

the review

July / August 2022

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

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TO
ELLSWORTH



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On the front steps of the shared village and township hall are three officials instrumental in the Ellsworth-Atwood strategic plan: (l - r) Village Trustee Lynn Aldrich Spearling; Village President Hugh Campbell; and, Township Clerk Donna Heeres. Photos by Seana Hope

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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 95, Number 3

We love where you live.

The Michigan Municipal League is dedicated to making Michigan's communities better by thoughtfully innovating programs, energetically connecting ideas and people, actively serving members with resources and services, and passionately inspiring positive change for Michigan's greatest centers of potential: its communities.

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The Arts Can Forge a Unique Community Identity

What would have happened back in 1969 if the folks at NASA had no goals and objectives for the space program, and no real plan for how to get there—wherever *there* might be? Sure, *maybe* Apollo 11 would've landed on the moon anyway... but it's far more likely it would've never even made it out of the parking garage.

The same with building a house: would you just dump a pile of wood on the ground and start nailing pieces together, hoping a mansion emerges? No matter how great the wood or how much of it you have, you're probably never going to build something you really want to live in.

What do you want your municipality to be? How do you get from where it is today, to where you want it to be tomorrow? Without that vision and a strategic plan to implement it, you probably *can't* get there—and certainly not in any timely, cost-effective manner that is supported by leadership and welcomed by residents.

As we emerge from the pandemic's shadow, hopefully most of us are creeping out of the cave armed with a few new tools to build that better future. Now is the time to take a good hard look at what's wrong and what needs to change... and what's right that can be built on to be even better. Then we can set realistic priorities and create a road map to get where we want to be.

But even the best road map won't take us there alone. We need strong partnerships in both the public and private sector, and an engaged community that's ready and willing to join in and share the load at every step of the process. That means making this an open, *transparent* process, where both your staff and citizens can understand how they fit into the plan.

In this issue we'll talk about the nuts and bolts of visioning and strategic planning and how it can help you create realistic goals and use it to implement and execute your initiatives. You'll learn how to use Community Wealth Building as the framework to draft long-term goals for spending ARP funds, and how to grow the impact of those funds exponentially through strategic partnerships. You'll also read about Buchanan's Vision and learn how it is guiding the community to an exciting new future. There is also a highly informative article on asset management for infrastructure, and an article on incorporating equity into your master plan.

Our cover story on the Ellsworth Atwood community (the Village of Ellsworth and the unincorporated area of Atwood in Banks township) digs into this question: "If you are not willing to reinvest in your community, who is?" Like many rural communities, the population is aging, younger residents are leaving, and those remaining need to travel further for basic goods and services. Community members rallied for the hometown they care deeply about, and at a visioning session came up with a seven-item action plan.

By the way, you might notice too that we're streamlining the magazine into a leaner, meaner version to more wisely use our resources while still delivering a useful communications tool. Those changes include alternating our Lab Report and Membership columns and discontinuing marketplace ads. We hope you'll like what we're doing—so please let us know what you think.

Meanwhile, we hope this issue on strategic planning will energize and excite you with all the ideas and guidance you need for building a better tomorrow, today. Here in Michigan, we're in an enviable position. Our state has the resources and talent to build the kind of community wealth that can sustain us for generations to come.

We aim to inspire you with this year's annual Convention. Please join us in Muskegon on October 19-21 for "Turn the Page: Local Leaders Shaping the Future." It will be full of community wealth building energy and practical takeaways.

The power for change is in our hands. This is *our* house, and we can make it whatever we want it to be, take it as far as we dare to dream.

Let's shoot for the moon.



Daniel P. Gilmartin
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League Offers Recovery Funding Technical Assistance for Members

By Shanna Draheim & Helen D. Johnson

ServeMICity

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The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a huge toll on the physical, social, and economic wellbeing of Michigan communities. Federal and state recovery funding—through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, and Infrastructure Investment and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, is the chance for your community to push beyond, is the chance for your community to push beyond funding necessities and imagine the ways that this support can amplify the good in your community.

ServeMICity

The MML and MML Foundation launched the ServeMICity program in 2020 to support our members in accessing and implementing CARES Act and ARP funding. The work has included numerous information webinars, developing and providing guidance documents, and most importantly, providing "on-call" technical assistance. The helpdesk technical assistance encompasses answering questions and helping member communities prepare application documents—essentially working with them in whatever way they need to submit their funding applications. Our initial investment of \$100,000 leveraged over \$200 million in CARES Act and ARP funding for communities to date.

While continuing to offer the ServeMICity helpdesk, we have also realized that there is a significant need to go "deeper" with League member communities as we work together to unlock the potential transformational impacts of these funds. ServeMICity offers guidance and support regarding prioritization of investments.

Capital Conference Workshop

Our first attempt to go 'deeper' was an in-person workshop that took place during the League's Capital Conference (CapCon) in March 2022. At the workshop, the League's ServeMICity program team was joined by a packed room of members for an in-depth, hands-on session focused on helping communities effectively deploy and maximize new funding resources. The workshop shared:

- tangible tools and resources designed to help municipal leaders navigate creative partnerships;
- information on how to use data to prioritize needs;
- tips for identifying guiding principles, or value statements, to guide how communities prioritize recovery-funded projects;
- ideas for engaging in more meaningful ways with community members;
- ways to seek complementary funding opportunities;
- tools for telling the story of how these resources are being invested; and
- strategies for meeting the technical reporting and compliance requirements of state and federal funds.



Our Capital Conference session featured two incredible speakers: (left) Joe Cortright, an economist with Impresa and City Labs. and Anika Goss from Detroit Future City (right).

Participating communities told us they were still very much in the early stages of making decisions about their ARP spending (i.e., identifying some initial projects and/or starting to brainstorm). For those that had already made decisions, the most common investments were water, sewer, broadband infrastructure, and provision of government services impacted by the pandemic.



Workshop participants used these words to describe how they were feeling about this once in a generation moment.

One of the key areas of discussion at the workshop was how communities can get unstuck from the scarcity mindset we have developed after decades of financial strain on local governments. Attendees were encouraged to think about leveraging the significant new state and federal money in ways that bring sustained prosperity. We were joined by two incredible speakers, Anika Goss (CEO of Detroit Future City) and Joe Cortright (economist with Impresa and City Labs), who emphasized the need to focus on investing in the right things for greater community impact.

Summer Workshops on the Road

We are excited to begin offering some 'bite-sized' versions of the Capital Conference workshop that will focus on these topics individually. Beginning in late summer, the League will partner with a few communities to host in-person workshops across the state. The goal is to provide more of the 'nuts and bolts' information and help inspire bigger thinking about the strategic investments that will have the greatest lasting impact on building community wealth. These workshops will be an important opportunity to learn from experts and peers in other communities in order to support local leaders in maximizing ARP and BIL funding and impact.

Pillars of Community Wealth Building

We define community wealth building as strategies that build community and individual assets, creating resilient and adaptable systems to address social and economic needs. The League will work with our partners to provide thought leadership, training, advocacy, resources, and best practices to build community wealth.



Workshop Curriculum

Participants at our Capital Conference workshop told us they would particularly like help with approaches for authentic and inclusive engagement of their residents in the decision-making process, using data to identify needs and opportunities, and maximizing their funding opportunities. We will also include curriculum on communicating and storytelling (getting in front of your own story and owning the narrative), effectively partnering, and managing new resources. In addition, our workshops will provide:

- inspiration to think bigger;
- understanding on how to plan in a way that leverages all resources (ARP, BIL, and more) collectively over a time horizon;
- best practice examples; and,
- tangible approaches and methods to develop and execute their strategic plan.

ServeMICity and Community Wealth Building

The League's work over the past fifteen years, since the financial crisis and the economic harms it wreaked, has focused on reestablishing the importance of distinct local places. It has both supported efforts to develop a strong sense of community, and ways to harness opportunities that can positively impact local communities. Our experience building programs in those areas has led us to the framework of community wealth building as a combination of the built, natural, and cultural environments bound together with mutual trust and belonging. ServeMICity is firmly rooted in current events/opportunities and is building on past programs that have been offered by the League/Foundation over the past decade plus. We are pleased to extend this service to League members and will continue to offer ServeMICity as communities navigate their way through these new funding opportunities. 

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Our Capital Conference workshop was packed, and members dug in to an in-depth, hands-on session focused on helping communities effectively deploy and maximize new funding resources.



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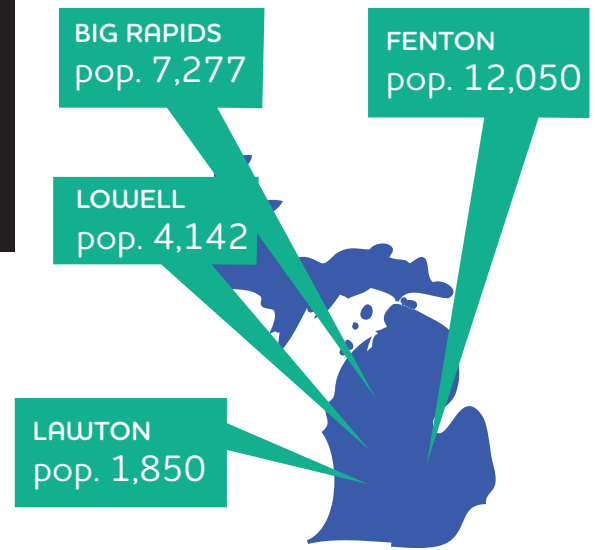
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Which Way Do You Want to Go?

Is Your Council Ready to Answer that Question?

By Lewis G. Bender, PhD



So, why did you run for city or village council? What makes running for elected office worth the time, effort, and personal risk? Often the response to these personal questions include answers like: “I love this community and I want to help make a difference.” Or “We need to address these problems.” These personal questions translate very quickly into community-based questions.

Effective strategic planning is designed to bring elected and appointed leaders together to answer these personal/key community questions: Where do we want to go? What will make a difference for our community? What larger issues do we want to address?

There is no “one size fits all” process for addressing these important questions. The strategic planning process for answering these and other important community questions can take on many forms. However, before attempting to create an effective strategic planning process for your community it is imperative that leaders determine if you are **ready** to do strategic planning.

KEY QUESTIONS INCLUDE:

How well do we work as a team? Do we trust each other? Are we playing “gotcha” games?

If you are a team that lacks mutual trust and engages in personal attacks, don’t start a strategic planning process. Occasionally municipal leaders will suggest that a strategic planning process will help “bring us together.” This can be true of teams that disagree with each other on issues but act from a base of mutual respect and support. It is a mistake to do strategic planning with teams that lack basic person-to-person respect. Councilmembers who engage in personal attacks in-person or on social media will not be able to resist the same behaviors during and after the strategic planning process. In a negatively charged environment, strategic planning and the actual plans can be used by “sides” as weapons against each other.

The City of Lowell’s process is a classic example of a council and a newly appointed manager addressing their mutual expectations before proceeding with a strategic planning process. This elected-appointed team has many strong personalities and were very successful in moving the community forward. In many ways, Lowell’s success can be attributed to their ability to work as a team.

Do we understand and adhere to our respective roles?

In strategic planning, as well as other decisional processes, elected leaders need to identify where they want to go. Managers and staff need to figure out how to get there. When elected leaders tell the manager and her team how to get there, the specter of “micro-managing” quickly appears. When the manager and staff attempt to tell the elected leader where to go, the ownership of the plan quickly shifts to the staff and not the council-staff team. While it is normal for elected and appointed leaders to consult with each other regarding where and how, it is important that every member of the team embrace their respective roles. Effective strategic planning is a team effort bringing elected and appointed leaders together around shared goals. Differing perspectives are encouraged. Crossing role-job boundaries will undermine, even destroy, a strategic planning effort.

Are we ready to use the strategic plan as a key factor in our ongoing decisions?

A strategic plan is primarily a communications tool. Long ago, we abandoned the notion of long-range planning. Back in the day, councils and staff would discuss, debate, and argue *ad nauseum* over “how many angels danced on the head of a pin.” We created large, beautifully detailed documents, and put them on shelves—never to be seen or used again!

“If you are a team that lacks mutual trust and engages in personal attacks, don’t start a strategic planning process.”

Strategic planning recognizes that we don’t have the power to see the future. Opportunities and challenges have ways of suddenly appearing and messing up our best plans. Who could have anticipated COVID-19, the recession of 2009-10, the loss of revenue sharing, etc.? Flexibility and ongoing communication between and among elected and appointed leaders are paramount to the success of a strategic planning effort. The City of Big Rapids serves as an excellent example of building the strategic plan into their ongoing decision processes. Their strategic plan is short, understandable, and regularly used by everyone involved in the decision-making process.

Lawton

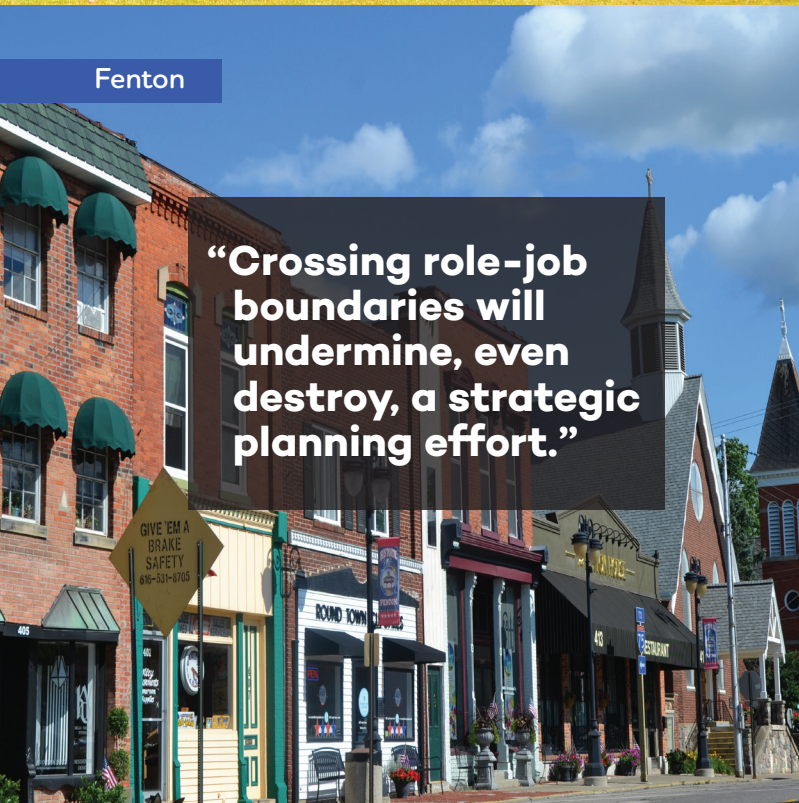
Lowell



Big Rapids



Fenton



“Crossing role-job boundaries will undermine, even destroy, a strategic planning effort.”

Is this our first strategic plan? Or are we building on past plans?

A strategic plan is a three-to-five-year commitment by a council or board and staff to a direction—and a set of major goals. It is usually best that a novice council or board take a more cautious approach to initial planning. Elected leaders need to become more familiar with municipal operations, each other, and the staff. Creating a one year set of goals and objectives is a more reasonable initial planning step before taking on a strategic planning effort.

Similarly, an experienced team may be more interested in expanding the strategic planning process to include a wide circle of people. An experienced council may wish to move to including more people in the input process of its strategic plan.

**You have decided to go forward.
What are some of the key questions?
Who should be involved in the strategic
planning processes?**

Once a council and manager have decided to go forward with a strategic planning process, the challenge is always: Who should be involved in the process? To requote the Cheshire Cat: "That depends a good deal on where you want to get." If the initial planning group believes that strategic plan outcomes may require a great deal of "buy-in" from many people, then many people should be involved in the process. The range of participants can be from only the council and manager and senior staff to input from community groups to involving the general public. However, if it is assumed that the outcomes will have a minimal impact on many others then the choice may be to only include the main decision-makers. Everyone is very busy, and time is very valuable. The decision to involve many people requires a serious pro-con discussion.

When the leaders of the Village of Lawton grappled with this question it became apparent that the leadership team had to figure out where they wanted to go before involving others. Indeed, they had to figure out the important questions facing the community before attempting to go in any particular direction.

What process should we use?

Again, this depends on where you want to go. If the team is looking for a working document that is basically focused on keeping the elected and appointed leaders on the same page over the next several years, then the process should be simple and straightforward. Oftentimes, the council and manager can identify internal strengths-weaknesses and external opportunities-challenges (SWOC) and goals, objectives, and first year tasks within a four-hour workshop.

If the decision is to involve a larger group, then the group might go with a "sandwich approach." With this approach, the council and manager spend one evening identifying the SWOC, their shared vision, and major three-to-five-year goals. The leadership group then "parks" this discussion and seeks input from other groups (staff, community groups, the public, etc.). The leadership group then reconvenes and reviews the input and moves forward to create the final strategic plan. The City of Fenton used this approach in its second strategic planning effort. In that process we used members of the city council as breakout group facilitators in an evening meeting involving approximately 150 residents.

Prior to submitting the proposed strategic plan to the council for final adoption, the manager and her staff should review and revise the document to ensure that the tasks can be accomplished within the prescribed timeframe. Any process should emphasize do-able goals, objectives, and annual tasks.


SWOC=

**Strengths-Weaknesses & External
Opportunities-Challenges**

Should we use an outside facilitator?

The obvious bias of this author is: yes. However, it is very possible to do strategic planning without an outside facilitator. Perhaps someone in the community could be trusted to lead the effort. In any case, it is important to have someone who can be trusted by all participants and who does not have a bias toward any outcome.

Final thoughts.

In the final analysis effective strategic plans are about shared ownership and commitment. Elected leaders must "own" the goals and direction they have chosen. Managers must be committed to finding ways to accomplish those goals. 

Lewis G. Bender, PhD is a retired professor from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and has four decades of strategic planning experience. You may contact him at 618.792.6103 or lewbender@aol.com





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Asset Management: Keeping Owned Items Valuable

By Zach Guerrero & Aaron K. Bedford

ST. CHARLES
pop. 1,992

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines an “asset” as an item of value owned. Our every-day personal assets can include homes, vehicles, money, and land. For municipalities, assets can include a variety of physical features—water mains, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, street signs, and parks, to name a few. The key denominator for keeping these owned items valuable is the effectiveness of how they are managed and maintained, and there are two methods—being proactive or taking a reactive approach.

Proactive: Be Aware, Monitor Continuously, and Act

For a home, the proactive approach keeps tabs on how old a furnace is, the condition of a water heater, the age of a sump pump, and the working condition of our household sewer system. Being proactive on vehicles means we keep an eye on tires, track mileage for oil changes, and check brakes occasionally for possible replacement. The proactive focus means being aware of the condition of any asset, monitoring them continuously, and acting ahead of time to eliminate the risk of failure.

Reactive: If it Ain't Broke, Don't Fix it

Being reactive means waiting for assets to fail and then fixing them. Taking a reactive approach normally leads to having to find a plumber on a holiday because the whole family is visiting and the toilets are backing up; or getting a massive repair bill from the auto mechanic to replace an engine because the routine oil changes were not completed, and old filters were not replaced. Additionally, the reactive approach is somewhat of a gamble and can present a false sense of security by thinking we are saving money and allowing us to spend



Spicer Group Inc. engineer Neil Noack working with Underground Infrastructure Services to hydroexcavate, identify, and record the materials of water services in the Village of St. Charles.

it other ways. This is the if it ain't broke, don't fix it mentality. However, the difference between being proactive or waiting until an asset is broke to fix it can be the difference of a \$200 bill or a tally of several thousand dollars. From a municipal perspective, that can escalate to hundreds of thousands of dollars depending on the asset and its critical importance.

For municipalities, a thorough asset management plan is a crucial component in taking the proactive approach. The development and utilization of asset management plans has advanced significantly over the past decade. While some communities are much farther along than others, asset management is beginning to become common practice in many communities across Michigan.

Village of St. Charles Stormwater and Wastewater Asset Management

For the Village of St Charles in Saginaw County, its dive into asset management began in 2015 when the village was awarded a SAW (Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater) grant. The SAW program was created in 2013. The program was designed to help municipalities develop, update, and improve asset management plans for their wastewater and stormwater systems. A total of \$449 million was awarded over several rounds of funding. The first round was awarded in May 2014, and the final round was awarded in April 2020. Most communities used the funding to create asset management plans, develop a capital improvement plan and adjust rates to address the current and future needs of the systems.

St. Charles used its grant to complete an asset inventory and inspection on its entire storm water and wastewater collection systems. With funding secured through state grant dollars, it was easy for the village to complete a basic asset management plan for both the water distribution system and streets in tandem with the SAW grant.

Drinking Water Asset Management

Now that the SAW program is all but finished, the state has shifted focus on requiring communities to complete a drinking water asset management plan. St. Charles was recently awarded another state grant, the Drinking Water Asset Management Grant (DWAM) to advance its current water asset management plan.

Drinking water asset management plans are used to understand the condition of the drinking water system and are needed to ensure the health and safety of customers. Understanding the condition of the water distribution system is essential in planning for future improvements and having a finance structure to implement those improvements. It is also vital to know the materials of pipes and service leads to reduce potential contamination from lead components, which are still in the ground after being banned from the use in municipal water systems in 1989.



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There are many proactive strategies to creating and maintaining an asset management plan. In St. Charles, the foundation for asset management was built using the ArcGIS Pro platform by ESRI. Some may consider a geographic information system (GIS) to be a map-making tool, but it is more powerful than that. When properly built, a GIS can help a community proactively analyze data and spot patterns in their assets.

Proactive asset management gives communities the necessary knowledge of their infrastructure to properly maintain and provide a quality level of service. For example, it can be used to visualize which water mains are prone to breaks, or which sanitary sewers have significant infiltration. The community can use GIS to weigh the variables and costs of operating these assets in their current condition versus the cost to either replace or rehabilitate those assets.

There are tools by ESRI to assist in field operations as well. Field Maps is a data-driven application created by ESRI that allows users to access and update their maps in the field with a mobile device. An example of using this to manage assets could include designing a map to track progress of an annual valve exercising or hydrant flushing program. Another field operations tool is the Survey123 app. While Field Maps is data driven, Survey123 is form driven. Custom survey forms can be created to perform inspections on any asset owned by a community.

St. Charles has been using these two applications side-by-side to complete the objectives outlined by the DWAM Grant. With Field Maps, the village has been mapping water shut-off locations and drawing water services into their GIS system. A contractor has been hired to expose the water services on both the public and private sides of the water shut offs using hydroexcavation. Through Survey123, a custom inspection form was built to track the service materials and capture photos of the service once they are exposed and identified.

This information can then be uploaded back into their GIS to develop visuals that show and analyze which areas may have high concentrations of galvanized or lead lines. The village will continue to utilize this method to advance their asset inventory until they have reached a complete distribution system materials inventory (CDSMI) by January 1, 2025 as outlined by EGLE. A replacement program will then be developed, and all water services with lead components will be replaced by the end of the year 2040. Both the SAW Grant and DWAM Grants were written and completed by Spicer Group on behalf of the Village of St. Charles. 

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Rich Murphy (on Front St.) has dedicated his career to making cities, towns, and neighborhoods stronger and better places. “I love Buchanan! I come to work every day to make it a better place. Every community has opportunities and challenges. Use what you have, everything is an asset, leave no one behind—and strive to be the place where people want to be! That is the new economic model in the U.S. The places that realize this and put their chips on this strategy are the places that will succeed.”

A Vision for Buchanan

By Richard Murphy

On January 4, 2021, I reported to my new assignment as community development director of the City of Buchanan. Over a thousand years ago, the Potawatomi people settled here along the banks of the St. Joseph River. Later, a beautiful 19th Century mill town emerged on the frontier, harnessing waterpower from McCoy’s Creek to produce flour. Then Clark Manufacturing hit the national scene making axels for heavy machinery and thrived for decades in Buchanan until 1984, when Clark and their over 3,500 jobs abruptly left town. Buchanan is a small city that has always had a strong sense of self. It is off the beaten path, but in a good way. I had a feeling that this place was ripe for opportunity.

“The [Andrews University] students have a special disarming way about them that gets to the heart of the matter because the community knows they have no agenda...”

On my first day, I made calls to colleagues letting them know where I landed. One was to Professor Andrew von Maur of Andrews University, with whom I worked in 2007 on a project that drove transformational change in Michigan City, IN. I wanted on his radar for a project in Buchanan. Professor von Maur and his 5th year architecture students choose communities to work in each year to prepare the students for working at the community scale. To my surprise, he called me back—a long-anticipated project overseas had been canceled due to COVID. It was my first day on the job in Buchanan. I had not even met the mayor yet. But I had already lined up a talented urban design studio to look at reimagining Buchanan. Things were off to an amazing start.

A Small City Asks Big Questions

Professor von Maur and I quickly realized that an equally relevant and compelling opportunity existed in Buchanan, right down the street from Andrews University and in our own back yard, so to speak. The script was writing itself. Buchanan was a small town asking big questions:

- How can Buchanan be better for the next generation?
- How can Buchanan invite more businesses and residents to choose Buchanan?
- How can Buchanan leverage its assets to create jobs and rev up its economy?
- How can Buchanan live up to its recent recognition by *Reader's Digest* as The Nicest Place in America?

This was one of the very reasons I took the job. In 2020, *Reader's Digest* designated Buchanan as “The Nicest Place in America” out of over 1,400 nominations. The story was how this small, rural city overcame the pandemic to honor America while also joining the fight for racial justice. Buchanan’s march for racial justice brought out about 250 people, including the police chief. Furthermore, since the Memorial Day parade had been canceled, locals found another way to honor the troops. Over 100 banners downtown celebrated local veterans from Afghanistan to World War II.

Asking the Community to Reimagine Buchanan

The Andrews University students arrived, and we hit the streets. We walked the downtown, the neighborhoods, and riverfront like an urban planning gang looking for meaning. I learned on the job with the students. I learned about Buchanan and began to see it as one of the great American small towns. We embarked on an ambitious plan to engage the community by asking them to reimagine Buchanan.

For the first time in a long time, there appeared to be a consensus arising from our community discussions. The students have a special disarming way about them that gets to the heart of the matter because the community knows they have no agenda except to see the community do better. The vision was being crafted. Someone asked the question,

“Where else in America does a designated trout stream run through the middle of a historic downtown?” Special things were happening. Again, the script was writing itself. A vision statement emerged:

Our vision of the Buchanan brand is a dynamic quality-of-life center. Our goal is to build a strong and diverse economy that leverages our uniquely special sense of place in a world where business can be done from anywhere and virtually, where we thrive on innovation and seek to build economic engines which evoke high quality of life, health and wellness, historic significance, and our relationship with our special natural resources, and while doing so we protect the authenticity, character, and soul of our American small town.

The process was intended to build consensus, identify community priorities, and shape a collective vision by intentionally engaging a broad diversity of citizens, property, and business owners. The ultimate goal of the project is to provide a roadmap for the next wave of redevelopment and revitalization. It is also a celebration of the future of the city and a tool for city leaders to facilitate implementation in the marketplace.

Focusing the Vision


A Vision for Buchanan is the result of an intense collaborative process initiated by the city commission. A broad array of diverse voices has been part of this process. A steering committee appointed by the city and led by Mayor Sean Denison worked with the Andrews University School of Architecture & Interior Design to reimagine redevelopment opportunities. The process challenged stakeholders to think in ways that highlight Buchanan’s unique strengths, while remaining true to its community identity. Central themes include placemaking, pedestrian-oriented design, family friendliness, historic preservation, and inclusive economic development. Given the semester-based availability of the Andrews University team, the decision was made to focus the work on two areas—downtown, the heart of Buchanan, and the Northside neighborhood—a proud, historically black neighborhood that has been neglected too often.

First, we concentrated on our historic downtown to make the heart of our community stronger and to take further action on “what is working already.” Secondly, we looked at compelling opportunities in our Northside neighborhood, making the realization as a community that we are only as good as our most vulnerable neighborhood. Through a series of meetings, the city and the Northside neighborhood group began to build trust in each other. The city pledged to make improvements to the neighborhood and the neighbors pledged to show up and communicate what they would like to see happen. To show good faith, the city began making improvements immediately. This was how *A Vision for Buchanan* was forged.



Andrews University School of Architecture students.

Amidst a buzz of excitement and hope for the future, the students gave an extremely well attended final project presentation, during a rainstorm, at the Buchanan Common. *A Vision for Buchanan* was released for implementation and the history of Buchanan was changed forever.

The Vision is meant to be practical and to immediately take action upon implementation. It is a menu of possibilities that can happen in Buchanan. Many of the projects are already underway. The project can be accessed in its entirety at www.nicestplacetowalk.com. 

Richard Murphy is the community development director for the City of Buchanan. You may contact him at 269.695.3844 x19 or rmurphy@cityofbuchanan.com.



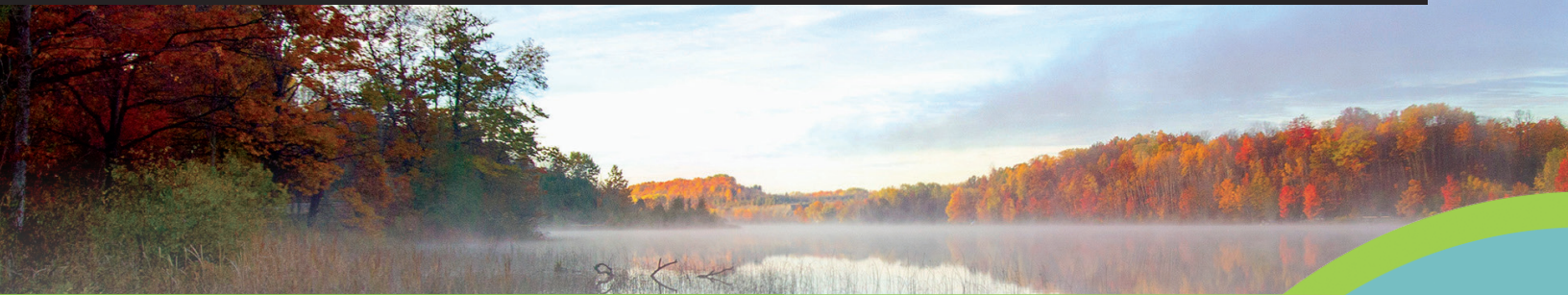
Northside neighborhood meeting.



The architecture gang walking the streets.

Ellsworth: The Village That Can...

By John Iacoangeli, FAICP, LEED AP, CNU-A



The Village of Ellsworth, population of 367 residents, located in Banks Township, Antrim County, reflects the best of values often found in rural America: compassion for neighbors, willingness to volunteer, pride for community, concern for the elderly and poor, and unwavering support for the local school system. And like many rural communities, it is at a crossroads where the population is aging in place, younger members of the community are leaving for college or job opportunities upon graduation from high school, the once-active business district is declining, and the remaining residents need to travel further for basic goods and services.

But unlike many rural communities, the Ellsworth-Atwood community has rallied around a broader vision for the community and pulled together a cross-section of community leaders and the community to ask a direct question: What is our vision for the future?

Community Forum, Snowstorm or Not

It was March 22, 2016, and the Ellsworth-Atwood community was preparing for an evening meeting on March 23 to decide their future course for the next several years. The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning forecasting 8–12 inches of snow for the evening of the event; the heavy kind of snow so often experienced in the early spring. An email went out to event organizers to assess if the meeting needed to be rescheduled due to the weather and without hesitation the answer came back to proceed, the community would come out. And so, they did. In the lower level of the historic Banks Township Hall, fifty-one people

ages “eight to eighty” showed up to offer their opinions on issues and expectations for the village’s future. They represented all segments of the community: young and old, retired and employed, families and empty-nesters, and village and township.

The strategic plan process was partially funded by Rotary Charities of Traverse City and Grand Traverse Community Foundation. Rotary Charities instituted a program to provide “seed” funding to communities to develop strategic plans that would leverage community assets, funding opportunities, local economic and community development projects and programs, and most of all create a local leadership pool to champion the outcome.

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Comm

**“If you are not willing to reinvest
in your community, who is?”**



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ELLSWORTH
pop. 367

Community

The community forum focused on six questions:

1. How would you describe the Ellsworth-Atwood community today?
2. How would you like to describe the Ellsworth-Atwood community in the future?
3. What does the Ellsworth-Atwood community need today?
4. What are the barriers that are preventing the achievement of the needs?
5. What does the Ellsworth-Atwood community need 10 years from now?
6. What actions need to be taken to accomplish the desired outcomes?

Communities are often confronted with barriers that impede success. These take the form of financial considerations, political posturing, lack of administrative capacity, lack of capabilities, and resident sentiments. Separately or collectively, these barriers determine the success and ultimate disposition of the community. Communities with a “can do” culture are often those that are vibrant and actively sought after by new residents and business. On the other hand, “can’t do” communities are often undervalued, rife with economic and social issues, and adhere to that familiar adage of ‘same old, same old.’ The outcome of the latter situation begs the question: “If you are not willing to reinvest in your community, who is?”

Setting Priorities

Strategic priorities are based on the actions that need to be taken to move the community closer to its vision. The priorities must also be tailored to the capabilities and capacity of the community, because an overwhelming variety of action items and objectives can produce the unintended consequence of organizational paralysis, resulting in no action at all.





The Ellsworth-Atwood community is managed by local elected officials with no trained public administrative staff. As a result, the strategic priorities must be constructed around a nucleus of volunteer citizens and elected officials. These included the Village of Ellsworth and Banks Township elected officials, Ellsworth Community Schools superintendent, Chamber of Commerce, local church and nonprofits, and several business owners.

What the Community Wants to Accomplish

Forum participants focused on five key priorities: downtown revitalization, neighborhood stabilization, housing development, economic development, and tourism/recreation. Further discussion revolved around each priority and what actions were needed to bring about change and accomplishment.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

Rural communities do not lack the desire or the willingness to make their communities stronger economically and socially, but they often lack the capacity to achieve these outcomes. A strategy to pool limited volunteer resources together is to establish a formally recognized group that works collaboratively on consensus projects. This is called a service hub: a central location where projects are vetted and those of the highest importance and impact to the community are pursued. It was suggested that the Ellsworth hub be structured around a Downtown Development Authority (PA 57 of 2018).

Blight

Another focus area was rethinking blight and its application to mitigate the lack of building maintenance, especially in the downtown area. Another critical concern voiced at the forum was the lack of a sanitary sewer system in the village. Development in the village relied on individual septic systems even in the downtown. However, new sanitary codes prevent redevelopment in the district due to the limitations of, or lack of, a septic leach field.

The Breezeway

Ellsworth is part of the C-48 “Breezeway” which connects the unincorporated Village of Atwood on US-31 with Ellsworth, East Jordan, and Boyne Falls on US-131. The Breezeway provides some of the best scenic views of northwest Michigan and offers access to roadside farms, art galleries, wineries, and quaint B&B’s. Ellsworth is also on a chain of lakes. The Chain of Lakes Water Trail, in northwest Michigan, is a 100+ mile inland water trail made up of 12 lakes and interconnected rivers which flow into the East Grand Traverse Bay of Lake Michigan. As a result, residents decided to capitalize on Ellsworth as a trail town for both land (motorcycles and bicycles) and water activities (canoe and kayak).


So, the action plan was cast with seven projects/programs. These included:

- Establish a DDA.
- Amend the current village ordinance to include building and property maintenance and contract with surrounding communities for a blight enforcement officer.
- Conduct a USDA approved income survey and perform a preliminary engineering study to apply for a USDA RD grant/loan for a sanitary system.
- Attend and participate in MEDC Redevelopment Ready training and program.
- Enhance the community brand and participate in a regional wayfinding program along the Breezeway.
- Become a Trail Town.
- Recruit a local grocery store.

Village Accomplishments to Date

Since the ad, of the strategic plan the community has established a DDA, amended its blight ordinance, accomplished its local income survey and preliminary engineering plan, and has an application under consideration for USDA RD funding for the sanitary sewer. Additionally, it is an active participant in the state’s Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program with several tasks away from “Essential” status and is engaged with the East Jordan Chamber of Commerce on marketing its community and businesses.

The 2016 Atwood-Ellsworth strategic plan was updated in 2019, and now the Downtown Development Authority is in the process of finishing its first strategic plan. Ellsworth quickly learned that success is not measured in large jumps but small steps, and incrementally these small steps move the community toward a vision that they crafted, own, and accomplish.

And if you are curious, as the final table and chair was placed in its cart, and the township hall was locked for the evening, the snow did start to fall, and the community was treated to its 12 inches of snow. 

John Iacoangeli, FAICP, LEED AP, CNU-A is a principal at Beckett & Raeder. You may contact him at 734.663.2622 or jri@bria2.com.



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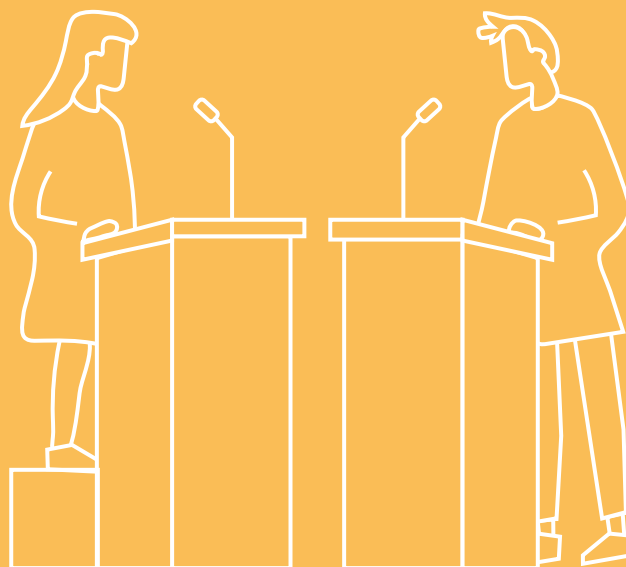
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SIX EASY WAYS TO INCORPORATE EQUITY INTO A MASTER PLAN

By Carolyn G. Loh



Many planners think that emphasizing equity in a master plan is difficult. It might not be a local priority and the planner may have been told to focus on other issues. It might involve change and it might involve redistribution, both of which can make residents nervous. However, it is not only a planner's responsibility to try to "plan for the needs of the disadvantaged," according to the AICP Code of Ethics, it is also the right thing to do to strengthen the community.

Areas with high or concentrated poverty, poor access to transportation, lack of housing choices, or environmental problems are not resilient: even if those problems don't appear to affect everyone, they ultimately will. A community where everyone has the opportunity to do well and whose residents shoulder the burden of problem-solving together will be better able to cope with change and issues as they arise: equity is not a zero-sum game.

Here are some ways local governments of any size can increase equity through master plans.


1. *Find out who lives in the community.* Most of the plans in the equity study included some kind of demographic analysis, but many left out race and income from that analysis. A few of the plans made an extra effort in their demographic analysis to identify socially vulnerable people, but most did not. Not one of the plans we evaluated mentioned rural poverty, which is certainly an issue in many Michigan townships.
2. *Find out where the most vulnerable people in the community live.* Perhaps the community has a low poverty rate, but most of the low-income people are concentrated in one neighborhood. Or perhaps in another community neighborhoods where minority residents live tend to be less well-provided with community facilities. The locations where vulnerable people live matter when trying to address inequities and improve access to services and quality of life. Local knowledge and census data combined can bring this information to light.

3. *Make sure the community's full range of diversity is represented in the planning process.* Only one plan in the study mentioned any efforts to engage historically marginalized people in the planning process. The plan cannot claim to represent community consensus if the process leaves many people out. What does diversity look like in a community? Perhaps the community is very racially or ethnically diverse. Perhaps it is mostly white but has quite a bit of income diversity. Diversity looks different in different places, but whatever it means to a community, that is who should be at the table during the planning process.

If the traditional methods of getting public participation only gather the input of certain swaths of the population, planners and officials need to be more creative. Community engagement or public participation processes can be expensive, but volunteers can help. Volunteers can visit local institutions and groups to gather input or recruit volunteers from those institutions themselves. This recommendation is probably the hardest, but it is also the most important: all other equity efforts should flow from participation.

4. *Talk about housing.* Who is having trouble finding housing in this community? What do they need? This goal and its objectives will look different in different places. Perhaps a lack of affordable housing in general is a problem, or perhaps affordability isn't an issue, but a lack of housing, s for seniors to age in place is. One plan recommended allowing accessory dwelling units so that seniors could house a caregiver or move into the accessory dwelling unit themselves while renting out their main residence. Every master plan can be expected to have a goal about providing a variety of housing types to accommodate all ages and income levels.
5. *Talk about hazards.* What are the natural hazards in this community? Is climate change exacerbating them or is it likely to? Are some people more likely to be affected by them than others? How can the plan move in the direction of ensuring equitable protection from hazards? Coastal communities are already paying attention to these issues, but other communities must also do so.
6. *Talk about transportation access.* Cities with transit should analyze if some neighborhoods have less access to transit (and find out who lives in those neighborhoods). Rural communities may not have any transit, but they do have the ability to do non-motorized planning. One rural community's plan talked about Rural Complete Streets, that have wide, paved shoulders or accompanying bike paths. That recommendation could go in any rural plan and be implemented over time.

Some plans are already emphasizing equity. Livingston County's master plan, which received two MAP Planning Excellence Awards in 2019, has a Social Equity chapter. The City of Bridgman's Master Plan has a chapter called "Defining Vulnerability in the Bridgman Community." Yet many communities have not looked at planning explicitly through an equity lens. Put more simply, plans haven't asked: how can we help the most vulnerable people in our community?

The recommendations outlined above have low political and financial costs and can be a community's first steps toward a more equitable future. By making sure no one is left behind, the community at large prospers. 

Carolyn G. Loh is an associate professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Wayne State University. A former planning consultant, her research interests include local land use decision making, the planning process, implementation, intergovernmental cooperation, and regional planning.

This article was first published in the March/April 2020 edition of the *Michigan Planner* magazine and is being reprinted here with permission from the Michigan Association of Planning.



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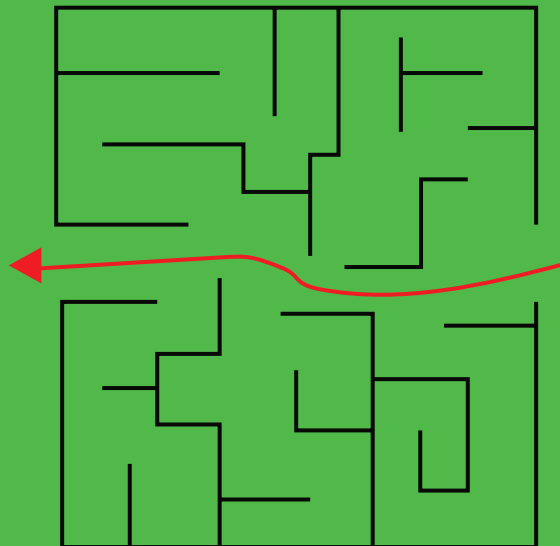
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Granting of Variance under the Airport Zoning Act

In 2019, Pegasus Wind, LLC (Pegasus) submitted variance applications for the construction of eight wind turbines as part of a wind energy system in Tuscola County. The proposed wind turbines are located within the Tuscola Area Airport zoning area. Previously, thirty-three turbines had been approved and constructed near the Airport. The Airport Authority owns the airport and is responsible for its operation. The Tuscola Area Airport Zoning Board of Appeals (AZBA), which is responsible for deciding whether to grant variances from airport zoning regulations, denied the applications for the eight turbines.

The Airport Zoning Act provides that the AZBA is required to grant a variance if an applicant fulfills four factors, i.e., “if a literal application or enforcement of the regulations would result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship and the relief granted would not be contrary to the public interest, but would do substantial justice and be in accordance with the spirit of the regulations.” [emphasis added] MCL 259.454.

On appeal, the Iosco County Circuit Court held that Pegasus failed to establish three of four criteria necessary for the grant of a variance. Pegasus appealed that ruling to the Michigan Court of Appeals.

The Court of Appeals examined the facts of the case relative to the four criteria and found as follows:

1. Practical difficulties/unnecessary hardships:

The Court of Appeals noted that the Airport Zoning Act does not distinguish between practical difficulties and unnecessary hardship. By analogy to the 2006 enactment of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, the Court found that the *practical difficulties* standard is the appropriate standard to be applied to an application for a nonuse variance (as in this case) rather than the *unnecessary hardship* standard applicable for use variances. Finding that the AZBA and the Circuit Court had confused the standards, the Court found that the reasons provided for denial of the requested variances were invalid. The Court further distinguished the requirements of practical difficulties and unnecessary hardships.

2. **Public interest:** The Court of Appeals further found that the variances would not be contrary to public safety and approach protection. The Court, on review of the testimony provided, found that the additional turbines would not create risks different from what was already happening at the airport.

3. **Substantial justice:** The Circuit Court had reversed the AZBA’s determination that granting the variances would not do substantial justice, noting that the record “does not contain evidence that the granting of variances would not do substantial justice; and that “[t]here will be no adverse impact to the airport.” The Court of Appeals did not address the issue noting that neither the AZBA nor the county addressed the basis of the Circuit Court’s reversal on the substantial justice issue.

4. **Spirit of the ordinance:** The AZBA had determined that the variances would not be in the spirit of the ordinance. The Circuit Court had affirmed, noting that the “limitations and risks posed by the wind turbines” did not “promote the health, safety, and welfare” of the County’s inhabitants. The Court of Appeals found that the record contained no evidence to support the finding of “aviation limitations and risks posed by the wind turbines.”

The Court of Appeals reversed in part and remanded the case to the Circuit Court for proceedings consistent with the opinion.

Pegasus Wind, LLC v Tuscola County, No. 355715, February 24, 2022

The Michigan Municipal League’s Legal Defense Fund submitted an *amicus curiae* brief to the Michigan Supreme Court on appeal in support of Tuscola County. At press time, no decision had yet been issued.

ARP Spending: Local Governments Helping Struggling Residents

By Rick Haglund



After decades of disinvestment by the state, lawmakers and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer have proposed more than \$1 billion in new spending for local communities this year in the form of higher revenue sharing payments and substantial aid for local governments struggling to meet increasingly onerous pension obligations for retired employees. The money comes from billions of dollars in federal COVID-19 relief funds and unexpectedly strong state tax revenues.

Local governments in Michigan are spending—or planning to spend—much of their \$2.4 billion in federal local COVID relief funds to replenish pandemic-depleted budgets, supplement the pay of weary essential workers, boost public health programs, and finance long-delayed infrastructure projects. But Ann Arbor and Lansing are reserving a portion of their allocations for innovative pilot projects that could put hundreds of financially struggling residents on a brighter economic path.

Universal Basic Income

The Ann Arbor City Council in April approved spending \$1.6 million of the city's \$24.2 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funds on a universal basic income program. One hundred families hit hardest by the pandemic will receive \$500 a month for up to three years to spend however they see fit. The program fits an ARP provision that allows spending to address negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in communities.

Lansing has proposed a similar program. The city is planning to spend \$1 million of its \$49.9 million ARP allocation to provide a basic income of \$500 a month to as many as 125 families in the city's three poorest neighborhoods for a year. Research by Lansing's Office of Financial Empowerment found the financial condition of low-income residents served by the office has significantly deteriorated during the pandemic. Consumer debt among these residents' averages \$23,431 this year, up 59 percent since the state logged its first COVID cases in March of 2020.

"We're just seeing people really struggle, and they've been struggling even more during the pandemic," said Amber Paxton, director of the Office of Financial Empowerment. "Even middle-class families doing fine before the pandemic are maxing out their credit cards." Much of the economic pain is a result of job loss by people who haven't been able to work from home during the pandemic, lack of day care for working parents and people leaving the workforce to care for ill or disabled family members.

Participants in the program will be chosen randomly from about 500 applications. There is no income limit for applicants, but Paxton said it's assumed most, if not all, will be low income because they live in the city's most economically challenged neighborhoods. She described the monthly payments as the first step in easing a financial crisis for recipients. The hope is that the money will help families get back on their feet and no longer need the extra cash when the experiment ends.

Paxton emphasized that Lansing's plan is a pilot project designed to see how a steady income impacts recipients' life. Her office will track a variety of data, including changes in credit scores, and savings and debt balances. The program is modeled after one in Stockton, California, which gave randomly selected, low-income residents \$500 a month for two years with no strings attached. An independent study found that the effort, which ended in last year, measurably improved participants' job prospects, financial standing and well-being.

Lansing's basic income pilot has received pushback from some who question the fairness of giving money to people who may not "deserve" it, Paxton said. "This is what we're trying to address. We want to move from a narrative of deserve and don't deserve to a narrative of abundance and dignity," she said. The idea of providing people a basic income gained awareness in 1967 when civil rights leader Martin Luther King equated it with the "dignity of the individual." Two years later, President Richard Nixon proposed replacing the country's welfare system with a guaranteed annual income to families with children. But the idea was defeated in Congress.

The concept has picked up steam in recent years as mayors across the country have signed on and dozens of cities have begun universal basic income programs. In the two years since its founding, 79 mayors and former mayors of U.S. cities have joined Mayors for a Guaranteed Income. Lansing Mayor Andy Schor is the only Michigan mayor in the group, which advocates for a national basic income. Paxton said she's "delighted" that Ann Arbor also is running a basic income pilot because data from the two cities could inform a policy debate about a potential statewide basic income program.

"If we get to true universal basic income, this can't just be at the city level," she said. "But cities have to be the laboratories for it."

Past-Due Rent and Mortgage Payments


Several other cities are using ARP dollars in other ways to directly aid their residents struggling with the economic effects of the pandemic. Bay City's household assistance plan gives qualified households a one-time grant of up to \$3,000 to pay past-due rent or mortgage payments incurred since March 3, 2021. So far, the city has awarded about \$450,000 to nearly 200 families, according to the Bay City Times. Bay City has allocated \$1 million of its \$31 million in ARP funds to the program.

Roof Replacements

Detroit has allocated \$30 million of its \$827 million ARP cash to "Renew Detroit," an effort to upgrade substandard homes, including free replacement of 1,000 roofs starting this summer. Poor housing stock is a major issue in Detroit. A University of Michigan study last year found that nearly 38,000 Detroit homes have extensive problems, including exposed electric wires, broken furnaces, and no hot running water.

It's unclear how much Michigan local governments have spent overall using ARP funds. Local units were required to report initial spending to the U.S. Treasury by April 30. Details of local projects were expected to be released by summer. Local governments have until December 31, 2024 to develop spending plans and must disperse funds by the end of 2026. The vast majority of more than 1,700 local governments in the state have applied for funding. Just 28 local units, all of them small townships and villages, did not respond to funding offers or declined funding, according to the state Treasury Department.

John LaMacchia, the Michigan Municipal League's director of state and federal affairs, said the League has advised some communities to "be patient" in spending ARP funds because they might be able to leverage their allocations in the future with state funds. One example of that is \$4.7 billion state spending approved in March, included \$4 billion in federal COVID relief funding targeted at infrastructure, housing assistance, and improved drinking water quality. "This is nothing short of a significant victory for all in our great state," LaMacchia said.

Paxton, the Lansing official, said she hopes the historic COVID relief money will lead to more permanent basic income funding that could lift struggling Michigan residents out of poverty, and produce more economically vibrant and equitable communities. "This is a movement that is going to happen with or without us," she said. "I want it to be done with us." 

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MI WATER NAVIGATOR
WATER INFRASTRUCTURE HELPDESK

What is MI Water Navigator?

MI Water Navigator is a resource for navigating Michigan drinking water infrastructure funding opportunities. Whether you are a public municipal water system or a private water utility, the MI Water Navigator helpdesk and toolkit will provide direction in your search for state and federal funding.



BRIDGE BUILDERS MICROGRANTS

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The Bridge Builders Microgrants program offers small, one-time grants to people or organizations within Michigan Municipal League member communities. Grants fund collaborative, creative projects that bring people out of their homes and into their communities!

In two years, we've reached nineteen communities and issued twenty-four grants to hard working Michiganders. Learn more about the program and its impact here:

mmlfoundation.org/projects/bridge-builders-microgrants/

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A Statistical Anomaly: Meet the Three Women Leading Marquette County's Cities

By Morgan Schwanky

Negaunee
pop. 4,627

Three women with one common goal: serving the cities of Marquette County. This Upper Peninsula County has three cities: Ishpeming, Marquette, and Negaunee. It is the largest land area county in the state, and it has the largest county population in the Upper Peninsula. But those are not the only things that make it unique. Currently, all three of the county's cities have elected female mayors to serve them.

The Facts and Numbers

This is a statistical anomaly on many counts. Women have been historically underrepresented within municipal government, and even more so within municipal leadership. This underrepresentation occurs both within appointed and elected officials. When the Michigan Municipal League started the 16/50 Project in 2017, women made up only 16 percent of local government managers (this includes cities, villages, and townships). Through this program, participants are given transformational training opportunities to empower them to become exemplary candidates to serve Michigan's communities. Now, that number has risen to nearly 20 percent. Learn more at <https://1650project.org/>.

As of this year, women make up under 30 percent of mayors in the state of Michigan, contrasted with the fact that they make up roughly 50 percent of the overall state population. Metro areas such as the cities of Grand Rapids, Flint, and Holland did not elect a woman to be mayor until their 2015 elections. To use the City of Marquette as an example, there have only been three women elected mayor in the city's history. To have two of the three cities in Marquette County elect female mayors would be an anomaly, and the fact that there are women elected in all three is something to celebrate.

These facts and statistics illustrate both the underrepresentation that women have faced, and the strides that have been taken in closing the gap for both appointed and elected officials. Trust and belonging are crucial to Community Wealth Building, and it is important that we have elected leaders that truly represent the communities that they serve.

We would like to introduce you to these three women and highlight their accomplishments.

Ishpeming

Mayor Lindsay Bean

"When I moved from Marquette to Ishpeming, I was looking for something new to be involved in. My husband and I went to some council meetings, and it sparked something in me. I thought it was something I could get involved in. I enjoy seeing the benefit of my actions—this is something I pushed, this was my idea. I don't look like the person you'd expect to run: I'm young(er), female, and don't fit a lot of people's stereotypes for a 42-year-old woman, especially in municipal government. By that same token, many people want something different and are willing to vote for change. Government is intimidating. I've always been pretty assertive, but I've still had to grow some tougher skin. My advice [to women and girls] is to just go for it. You'll learn as you go."

Bean was elected in 2020 and has served on Ishpeming's City Council since 2018. In addition, she works as the Internal Communications and Engagement Advisor for Eagle Mine. She previously was an Instructor at Northern Michigan University, from where she also earned her bachelor's degree before earning her master's at Prescott College.



Mayor Bean riding with her dogs.



Mayor Bean at the finish line of the Marji Gesick 100 (100-mile version), a gnarly mountain bike race that ends in downtown Ishpeming.

Marquette Mayor Jenna Smith

"I am honored to serve the residents of the City of Marquette as mayor, especially as the third female to serve in this role. The more time I spend in this role, the more I learn that it's not necessarily what you know that matters the most. It's how you treat people, and how you communicate to fellow commissioners, city staff, and the public. It's how you approach understanding a topic—by being willing to put in the



time to read hundreds of pages or listen to input from the public and use that information to fuel discussion and change. Public service can be a lot of work, but most things worth doing are."

Smith was elected in 2019 and has been involved in city government since 2015, serving as city commissioner and

the vice chair of the Marquette Housing Commission. She is the first woman to serve as mayor of Marquette since 1980. She works as the human resources manager for Marquette Area Public Schools and is a member of Connect Marquette (an organization promoting professional development through events and leadership opportunities). She studied at the University of Michigan and held multiple positions with Michigan Works!, along with the National Wildlife Federation, to name a few.



Mayor Smith at Presque Isle Park.

These 4th graders had the best questions. Mostly serious with a few silly ones. Talking with students about local government never gets old!

"What's it like to be the mayor?"

"What's your favorite and least favorite part?"

"When can we take our masks off?"

"Why can't we have an indoor trampoline park?"

"I want a snake shop downtown"

"What's your term limit?"

"Does the city own all of Marquette?"



Dear Jenna Smith,
Thank you so much for coming to see us. Thank you for answering our questions. We were so happy to meet you. We are glad you are Mayor. We hope you can help our city.

Negaunee


Mayor Dana LaLonde

"I fell in love with Negaunee years ago while volunteering at the annual Teal Lake Swim for Diabetes before choosing to buy my home here in 2015. The growing community is very welcoming to me and my sons. I decided to



take a vested interest in actively participating in local government after attending a city council meeting regarding Teal Lake. That first council meeting was an inspiring example of Negaunee's community spirit and passion for its shared history,

hopes, and aspirations. I loved it! I volunteered for the special advisory committee on blight and served as a voter inspector for several elections. I am currently the only woman serving on the city council. Through my civic involvement, I hope to encourage my sons and more women to get involved in local government, community groups, or other organizations."

LaLonde was elected in 2021 and has served on Negaunee's city council since 2019. She also works as a financial aid counselor at Northern Michigan University and serves on the Marquette County Central Dispatch Policy Board. She studied at Northern Michigan University and held a variety of positions there before her current one. Previously, she worked at UAW Local 1950 and the Peter White Public Library. 

Morgan Schwanky is a content developer for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6320 or mschwanky@mml.org.



Mayor LaLonde at the lighting of the traditional bonfire during the annual Heikki Lunta (the Finnish snow god) festival held on January 28-29, 2022 in Negaunee.



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R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy



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MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE HANDBOOKS

These handbooks are essential reading material for both new and veteran elected and appointed officials in cities, general law, and home rule villages.

Topics covered include:

- Structure and Function of Local Government in Michigan
- Roles and Responsibilities of Municipal Officials
- How to Select and Work with Consultants
- Running Meetings
- Personnel and Human Resources Issues
- Special Assessments and User Charges
- Planning and Zoning Basics

Numerous appendices include:

- Open Meetings Act
- Freedom of Information Act
- Sample Council Rules of Procedure
- A Glossary
- Frequently Asked Questions
- A Sample Budget Ordinance



Q. Can the council limit the amount of time the public speaks during a public hearing?

A. A public hearing should be treated like a public meeting. Under the Open Meetings Act, the public has a right to address the public body, and, consequently, the public body can enact rules regarding public participation. Your public speaking time rules should continue into your public hearing(s); however, if there is a time when you want to allow longer than your usual time limit, the council can vote to suspend the rules before the public hearing.

For more information on public hearings, see our Fact Sheet: Public Hearings at www.mml.org.

Q. We are interested in records retention. Does the League have a records management schedule?

A. Local government records management schedules must be approved by the state of Michigan. Schedule #8, Records Management Handbook: Guidelines and Approved Retention and Disposal Schedule for Cities and Villages, is an approved schedule. It was written by state archivists and published by the Michigan Municipal League in 1998. However, there have been significant changes regarding its updating. Instead of updating the entire schedule, the state's Records Management Services has been updating it in sections, as separate schedules. If you have adopted and used Schedule #8, you now need to adopt the separate schedules that have superseded sections of this book. For example, the Elections schedule (schedule #23) and the Clerks schedule (schedule #24) have superseded sections of the Records Management Handbook published by the League.

Not all the new schedules promulgated by Records Management Services supersede sections of the Records Management Handbook. Schedules such as Public Libraries (schedule # 17) and Human Resources (schedule #26) are new, and were never a part of the original general schedule. Look over the list of general schedules at www.mml.org and adopt the schedules that are appropriate for your municipality.

Q. A trustee is having a health issue and won't be able to physically attend a council meeting. Can the trustee attend by Zoom and vote on items?

A. Due to COVID-19, the state of Michigan put regulations in place to protect the public health and still enable local governing bodies to hold meetings. For a time, all electronic meetings were permitted. The state put restrictions on them from March 31–December 31, 2021, when public bodies were permitted to conduct virtual meetings only if a member of the public body was absent due to military duty, a health condition, or there was a statewide or local state of emergency or disaster. The ability to hold virtual meeting expired on December 31, 2021. You can hold hybrid meetings, where the council meets together in person and the public can join via Zoom. Now, the only members of a public body who can join virtually and be part of the decision-making process are those out of the jurisdiction for military service.

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.

Michigan's Cannabis Regulatory Agency Replaces the Marijuana Regulatory Agency, Brings Hemp Processing into the Fold

Governor Whitmer's Executive Reorganization Order (ERO) 2022-1 went into effect on April 13, 2022, and the Marijuana Regulatory Agency (MRA) is now the Cannabis Regulatory Agency (CRA), with authority over Michigan's hemp processors and handlers under the Industrial Hemp Research and Development Act also shifting to the new CRA.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) will continue to oversee hemp cultivation in the state. At this time, the CRA has no plans to make changes materially affecting the operations of hemp processors and will pro-actively communicate with licensees if that were to change. Those inquiring about licensing and regulation of hemp processing should visit the CRA's hemp landing page.

There is extensive crossover between the hemp and marijuana industries, specifically in the arena of cannabinoids. Hemp-derived ingredients are being added to marijuana-infused products. Hemp products are being produced and sold in the same facilities already licensed by the CRA. The Agency currently has authority to regulate the production, safety testing, labeling, and sale of psychoactive cannabis products, so the transition of authority allows for better regulation of the ever-evolving cannabis industry.

MML Affiliate Organizations Gather for Lakeside Learning

Plus more affiliate news....

By Margaret Mooney



The League serves multiple affiliate organizations. Here's a look at those organizations' upcoming events.

Michigan Leaders Take to the Lakes for Annual Summer Workshops

This summer, the Michigan Municipal Executives (MME) will be heading to Holland for their 2022 Summer Workshop. The event will take place July 19-22 at the Haworth Hotel and Conference Center in Holland. In addition to a robust agenda of education sessions, attendees will have ample time for networking. MME's Professional Development Committee has put together a program that will provide Michigan's municipal managers with further knowledge in negotiation strategies, risk management, social media, short-term rentals, community engagement for parks planning, financial infrastructure, and more.

The Michigan Association of Mayors (MAM) 2022 Summer Workshop will also take place this year. The group will gather for their annual summer program August 3-5 in Cadillac. This year's workshop is set to include sessions on a variety of topics, all of which will increase awareness on current issues and strengthen leadership skills among the state's chief elected officials. In 2021, MAM held two in-person educational events that fostered community among attendees and provided much needed connection after pandemic isolation. In August, the group went north for an exciting Summer Workshop in Sault Ste. Marie. Next, MAM held the "Mayors and Presidents Institute" in November, which took place in Mount Pleasant. Following such a successful year of learning in 2021, the 2022 Summer Workshop will feature more ideas and skills that are essential for all community leaders. Among these are diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), best practices for civility, how to lead with the heart, and skills for navigating


the important relationship between the mayor or president and their municipal manager. Alfredo Hernandez from the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) will present on the basics of DEI, which will be the first dedicated session on this topic that MAM has received as a group. The workshop will also provide a legislative update from MML's Lansing staff and an active assailant training session from Port Huron's Detective Ryan Mynsberge.

Looking Ahead and Continued Affiliate Engagement

Looking toward the rest of the year, the League's other core affiliate groups will continue to engage their members as well. For the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (MBC-LEO), virtual member meetups began as a product of the pandemic but have proven to still be an effective way to connect their members. Every few months, the group gets together on Zoom for networking and discussion in an informal setting, which will continue through the fall and moving forward.

Also coming up this fall, the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys (MAMA) will have their Annual Meeting, together with an education program in Lansing on October 13. The annual meeting will include the election of board members and officers, along with other business.

The Michigan Women in Municipal Government (MWIMG) will also join together for their annual luncheon during the 2022 MML Convention in Muskegon. The luncheon is tentatively planned for Wednesday, October 19 at 11:30 a.m.

And as always, look out for event registrations, affiliate organization updates, and other additional information via email and MML's social media platforms. 

Margaret Mooney is a membership associate for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6324 or mmooney@mml.org.



MME's 2021 Summer Workshop tour in Royal Oak.



MAMA 2021 Annual Meeting in Lansing.



MWJMG 2022 meeting in Lansing at MML CapCon.



MBC-LEO 2022 meeting in Lansing at MML CapCon.



MAM 2021 Summer Workshop tour in Sault Ste. Marie.



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GUIDO & SINCLAIR AWARDS

MICHAEL A. GUIDO LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD



Created in memory of Dearborn Mayor Michael Guido. Nominees must be a current chief elected official from a League member community who has demonstrated excellence in leadership and shown perseverance in making a difference in his/her community for a sustained period of time.

JIM SINCLAIR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARD



Created in memory of Rogers City Councilmember Jim Sinclair. Nominees must be affiliated with the League in the capacity of a municipal official, municipal staff, a League staff member, or an active participant in the League's mission; and be active in furthering the cause of educating elected officials so that communities may benefit from the education and experience that their elected officials have gained.

For nomination forms and related materials: www.mml.org/awards.