

# the review

July / August 2019

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

## DETROIT

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The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

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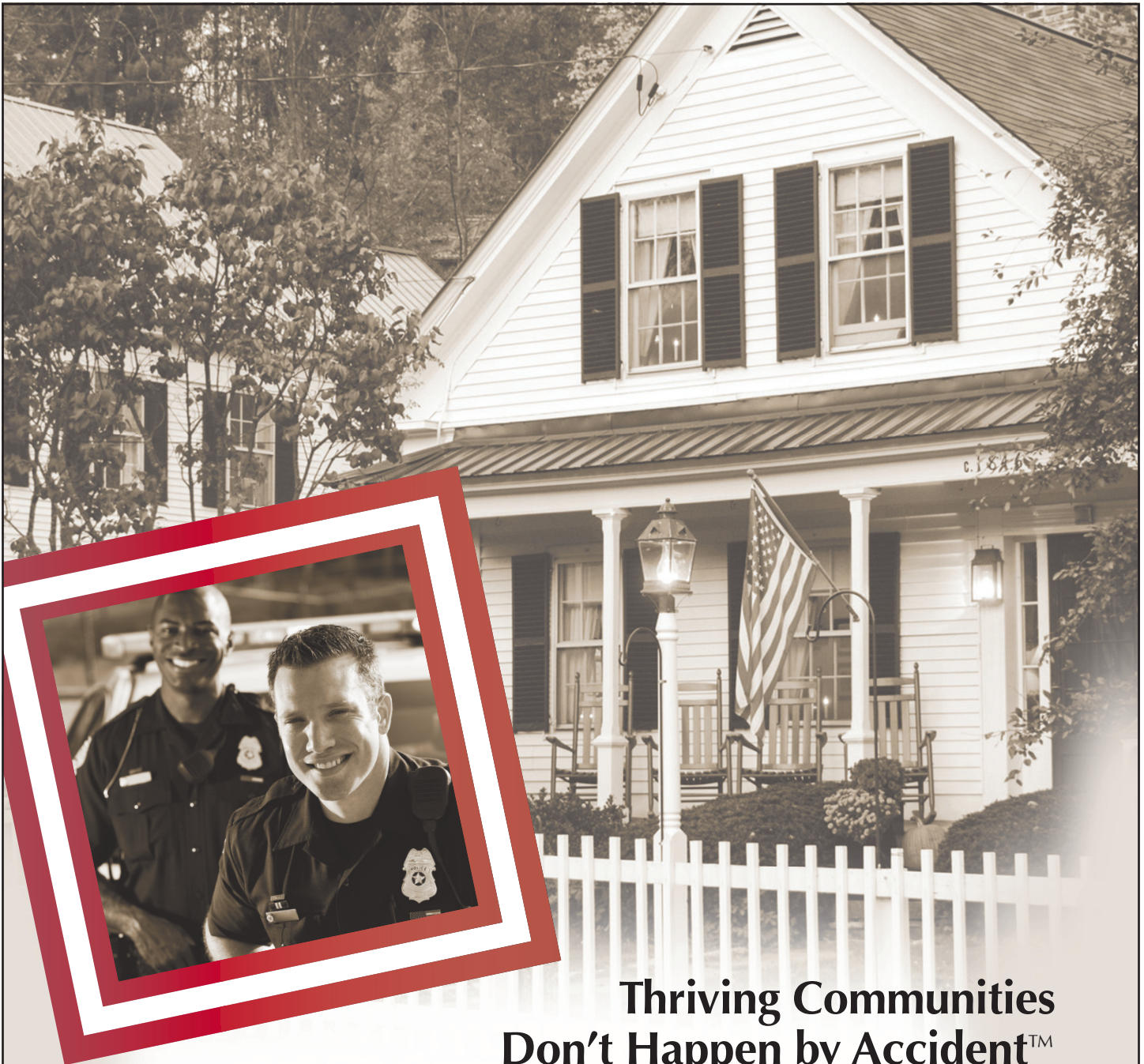
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# the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 92, Number 4

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## Detroit Rising

I am very passionate about the City of Detroit and proud to say that I am a Detroit native. But like so many families in the 1960s and 70s—as Detroit's economy declined, schools were failing, and racial tensions were growing—we moved to the suburbs when I was quite young. I may have left Detroit, but Detroit never left me. My passion for the city is now being passed down to my own two sons, who enjoy our frequent visits to Detroit museums, musical and festival events, and sports games. Occasionally, in the quiet of a Saturday morning, I will jump in the car and drive around the streets of the city, surveying the good, and imagining the what-ifs.

It was heartbreaking to witness Detroit's slow economic deterioration, but I never doubted that it was a city that would find its way back. Cities and communities are living, breathing ecosystems, forever evolving with the economic and political winds of the time—capable of experiencing unexpected decline, but also displaying a resilience that can reimagine and restore economic health. The glory days of mid-20th century Detroit are long gone, but we can honor its legacy and learn from its struggles while at the same time build a city that responds to a fast-changing world and generational expectations and realities.

Four years ago, Detroit climbed out of bankruptcy and has never looked back. During this time, we have witnessed an acceleration of progress and development, leading to a lot of buzz about Detroit's comeback. While there is good reason to argue that it is premature to declare victory—Detroit still faces enormous challenges, such as racial disparities, housing needs, and jobs that will support the well-being of all its residents—there is much to celebrate. Big businesses are moving back to the city, making significant investments in the downtown. Millennials, the age group considered the holy grail for a successful economy, are moving to Detroit. Campus Martius is a downtown public space that continues to expand and draw people of all ages all year round.

A restored riverfront befits the waterway legacy of Detroit, providing a welcoming place for all and a proud beacon for our Canadian neighbors. Start-ups are exploding, evoking memories of what Detroit once stood for. And neighborhood groups, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, small businesses, and citizens are collaborating like never before to harness a collective passion and spirit for Detroit and effect change on their own blocks and neighborhoods.

Without a strong Detroit, Michigan will continue to suffer and lose out on talent that it desperately needs to grow a sustainable economy. A strong Detroit is the beating heart that extends a lifeline to all communities in our state. Unfortunately, we continue to sorely lag in the nation. Looking at state-wide growth and financial stability for households, we still rank only 31st per capita, 33rd in wages and benefits, and 31st in college attainment (Michigan Future Inc., 2017). This is not good news. Plain and simple: we need to attract and retain talent if we are going to have a strong economy, and to do that we need to build a city and region that provides the amenities they seek. I am confident that we are on our way to doing just that—but there is still much to do.

As you read the inspiring stories that are contributing to Detroit's resurgence, we hope that it will stimulate your curiosity to learn more and that you will join us for our annual Convention in Detroit September 25-27 at the Cobo Center. Don't miss out for an on-the-ground opportunity to witness first-hand where Detroit is today, to understand the challenges it faces in the future, and to identify what role you can play in advocating for Detroit's advancement. The health and prosperity of your community depend on it!

**Amazing news to share: I'm very proud to share with you that the Michigan Municipal League and our own Chris Hackbarth were both recognized recently for being among the top lobbyists in the state. The recognition of the League and Chris making a real impact in Lansing politics was part of the 2019 Capitol Insider Survey done by MIRS News Service and EPIC-MRA. It's the second consecutive time where the League and Chris were both recognized in the survey for lobbying effectiveness. This is significant recognition made only possible through the support of you—our members. So, we celebrate this honor with you!**

*Daniel P. Gilmartin*

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# REVAMPING DETROIT BUSINESS CORRIDORS

By Liz Foley

If you haven't driven through Detroit lately, it's time to do it again. Better yet, walk these eight retail corridors reimagined into shared spaces, greenways, and complete streets.

They're a big part of Detroit's \$125 million bond-funded neighborhood improvement campaign. The streetscapes will command about \$80 million of the funds, with the rest going toward sidewalk replacement, road resurfacing, and other general improvements across the city.

It's one way the city contributes toward neighborhood revitalization, said Caitlin Marcon, deputy director of the Complete Streets Division in the city's Department of Public Works.

"I truly think there is a lot of synergy between private and public investment in communities," said Marcon. "The private sector can only go so far; the public sector must meet them halfway... We can't rely on our private partners to do all the work."

Here's a look at what you'll see by the end of 2019:

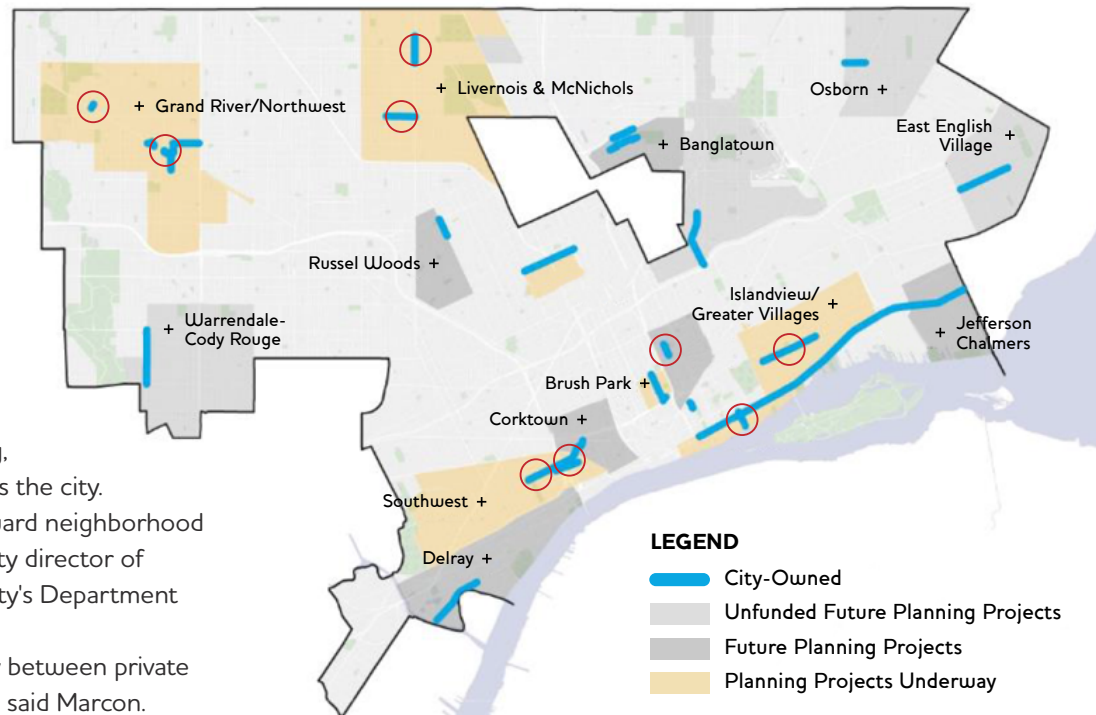
## Festival-Friendly:

### BAGLEY STREET FROM 24TH STREET TO WEST FISHER SERVICE DRIVE

In the vibrant heart of Mexicantown, two blocks of Bagley are reimagined as a shared street or shared space, an urban design approach that minimizes the segregation between modes of road user by removing features such as curbs, traffic signs, and traffic lights.

With sidewalks level with the street, the effect is a plaza-like space that seamlessly lends itself to street festivals and other community events. Already a thriving retail corridor, this section of Bagley is home to many eateries and retailers that will benefit from the more open, adaptable space.

Sidewalks and parking lanes are distinguished by different colored pavers, while driving lanes are another material. Tactile cues help the visually impaired feel where the sidewalk ends and the street begins, said Marcon. The street can be easily closed to motorized traffic for special uses.



"The city already offers flexible permits to allow some business districts to do things like shut down every Sunday afternoon for a farmers market, or every Saturday evening for al fresco dining," said Marcon. "This will allow the community to think about new ways to use the space, not just large-scale events."

## Welcome to Southwest Detroit:

### VERNOR HIGHWAY FROM CLARK AVENUE TO NEWARK STREET

One of the most exciting changes coming to southwest Detroit is Ford's purchase and redevelopment of Michigan Central Station. Once the centerpiece of Detroit "ruin porn", the long-abandoned train depot is coming back to life as an anchor of Ford's massive new urban campus for high-tech automotive innovation. Mexicantown is uniquely poised to benefit from this highly anticipated rebirth at its easternmost doorstep.

Decorative lighting will enhance the entire one-mile stretch through the heart of Mexicantown, starting at Newark Street where Vernor tunnels under the train tracks toward the depot.





*The planned new look for the Avenue of Fashion.*

### Beyond the Riverwalk:

#### JOSEPH CAMPAU STREET FROM JEFFERSON AVENUE TO THE DETROIT RIVERWALK

True walkability “connects the dots” into a network of interconnected greenways, cycling tracks, and walkways. New landscaping, lighting, and a two-lane cycle track along several blocks of Joseph Campau Street will now connect Detroit Riverwalk users to the currently underutilized off-street walkways north of Jefferson Avenue, which are also being refurbished this year.

“The greenway goes north of Jefferson all the way to Vernor,” said Marcon. “This is opening that whole mile and a half up to the river without having to get in a car and drive.”

The sidewalks will also feature bump-outs where local eateries can add outdoor seating.

### Heating up a Hotspot:

#### KERCHEVAL AVENUE FROM PARKER STREET TO EAST GRAND BOULEVARD

West Village and Islandview are among the city’s trendiest neighborhoods, drawing investors and residents and creating a hotspot for eclectic eateries and shops.

Upgraded bike lanes, sidewalks, and landscaping will grace a half-mile stretch of Kercheval from East Grand Boulevard in Islandview to Parker Street in West Village near Indian Village, a historically affluent neighborhood boasting some of Detroit’s most architecturally significant homes.

In addition to traditional sidewalk trees for landscaping, the area in front of a popular recreation center will be expanded into landscape beds that naturally filter storm water runoff with drought- and salt-tolerant plantings.

**“I TRULY THINK THERE IS A LOT OF SYNERGY BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITIES. PRIVATE SECTOR CAN ONLY GO SO FAR; THE PUBLIC SECTOR MUST MEET THEM HALFWAY...”**

### Avenue of Fashion:

#### LIVERNOS AVENUE FROM EIGHT MILE ROAD TO CLARITA AVENUE

Before suburban malls took over the retail landscape, luxury shoppers in the 1950s came to Detroit’s “Avenue of Fashion.” Steeped in the rich and storied traditions of American jazz and African-American culture, this northwest Detroit shopping district is back in style and ripe for a facelift of massive proportions.

The median will be ripped out to convert the existing four-lane divided highway into two lanes with a central left-turn lane and parking along each side. The road diet will also make room for bike lanes in each direction, and grandly widened sidewalks reminiscent of downtown’s Woodward Avenue. Like Hollywood’s Walk of Fame, the sidewalk will be embedded with plaques commemorating the historic storefronts that once graced the location.

Topping it all off will be new landscaping and decorative lighting, and new bus stops to bring shoppers from elsewhere in the city.





The future of Riopelle Street.

### Walkable and Bikeable Greenway: MCNICHOLS ROAD FROM GREENLAWN TO LIVERNOIS AVENUES


A vibrant retail corridor once connected the University of Detroit Mercy and Marygrove College along West McNichols Road. Now, a well-lit and handsomely landscaped street and bike paths will transform the current stretch of mostly vacant eyesores into an attractive and welcoming corridor with safer pedestrian crossings, improved sidewalks, and convenient bus stops.

The city owns a number of properties along this stretch which are currently under consideration for development proposals, said Marcon.

### A Shared Destination: RIOPELLE STREET FROM DIVISION STREET TO FISHER SERVICE DRIVE

Eastern Market has long been a popular Detroit destination. Now the shared-street concept will enable the Riopelle Street retail district flanking it to become a destination of its own. Similar to Bagley, the sidewalks and street will become flush, creating a plaza-like space for special events.

### Grand River: EVERGREEN TO GLASTONBURY

The city has also partnered with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) on a \$12 million revamp of Grand River Avenue (M-5). As part of the MDOT overhaul, the seven-lane thoroughfare between Evergreen and Glastonbury will be reduced to five lanes and two-way cycle tracks, with a center turn lane featuring safety islands for pedestrian crossings. In 2020, the road diet will be extended to Grand River between Cooley and McNichols. 

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Grand River will become more biker- and pedestrian-friendly.

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# *An Inside Look at the* **TRANSFORMATION OF THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT**

By MJ Galbraith

Reprinted from the Aug. 21, 2018 edition of Model D, with permission from the publisher, Issue Media Group. Edited for date changes.

In the myriad of ways that Detroit has changed over the past decade or so, the transformation of its riverfront is one of the starkest in the city. What once was a largely inaccessible patchwork of private property scattered with industry and parking lots has since become one of Detroit's busiest public spaces.

Those developments were set in motion in 2003 with the 4.5-mile Detroit RiverWalk and a few years later with the nearly two-mile Dequindre Cut, triggered by land purchases and transfers from General Motors and the City of Detroit, and the formation of the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy. But for all the drastic changes since then, the riverfront is developing even faster now.

The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, the nonprofit tasked with stewarding the riverfront's public spaces, works in tandem with public and private partnerships to create a larger

framework of development. And though private developers' interest in the greater downtown hasn't been this high in decades, the Conservancy and the city itself has established a commitment to maintaining its mission of the riverfront remaining and growing as a public space as much as possible.

As president and CEO of the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, it's Mark Wallace's job to uphold that mission. 'We focus on public space first and foremost,' Wallace says. 'But we don't just want to put imaginary buildings on a rendering. These are changes we know we can accomplish soon.'

The RiverWalk is more than 80 percent complete when compared to its 5.5-mile-long goal. Much of the Conservancy's plans aim to fill in the gaps as well as further enhance the already developed spaces. The RiverWalk will eventually stretch from Belle Isle to the east to the Ambassador Bridge to the west.

*“What once was a largely inaccessible patchwork of private property scattered with industry and parking lots has since become one of Detroit's busiest public spaces.”*





*The play garden planned for the new Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.*

## East Riverfront

Set to open this summer is Atwater Beach. Although it won't allow for swimming access, the beach will feature sand, a grassy area dotted with trees, a playscape, and a performance shed. A new pedestrian bridge and a floating barge café will connect a crucial gap of the RiverWalk, allowing for uninterrupted travel from Stroh River Place to Chene Park East.

Sometime in the fall, the Conservancy will break ground on the old Uniroyal site. The 43-acre plot of land separates Mt. Elliott Park, the eastern end of the RiverWalk, from Belle Isle. Several years and millions of dollars of environmental remediation for the once heavy industrial site will soon pay off, allowing the RiverWalk to connect to Belle Isle and its MacArthur Bridge.

"We've found that people want a connection to Belle Isle as soon as possible, Wallace says."

There are still more improvements planned for the East Riverfront. The district made the news in March 2017 when city planners announced its strategic framework plan for the area. The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, the City of Detroit Planning & Development Department, and the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation held several months' worth of community engagement, holding discussions, meetings, and tours with residents and stakeholders.

What resulted was a deeper commitment to public space, with three planned private developments scrapped in favor of eight extra acres of park space. Milliken State Park & Harbor will expand. East Jefferson Avenue, which has already seen non-motorized transit improvements, such as protected bike lanes, will be made safer for pedestrians to cross and access the riverfront.

"The riverfront belongs to all Detroiters," Maurice Cox, director for the City of Detroit Planning & Development Department, said at the time. Thanks to the involvement of hundreds of residents, we have principles that frame an international riverfront that can be accessed and enjoyed by all."

Mark Wallace echoes that sentiment today. "As we build, we want to continue to get input and broaden the groups of voices we listen to."

Also planned are two more Dequindre Cut-style pathways: Joseph Campau Greenway, which will run from the Detroit River to Vernor Highway, and Beltline Greenway, located

between Belleview and Beaufait streets, which will run from Kercheval Street to the riverfront. All three greenways are viewed as critical pedestrian-friendly access points, drawing residents from their neighborhoods to the riverfront.

## West Riverfront

And that's just the east side. Travel west and the RiverWalk seemingly ends at Joe Louis Arena. A visitor unfamiliar with the city would be forgiven for not realizing that the RiverWalk picks back up at West Riverfront Park. But Wallace says that the Conservancy has received easements from property owners to extend the RiverWalk and connect the gap interrupted by Riverfront Towers and other parcels of land there.

West Riverfront Park itself is scheduled for a major overhaul. The Conservancy held more rounds of community engagement, even going so far as to fly 21 community advisors to New York City and Philadelphia to study the great parks there. An international design contest was held for the \$50 million redevelopment of what is now mostly an open grassy field.

New York firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates was ultimately chosen for the redevelopment. Plans for the 22-acre park include a cove that comes into the park from the river, stone jetties, a kayak launch, a sandy beach, a performance hill, sport, pool, and maker houses, what Wallace describes as an "iconic" playground, and much more. Trees, hills, and extensive landscaping run throughout the renderings.

That leaves roughly one more mile to reach the Ambassador Bridge, the end goal for the RiverWalk's westward expansion. Completing the 5.5-mile stretch has always remained the Conservancy's ultimate vision. With each development, a unique experience punctuates every few steps along the RiverWalk. "A system of public spaces is more powerful than one big one," Wallace says.

## Complementary Public and Private Developments

That focus on public space has made the Detroit riverfront an increasingly desirable place to live. And just as organizations—including the city's planning department, the DEGC, and the Conservancy—work together to maintain and grow public access to the riverfront, they also regularly check in with each other to help guide the private development that does happen.





A play garden at the new Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will offer lots of fun activities for families.

The DEGC itself has more than ten acres slated for development, with some RFPs scheduled for announcements within the next few weeks, and all adjacent to or nearby the riverfront. The developments emphasize mixed-use and mixed-income that increase density throughout the district.


Sarah Pavelko, senior real estate manager for the DEGC, says that the riverfront can be a place for both public spaces and private developments. The former attracts the latter, and vice versa.

"I think it's a false dichotomy, pitting public against private," Pavelko says. You can't have one without the other. That's the reason people move to big cities.

Recently completed developments include Waters Edge at Harbortown, Orleans Landing, and the nearby DuCharme Place, which added 175, 275, and 185 residential units to the east riverfront, respectively.

And more are coming. A mixed-use redevelopment of the historic Stone Soap building could see a groundbreaking within months. Another is the \$40 million senior housing complex from Presbyterian Villages of Michigan.

It's just the beginning of what's likely to be wave after wave of mixed-use development announcements for the riverfront. It's a desirable place to live and much of the credit can go to organizations like the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, which has spent a decade and a half cultivating more than six miles of public space.

"There's a lot going on but these are things that we've wanted to do for 15 years," Wallace says. "A window of opportunity has opened for us and we want to move through it as fast as we can." 

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*Techstars helped entrepreneurs Kyle Bazy, Fares Kksebati, and Adam Oxner launch the MySwimPro app.*

# The Creative Power of Entrepreneurship

## Techstars Detroit Moves Start-ups Toward Success

By Colleen Layton

Seven years ago, Ted Serbinski made the leap from San Francisco to Detroit. He saw Detroit as a city of opportunities and arrived with several ambitious goals in mind. Among them was to seek companies to invest in, develop entrepreneurial ideas, and potentially create his own start-up. Living in San Francisco, he felt more like a dweller—living and working, but not really making a huge difference in an already thriving city. He was drawn to Detroit because he knew that he could be more of a creator and help effect impactful change.

His passion for the city grew quickly. He says, “Shortly after moving to Detroit, my personal mission developed where I really wanted to change the perception of Detroit, and now I am doing that through entrepreneurial investors.” Initially, he helped start Dan Gilbert’s Detroit Venture Partners. But with Detroit’s healthy entrepreneurial environment and the presence of the auto industry and outstanding regional universities and medical institutions, his vision led to other opportunities.





*Last year's Techstars Startup Week Detroit drew more than 12,000 attendees.*

## Launching Techstars Detroit

Several years ago, Serbinski connected with Techstars, a company founded in Boulder, Colorado in 2007, which helps entrepreneurs connect across the globe, through accelerator programs, to become more successful. The company has invested in over 2,000 startups around the world, raising over \$10 billion globally, including one company that went public on the stock market. With this substantiated success, Serbinski spearheaded the founding of Techstars Detroit based on a new model, which he described as an emerging ecosystem consisting of a consortium of corporate partnerships that were not necessarily automotive experts but were investors in companies. Some of the initial partners included Ford and Verizon.

As founder and managing director, Serbinski's goal was to develop this new model of Techstars specifically for Detroit, mentoring start-ups focused around mobility, manufacturing, and other related sectors. This is an excellent illustration of innovation—taking a proven idea and reimagining its potential and adaptation elsewhere—which is exactly what Serbinski did. He viewed it as a brand-new entrepreneurial ecosystem for the city—start-ups and corporations having access to each other and mutually benefitting from their knowledge and innovation.

Fittingly, the same day that the end of Detroit's bankruptcy was declared in 2014—a day of uplifted hopes and optimism—Serbinski announced the first Techstars

Detroit mentorship-driven accelerator program. Now entering its fifth year, by all measures it is considered a great success and continues to expand its programs and amplify its influence.

## Moving Start-Ups to the Next Level

Start-ups from all over the world, representing a variety of sectors and industries, come to Detroit to participate in the program. Techstars Detroit's accelerator program invests in founders to assist them in doing more—faster. Start-ups in various phases of development can apply to participate in a three-month mentorship, which provides them access to valuable financial and knowledge-based resources.

Out of more than 300 companies that apply each year, only 10 are chosen, making it a highly competitive selection process. The company considers a variety of criteria—among them, a genuine passion and devotion to their ideas, a strong cohesive team, and the real potential to “disrupt the industry.” One of the big considerations in selecting a start-up, Serbinski said, is whether the start-up could benefit by being immersed in the automotive and mobility ecosystem in southeastern Michigan.

Forty-four start-ups from eight different countries have participated in the program to date. Although two start-ups originated in Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids, none from Detroit has yet participated. But Serbinski is hopeful that the next class will include a start-up from Detroit. He is quick to add, however, that it doesn't mean it isn't having an impact on the city. He says, “It's a great thing—all these companies who





Techstars had a big presence at the North American International Auto Show.



Ted Serbinski, who launched Techstars Detroit, makes a presentation at the 2018 North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

apply would really like to do business in Detroit, so Techstars Detroit is really the connector. It is the connector of the dots and on the cusp of really changing the perception of doing business in Detroit.”

Success Stories

Three of the companies who have completed the program, all from New York City, have relocated permanently to Detroit. One example is SPLT, a ridesharing app start-up that first participated in Techstars Detroit’s inaugural accelerator program in 2015. Following SPLT’s great success, Bosch, a leading global automotive industry supplier, acquired them last year and they now have an Innovations Office in downtown Detroit.

Another start-up that has settled in Detroit is BeepHow, a company that bridges the skills gap by using artificial intelligence and video to get information from a master mechanic or master electrician to capture what they do before they retire and share their expertise with the next generation of workers. The accelerator program provided a huge competitive edge for these start-ups to carve out a niche in Detroit.


Fostering the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

Recognizing the importance of engaging future generations, Techstars Detroit is establishing a partnership with Detroit’s Christo Rey High School, a Catholic school serving economically disadvantaged families. Students who attend are

employed by corporate partners in real jobs through its Work Study Program. This enables them to attend not only an excellent high school and get job experience but follow a long-term trajectory for success with a 100 percent college acceptance rate. It’s an exemplary model of education working in Detroit’s low-income neighborhoods.

Through this partnership, Techstars Detroit is bringing students into their program this summer. Serbinski emphasizes, “This is an opportunity to really connect with residents of Detroit with where the future of the industry is going.”

When asked how the work they are doing relates to the state of Michigan as a whole, Serbinski affirmed, “We’re bringing technology to Michigan from all over the world, and making it accessible, and making sure that they are doing business in Michigan first. There is a big economic tailwind to what we do here, and we are changing the perception of Detroit.”

Vision, innovation, and entrepreneurial optimism are what once made Detroit a leader in the world. Decades later, individuals like Serbinski and companies like Techstars Detroit are continuing the legacy by leading the way with their own creative power—thereby becoming an important part of Detroit’s comeback story. 

Colleen Layton is a consultant for the League and a former long-time staff member, most recently holding the position of director of policy development. You may contact her at [clayton@mml.org](mailto:clayton@mml.org).




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# DETROIT MOBILITY

## Plenty of Options for Getting Around Town and Beyond

By Mark de la Vergne

**D**etroit is becoming a city of more—more jobs, more parks, more restaurants, more people. We are committed to providing more options for residents to ensure access to all of these new opportunities and amenities. In September 2018, Mayor Mike Duggan released the Strategic Transportation Plan for Detroit which laid out the priorities for the next four years. This document will serve as the playbook for how we make it safer, easier, and more affordable to get around the Motor City.

### Driving Improvements in Mobility

A tremendous amount of progress has already occurred in reaching the mayor's vision, starting with the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT). Charged with providing transit within the City of Detroit as well some of our neighboring municipalities, DDOT has made tremendous strides. This includes increasing the number of 24-hour routes from 0 in 2014 to 12 now, boosting the frequency on a number of our services, adding new bus shelters, improving

the cleanliness of our fleet, and making passengers safer by installing cameras on all of our buses. In September 2018, we announced the first rebranding of DDOT since the early 70s, which included a new color scheme, new logo, and the announcement of our ConnectTen Routes. These ten routes serve as the backbone of our service, run 24-hours a day with frequent headways, and provide free wi-fi on the bus. In addition to focusing on service within the city, we have created a new level of collaboration with SMART, which provides transit service in the suburbs. We are partnering with SMART to ensure that transit in the city and region is as seamless as possible. This started with coordinating service planning on SMART's FAST corridors (Woodward, Michigan, and Gratiot), expanded to a joint Get a Job Get a Ride program, and most recently led to a unified fare policy and new fare media (Dart) between DDOT and SMART. Now, customers can use their Dart pass to ride transit in the region as much as they like within the time limit of their pass and not have to worry about paying extra fees or transfers. A mobile Dart pass will launch later this summer making it even easier to take transit in Detroit.





The QLINE continues to make improvements to its service, including pilots with dedicated lanes. The People Mover continues to serve as a critical link around Downtown. And we now have real time arrival information for all modes of transportation in one app, appropriately called Transit.

All of these efforts are already paying off, literally. Bucking the trend of ridership decreases on transit across the United States, Detroit is one of only seven places where transit ridership is increasing. More efforts are on the way, including providing more service where there's more demand, adding more bus shelters, and finding new ways to prioritize transit.

### Expanding the Mobility Menu


There are still gaps in our mobility network and we are looking to fill them with different types of services. In 2017, the mayor launched the Office of Mobility Innovation to start piloting additional services to see how to provide the greatest amount of mobility to Detroit residents. Over the last two years, several new options have come to Detroit, including:

- **MoGo**—Detroit's bike sharing service, MoGo, launched in 2017 with 43 stations and 430 bikes. It has proved to be enormously successful, exceeding annual ridership projections every year. In the summer of 2018, MoGo is planning to expand its service into Northwest Detroit, as well as Ferndale, Oak Park, Royal Oak, Berkley, and Huntington Woods. This will be the blueprint to expand MoGo into additional neighborhoods across the city as well as adding new types of technologies, like electric assist bikes.
- **Night Shift**—The Night Shift partnership with Lyft provides a free \$7 credit to DDOT customers who are riding the bus between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. The goal of this pilot is to understand if ride hailing services like Lyft or Taxi can complement our 24-hour bus routes. Over the last year, the service has grown in popularity and served as a model pilot for other transit agencies across the country. The next iteration of the pilot will focus on working with employers to understand the impact this service is having on employee retention.





- **Scooters**—Scooters arrived in Detroit in 2018 and life went on. While part of the popularity of scooters obviously was due to the new technology, similar to the hula hoop in the 1950's, there are a lot of mobility use cases in Detroit where scooters can make it easier to get around. We were able to allow the scooter companies to operate and drive supply of the vehicles outside of the greater Downtown area.
- **May Mobility**—In partnership with Bedrock, May Mobility launched an autonomous shuttle in Downtown Detroit that connects two parking lots and transports Bedrock employees.
- **Maven**—In partnership with the city, Maven has expanded its car sharing service outside of the greater Downtown area. This was made possible by a pilot program allowing car sharing vehicles to use on-street parking and a partnership with the Osborn Neighborhood Alliance to get local residents to critical job appointments in the suburbs.
- **On-Demand Shuttle Service**—Later this year, DDOT will launch an on-demand shuttle service that addresses first/last mile issues in the I-94 Business Park.

There is a new focus on mobility to provide more options to our residents. Bringing all these different services to work as one seamless system is the overall goal. Like all cities, we have much more to learn and improve upon, but we are well on our way to transforming into the Mobility City. 

*Mark de la Vergne is the chief of mobility innovation for the City of Detroit, Mayor's Office. You may contact him at 313.224.6210 or [dlvergnem@detroitmi.gov](mailto:dlvergnem@detroitmi.gov).*



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# The Power of Neighborhood Visionaries

Spurring Small-Scale Development in Detroit Neighborhoods

By Chase L. Cantrell



BEFORE AFTER

The emotion in the room is palpable. It's the first day of class at the University of Michigan Detroit Center, and participants are asked one by one to approach the front of the room to describe their reasons for applying to Building Community Value's Better Buildings, Better Blocks training program. Some chronicle the destabilization of their neighborhoods due to foreclosures, demolitions, and property speculation. Others outline their vision of focused revitalization in neighborhoods that are tied so closely to their own identities. For those who cite personal or family wealth building as their rationale, the goal is framed as professional or financial freedom. Above all else, each participant wants to be an agent for positive change in their neighborhood.

Providing tools and resources to residents of Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park who wish to effect change in the built environment of their communities is at the core of Building Community Value's mission. The organization's programming recognizes that, during the decades of economic contraction experienced within its three service areas, city

residents worked diligently—often without sufficient institutional support—to hold their communities together. As outside interest and investment in Detroit real estate continues to increase exponentially, these same neighborhood visionaries merit access to opportunities to make a difference close to home.

With the support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Building Community Value offers low-cost courses to local residents who wish to learn the nuts and bolts of small-scale residential and commercial development. The curriculum, designed by Peter Allen of the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, is taught twice a year by Dietrich Knoer, the president and CEO of The Platform—a private, large-scale developer in the City of Detroit. Lessons focus on site identification and acquisition, pro forma development, project financing, and project management.

The course requires participants—who are intentionally drawn from each of Detroit's seven council districts as well as Hamtramck and Highland Park—to apply the information taught in class as quickly as possible. They each must select a



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Above all else, each participant wants to be an agent for positive change in their neighborhood.

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property requiring rehabilitation, using tools provided in class, and move through a process of analyzing and documenting the feasibility of the project. Along the way, participants have access to ongoing technical assistance provided by six other professionals who work in local real estate development and policy. Such hands-on training, coupled with active mentorship, is the linchpin of the program's popularity and success.

### Equitable Representation and Team Building

Given the requirement that class participants must reside in Detroit, Hamtramck, or Highland Park, over 90 percent of the Better Buildings, Better Blocks applicant pool is de facto African-American, and participants selected for the course routinely reflect the demographic makeup of those cities. The scale of property vacancy—with Detroit alone having over 35,000 vacant structures—means that Building Community Value and its community partners are poised to create a pipeline of developers of color in a way unparalleled in other major cities.

To ensure the diversity of the talent pool in the class, Building Community Value accepts individuals who have never executed a development project, others who have completed small-scale projects (e.g., 1-4 unit rehabs), and professionals who work for local community development organizations or governmental agencies who wish to deepen their subject-matter knowledge. This range of expertise fosters a dynamic class environment and not only encourages participants to form development teams but also encourages them to see the class network as another development tool.

This tool, however, is not confined to a single cohort. With nearly 200 participants who have moved through the course since its inception in 2015, class graduates are connected via social media and in-person reunions to other program alumni. Acknowledging that real estate development is a team sport, Building Community Value maintains an active alumni network to galvanize continued information sharing in an ever-evolving market.

## BEFORE



## AFTER






## Building a Pipeline

Building Community Value is not alone in its efforts to cultivate a pipeline of developers of color in and around Detroit. Better Buildings, Better Blocks seeks to introduce burgeoning developers to the field and help small-scale developers formalize their practices. Capital Impact Partners, a national community development financial institution with a strong presence in Detroit, provides complimentary programming for the next level. Through its Detroit Equitable Development Initiative, piloted in 2018 with funding from JPMorgan Chase, Capital Impact Partners provides training and mentorship to developers who have previous development experience to help them implement larger-scale development projects (i.e., \$2 million or more in construction costs).

Regardless of the program or the experience level of the graduate, participants across programs cite access to financing as a major barrier to executing projects. For the small-scale residential developer, with few financing tools other than traditional loans that require owner-occupancy of a unit, scaling business practices and community impact using leverage is a slow process. Similarly, for the small-scale commercial developer, suitable loan products are scarce for projects along most of the commercial corridors in and around Detroit.

Understanding such challenges, and to help defray project implementation costs, Building Community Value honors the commitment of dedicated community members who wish to improve their communities by providing small monetary awards at the end of each cohort to the best projects presented in class. Program administrators are also exploring the creation of a dedicated fund to support participants' projects. Such interventions are just the beginning of how Building Community Value will continue to break down structural barriers in neighborhoods with the greatest potential for resilient and equitable development.

Learn more about Building Community Value at [bcvdetroit.org](http://bcvdetroit.org). 

*Chase L. Cantrell is the founder and executive director of Building Community Value. You may contact him at [chase.cantrell@bcvdetroit.org](mailto:chase.cantrell@bcvdetroit.org).*



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IN



THE





## We're excited to be holding our annual Convention in the D! The world has taken notice of Detroit's evolution and the city continues to make headlines as America's great comeback kid.

You will get to experience Detroit's fresh, new look with a sizzling culinary scene, hip hotels, hot entertainment districts, eclectic shops, and reactivated parks. Against this backdrop, you'll have a great opportunity to hone your leadership skills. Learn how to turn a placemaking opportunity into a strong community partnership. Explore creative approaches to meeting the need for affordable housing. Gain insights from the High-Risk Response Team on how to address human trafficking in your community. We'll also show you the power of beautifying your city with environmental and lifestyle enhancements, and much more! Check out some of the highlights:

- TWICE as many Breakout Sessions
- NEW on Wednesday, prior to Convention opening, our Workers' Compensation Fund and Liability & Property Pool are hosting a unique risk management session. There will also be a risk management educational track available throughout Convention with multiple Breakout Sessions.
- NEW League Affiliate tracks hosted by Michigan Association of Mayors (MAM), Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (MBC-LEO), Michigan Municipal Executives (MME), and Michigan Women in Municipal Government (MWIMG).



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Jia-Ping Lee

Jia-Ping Lee is the program director and head of corporate communications for Think City, a community-based urban rejuvenation organization. Think City's main goal is to create more liveable and resilient cities through partnerships with government bodies, private partners, and civil society. Jia-Ping heads the Kuala Lumpur office and is responsible for driving the rejuvenation of the historic core of Kuala Lumpur.



NEW INSURANCE TRACK  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Jon Robison

PhD, MS, MA, CIC

Jon Robison is a gifted speaker, teacher, author, and consultant. He advocates shifting health promotion away from its traditional, biomedical, control-oriented focus; with a particular interest in why people do what they do and don't do what they don't do. He is the author of two books and numerous scientific articles and book chapters.

More keynote speakers and information at [convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org)



# CONVENTION AGENDA OVERVIEW

\*Additional Fee

## TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

6:00 pm Early Arrival Activity\*  
@ Comerica Park  
Tigers vs Twins 6:40 pm

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

8:00 am Registration Opens  
10:00 – 11:30 am Risk Management  
General Session  
10:00 – Noon Mobile Tours\*  
Noon – 1:30 pm Michigan Women in Municipal  
Government (MWIMG) Lunch/  
Annual Meeting\*  
Noon – 1:30 pm General Lunch  
2:00 – 3:45 pm Opening General Session  
4:15 – 5:00 pm Business Meeting Check-in  
and Annual Business Meeting  
5:00 – 5:45 pm First Timers/New Member Meet-up  
6:00 – 8:00 pm Welcome Reception  
8:00 – 10:00 pm Afterglow Fowling\*  
Warehouse, Hamtramck

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

7:00 am Explore Detroit Fun Walk/Run  
7:30 am Registration Open  
8:00 – 9:00 am General Breakfast Roundtables  
Michigan Association of Mayors  
(MAM) Breakfast/Annual Meeting\*  
9:00 – 10:30 am General Session: Keynote &  
Community Excellence Award  
Presentations  
10:30 – 11:00 am Networking Break  
11:00 – Noon Breakouts  
Noon – 1:15 pm Networking Lunch  
1:30 – 2:45 pm General Session  
1:00 – 3:00 pm Mobile Tours\*  
3:00 – 4:00 pm Breakouts  
4:15 – 5:15 pm Breakouts  
6:00 – 9:00 pm Foundation Fundraiser\*  
@ Detroit City Fieldhouse

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

7:00 am Explore Detroit Fun Walk/Run  
7:30 am Registration Open  
8:00 – 9:00 am Michigan Black Caucus-Local  
Elected Officials Breakfast/  
Annual Meeting\*  
9:00 – 10:00 am Breakouts  
10:15 – 11:15 am Breakouts  
11:30 – 12:30 pm General Session & Community  
Excellence Award Presentation

## BREAKOUTS

### Breakout Session Preview

Breakout Sessions will connect attendees with ready-to-use resources and opportunities to help their communities thrive. Attendees will have the opportunity to attend up to five breakout sessions during the Convention. These sessions will cover everything from essential skills to innovative new ideas.

Learn more about:

### Everyday Bias: Institutional and Implicit, Part 2

Implicit bias can be described as an unconscious process that influences how we perceive ourselves and others. This thought process is shaped by repetitive messages in the media, education and other socio-cultural contexts. Implicit biases inevitably impact our decision-making and generate unintended outcomes. In this session, attendees will explore the undesired effect of unexplored biases and review how personal, interpersonal, institutional and structural biases may form exclusive policies, procedures and outcomes. Debiasing strategies and socially conscious approaches will be presented.

### Crowdfunding

Michigan's Community Capital partners are national leaders in the development and use of local, state, and federal crowdfunding tools. Many of these projects have been downtown placemaking projects or rehabs of historic buildings and sites. This session will celebrate successful case studies and inspire new projects using these funding methods.

### Aging Housing Stock: Is It Time for a Residential PACE Program?

Buildings account for a whopping 39 percent of carbon emissions, and demolition does nothing to improve on that statistic. Pragmatic rehabbing of older and historic single-family and multi-unit residential housing can help Michigan property owners not only reinvest in cities, but it can also reduce environmental impact. It can sometimes be difficult to finance important yet costly retrofit and energy efficiency measures. This session will discuss ways to establish alternative financing options so people who want to fix up their aging building stock can access the funds to accomplish the work.



## Revitalizing Hamtramck: Local Investment, Regional Impact

Want to build partnerships with community organizations but don't know where to start? Learn how a placemaking opportunity created a special relationship between the City of Hamtramck, Hamtramck Public Schools, the League, MML Foundation, Detroit City Football Club, and the Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium. The partners will share how they collaborated to get an \$807,000 grant; tips on building a successful decision-making process; and key lessons learned, so you know what pitfalls to avoid.

## Headwinds and Oversight

When it comes to managing pension and retiree health liabilities, many local units of government face challenges of fluctuating investment markets and increasing retiree longevity. At the same time, complying with recently enacted reporting requirements and fiscal review by the state places additional focus and pressure on these issues. This session will identify these challenges and explore actions that local units of government can take now to prepare.

## Additional Breakout Topics Include:

- Leading in a Crisis/Emergency Preparedness
- You've Been Breached
- MML Legislative Update
- Opportunity Zones
- Social Media
- And more at [convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org)!

## MOBILE WORKSHOP OPTIONS

Experience Detroit's comeback firsthand by getting out and seeing some of the things that make the city so unique. Join us for one of the many mobile workshop options during Convention. All mobile tours will be offered as add-ons to your Convention registration.

## Detroit Neighborhoods Tour

Are you familiar with Downtown and Midtown and want to venture farther afield? Visit a couple of nearby neighborhoods in Detroit, admire their historic housing stock, and get a sense of the emerging local businesses and community projects currently underway.

## Other Tours Include:

- Detroit City Football Club Tour
- Detroit Riverfront and East Jefferson Revitalization Bike Tour

## NETWORKING/SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

You'll have multiple opportunities to network and connect with other attendees throughout your Convention experience. This year, we're including some new options so you can make the most of your time with us!

- Tuesday: Tiger's Game at Comerica Park
- Wednesday: Welcome Reception and Fowling Afterglow
- Thursday: Foundation Reception at the Detroit City Fieldhouse
- Thursday and Friday: Explore Detroit morning walk/run

## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

Looking for visibility and the ultimate in brand recognition? For three days, local officials from across the state come together to connect, engage, and discover creative solutions to local challenges. We will do our utmost to satisfy the needs of sponsors with unique involvement and exposure. Contact Allison Gotelaere at [agotelaere@mml.org](mailto:agotelaere@mml.org) or visit the sponsorship tab at [convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org) for more information.

More information at [convention.mml.org](http://convention.mml.org)





## Campaigning by Public Officials/PA 269 Dos and Don'ts

### Introduction

U.S. District Judge John Corbett O'Meara accepted an agreement between the Secretary of State's office and local governments and school groups, permanently keeping the Secretary of State from enforcing a law that prevented local officials from providing factual information on local ballot proposals. O'Meara's order, entered April 28, 2016, references his previous temporary injunction against enforcement of the law, saying that the local governments had "demonstrated a strong likelihood of success on the merits of their claim that (the law) is unconstitutionally vague and thus void." The gag order was part of a larger campaign finance bill that passed the Legislature with little debate in the final days of 2015's legislative session and was signed by Gov. Rick Snyder, becoming Public Act 269 of 2015.

Section 57 of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act limits how a public body can use public funds or property when it comes to campaigning for ballot questions or candidates.

### Campaign Finance Act—Permitted Activities

Generally, public officials can issue communications to voters using public dollars if the communications contain factual information regarding the election, the proposal, and what impact either its passage or defeat will have on the public body. Moreover, the prohibition on using public monies to support or defeat a ballot proposal does not prevent certain high-level officers and employees from expressing their opinions. For example, nothing prevents a municipal official from standing up at a public meeting and telling the gathering that, in his or her opinion, the municipality needs to ask for a millage increase and the voters need to support it.

Although there are opportunities to carefully use public time and money to further educate the electorate on a proposal, public employees and officials should also keep the following additional guidelines in mind:

- 1) Non-policy making staff may not take "official" time (i.e., time during their regular jobs) to participate in campaign committee activities, as this would constitute an inappropriate expenditure of public funds. Nothing would restrict the ability of these individuals to work in any way on the campaign on their own time.

- 2) A public body may provide information to individuals and/or a campaign committee that is publicly available in the same manner as it would provide information to anyone else requesting the information.
- 3) Campaign committees may meet at public facilities only to the extent that, and on the same terms as, any other group is permitted to use the same facilities. If the public body incurs any expense in providing meeting space to the committee, the committee must reimburse the public for that expense.

### Campaign Finance Act Don'ts

- 1) Don't use city or village funds, municipal-owned office space, or other property to expressly advocate a vote for or against a candidate or ballot question. "Expressly advocate" means to state support for the passage or defeat of a ballot question or the election or defeat of a candidate—in other words, to say "Vote yes for" (or no) or "Support" (or defeat) a candidate or ballot question.
- 2) Don't put links on your municipal website to sites that expressly advocate only for or against one candidate, one slate of candidates, or one side of a ballot question.
- 3) A city or village council cannot authorize or use public resources for a payroll deduction plan to collect for a campaign committee.

### Tired of sifting through reams of paper for answers to your questions?

The League's Fact Sheets can help. Here's a small sample of what we have to offer.

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- Closed Meeting Minutes
- Posting Requirements
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“

... Detroiters today have a much greater sense of confidence in how their city is being managed. That makes it more attractive for existing residents to stay and invest in their properties and for others to relocate to Detroit to join them.

”

*The Belt, an activated alley in downtown Detroit. Photo courtesy of Nicklas Bergstrom.*





# DETROIT

## Revving Michigan's Biggest Economic Engine

By Lisa Donovan

**H**ello, Detroit is the common refrain of residents, visitors, and businesses as the city rebounds from years of financial challenges. From Corktown to Midtown and all over town, the city is abuzz with activity. People are filling the stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues; new developments are popping up; and old buildings are getting a new lease on life.

This picture of vibrancy is all the more remarkable when you consider the rocky road the city has traveled. For decades, scores of people had been expressing the opposite sentiment, saying goodbye to the city as it spiraled into financial decline. By 2013, the city was about \$12 billion in debt and unable to deliver basic services like street lighting and prompt responses to 911 calls.

The economic engine of Michigan's largest city had stalled. Without serious corrective action, the crisis would have a detrimental effect on the economy of the state as well as the city.

The situation came to a head in March 2013 when Governor Rick Snyder appointed attorney Kevyn Orr as the city's emergency manager. On July 18 of that year, Orr filed for bankruptcy on behalf of the city and began a tough year of settlement negotiations with the city's multitude of creditors. On Dec. 10, 2014, Detroit emerged from bankruptcy, leaving city leaders in charge of implementing the restructuring plan aimed at restoring economic stability. They remained under state financial oversight, but that, too, came to a close on April 30, 2018. A \$36 million surplus was expected for the fiscal year 2018.

Detroit's economic engine was revving up. "During that time, we focused on our finances and were able to get out from active state financial oversight in three years, which is the shortest time possible under statute coming out of bankruptcy," said Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan. "As a result of strong financial management, we've received several credit rating upgrades and positive comments from agencies like Moody's."





*Ford Motor Co. plans to transform Michigan Central Depot into the heart of its mobility-focused Corktown campus.*



*Ribbon-cutting ceremony at Little Caesar's Arena, which now houses the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Pistons.*



Providing the basic services that residents need and expect is also back on track. "Progress has been steady, although we still have a great deal of work today," said Mayor Duggan.

"The first four years were mostly about showing Detroiters we could get basic city services working again, such as bus service, timely police and EMS responses, keeping neighborhood parks open, and the like. A key thing we've accomplished is that Detroiters today have a much greater sense of confidence in how their city is being managed. That makes it more attractive for existing residents to stay and invest in their properties and for others to relocate to Detroit to join them."

### Game-Changing Developments

Investors, real estate developers, and the business community are also feeling renewed confidence in the city. Just look at headlines like "Detroit breaks ground on 'transformational' development at former Hudson's site" and "\$20 million redevelopment planned for Milwaukee Junction block."

Three real estate projects, in particular, are set to be real game changers for the city.

### Little Caesar's Arena

In 2014, plans were announced to build a new arena for the Detroit Red Wings hockey team, owned by the Illitch family of Little Caesar's Pizza fame. The arena would be built at I-75 and Woodward Avenue, just north of Ford Field and Comerica Park, home of the Detroit Lions and Detroit Tigers, respectively. Two years later, the Detroit Pistons announced that the team was leaving its stadium at The Palace of Auburn Hills and relocating to Little Caesar's Arena. The \$863 million, 20,000-seat arena opened in the Fall of 2017.

In a news report, Mayor Duggan said tens of thousands of people will come and use the bars, restaurants, and shops, which will create jobs and opportunities for Detroiters.

### Michigan Central Depot

In 2018, Ford Motor Co. purchased the 105-year-old Michigan Central Depot in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood. The last train left the depot in 1998 and over the years the neglected buildings had become the poster child for Detroit's urban blight. The automaker plans to breathe new life into the station and several surrounding parcels and buildings as it invests as much as \$740 million to transform them into its mobility-focused Corktown campus. As many as 5,000 jobs could also come to the neighborhood.





*A new Fiat Chrysler assembly plant on Detroit's east side will churn out Jeeps.*

"The Ford project is transformational because of what it will bring to Corktown and beyond, both in terms of new development and community benefits," said Mayor Duggan. "We are the only city in America that has a community benefits ordinance and the residents of Corktown negotiated \$10 million in benefits for the things that matter to them the most."

### Fiat Chrysler Assembly Plant

In May, Mayor Duggan announced that an agreement had been reached on all the elements needed for Fiat Chrysler Automobile (FCA) to move ahead building the new Jeep assembly plant on Detroit's east side. FCA plans to invest \$2.5 billion in the Jeep plant and the adjacent Jefferson North Assembly Plant, creating an estimated 4,950 jobs. Construction should start this year with a planned opening date of late 2020.

"Detroiters will have the first opportunity to fill the jobs, not just initially, but for the life of the plant. That's never been done before anywhere to my knowledge," said Mayor Duggan. "Residents in the area were able to negotiate \$35 million in community benefits. We've been able to land this project by securing 200 acres of land without displacing a single resident. We are very proud of that."

### Strengthening Residents and Neighborhoods

As vital as the downtown area developments are, providing Detroit residents with the quality of life they deserve is equally important. Mayor Duggan's administration has made it a priority to help residents to participate in the city's comeback.

Current job skills that lead to good career opportunities are key to joining in Detroit's recovery. That's the goal of the city's Detroit at Work program. Detroit at Work serves as the on-ramp for Detroiters to receive free training for in-demand careers in fields like skilled trades, health care, IT, hospitality, and more. Getting involved is as simple as logging on to [www.detroitatwork.com](http://www.detroitatwork.com) to find thousands of job listings and more than 100 free training programs.

Detroit's housing stock has taken a hit over the years, so providing and preserving affordable housing is essential. To improve the housing options available to residents, the city is developing a \$250 million Affordable Housing Fund. The fund is designed to ensure that every neighborhood has a mix of housing so Detroiters can live in the neighborhood of their choice.

To improve Detroit neighborhoods in an even broader way, Mayor Duggan announced the \$35 million Strategic Neighborhood Fund in December 2018. Under this initiative, seven neighborhoods in neglected areas of the city will get an economic boost from seven companies. Over the next five years, the funding will be used to improve parks, streetscapes, and commercial corridors as well as single-family and affordable housing.




*Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan announces the development team chosen to remake the Fitzgerald neighborhood in northwest Detroit.*

"It's all about quality of life amenities for the people who are there now, not some phantom demographic of people who may come," said Maurice Cox, director of Detroit's Planning and Development Department. "When you have that lens, you have to talk to the people and find out what they want for their neighborhood."

That talking and listening takes place at dozens of meetings, workshops, and pop-ups—230 of them in 2018. Cox has found residents to be incredibly open to new ideas. They're pleased that people are coming into their neighborhood and trusting them to have good ideas.

"Our job as professionals is to translate those ideas into something that can be built," said Cox. "We've generated an enormous amount of good will by listening and creating ideas that are actionable, that you can hold people accountable for 12 months from now. We don't want the plans to just sit on a shelf."

Indeed, Neighborhood Framework Plans for the Fitzgerald and Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhoods are already heading toward implementation. Many other neighborhoods are in the queue for that same transformational opportunity. 

*Lisa Donovan is the communications specialist and editor for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6318 or [ldonovan@mml.org](mailto:ldonovan@mml.org).*



# Michigan Municipalities and the 2020 **United States™ Census** Bureau

By Kelly Warren



**C**ount Day for the 2020 Census is less than a year away. On April 1, 2020 the Census Bureau's goal is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place! Michigan municipalities have a high stake in making sure everyone is counted. For every resident not counted Michigan stands to lose an estimated \$1,800 per person per year in federal funds.

The very first responsibility of the federal government under the U.S. Constitution is a count of all persons living in the United States to allocate seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. In addition, census numbers impact how legislative districts at all levels of government are drawn, where roads and transit are built in the future, planning for emergency management services, and how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed annually across the country.

## **What are Some of the Changes in the 2020 Census?**

The U.S. has counted its population every 10 years since 1790. In 2020, for the first time, every household will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone.

The controversial citizenship question may be restored. The Supreme Court had not decided on this by *The Review* print deadline.

There will be twice as many language options as in previous years. And you'll see fewer census workers in neighborhoods verifying addresses. High resolution aerial and street-level imagery have allowed for continual address updates to occur over the last decade.

## **Engage, Educate, Encourage**

There is still time for your municipality to be an active participant in the 2020 Census.

- Designate a point of contact for census preparedness in your community.
- Work closely with Census Bureau staff and regional offices. Michigan is represented by the Chicago Regional Office of the Census Bureau.





- Create or join a Complete Count Committee (CCC) in your area. The CCC is key to creating awareness in your community. CCC's act as 2020 Census champions and provide trusted voices as census ambassadors. When community members are informed, they are more likely to respond to the census. CCC's can be organized at the county, municipal, or community level. Complete Count Committees organize local outreach efforts and provide leadership and support for participation.

### Hard-to-Count Populations

In 1790, under the direction of Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, marshals took the census in the original 13 states, plus the districts of Kentucky, Maine, and Vermont, and the Southwest Territory (Tennessee). According to the Census Bureau, both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson expressed skepticism over the final count, expecting a number that exceeded the 3.9 million inhabitants counted in the census. There are several reasons why there could have been an undercount. Historians suggest that dispersed population, poor transportation, and individual refusal to participate all could have been at play.

From the first census on, trends show us that not every household will submit their responses to the census questionnaire. For the 2020 Census, when it comes to reaching hard-to-count (HTC) populations local leaders can

help by getting the word out and informing these groups, and those representing these groups, about the census in general, how easy it will be to complete, and the importance of completing it. Let them know that Federal law protects the confidentiality of all the information the Census Bureau collects, and data is only used for statistical purposes. HTC's include children under 5, rural residents, renters, minorities, recent immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, low-income households, those that distrust the government, and others.

Approximately 8 percent of Michigan's current population lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods. You can see where these neighborhoods are in the City University of New York hard-to-count map located at [Censushardtocountmaps2020.us](http://Censushardtocountmaps2020.us). These are the census tracts where almost a quarter or more households did not mail back their census questionnaires in 2010. You can use this map to prioritize hard-to-count communities for your educational efforts. The map is searchable by addresses, zip codes, county, state, or legislative districts.

Sharing Census information doesn't have to be a massive undertaking. Include a census informational insert with your water bill mailing, share information during local festivals and events to encourage participation, post information on your website, work with local nonprofits and community-based organizations to spread the word, and promote the Census through social media.



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## Help Recruit for Census Jobs

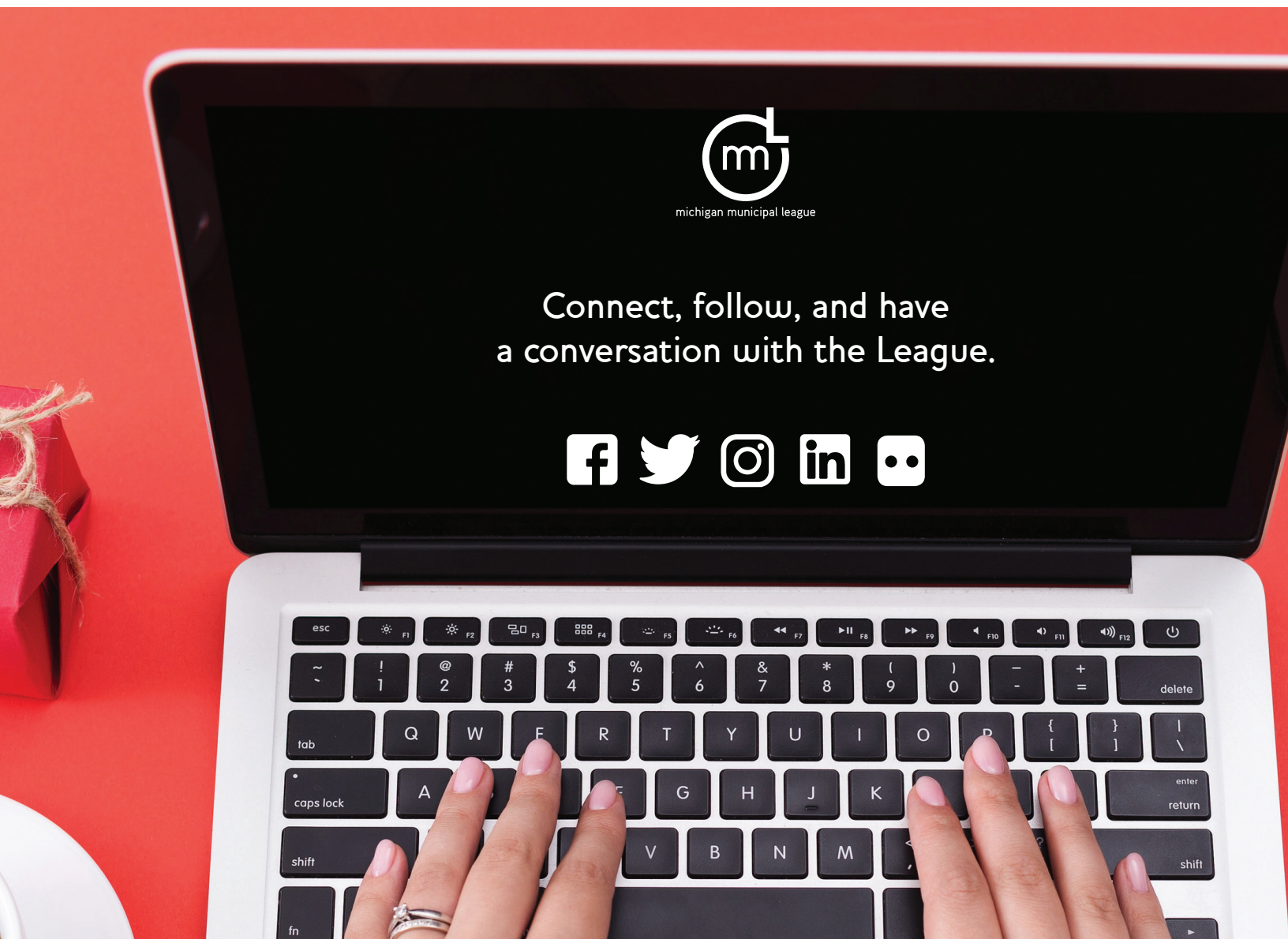
The Census Bureau is recruiting thousands of people across the country to assist with the 2020 Census count. Share that news in your community and consider posting the recruitment link on your community website, <https://2020census.gov/en/jobs>. They are recruiting for a number of job types, including field workers. Local field workers know their communities best and are instrumental in conducting surveys with residents on a variety of topics.

## Census Timeline

- April 1, 2020—Census Day. When completing the census, you'll note where you are living on April 1.
- May-July 2020—The Census Bureau will follow up with households that have not responded.
- December 2020—The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the President.

Let us know what your community is doing to prepare for the Census. We'd love to hear from you. For more information visit [mml.org/census](https://mml.org/census) 

*Kelly Warren is the director of membership and affiliate engagement for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6310 or [kwarren@mml.org](mailto:kwarren@mml.org)*





# Effect of Revised Adverse Possession Statute Re: Municipality

## FACTS:

Plaintiffs Bou-Melhem filed a complaint against Trumbull-Commonwealth, LLC (later amended to name defendant Trumbull and 94, LLC) alleging that plaintiffs had adversely possessed property located at 5275 Trumbull in Detroit for more than 15 years and requesting that the court quiet title to the property in favor of plaintiffs. The property consists of the northern half of a parking lot located between the defendant's convenience store and plaintiffs' car repair shop. The southern half of the parking lot was undisputedly owned by plaintiffs. According to their testimony, plaintiffs had constructed a gated fence across the entire parking lot in 2000 and used the northern half of the lot (5275 Trumbull) for at least 20 years for parking their customers' cars. In 1994, the State Department of Natural Resources (the then-owner of 5275 Trumbull) conveyed the property to the City of Detroit, which subsequently conveyed it to Trumbull-Commonwealth in 2007.

The Michigan Supreme Court has stated that "a party claiming adverse possession must show clear and cogent proof of possession that is actual, continuous, open, notorious, exclusive, hostile, and uninterrupted" for [15 years.] *Marlette Auto v Van Dyke*, 501 Mich 192 (2018). The Court in the current case analyzed the various elements comprising a claim for adverse possession. However, this discussion will be limited to the Court's analysis regarding the period of time during which the City of Detroit owned the property.

Defendant argued that since the city owned 5275 Trumbull from 1994 until 2007, the property could not have been adversely possessed until the city conveyed the property in 2007, citing the current version of MCL 600.5821(2)(c) effective June 20, 2016. MCL 600.5821(2)(c) basically provides that a municipality is not subject to a claim for adverse possession. The previous version of the statute had been interpreted to permit a claim to property through adverse possession against a municipality only if the property owner (and not the municipality) initiated the action.

## QUESTION:

Under the facts as presented, was the period of adverse possession during which the City of Detroit owned the property subject to the current or prior version of the statute addressing a claim against a municipality?

## ANSWER:

The Trial Court, on motion for summary disposition, ruled in favor of the defendant concluding that it would be impossible for plaintiffs to establish adverse possession.

The Court of Appeals reversed, holding, in part, that the applicable statute setting forth the period of adverse possession was the prior version of the statute. The Court noted that statutes are presumed to operate prospectively unless the Legislature directs otherwise, or the statute is remedial or procedural. The Court held that even though statutes of limitation are generally considered procedural, the expiration of a limitation period constitutes a vested right that may not be retrospectively taken away. Since plaintiffs began adversely possessing the property in 2000, more than 15 years before the effective date of the current statute, plaintiffs would have had a vested right to the property prior to the effective date of the revised statute, assuming all other elements of adverse possession had been satisfied.

*Bou-Melhem v Trumbull-Commonwealth*, No. 340581 (February 12, 2019). Unpublished opinion. Motion for reconsideration filed.

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# Tackling Auto Insurance Reform

By Rick Haglund

**D**etroit residents pay the most expensive car insurance in the country—an average \$5,414 a year—nearly double the estimated annual statewide premium of \$2,610, which is the highest of any state, according to a March study by the University of Michigan. Exorbitant insurance rates lock Detroit and Michigan residents in a “cycle of poverty,” putting the state and its communities at a competitive economic disadvantage, the study said.

But there’s great hope that the cycle could be broken. In June, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed a sweeping overhaul of the state’s 46-year-old no-fault auto insurance law that she, lawmakers, and other supporters say will give motorists a big break on crushing insurance costs. That could remove a major impediment to the city’s efforts to grow its population and expand its economy.

## A Speed Bump to Detroit’s Growth

Longtime demographer Kurt Metzger cited high auto insurance rates as a major drag on Detroit’s growth. “The cost of insurance, particularly auto, is one of the top factors in deciding whether or not to live in Detroit,” said Metzger, the retired founder of Data Driven Detroit. “Since the Detroit region has yet to develop a regionally integrated system of mobility, most all residents require access to a car.”

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, who’s been fighting for years to trim insurance rates for Detroiters and the rest of Michigan’s residents, called the bipartisan deal crafted by the Republican-controlled Legislature and Democratic governor “outstanding; it will cut rates for Michigan drivers significantly,”

he said. Prior to the deal being reached, Duggan said there was no place in Michigan where auto insurance reform was more important than in Detroit. “To me, it’s one of the fundamental civil rights issues facing this state.”

The new law is designed to bring down rates by eliminating Michigan’s unique requirement that motorists purchase unlimited lifetime medical coverage, known as personal injury protection, or PIP.

- Starting in July of next year, vehicle owners will be able to choose among five levels of PIP coverage, ranging from unlimited medical benefits to a complete opt-out for those covered by Medicaid, Medicare, or private health insurance. Cost savings are estimated to run from 10 percent for unlimited medical coverage to 100 percent for those opting out of the system. The savings are guaranteed for eight years. PIP coverage can be as much as 50 percent of the total insurance premium.
- Michigan switched to no-fault insurance in 1973, hoping that it would lower insurance premiums by allowing motorists to collect benefits from their own insurance companies rather than having to show fault by another driver in court. But the opposite has occurred, mainly because of skyrocketing medical costs.

Car insurance rates are so high in Detroit that an estimated 60 percent of drivers living in the city go uninsured. About a third of the city’s adults don’t own a car. But beyond the burden high insurance rates places on current residents, the lack of affordable auto insurance is a major drag on attracting new residents the city so desperately needs to extend its downtown resurgence into the neighborhoods.



Duggan, who was elected mayor in 2013, has said he should be judged on whether the city's population grows while he's in office. He has yet to accomplish that goal, although population loss has slowed considerably in recent years. The city lost 1,526 residents between 2017 and 2018, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau estimate. That was the smallest annual loss since 1950, when Detroit's population stood at 1.8 million people. The city is home to 672,662 residents, according to the latest Census estimate.

Young millennials, many of them with college degrees and good jobs, have flocked to the downtown and Midtown areas of the city in recent years. And some empty nesters have moved to the city's core from the suburbs, Metzger said. About 10,000 people have moved into the city's center since 2010, according to Moody's Investors Service. Those who live and work in the area can avoid car ownership by using a number of transportation alternatives, including walking, biking, ride-hailing and using the QLine streetcar that connects downtown to Midtown.

Although there's no hard data on the phenomenon, many millennials who have moved to Detroit from the suburbs trim their auto insurance rates by registering their vehicles with suburban addresses of parents or friends, "thus qualifying for a (lower) suburban rate," said Metzger, who is the mayor of Pleasant Ridge, a Detroit suburb.

### Driving Toward a Solution

Duggan, a lawyer and the former head of the Detroit Medical Center, has been fighting for lower auto insurance rates for years. He backed a bipartisan plan in 2017 that would have attempted to lower rates by giving motorists the choice of buying reduced-coverage policies. But the plan died after being rejected by the state House.


Last year, Duggan and a group of motorists filed a federal court lawsuit, claiming that Michigan's no-fault auto insurance law is unconstitutional for failing to produce rates that are "fair and equitable."

In addition to no longer requiring motorists to buy unlimited, lifetime medical coverage, the new auto insurance law seeks to lower rates by prohibiting insurers from using non-driving factors in setting rates. Those factors are zip codes, gender, marital status, education, credit scores, home ownership and occupation. But insurers could still set rates based on "territories," which could be as small as a census tract or as large as a multi-county region.

The new law also establishes a fee schedule for hospitals, physicians and other providers who treat auto accident injuries. Duggan and others have long argued that auto

insurers are being charged much higher rates for medical services than the same services paid for by health insurers, Duggan has called the higher fees "morally indefensible." The new law lowers medical fees charged to auto insurers.

Critics say the new law could end up shifting costs to private health and government insurers, rather than reduce them. The state Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that Medicaid costs for treating low-income, injured motorists who don't buy PIP coverage could jump by \$83 million in the first year of implementation.

New laws don't always produce the intended results. But making auto insurance more affordable for Detroiters is crucial to the city's economic future. 

*Rick Haglund is a freelance writer. You may contact him at 248.761.4594 or [haglund.rick@gmail.com](mailto:haglund.rick@gmail.com).*



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# West Branch Takes a Fresh Look at Branding

By Mary Bickel



For many, West Branch is simply a quick stop on your way to somewhere else. But down the hill and hidden around the bend lies a historic downtown flush with locally owned shops, one-of-a-kind restaurants, a movie theater, brewery, tasting room, and more. The recreational trails are limitless, and you'll never be far from a lake. And that is exactly why West Branch felt the need to convey a different message about this quaint Michigan town.

West Branch began Project Rising Tide in the spring of 2018 with hopes of creating economic development. What grew from that has been nothing short of amazing.

The process of learning about the community's needs and visions led them to engage in a rebranding effort.

Like so many small communities, West Branch lacks the technical resources to lead a large-scale rebranding effort. That's where Project Rising Tide and the team from Beckett & Raeder, a landscape architecture and planning firm, stepped in. They had previously worked with a handful of the Round 1

Rising Tide communities on branding. For this effort, they partnered with Arnett Muldrow, a creative planning firm known nationally for helping communities. Their process involves working very closely with clients to define the planning issues for their communities. Then they craft a custom process for each community, whether the solutions focus on an economic development strategy, retail market research, community branding, or historic preservation.

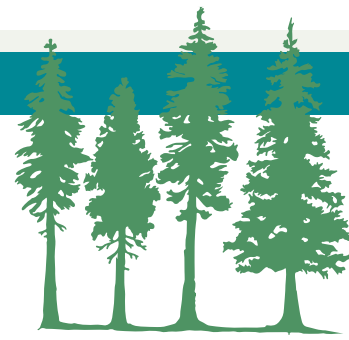
Over the years, West Branch has used three different themes: Victorian era, Bigfoot, and the yellow "smiley face" water tower. Each of these themes were part of a marketing tool or had become ingrained in a logo. Some people loved them and others loathed them. But everyone decided that the city needed a more cohesive look that would attract new businesses, bring in families and tourists, and create a sense of community pride. Ben Muldrow, partner at Arnett Muldrow, visited West Branch to learn about the community and all that it has to offer. He sat down with community leaders, business



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owners and civic organizations to gather information and then used an online survey to capture public input. The survey generated nearly 400 responses in a city with a population of only 2,000. After analyzing the data, Muldrow had what he needed to create a new look.

## Settling on a New Theme

"Up north never felt so close" became the anchor for the rebrand, symbolized through a sleek font, pine trees, and a beautiful color palette with deep greens, blues, browns, and golds. It captured West Branch's story and felt very authentic. The community was absolutely thrilled with the new brand. The beauty of this effort is that it is flexible enough to grow with the community, however it evolves. During the rebranding process, the city involved local business owners, residents, and neighboring communities. "This larger group focus brought on an unintended reward in that it has improved the working relationship and more of a community-minded focus with the different members of the community," said John Dantzer, West Branch interim city manager. "In response to this, the city worked with our two neighboring townships to develop a joint DDA development plan and we're now in the process of developing a joint trail plan including both motorized and non-motorized trails.

The next steps include collaborating with local businesses and organizations to connect the new community brand with their business plans. All the logos, fonts, collateral, and colors were made available to the community along with a checklist that's customizable to their needs. Over the next few months, West Branch will roll out a strategic plan to implement the updates and find funding to make those changes. This is truly a community effort and has already created a sense of pride. 

Mary Bickel is a community development fellow for the city of West Branch. You may contact her at [westbranchcdfellow@gmail.com](mailto:westbranchcdfellow@gmail.com).





## How Detroit Built a Better Preservation Playbook

By Melissa Milton-Pung



**D**etroit is midstride in its great comeback, emerging like a phoenix in full burn. In a city which has suffered so much loss, not only are community leaders and private investors acting to salvage what remains, but they are making the city whole again by knitting together gaps with new infill. Big impacts have been directed to the downtown core, yet there's still much to be done at the neighborhood level.

One of the instruments of Detroit's success was established during the economic recovery, with an unorthodox approach to building preservation and reuse. In 2013, City of Detroit and the Detroit Landbank Authority (DLBA) received an allocation from the Hardest Hit Fund. Working with an army of volunteers from the Michigan Historic Preservation Network and Preservation Detroit, along with homegrown tech experts from Data Driven Detroit (D3) and Loveland Technologies, they created the Detroit Blight Task Force. Out of this creative partnership, Blexting—short for blight texting—was born.

Blexting created a survey of the condition of nearly every property in the city of Detroit. The results were informed recommendations for the demolition of thousands of properties by DLBA. Instead of blindly pushing through blight elimination dollars, Detroit's leaders used a more sophisticated approach supported by photos and existing conditions data directly uploaded to the survey. By documenting and evaluating a substantial portion of the city's building stock, the taskforce effectively put assets into a building savings account for when the market ripened for rebirth.

Less than a decade later, Detroit is now activating those saved assets. Neighborhood-level community plans and new developments contain a mixture of building rehab, adaptive reuse, and new infill construction. Sections of the city which had not seen new work in decades are now receiving reinvestment. And it's far from done.

Detroit is in many ways unique. Yet in other ways, such as scarcity of resources, lost taxable value, and declined population, it mirrors the disinvestment felt by many Michigan towns. Here are lessons learned for Michigan's aging building stock.





Detroit's Jefferson East neighborhood.

### Strategize & Combine Tactics

The decisions cities make today will shape the reality of their future. Cities need to articulate a consensus vision of who they are and who they want to be. Immediate tactics are site inventory, zoning reform, and the choice of target sites for catalytic reinvestment. Doubling down on existing buildings—both historic gems and simply older sites—and development of vacant lots in core city centers can also help cities respond to increasing interest in lessening environmental impact and improving infrastructure resiliency.

Michigan residents are choosing increasingly to live, work, and be in places of authentic texture. And because energy use is an increasingly important issue, they often want it connected to transit. The QLINE on Woodward is one way that Detroit is concentrating efforts along an existing corridor, building in walkable transit-oriented development amid the streetcar suburbs of the last century.

### Explicitly Advocate for Diversity

Only 8 percent of National Register sites and 3 percent of our National Historic Landmarks represent people of color, women, or members of the LGBTQ community. As stated by National Main Street CEO Patrice Frey in a recent City Lab article, “The preservation movement is also struggling to tell the full American story.”

Cities must build an authentic local vision by asking their residents to help with asset inventory. Get on the ground and engage in conversations with those who live there. Record what defines the place to avoid sacrificing cultural identity.

Detroit is owning the gaps in its recorded history and they're doing something about it. Through neighborhood planning efforts, the city is backfilling a broad range of under-told histories which are more reflective of all residents. They're doing this through a pilot event that brings together several departments to engage with local preservation stakeholders. Tiffany Rakotz, a preservation specialist at the City of Detroit, says this dialogue will “focus on thematic topics that impact local preservation efforts during this period of recovery and growth.”


### Broaden the Concept of “Preservation” to Plan for Attainable Housing

According to recent discussions at the Urban Land Institute's spring meeting in Detroit, households are now choosing smaller homes in favor of proximity to parks, walkability to shops, and employment. The magical formula here also includes the key calculation of what people can actually afford.

In considering how to rehab Michigan's aging housing stock and accommodate gaps with new construction infills, communities must choose a diversity of options instead of one single family housing solution. Prior to standardized zoning, historic neighborhoods had small scale commercial next to single-family homes mixed with multi-unit splits, carriage houses turned into apartments, row houses, and duplexes intentionally built next to single units.

By easing zoning restrictions and allowing these natural adaptations to take place by-right in the code, we can not only legalize what has happened in neighborhoods for decades, we can also encourage reinvestment in those same neighborhoods in new and creative ways.

In choosing to allow for a mixture of building types for rebuilding neighborhoods, cities can also communicate that attainable quality for many income bands does not equal luxury housing. Cities also need to develop alternative financing options so people who want to fix up their aging building stock—either in incremental multi-unit development or single-family rehab—can access the funds to accomplish the work.

Tempering community engagement with realistic expectations is key. In Detroit, members of the community are being actively engaged in “preserving ... local history, and in creating a vision for the future,” says Rakotz. “I think it is important for the citizens of Detroit to recognize what resources the city is able to provide and for us as public servants to understand what those citizens want.” 

*Melissa Milton-Pung is a civic research program manager for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6328 or [mmiltonpung@mml.org](mailto:mmiltonpung@mml.org)*



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# MAXIMIZE YOUR MEMBERSHIP



(Left) League members participate in a Legislative hearing on short-term rentals. (Right) League staff network at a recent infrastructure week event in Lansing.

## Loving Where You Live!

By Matt Bach

Perhaps the most important thing the League does is advocate on behalf of our members. Most days, this is a silent battle fought largely by your state and federal affairs team. They care deeply about the challenges facing our communities. But every so often, we need to call in the big guns, and that is all of you. Recently, a bill related to the zoning of short-term rentals reached a critical point and the League staff needed your help.

And you responded—in droves. Your efforts were the push needed to support months of work by our team, especially Jennifer Rigterink. At her behest, you sent emails and texts, and made phone calls and posted tweets. You drove to Lansing from Cadillac, Alpena, Lake Angelus, Livonia, Battle Creek, East Lansing, Jackson, Meridian Township, Grand Rapids, St. Joseph, South Haven, Grand Haven, and Spring Lake. It was truly an inspiring state-wide response to an issue that affects all of us.

Attendance at the hearing to testify on the issue was so strong that the House committee had to open an overflow room to accommodate the huge crowd. During the hearing, one legislator even said she received more calls in opposition to on this issue than all the calls her office had received on the governor's proposal to raise the gas tax by 45 cents a gallon. The fight on the issue continues, but it is a great reminder of the collective power of engaged members and a strong advocacy team. Together we can truly achieve great things.

This example of our members mobilizing to help change an issue is at the core of what the League does in working for you. It's doing what our motto says, "We Love Where You Live."

The League is out there helping in all kinds of ways. Sometimes it's working with you—our members—to fight against a bad bill in Lansing. Sometimes, it's supporting

a potential multi-million-dollar revisioning project in Hamtramck. Sometimes, it's leading a tour of historic buildings in Holland. And still other times, it's helping a local official attain their dream of becoming a city manager. In all these ways and more, we're out there serving. We're out there loving where you live.

Here's a look at how we are loving where you live in some key areas:

### Advocacy

One of the most visible ways we fight for you is through our advocacy team in Lansing. Our legislative team consists of Chris Hackbarth, John LaMacchia, Jennifer Rigterink, Herasanna Richards, and Betsy DeRose. Our staff tackles legislative issues impacting our member communities that arise from the roughly 4,000 bills introduced every legislative cycle. Our team has been named among the top lobbyists for associations in the state in 2019, 2018 and 2011 in the Capital Insider Survey done by MIRS News Service and EPIC/MRA. In the past year, we were successfully involved with supporting or opposing hundreds of bills impacting local government, including:

- Protected Personal Property Tax reimbursements and ensured full-funding of Fire Protection Grants for the first time ever;
- Extended pension and OPEB bonding tool and expanded the number of communities eligible to use this financing mechanism;
- Secured a series of positive changes to the state's fireworks law, reducing the hours and days of use and giving local units more control and enforcement power;



- Shifted the focus of the Treasury's assessing reform proposal to preserve local authority and provide additional tools for villages to streamline their process;
- And we fought hard to defeat a harmful tree ordinance preemption and a proposal to exempt utility distribution equipment from paying Personal Property Tax, along with blocking other local zoning preemption and PPT exemption efforts.

These are battles that our staff engage in every day. But it's also important to be proactive and that's what our SaveMICity campaign is all about. Launched at our Capital Conference in 2016, SaveMICity aims to educate the public, elected officials, business leaders, and the media about how Michigan's system for funding municipalities is broken and needs to be fixed. This is a long-term strategy. With your help, SaveMICity can show the public and decision makers how the local programs everyone values are funded and how we must fix the system if we want our communities to be the types of places today's talent and business demand. Join the effort and learn more about the campaign at [SaveMICity.org](http://SaveMICity.org).


### Training Opportunities

The League does a variety of trainings throughout the year to help members on everything from council-manager relations to the latest on medical and recreational marijuana laws. Our two major events are Capital Conference in March and our annual Convention, which is happening September 25-27 this year in Detroit.

We also offer a series of onsite trainings where experts on specific topics come to your community for an in-depth training on Essentials of Local Government, Parliamentary Procedure, Everything Meetings, and Social Media and Your Community. Our newest offering is an advanced on-site training entitled Building a High-Functioning Leadership Team. This full-day workshop is designed to assist elected and appointed officials in bridging seemingly disparate roles and responsibilities to form a leadership team capable of effectively tackling the complicated goals and interests of your community.

### Executive Search

Yet another way we're showing how to love where you live has potentially long-lasting impact on your community. Our executive search service is a resource offered to strengthen the quality of municipal government and administration through successful placement of public leaders. The League is invested in the community before, during, and after the search and is dedicated to a long-term partnership.

You can learn about all these programs and ways we're working every day to show We Love Where You Live on our website—[mml.org](http://mml.org). 

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**Q.** What is the status of the recreational marihuana rules that LARA is promulgating?

**A.** The responsibility for marihuana regulation at the state has been transferred to the newly formed Marijuana Regulatory Agency (MRA). The MRA was expected to release draft emergency rules for the regulation of recreational marihuana in June (prior to the publication of this issue). The promulgation of rules was required per the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act (MRTMA) passed by voters last November. The draft rules were anticipated to be similar to the Medical Marihuana Facilities Licensing Act (MMFLA) rules.

Ninety days after issuance of the emergency rules, the MRA may begin accepting applications for recreational marihuana licenses. That date could be as soon as September. The department has indicated they'll be prepared, but whether they actually begin accepting applications early depends on many different factors. Per the MRTMA, the department must begin accepting applications by December 6, 2019.

Once the MRA begins accepting and processing applications, if no sound reason to deny a license exists, the applicant will be approved. Possible reasons an application could be denied are that the applicant is out of compliance with requirements in the MRTMA or in the finalized emergency rules, or the municipality in which the applicant is seeking to locate has opted out. If your community is not opting out, it is recommended that you have any needed zoning requirements in place prior to the MRA processing applications. Again, this could be as early as September.

The League will continue to update members as we receive new information. Please visit our Marijuana in Michigan resource page on our website at [mml.org](http://mml.org)

**Q.** We are thinking of enacting a rental housing inspection program. What do we need to know?

**A.** Michigan's Rental Housing Law has changed significantly in the past decade. In 2008, the Act was changed to provide more options for inspections, such as allowing municipalities to accept other inspections as their own. In 2016, the Act was changed to decrease the population threshold of local units subject to the Act. And, in 2017, a key provision was inserted: "An inspector must request and receive consent from the lessee to enter before entering a leasehold regulated by this act to undertake an inspection."

The League has a new Fact Sheet on this topic, "Rental Housing Inspection Law" available at [mml.org](http://mml.org)

**Q.** seem to remember that there used to be a state requirement that all purchases by a municipality over a certain dollar amount had to go out for public bid. Do you happen to have that reference?

**A.** Yes, there used to be a state law that required municipalities to go out for public bids on projects over \$20,000. The requirement, however, was repealed in 1996 (PA 341).

There currently are no state requirements for bidding municipal purchases or projects—either as to amount or procedure. However, a municipality can establish public bid requirements of its own. Purchasing and bidding procedures can be set through a charter provision, ordinance, or policy. Check to see if your municipality has established a local public bid requirement. In addition, certain funding sources, e.g. grants, may make such a requirement. There are several sample purchasing policies on our website ([mml.org](http://mml.org)) which you might find useful. Even if your municipality does not have such a requirement, it is often prudent to solicit bids on large projects. The League has many sample bidding policies—contact [info@mml.org](mailto:info@mml.org) to make a request.

**Q.** We saw the Virginia Beach shooting at the DPW building on the news. What can we do to protect ourselves?

**A.** Michigan is an open carry state—meaning, under state law, an adult may openly carry any legal firearm. A member of the public, with or without a CPL, may open carry in any municipal building, except for courts. In 1990, the Michigan Legislature enacted the Firearms and Ammunition Act (PA 319) to put limits on what municipalities could control when it came to firearms. Specifically, "A local unit of government shall not enact or enforce any ordinance that regulates, in any manner, the ownership, registration, purchase, sale, transfer, transportation, or possession of pistols or other firearms." (MCL 123.1102).

FEMA has a free, online active shooter training <https://emilms.fema.gov/IS907/curriculum/1.html> and some jurisdictions have their local force put on trainings. ALICE (Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate) at <https://www.alicetraining.com/> is also a resource. The League has a resource page on its website ([mml.org](http://mml.org)) which includes a link to the above FEMA webinar, a Department of Homeland Security booklet, Active Shooter: How to Respond, and sample municipal weapons policies.

*The League's Information Service provides member officials with answers to questions on a vast array of municipal topics. Call 800.653.2483 or email [info@mml.org](mailto:info@mml.org) or [inquiry@mml.org](mailto:inquiry@mml.org).*





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at this year's Convention  
—go to [cea.mml.org](http://cea.mml.org)

