Workshops
6:30-8:30 pm	Reception & Annual Awards Banquet
8:30 pm	Foundation Fundraising Tavern Tour

### Friday, October 17

7-11 am	Registration Hours
7:45-8:45 am	Governance Committee Meeting & Breakfast
9-10:15 am	Breakout Sessions
9-10:15 am	MBC-LEO Meeting
10:30-11:45 am	Closing General Session Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup" Winner Announced
11:45 am	Closing Lunch

Register online @ [CONVENTION.MML.ORG](http://CONVENTION.MML.ORG)

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Samantha Harkins

So far in 2014, Michigan's legislators have taken up many issues affecting local government. When they broke for summer to hit the campaign trail for the upcoming fall elections, a few issues were resolved—but many remain, to be dealt with when they return.

## **EVIP Eliminated in Final Revenue Sharing Budget!**

The League was successful in eliminating most of the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) requirements that have been burdensome to communities for the last several years. Many of our communities contacted their legislators expressing concerns with EVIP, and a number of you testified before the Legislature. Thank you for your critical advocacy on this issue. They clearly heard us, and the pressure worked! Category 1 requirements still remain in effect, as far as dashboards, citizen guides, etc., but the other criteria for category 2 and 3 have been eliminated entirely.

The League would like to give a huge “thank you” to Senator John Pappageorge (R-Troy), a champion in the effort to eliminate EVIP. Sen. Pappageorge has requested that we purge the term “EVIP” from our vocabularies—I think our members will happily comply.

This year's budget included a \$13 million statutory revenue sharing increase. Of that amount, \$7.2 million (or 3 percent) would be distributed through the existing revenue sharing formula for cities, villages, and townships that are currently eligible. An additional \$5.8 million in one-time funding is included and distributed to cities, villages, and townships. The payment will be distributed by providing the greater of a 3-percent increase over the Fiscal Year 2013-14 revenue sharing payment or per capita of \$2.65 for a local unit with a population of 7,500 or more. Communities with a population of less than 7,500 will receive a 3-percent increase over a FY2013-14 payment. The budget also includes an additional \$8 million for financially distressed cities, villages, and townships. The funding will be distributed by the Department of Treasury in a grant program. Constitutional revenue sharing is also up by 2.4 percent. The governor signed the budget on June 30.

## **Detrimental Public Safety Exception to PA 54**

The Senate passed SB 850, a bill that would exempt police and fire from PA 54, enabling them to receive retroactive pay increases after a contract expires. The bill passed by a vote of 27-10.

In 2011, the Legislature passed a number of reforms to help employers control costs and be better stewards of taxpayer resources. One of the most significant was prohibiting retroactive pay increases after a contract has expired. This game-changing statute, PA 54 of 2011, has helped communities settle contracts more quickly and provides more certainty in municipal budgets. Passage of SB 850 would be detrimental to local governments' ability to settle contracts quickly and efficiently.

The League strongly opposed this bill, and we continue to urge you to contact your legislators when they return to let them know how harmful this carve-out would be. The arguments public safety groups use to support this bill include: the number of PA 312 filings would proliferate and the Legislature only intended this bill to impact teachers. However, according to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, there were only 43 PA 312 filings in 2013 as opposed to 69 in 2011. PA 312 filings are significantly lower than they were before enactment of PA 54. In addition, if the Legislature did only intend this for teachers, it has been a game-changer for municipal budgets, and it's critical that we retain this tool to allow local units the opportunity to settle contracts expeditiously and save taxpayers money.

## **Road Funding**

The Senate and House adjourned for summer recess after several failed attempts to provide additional road funding to fix Michigan's infrastructure. Failing to act means our roads and bridges will continue to fall into greater disrepair and we won't be able to invest in additional infrastructure to attract and retain talented employees and job providers.

The League will be relentless in the pursuit of additional funding and we want to thank all the members who reached out and asked their legislators to support a long-term sustainable solution. We anticipate the Legislature continuing discussions around this issue upon their return, and are hopeful they will find a solution before the end of the year.



Although the Legislature was unable to come up with a comprehensive solution to fix Michigan's transportation system, next year's transportation budget includes an additional \$144.5 million in one-time funding for roads. As a result, cities and villages will receive \$31.5 million. Based on the boilerplate language in the bill, the money will be spread out over equal payments throughout the year—not as a lump sum payment. An estimated breakdown, by community, can be found at [blogs.mml.org](http://blogs.mml.org).

### Medical Marihuana Legislation


The Senate Government Operations committee passed House Bill 4271, allowing local units of government to regulate (or ban) provisioning centers (i.e. dispensaries), and HB 5104, allowing for medical marihuana-infused products. The League has pushed for the continued inclusion of local control and has been successful. Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe), chair of the committee, stated there is still work to be done on the legislation before a vote in the Senate takes place.

### OMA—Physical Presence Required to Vote

House Bill 4363 Sponsored by Representative Amanda Price (R-Holland) has been passed out of the Senate Government Operations and sent to the Senate floor. This bill would require a member of the legislative body to be physically present in order to vote at a public meeting. Concerns were raised from both sides of the aisle, and the bill sponsor has agreed to address these before the bill is taken up for a vote in the Senate.

### Michigan Investment Market Legislation

House Bill 5273, dealing with Michigan investment markets, has been unanimously voted out of the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee. This bill would allow businesses and residents in Michigan to become broker-dealers to create a market (online or in person) through which intrastate stocks can be listed, bought, sold, and resold. Those interested in purchasing stock from local companies would have easy access to the listings of all the companies on the exchange and show these potential investors that there is indeed a market for what they may be purchasing. Exchanges must apply and be registered with the state, as well as follow rules of operation laid out in the legislation which will provide security for all those participating, both the businesses and the investors.

This is the next step in building on the MILE/ crowdfunding legislation that was passed earlier this year. We want to thank Representative Nancy Jenkins (R-Clayton) for sponsoring this legislation and working so diligently to help small businesses in our local communities grow and prosper. 

*Samantha Harkins is the director of State Affairs for the League. You may contact her at 517-908-0306 or [sharkins@mml.org](mailto:sharkins@mml.org)*



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# City Charters



A city charter is a basic law formulating the government for a city that establishes the framework of government, defines powers and duties of city officials, and identifies the rights and responsibilities of a city in fulfilling the needs of its citizens.

By League Staff

## HISTORY

During the nineteenth century city charters were general or special acts dictated from a distant legislature. These charters fixed the forms of city government and granted only such powers to local bodies as were expressly enumerated therein or necessarily implied. This concept is sometimes known as “Dillon’s Rule” and considered a city to be a mere political subdivision of the state and, regardless of the city’s needs, it could exercise only such powers as were expressly granted.

At the start of the twentieth century, great economic changes were bringing even more pronounced social changes. Together these placed new and heavy burdens on cities. Large numbers of the rural population moved into the cities at the very time waves of immigrants arrived. Cities experienced immense growth and a tremendous need for many new services, but with populations still inexperienced in complex governmental forms. As the industrial-economic-social revolution roared on, it is no wonder that governmental conditions in cities became chaotic. Bossism, patronage, spoils—they all appeared to be commonplace necessary evils. Even graft was common, and largely unchecked. “You can’t beat city hall” was more than a casual saying. It was a brutal fact.

## HOME RULE

Thus the stage was set for municipal reform and the concept of “home rule.” It was reasoned that the vices of the past might be corrected or reduced if the local populace could frame its own charter, determine how best to secure representation on the city council, provide its own means for selecting the mayor and the administrators of the city activities, define the powers that might be exercised, adopt nonpartisan at-large elections if it wished, and establish its own accounting and auditing controls.

The principle of municipal home rule was apparently first enumerated in the constitution of Missouri in 1875. It quickly spread to other states. The Michigan Constitution of 1908 included the following language:

Article VIII, Section 21. Under such general laws, the electors of each city and village shall have power and authority to frame, adopt and amend its charter and to amend an existing charter of the city or village heretofore granted or passed by the Legislature for the government of the city or village and, through its regularly constituted authority, to pass all laws and ordinances relating to its municipal concerns, subject to the constitution and general laws of this state.

This provision was hailed as a major accomplishment by establishing “home rule” for cities and villages in Michigan.

After approval of the constitution by the voters, the Legislature adopted Act 279 of 1909, the well-known Home Rule Cities Act (along with one for villages), to enable the citizens of Michigan cities to frame, adopt, and amend their own charters within the extensive ground rules established by that Act. It later added a declaration approving the essence of home rule:

Each city may in its charter provide for the exercise of all municipal powers in the management and control of municipal property and in the administration of the municipal government, whether such powers be expressly enumerated or not; for any act to advance the interests of the city the good government and prosperity of the municipality and its inhabitants, and through its regularly constituted authority to pass all laws and ordinances relating to its municipal concerns subject to the constitution and general laws of this state. MCL 117.4j.



## BASICS OF A CHARTER

The charter will have to establish, first, the basic form of government which the city shall have. The duties of the legislative body, mayor, and of the chief administrative officer or manager, if those positions are provided for in the charter, will have to be defined. Basic questions cluster around issues of how to structure the governing body:

- Will elections be conducted at-large or by wards?
- Will elections be partisan or nonpartisan?
- How long will the terms of office of elected officials be, and will they be staggered?
- Will terms of office be limited?
- How many members on the council?
- What will be the procedure for adopting ordinances and when will they take effect?


Most Michigan charters contain at least ten or twelve chapters covering the following subjects:

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Incorporation and Powers    | • Taxation                 |
| • Elections                   | • Special Assessments      |
| • The Legislative Body        | • Borrowing                |
| • Legislation, Administration | • Utilities                |
| • General Finances            | • Miscellaneous Provisions |
| • Budgets and Contracts       | • A Transition Schedule    |

There may be other chapters especially addressed to matters of prime local concern that are desired to install permanently in the charter rather than leaving to ordinance or contract treatment, such as: a hospital, museum, art center, library, pension system, civil service, electric or water distribution facility, transportation system, and so on.

## LEAGUE CITY CHARTER DATABASE

To aid our members in revising and amending their charters, the League has compiled an online resource—the city charter database. The charter database is a glimpse into the unique governing documents of Michigan’s cities. This one-of-a-kind database includes information from all 273 home rule city charters on key concepts such as number of elected officials on council, how the mayor is selected (most popular votes, direct election, or chosen from amongst council), terms of office of council, how vacancies in elected office are filled, a city’s fiscal year, etc. Users can search by geographic location, population, form of government, and areas of duties/responsibilities. For example, if you are amending your charter and want to know which other cities in Michigan have a provision you are looking for (method of filling council vacancies, purchasing limits, fiscal year, nepotism, etc.), you can choose your criteria from a drop down menu and find the data in the charter database. We have also included digital PDFs of charters (when available) so you can also search a specific city’s charter to pinpoint the text of a provision you are interested in.

This article is an excerpt from the paper “The Nature and Purpose of a Home Rule Charter” by David Morris. 

**The League has many additional resources to aid city officials and elected city charter commissioners at [mml.org](http://mml.org):**

### CITY CHARTER DATABASE

#### CHARTER COMMISSIONERS HANDBOOK (INCLUDES):

- Charter Revision & Amendment
- Nature and Purpose of a Home Rule Charter
- General Subject Areas of a Charter
- Mandatory Charter Provisions of the Home Rule City Act and Home Rule Village Act
- Outline of Procedures for Revision of Village Charter under Home Rule Village Act
- Sample Charter Commission Rules of Procedure
- Sample Charter Commission Minutes

#### ONE PAGER *PLUS* FACT SHEETS:

- Charter Amendment Legislative Body HRC
- Charter Amendment Initiatory Petition HRC
- Charter Amendment Legislative Body HRV
- Charter Amendment Initiatory Petition HRV

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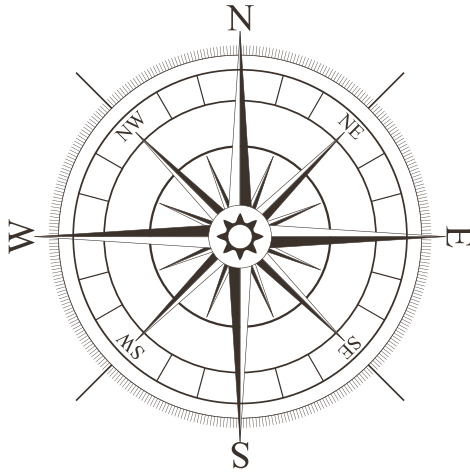
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# THE NOQUEMANON TRAILS NETWORK

By League Staff

**T**he terrain and extreme seasons of Marquette fairly beg for four-season silent sports activity. The Noquemanon Trails Network (NTN) is a 501c3 that emerged from an unofficial volunteer group concerned with maintaining trails when state resources became untenable about 10 years ago. At the same time, the city of Marquette was actively repositioning itself from a former industrial community to a premiere recreational tourism destination. In this pursuit, the city purchased 2,243 acres in the city and contiguous townships, enabling expansion of NTN's silent sports trail system within city boundaries and beyond. Unanimously approved by city officials, the acquisition was dubbed the "Louisiana Purchase" for its future economic importance.

NTN has a 17-member board of volunteers, representing all user interests. Several members of the board are both trail users and local business owners with a vested interest in the success of the trails and promotion of the area as a recreational tourism destination. NTN has a full-time director and part-time trail builders and maintenance workers, but most maintenance is done by volunteers.

While the city invested in strategic land purchases, NTN took up the challenge of major trail development. NTN's goals are: erosion control; preservation; and an excellent trail experience for all skill levels, multiple generations, and all user types. With this investment, mountain bike (Single Track) use exploded, and Marquette is now a national year-round silent sports destination.

The city, DDA, and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) all play a role in promoting this brand and attracting visitors. NTN's focus is changing from infrastructure development to events, many of which are coordinated with the city's downtown interests. The city will soon develop high-end condominium units in the popular Heartwood area providing immediate trail access for residents, and an additional tax base for the community.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

► Increased annual hotel sales primarily through two major recreational events by 25,000 rooms from 2009-2012. A conservative estimate of an additional \$150 contributed to the local economy per room sold equals nearly \$3.8 million, not including spending estimates of local/regional participants and spectators.

► Stimulated, through development of downtown trail access, more than \$40 million in private investment and provided the impetus for more than \$12 million in other public projects. New businesses include two brew pubs representing \$750,000 of investment and 14 employees, seven restaurants representing \$2 million of investment and 80 employees, as well as other new and expanded shops and businesses. The taxable value of downtown properties is up 83 percent, with new downtown residential increasing 200 percent (townhouse, condo, and second-story residential).

► Doubled the number of major trail event participants annually and created year-round recreation destination by welcoming and investing in Single Track (mountain bike) users.



► Launched annual Noquemanon Ski Marathon, which is part of the American Ski Marathon Series and is an FIS (International Ski Federation) points race. The race draws Olympic competitors, has reached its maximum capacity of 1,400 participants, and is enjoyed

by countless spectators. 600 volunteers work the event which includes: marathon and half-marathon, 12 K, youth races, snow shoeing, skijor, snow-biking and sit ski events. Annual NTN skiers and snowshoers are estimated at 28,000.

► Launched Ore to Shore Mountain Bike Epic, drawing 2,387 participants in 2012, attracting national cycling team participation, and creating additional exposure for Marquette as a premiere cycling destination. 400 volunteers work the event, which included 48-mile, 28-mile, and 10-mile races with various youth events. The route runs through downtown Marquette.

► Launched first Fat Tire (snow bike) Winter Event as part of Ski Marathon events in 2013.

► Utilized the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) to train Marquette stakeholders in becoming an IMBA-recognized destination. In this pursuit, NTN hired a master trail builder to create trails for all skill levels that also include erosion control, engineered to coexist with the environment. Once IMBA-recognition is achieved, NTN will receive national exposure to 35,000 IMBA members and retailers.



Photo by Aaron Peterson

► Inspired DDA/city to brand for recreational tourists and plan ambitious events downtown:

- High profile bike racks in downtown create a welcoming bike culture and promote Marquette's many other recreational tourism attractions such as hockey, music, freighter-watching, etc.
- The new 2012 summer Bike Jam combined NTN Single Track trail events with downtown bike events, appealing to all skill levels, bike types, and families.
- The new 2013 winter Rail Jam is a downtown event for snowboard competitors-promoted in conjunction with the UP 200 Sled Dog event (an Iditarod qualifying race).

► Inspired Marquette General Hospital and other major employers to use the NTN system as a quality of life recruitment tool.

► Attracted major players in bike industry to test-ride new bike lines on NTN trails.

► Attracted skijors (skiers pulled by dogs or horses) and sit skiers (adaptive skiing for the physically challenged).

► Recognized widespread popularity of canine companions and designated canine-friendly trails.

► Separated trail users by activity (to degree possible) to maximize trail experience for all.

## ACTIONS TAKEN

An abundance of natural and social capital is what makes this endeavor successful. The energy and desire of sports enthusiasts, coupled with community pride, makes for great volunteers.

■ **Build Foundation of Community Pride:** The city's adherence to a long-term master plan to reinvent itself from an industrial-based to a recreation/tourism-based community through steady implementation and publicized successes, fostered community pride and created an enthusiastic resident fan base.

■ **Nurture Social Capital:** As a recreation destination with a university and major health industry, Marquette has physically active residents who tend to be high-energy and socially connected via sports networks. Combined with a foundation of community pride, this provides Marquette with effective, reliable volunteer groups and a strong donor base. The city further fosters this culture with numerous citizen boards and committees.

■ **Complement Rather than Compete:** Marquette's reinvention began as a tourism destination, but the city also seized opportunities to actively promote and develop recreation options, providing a greater overall experience.





NTN has attracted Single-Track users from across the Midwest and Canada throughout the season (not just for events), as evidenced by license plates at trailheads.

Also, as NTN developed, it chose to complement (rather than compete with) the Keweenaw Peninsula's elite mountain biking destination by positioning itself as a destination for all skill levels—creating a regional destination from one area.

■ **Seek Professional Help:** As NTN developed Single Track, it sought expert guidance from the International Mountain Biking Association on becoming an IMBA destination—to appeal to all skill levels, including youth.

■ **Build on Success:** Don't expect instant success, but recognize potential. Try new things and shake it up to see what works (or doesn't). The annual Ski Marathon, limited to 1,400 participants, grew from the original Red Earth Loppert which drew a few hundred skiers.

■ **Collect the Data:** Marketing decisions are based on participant data regarding local, out-of-area, out-of-state or international participants. The CVB reports steady annual growth in hotel rooms sold from 2008-2012, now up more than 25,000 rooms annually. Further, a conservative estimate of \$150 spent on the local economy per room sold, yields a \$4 million increase from 2009. These figures do not reflect regional participants and spectators.

■ **Adjust the Lens:** As NTN's trails developed and popularity grew, NTN's focus changed from an infrastructure-based organization to an events-based organization. Events are used as significant fundraisers to complement donor and membership dollars—while

simultaneously creating buzz and feeding the media, serving to further market and promote the trails.

■ **Bam!:** The original trail users were primarily local and focused on recreation, never dreaming that what they created would have such a stunning impact on both the image and the economy of an entire city. Fortunately, the city, DDA, and CVB all recognized NTN's growing contribution to the health of the community and are able to collaborate on events and capitalize on this enormous asset.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Growing Pains are healthy; the alternative is stagnation or decline. Deliberately plan to manage change. NTN experienced significant controversy over how much of its resources from a loyal skier base they should devote to Single Track—now, it's a full embrace.

In Marquette, recreational development was the goal of the users, prior to its economic impact. Other communities may partner effectively from the beginning with economic impact as the primary goal, recognizing authentic recreation development as a means to achieving this. 

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

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R025064



# Municipalities may be subject to claims to quiet title under MCL 600.5821(2)

## FACTS:

In 1971, Kenneth Waisanen purchased property in the Jordan Beach subdivision. The parcel abuts First Street, a lake access roadway dedicated to public use. When purchased, the property contained a break wall. In 1981, Waisanen constructed an addition to the house. In 2008, Superior Township conducted a survey that indicated that the break wall encroached ten feet onto First Street and the addition approximately three feet. Waisanen filed an action to quiet title in his name on the basis of adverse possession and acquiescence to the portion of First Street that included Waisanen's break wall and addition. The township, as defendant, filed a counterclaim for possession of that same portion of First Street.

Adverse possession of property requires clear and cogent proof that possession of the disputed property has been actual, visible, open, notorious, exclusive, continuous and uninterrupted for the statutory period of 15 years. The use of the property must be "hostile" that is "without permission and in a manner that is inconsistent with the rights of the true owner." Acquiescence is basically a claim for title based on the recognition and acquiescence of the parties to a boundary line for a period of 15 years.

The statute that provides municipalities with relief, under certain circumstances, from the claims for possession is as follows:

MCL 600.5821(2): Actions brought by any municipal corporation for the recovery of the possession of any public highway, street, alley, or any other public ground are not subject to the periods of limitation.

In the present case, Waisanen claimed title by adverse possession and also by acquiescence on the basis that he had adversely possessed the property in excess of 15 years and that the township had actively and passively acquiesced to the boundary line for a period in excess of 15 years. The township, however, argued that the statute applies since it had filed a counterclaim and that Waisanen was precluded from claiming title to the property against the township.

## QUESTION:

Does subsection 2 of the statute apply where a municipality is a defendant to a claim for adverse possession or acquiescence and had filed a counterclaim for possession of the property?

### A: Answer according to the trial court:

The circuit court granted Waisanen's request to quiet title in his favor, finding that Waisanen had acquired title through acquiescence or in the alternative through adverse possession. The circuit court did not apply the statute to Waisanen's claims.

### A: Answer according to the Michigan court of appeals:

The Michigan Court of Appeals agreed with the circuit court and held that subsection 2 of the statute did not apply. The court held that the statute does not bar claims for either adverse possession or acquiescence unless they occur in an action brought by a municipal corporation for recovery of possession of the property. The court rejected the township's assertion that its counterclaim was an "action brought by any municipal corporation." The court further found that Waisanen satisfied the elements of adverse possession and acquiescence and quieted title in *Waisanen*. The court noted that it was the Legislature's responsibility to "fix" the statute if, in fact, subsection 2 did not represent its intent regarding protection for municipal corporations.

*Waisanen v Superior Township*, No. 311200 (June 24, 2014).

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

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# The Impact of Tax-Exempt Properties on Michigan Local Governments

The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) is conducted by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan in partnership with the Michigan Association of Counties, Michigan Municipal League, and Michigan Townships Association. The MPPS takes place twice each year and investigates local officials' opinions and perspectives on a variety of important public policy issues. Respondents for the MPPS include county administrators and board chairs, city mayors and managers, village presidents and managers, and township supervisors, clerks, and managers from 1,350 jurisdictions across the state.

Property tax revenues are one of the most important sources of funding for local governments in Michigan, but jurisdictions' revenues are constrained in part because most have at least some properties that are exempt from taxes. This report presents Michigan local government leaders' opinions regarding the presence and local impact of property tax exemptions in their communities. The findings in this report are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2013 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS). Note: most of the percentages below are among jurisdictions with at least one tax-exempt property.

## Key Findings

Nine out of ten Michigan local jurisdictions report having properties within their borders that are exempt from paying taxes. The most common types of tax-exempt properties (TEPs) include religious properties (reported by 78 percent of jurisdictions with at least one TEP), local K-12 school system properties (59 percent), and principal residence exemptions for people in poverty (47 percent).

In terms of their land area coverage, 53 percent of local leaders estimate TEPs account for an insignificant portion of all properties in the jurisdiction, while 36 percent say they make up a moderate or significant portion. In Michigan's largest communities, 48 percent say they are a moderate or significant portion of all property. In the state's Upper Peninsula, 56 percent of jurisdictions say they are a moderate or significant portion, likely reflecting the vast state and federal forestlands in the U.P.

In terms of their impact on potential tax revenues, 39 percent say TEPs represent a moderate or significant portion of all potential property tax revenues (55 percent in Michigan's largest communities).

And in terms of the service demands they place on Michigan's local governments, 32 percent say TEPs and the organizations that own them account for a moderate or

significant source of service demands (59 percent in the state's largest jurisdictions).

While TEPs may decrease tax revenues and increase service demands for a jurisdiction, they can also offset other service demands by providing homeless shelters and pantries, housing for the elderly, and so on. TEPs may also indirectly boost revenues by fostering higher community quality of life and helping attract or retain residents and businesses, for instance through nonprofit cultural amenities, education, and medical services, etc. When it comes to local jurisdictions' fiscal health, 26 percent of local leaders say their TEPs are assets overall, while 15 percent say they are liabilities, and 40 percent say they are both assets and liabilities.

When it comes to communities' quality of life, 46 percent say TEPs are assets overall, just 7 percent say they are liabilities, and 28 percent say they are both.

TEPs and their local impacts do not appear to be a significant concern among Michigan local officials overall, except in big jurisdictions and among those that view their TEPs as liabilities to fiscal health or quality of life. Among all jurisdictions with TEPs, only 24 percent say these issues have been a topic of much discussion among local leaders in the last year, but this increases to 44 percent among the largest jurisdictions and 74 percent among jurisdictions that view their TEPs as significant financial liabilities.

Among officials who provided descriptions of policies or programs being considered for seeking additional revenue to offset losses from property tax exemptions, many reported discussing new millages, particularly targeting public safety (police, fire, emergency), while others mentioned possible fees-for-service, new payment-in-lieu of taxes programs, and creation of special assessment districts.

The full report is available online at [closup.umich.edu](http://closup.umich.edu). For more information, please contact [closup-mpps@umich.edu](mailto:closup-mpps@umich.edu) or 734-647-4091.





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## Silver Beach Development

For many decades vacant property and antiquated industrial buildings dotted the city's lakefront. In 2006, the Silver Beach Committee was formed to acquire the property and create a "WOW" factor. The committee agreed that the development should be innovative yet maintain a sense of history from the time when the property was an amusement park.

On January 2, 2010, after seven years of planning and fundraising, the community christened Silver Beach which includes the Silver Beach Carousel, the Curious Kids' Discovery Zone, and Michigan's largest interactive water fountain.

The Silver Beach Center is one of the newest, year-round entertainment venues in southwestern Michigan.

What once was underutilized property is now a

world-class, multi-use recreational venue attracting visitors from throughout the region and nation. The project was designed to be a destination for people of all ages. Families experience a piece of Silver Beach's history by riding the large wooden carousel, and science is disguised as playtime for Curious Kids' Museum Annex visitors.

Stroll the boardwalk to the carousel house. As soon as you enter you'll feel a rush of happiness. Pick your favorite figure or chariot and take a spin...then pick another and another. Make silly faces in the photo booth. Then explore the free Silver Beach Amusement Park Museum. This wonder-filled place graced the shores of Lake Michigan from 1891-1971. It meant something special to every one of its millions of patrons

through the years. Walk past the beautifully carved carousel animals and look up into Michigan's tallest kaleidoscope and watch the beautiful changing patterns.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, Whirlpool, and several local families, over \$8,200,000 was raised to privately fund the project. Today, Silver Beach Center is a mecca for tourists and locals who want to create memories.

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