

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

January/February 2010

HOUGHTON: UNDENIABLY A WINTER COMMUNITY

“ WE’RE WORKING HARD TO
**MAKE WINTER
DESIRABLE.**
WINTER IS OUR NICHE. ”

—SCOTT MACINNES
Houghton City Manager
(and avid skier)

**WINTER
FESTIVALS**

**MAINTAIN MOMENTUM
DURING THE
OFF-SEASON**

**SNOWMOBILING—DRIVING
THE WINTER ECONOMY**

**Making Winter
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On the Cover...

Houghton City Manager Scott MacInnes is gearing up for skiing in his fair city. With nearly 17 feet of snow each winter, his Upper Peninsula community has enthusiastically embraced the tenets of a "winter city." (Read the full story on pages 16-18).



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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League.

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MICHIGAN 2010 CENSUS
IT'S IN OUR HANDS



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To Submit Articles

The Review relies on contributions from municipal officials, consultants, legislators, League staff and others to maintain the magazine's high quality editorial content. Please contact the editor at 734-662-3246 for an editorial calendar and writer's guidelines. Information is also available at: www.mml.org/marketingkit/.

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The Review accepts display advertising. Business card-size ads are published in a special section called Municipal Marketplace.

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The Review (ISSN 0026-2331) is published bi-monthly by the Michigan Municipal League, 1675 Green Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2530. Periodicals postage is paid at Ann Arbor MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE REVIEW, PO BOX 1487, ANN ARBOR MI 48106-1487.

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Executive Director's Message

By Daniel P. Gilmartin

Building a Sense of Place in Winter

Winter. How do you feel about it? Winter is something that people in our state have grown to love, learned to tolerate, or come to dread. In a municipal setting, thoughts of winter immediately drift to the maintenance side of operations. Snow—salt it, sand it, shovel it, plow it, move it. However, winter has a whole other aspect that can be embraced and showcased. There is even a movement and organization dedicated to its uniqueness. The Winter Cities Institute founder, Pat Coleman, states that any city, village, or crossroads can be a “winter community” if it embraces the concepts.

A winter city/winter community is defined as:

A concept for communities in northern latitudes that encourages them to plan their transportation systems, buildings, and recreation projects around the idea of using their infrastructure during all four seasons, rather than just two seasons (summer and autumn). A Winter City is one which has embraced winter in its planning, in its cultural offerings, and in its attitude. Generally speaking, winter offers both challenges and opportunities for northern communities. Those cities that accommodate winter are Winter Cities. Those cities that simply tolerate winter and do not accommodate it are Frozen Cities. The goal is to create livability, reduce human discomfort, and promote energy efficiency and the economic sustainability of northern places. (Wikipedia.com)


This issue of *The Review* will illustrate the possibilities of thinking about winter in an altogether different way. There are places in Europe that are teeming with activity in winter—people out and about in public spaces, continuing their entertainment and recreational activities throughout the cold and darkness of winter months. Part of the process in becoming a “winter city” (or a “winter community”) is

planning—buildings and public spaces designed with winter in mind; winter walkability; sustainability; and festivals, tourism, and recreation.

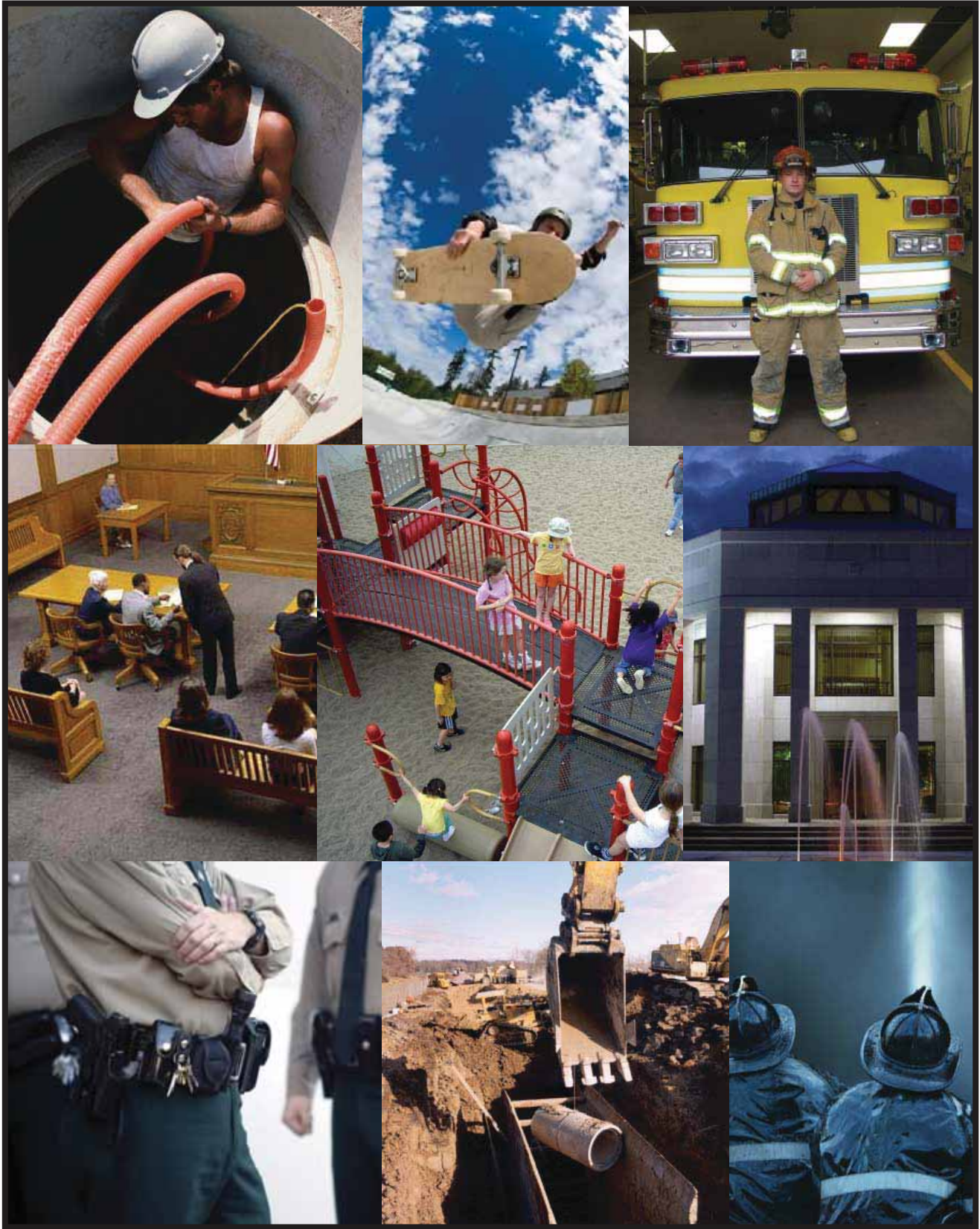
We know that the knowledge workers of the 21st century want great places to live that offer all the amenities they desire; we know they often choose a place to live then look for a job. If they want entertainment and walkability in their future homes, then it should be there, no matter the season. In this issue, we offer articles on designing for winter, on unique Michigan festivals, and a winter walkability and recreation plan utilized in the city of Houghton. We also show what other northern latitude communities experience in the way of people out and about in winter—the proof is in the pudding.

In addition to winter communities, we have included articles on the 2010 Census and what it means to Michigan; a municipal attorney who practices art (his “unique technique”) as well as law; and a story about a special event that gathered together youth, entrepreneurs, and sustainability experts for a “real world” competition for the best green project. Our Associate General Counsel Sue Jeffers served as a judge and contributor to two project concepts.

League News

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate two long-time League employees on their retirements. Dee Butterfield and Donna Louer retired on December 31 with a combined 40 years of service to the organization and its members. Both were loyal, dedicated workers who performed their duties with a quiet professionalism that made them valued members of our staff. On behalf of all of us here at the League, I wish them all the best. 

Daniel P. Gilmartin is executive director and CEO of the League. You may contact him at 734-669-6302 or dpg@mml.org.



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WINTER COMMUNITIES

SHOW COLD WEATHER CAN BE COOL

No need to retreat indoors—great public spaces draw people 12 months a year

By Jay Walljasper

Plunging temperatures, gray skies and long nights don't mean we need to hurry indoors until springtime. Many cities around the world now offer inspiring examples of how creative placemaking allows people to enjoy public spaces and lively community streets throughout the winter. From Copenhagen to Quebec City to New York, people are flocking to outdoor markets and festivals, engaging in public activities, and even gathering at sidewalk cafes during the coldest months of the year.

In an increasingly globalized economy, where businesses as well as workers have more say in where they locate, winter communities can no longer afford to appear lifeless for a quarter of the year. Many people now choose places to live on the basis of vital local culture, and civic leaders increasingly understand that making public places that are inviting all year, not just when it is warm and sunny, is essential for a

dynamic, prosperous community. Successful visions for winter communities include showcasing numerous opportunities for public activity throughout the winter months (not just during the brief holiday season), focusing on local identity and character and, of course, providing an inviting, vibrant physical environment.

Learning from Vienna, Berlin, and Paris

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) President Fred Kent and Senior Vice President Kathy Madden came back from a tour of European Christmas markets in Vienna, Salzburg, Paris, and Munich last year amazed at all the public activity in chilly weather. "People were out walking, shopping, going to markets, eating from street vendors. The city hall squares were full of events," Kent reports. "You did not want to go indoors at all because there was so much going on."



Above: Christmas markets like this one in Salzburg, Austria keep public spaces lively—even in the chilliest winter communities.

Left: Seasonal lighting displays warm up a Salzburg street.

Cynthia Nikitin, PPS vice president for civic centers and downtowns, found the same thing on a wintertime visit to Berlin. “It gets dark at 3:30. It’s snowing like crazy. But it’s no problem. People are playing bocce ball on the ice. There are tents selling hot mulled wine. You are walking down the street just watching all the other people. Life is good, and winter feels good, too.”

PPS’s experience with placemaking projects in European, Canadian and northern U.S. cities has shown that if people are given the chance to do something they enjoy doing, they will bundle up and go outside to do it, even when temperatures are below freezing.

“It’s like any other time of the year,” Nikitin adds. “If there are people out, other people will come out too to see what’s going on. But there has to be a reason to be outside—a market, ice skating, music, decorative lighting or just a good place to hang out when it’s cold. No one will stay outdoors to stare at an empty plaza.”

A frequent mistake made in winter cities is to overemphasize the impact of the weather, using it as a rationale for why they don’t have great public spaces. “When people in a city use the climate as an excuse for mediocrity—and that happens in hot places where we work, too, like Dubai and Tempe, Arizona—” says Nikitin, “then I know the problem is not weather but the need for a bigger vision in that place.”

This lack of vision—not freezing temperatures, cloudy skies, early sunsets or deep snow—is the biggest problem facing winter communities in North America. As Gil Peñalosa—a Colombian and former parks commissioner in Bogotá, who has happily adapted to life in Mississauga, Ontario, where he works as president of Walk and Bike For Life—explains, “Winter is really a question of mental attitude. Thanks to new lightweight warm clothes you don’t have to pile on thick coats and three layers of mufflers like you once did. It’s much easier to enjoy yourself outside. It’s really up to you how much fun you have in winter.”

Creating a Vision for Winter

The first step in creating great winter communities is recapturing the enthusiasm kids show this time of year. What child (of any age) doesn’t welcome a fresh snowfall or a new coating of ice to slide around on? Parks and plazas play a big role in fostering public activity 12 months a year, providing people with places to sled, cross-country ski, ice skate or just mingle. So long as winter weather is associated only with difficult driving conditions and potential frostbite, as happens with most TV weather reports, people in northern cities will continue to hole up in their homes or make plans for moving south.

Quebec City, famed for its winter carnival and street vendors selling hot bread, is a prime example of making winter into an asset. Same for the Canadian capital of Ottawa, where the Rideau Canal becomes the focal point of civic life in the winter as folks strap on their blades for a chance to skate through a wintry landscape rather than just making circles around a rink or pond. People even commute to work that way. Mississauga, the Toronto suburb where Peñalosa was Parks Director, doesn’t have a canal but they fashioned a long-distance skating course by flooding a walking trail.

New York stands out among American cities in celebrating the winter months. Rockefeller Center is famous for its ice rink, which becomes the beloved heart of Midtown Manhattan by attracting a handful of skaters and the crowds of onlookers who love to watch them glide back and forth. That’s an important lesson in winter recreation. The skaters or tobogganers are not the only ones served. There’s a multiplier effect, in which the hardy endeavors of a few draw

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other people to the scene, thus creating the critical mass for a bustling public place. Add a stand to buy hot chocolate or roasted chestnuts and things get even livelier. This idea of “triangulation” can create a major city center attraction even during the coldest months of the year. That’s the mission of Rockefeller Center, where music and other public events are programmed all winter long so that it becomes a spot to which New Yorkers and even out-of-towners naturally gravitate.



Less well-known nationally but equally important to locals are the winter goings-on at Bryant Park, right behind the New York Public Library on 42nd Street. This small mid-town park has increased winter activity by leaps and bounds with the addition of a holiday market and skating rink. The park’s café now stays open in the evening, and they even offer outdoor seating, which helps keep things lively after sundown. The Bryant Park Restoration Corporation emails people in the adjacent area periodically to let them know when the rink is open and encourage them to stop in at lunch or after work. This is important in building a winter constituency for the park, since most people don’t naturally think of going to the park in cold months. And like Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park offers events all through the winter. Too many cities shut off the lights and clear out the public spaces by January 2, when cold weather has just begun.

Winter Markets and Celebrations Are Hot

In cities like Vienna and Salzburg in Austria, Munich in Germany, and Strasbourg and Paris in France, there is much thought and planning devoted to make sure the city stays lively once the leaves fall and the mercury drops. Popular places like street markets don’t close, they just take on another form. Holiday-themed markets are found in many places for several weeks before the Christmas holiday.



This tradition has now come to North America. Union Square and Columbus Circle in New York now feature European-style markets, and others can be found in places as varied as Salt Lake City; New Orleans; Washington DC; Santa Fe; Eugene, Oregon; and Santa Monica, California.

Holiday markets can boost the spirit of any community in the colder season. “It’s coming on as a new kind of market,” says David O’Neil, PPS senior associate on public markets. “We’ve been pushing the idea of farmers markets extending the season beyond Thanksgiving, which is the traditional end of many seasonal markets.” It can start simple with the local market staying open for Christmas tree growers and inviting local artisans to exhibit their creations for holiday shoppers. Find a vendor to sell cappuccino, hot cider or even wassail, and another offering steaming cups of chili, sizzling sausages or toasty grilled cheese sandwiches. Bring in church and school choirs to sing carols, and maybe build a makeshift stage for bands or theatrical troupes. Sponsor a snowman, ice sculpture, or break-dancing-on-ice competition. And that’s just the beginning.

Top: Ice skating at the Hotel de Ville (“City Hall”) in Paris.

Middle: Cristo’s “The Gates,” an outdoor on-site sculpture exhibit, brought New Yorkers and tourists to Central Park during the coldest winter weeks.

Bottom: The holiday market keeps people coming to Union Square long after temperatures plummet.

Winter carnivals are another great tradition to spice up the doldrums of late January or February. For more than a hundred years, St. Paul has been throwing a mid-winter bash that resembles a frozen Mardi Gras. There are torchlight parades complete with floats, a citywide treasure hunt, an internationally acclaimed ice sculpture exhibition, dogsled races, and, some years, a life-sized ice palace you can wander through. The whole event revolves around a fanciful battle pitting King Boreas, the reigning monarch of the winds, in alliance with Aurora, the Snow Queen, against the Rex Vulcanus, the God of Fire, and his followers who wear red suits and ride firetrucks around town. It's ten days of good fun, which ends in Vulcanus's triumph—a sign that spring is around the corner.

Dartmouth College and Quebec City are also famous for their midwinter fêtes, and could be an inspiration for your own community celebration of snow, ice and all things wintry. An event scheduled for March—a time in many regions where the snow has turned to slush but chilly temperatures and cabin fever endure—might be especially welcomed.

People's newfound interest in enjoying public spaces twelve months a year is sparking a wave of admirable innovations. Landscape architects are paying more attention to patterns of wind and sunshine, so people can comfortably hang out outdoors in parks and squares. In some forward-looking cities, bike lanes and pedestrian walks are snow plowed before the streets. Restaurant owners have installed gas heaters, and provide blankets to keep customers coming to their sidewalk tables far longer than ever before. In Denmark, notes Copenhagen architect Jan Gehl, improvements like these have expanded the season of "good" weather from six to ten months.

Darkness, as much as cold and snow, can limit people's enjoyment of the outdoors during winter. Smart communities are responding by artistically stringing lights throughout the community center and neighborhood business districts, creating an overall ambiance of delight and pleasure that makes us want to linger outside even when it is chilly. And the lights shine on all winter, not just the Christmas season. Scotland may be the leader in creative lighting today. In Edinburgh, attention is focused on key streets with creatively designed overhead lighting as part of a mesh roof for the street.


Escaping Winter Can Backfire for a Community

A common and tragic mistake that many North American winter communities have made in recent decades is to try and engineer winter out of existence. This is seen most prominently in second-story walkways (called "plus fifteens" in Calgary, "skywalks" in Winnipeg, "skyways" in Minneapolis and Des Moines, "pedways" in Chicago and Edmonton) that allow people to circulate around downtown areas without stepping outside. A good idea on paper, perhaps, but in practice, the life of the city is removed from the streets and eventually disappears.

After visiting Minneapolis, where there is an eight-mile system of second story passageways linked by skyways between buildings, architect Jan Gehl observes "When you glass in the city, you eliminate the bad days but also all the good days. That is too much of a price to pay. You miss the fresh air, the flowers. You may have 20 bad days a year when you want to stay indoors, but 200 good ones you miss."

Six Lessons for Making Great Winter Communities

In the winter, when the environment offers more challenges, we need to think about public spaces and events differently. Great winter cities have learned some key lessons for success:

- Winter events should last awhile, preferably more than a week. Activities should offer more than a tree lighting followed by carols. Specific events are best tied to an ongoing winter activity like a skating rink.
- The events and activities should overlap and be spaced out. A series of ongoing events can be created that cumulatively last three months or even longer, depending on the length of the winter season.
- Different types of activities and events should be combined so they can build off each other. For example, combining a skating rink, outdoor café, outdoor library reading room, children's play area and food or holiday market entices people to stay for a few hours or more, even when it's cold and dark outside.
- Focus on what makes a particular city special. In Germany, Austria, and France, local specialties like wursts, mulled wines, or oysters foster a sense of local identity at outdoor winter events. They highlight what is unique about the place while also providing people with the draw of warm food and drink on a cold day. Locally made goods and gifts can serve the same purpose.
- Creative lighting is key because it creates an ambiance for the community center as a whole. Lighting can create the feeling that winter activities and events are much bigger than they really are.
- Management is essential. Without management of a community's spaces, no winter activities would occur. Competent and ambitious management leads to great results. 

Jay Walljasper is a senior fellow at Project for Public Spaces (PPS); he can be reached at jay@odemagazine.com. To find out how PPS can help your community make the most of winter, call Robin Lester at 212-620-5660 or email rlester@pps.org.

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The Livable Winter Community

By Patrick J. Coleman, AICP

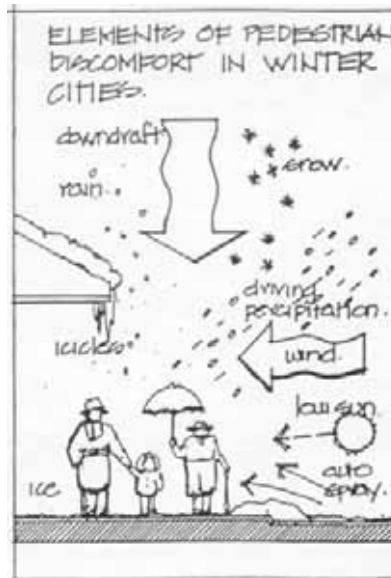
Following the recent decades of exodus by northern city residents to the Sunbelt, winter communities must become more livable and competitive than their southern counterparts to find their place in today's global marketplace. Unfortunately, the winter season is often dreaded in the North American culture due to perceived discomfort, inconvenience, and a potential increase in costs. Northern communities need solutions to common winter problems, such as pedestrian and bicycle conditions in winter, appropriate street/roadway/walkway design, parks and recreation (how to better utilize existing parks for winter recreation), and snow management. The Winter Cities Institute was organized in 2008 to help winter communities identify, promote, and share the positive attributes of winter living; to promote new concepts in architecture and urban design; and to share success stories from places that are thriving in the north.



*A multi-use urban trail in Anchorage, Alaska accommodates skiers, walkers, and bikers.
Photo by Patrick Coleman*

In a community survey, **80 percent** of Marquette residents viewed winter as a positive.

“Winter cities” is a concept that includes cities and villages and townships, and even crossroads—so long as the goal is to address the problems of snow and cold while enhancing the advantages, opportunities, and beauty of the winter season. A positive approach benefits the attitudes of residents, and bolsters the community’s ability to attract new business and residents. “Winter communities” must overcome the negatives of the season in order to best handle the demands of the weather and to fully utilize the winter season as an important community asset.



Top: The discomforts of winter.

Right: Plan for all-season use of recreation trails.

Graphics courtesy of Winter Cities Institute



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The image features four individuals representing different professions: a woman in a police uniform, a man in a blue shirt and white hard hat, a man in a suit, and a man in a firefighter's uniform. In the center, there is a stylized logo consisting of a black 'M' with two red dots above it, and the letters 'MEBS' below it.

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Positive Aspects of Winter

- Outdoor recreational opportunities, including downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, snow shoeing, ice skating, and hockey
- Natural beauty
- Winter tourism, special events, and festivals
- Using ice and snow for civic art
- Opportunities for innovation and improvement in services, building, and product design

Negative Aspects of Winter

- Snow management costs
- Health care costs associated with accidents, both auto-related and pedestrian
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and psychological depression related to a lack of sunlight
- Difficult mobility, particularly for seniors and the disabled, either as pedestrians or in automobiles
- Limited outdoor activity for many persons
- Increased heating costs and energy consumption
- A visually monotonous environment dominated by white and gray

Fortunately, not all Michigan residents have bad winter attitudes. A 2004 community survey in the city of Marquette found that 80 percent of residents viewed the winter season as a positive attribute. The survey also found that negative perceptions were related to mobility and shoveling snow. By applying creative planning approaches to solving winter-related issues, Michigan's cities can embrace the winter season, mitigate discomfort and inconvenience, and become more sustainable. This positive approach will improve the attitudes of residents, and bolster the community's image.

Recommendations & Winter Design Guidelines

Appropriate design for winter communities should not be an afterthought. It really is all about small details and considerations brought to the forefront of the planning process.

Site Design—Utilize solar radiation and a site's southern exposure in the orientation of buildings, parks, and outdoor spaces to maximize the penetration of heat and sunlight. Use buildings to protect outdoor spaces from prevailing winter winds while avoiding building orientations that will create a wind tunneling effect.



Michigan's waterfronts, like Marquette's, are wonderful winter venues. Photo by Jo Lorichon

Building Design—Building surfaces should reduce wind speed by incorporating balconies, stepped façades, or irregularities into the building's exterior. Cover ramps or stairs to protect them from snow and ice and provide handrails for all public and private walkways that exist on slopes.

Design roofs to account for snow and ice accumulation and to prevent snow and ice from shedding onto parking areas or pedestrian walkways. Transition areas at building entrances provide patrons with an area to shed snow prior to entering the building.

Road Design—Snow removal must be balanced with aesthetics and pedestrian comfort in the design of road improvements. Design road cross-sections to provide an area for snow storage adjacent to the road to prevent snow from being plowed onto the sidewalks when roads are cleared.

Parks and Recreation—Can Michigan's communities really afford to build and refurbish parks that are only used part of the year? Consider ways to use parks and open spaces in all seasons. Ponds, lakes, and open areas can be used for ice



The Marquette Commons, a town square designed for all-season use. Photo by Greg Borzick

skating. Use an existing hillside or make one to create a snowboard and ski terrain park. Flood a walkway and make a skating pathway. Snow can be packed and groomed on existing pedestrian trails for multi-uses such as walking, biking, and cross-country skiing.


Pedestrian Circulation—Designate critical pedestrian areas that should receive priority when clearing walkways and ensure that transition areas such as corner pedestrian ramp curb cuts and bus stop platforms are properly cleared to ensure pedestrian safety. Design crosswalks to be slightly raised in order to prevent water and ice from accumulating, potentially posing a hazard to pedestrians. Separate sidewalks and other pedestrian pathways from the roadway. This separation protects pedestrians from the spray of slush and water from passing cars.

Landscaping and Vegetation—Plant deciduous trees on the southern face of a building or outdoor area to provide shade in the summer, while still allowing sunlight to filter in during the winter. Conifers should be used on the north and west sides to protect the area from prevailing winter winds. Berms and vegetation can be used to direct snow drifts away from building entrances.

Select appropriate landscaping for snow storage areas and plant living snow fences to protect walkways and roadways from prevailing winter winds, and to create “outdoor rooms” for all-season comfort from prevailing winds. Some plant, shrub and tree species offer attractive or useful winter-appropriate characteristics such as twig color, fruit, or salt-tolerance.

Materials and Aesthetics—Lead the way in your community by designing municipal facilities to function and look good in all seasons. Consider color and lighting treatments when designing buildings and landscapes to offset the darkness and monotony of the winter season.

Use technology and materials appropriate for a winter community, such as outdoor furniture constructed from wood, polyethylene, or vinyl-coated metal. The use of color, public art, and seasonal light displays will create winter interest and offset the often gray and drab winter landscape.

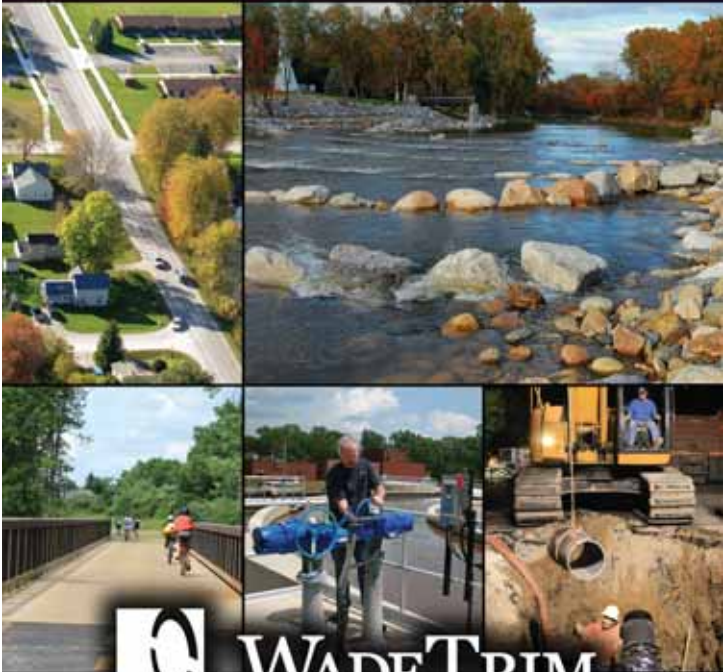
Addressing winter issues and incorporating these ideas into your community’s planning framework is not difficult. Begin by conducting a “winter community audit,” evaluating winter issues and opportunities, identifying what is currently being done and what citizens would like to see. Doing this will lead to an enhanced year-round livability, a better quality of life in wintertime, and reinforce the idea of a Michigan “winter culture.” It will also increase opportunities to attract business, economic development, and new residents. And finally, it will improve citizens’ attitudes about winter and generate pride in the community. 




This bike rack at Northern Michigan University was designed for the winter bicyclist and to enable efficient snow clearing operations. Photo by Bill Sanders, UPEA

Patrick J. Coleman, AICP, is the senior planner with USKH, Inc., a multi-disciplinary design firm based in Anchorage, Alaska. He lived and worked for many years in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. He is also the CEO of the Winter Cities Institute, a web-based resource and information sharing network found at www.wintercities.com.

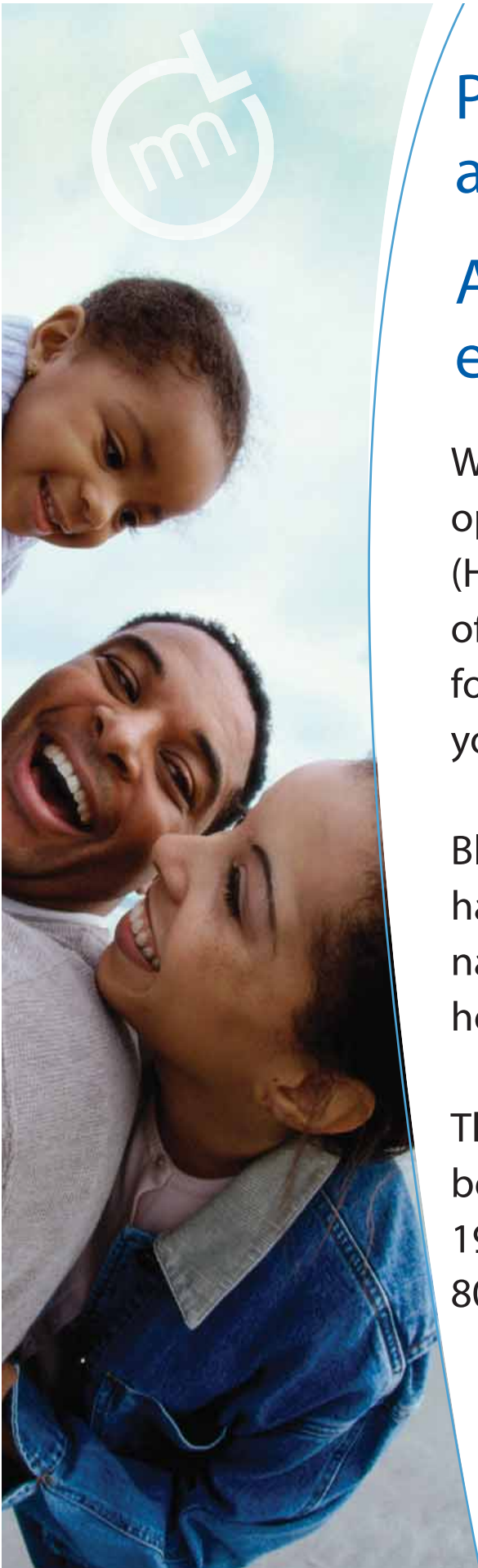
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Why Is the 2010 Census Important for Michigan?

The census is a snapshot of your community that defines the challenges and opportunities ahead for the people you serve and engage.

1. Why is the census important for Michigan communities?

Every person counted—or not counted—in their community impacts **ten** years of funding, representation, and allocation of public services and infrastructure—both on the state and federal level.

It is a mirror that creates a new picture of a community—defining the challenges and opportunities ahead.

2. What are three things most affected by the census?

Funding—both federal and state: For 100 people not counted, a community loses an estimated \$1.2 million in federal funds for programs such as Medicaid, social services, block grants and vocational education over the 10-year period. State constitutional revenue sharing is paid on a per capita basis.

Estimates for 2010 are that constitutional revenue sharing rates will be \$62.81 per person per year. This does not take into account the formula for statutory revenue sharing.

Political Representation—both federal and state: Census numbers re-draw 435 congressional districts, 1,971 state senate districts, and 5,411 house districts nationwide. In Michigan, 110 house districts and 38 senate districts will be redrawn, as well as council districts in some cities.

Public Infrastructure: Government and businesses use census numbers to locate schools, health centers, public transportation and highways, affordable housing, and retail outlets among other things.

3. Who is in danger of being undercounted?

The census tracks 12 “Hard to Count” conditions—including people’s current housing situation, income, literacy, employment status, and language spoken at home. Check www.cridata.org/htc/ to see these areas in your community.

4. When does the population census take place?

The census starts in February 2010, counting “group quarters” such as senior homes, student dorms, prisons, etc. Census forms go in the mail to 145 million households in late March.

The Census Bureau will conduct special counts of the homeless on specific dates near April 1. Households not returning a form will receive home visits and be encouraged to go to Questionnaire Assistance Centers housed at local nonprofits.

5. What’s new and different this time around?


It’s easier—everyone gets the short form. It’s one page. Six questions. However, there are challenges because there are more people, more multiple-family households, more immigrants, and more languages. Trust in government has declined. It can’t be done without local units of government and nonprofits helping.

6. How easy is census engagement for local governments and nonprofits to do?

There are many easy activities to integrate into everything you already do. Visit www.nonprofitscount.org.

7. What’s the best thing you can do for the census right now?

Contact our local census office. Have a short conversation with a partnership specialist about simple ways you can help.

Visit www.mml.org for easy to access links to <http://www.cridata.org/htc/> to determine the “Hard to Count” areas in your community. For additional, up-to-date information, visit www.mnaonline.org/census.asp and www.nonprofitscount.org. 

Prepared from materials provided by the Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network (www.nonprofitvote.org) for its “Nonprofits Count!” 2010 campaign.

HOUGHTON: UNDENIABLY A WINTER COMMUNITY

By Scott MacInnes



Houghton,
pop. 7,010

For over a decade, the city of Houghton has actively pursued the “winter city” approach to planning. The area receives annual snowfall in excess of 200 inches, resulting from the northwest prevailing winds traveling across Lake Superior. With a five to six month winter,

it is very important that Houghton embrace positive attitudes toward winter. In 1997, the Winter Cities Association held two planning workshops in the city, involving civic and business leaders to help identify projects and set goals that would enable the city to take full advantage of winter.

Input at the workshop included issues of snow management, the lack of sunlight and need to “cheer up the town,” to blading and cross-country skiing opportunities. Following the workshops, the city pursued a winter recreation plan, a winter walkability plan, and made a decision to increase its efforts in winter festivals and activities.

Citizens of Houghton generally have a positive attitude toward their long, cold, and snowy winters. Winter has become an important part of Houghton’s niche and strategy as a “winter city” to attract new residents and business to the community. Supporting winter recreation is an important role for the city.

Winter Recreation Planning

A unique feature of Houghton’s population is the predominance of 15 to 19 year olds and 20 to 24 year olds, particularly when compared to Houghton County. The city has two to three times the percentage of persons in these age groups than Houghton County. This is due primarily to the presence of Michigan Technological University (MTU) in the city and resulting student population. For recreation planning, this is especially important, as younger citizens have different recreation needs than older citizens. While MTU provides excellent recreation facilities, students use many city recreation facilities, such as the beach and waterfront walkway/trail. Many students who live in the city tend to walk, bike, or roller blade to the campus, downtown and other city destinations, creating new needs and demand for pedestrian and biking improvements.

Houghton’s recreational offerings include facilities that are designed to accommodate all-season use. Winter creates different opportunities, such as hockey/ice skating, sledding, cross-country and downhill skiing, ice fishing, and snowmobiling. The city has developed a 4.5 mile paved trail along the Portage Lake waterfront. This non-motorized trail is extremely popular with residents and visitors. In winter, the trail is used by snowmobilers.



Houghton creates a luge track for sledding right through its downtown.

Dr. Robert Nara, Houghton businessman and civic contributor, donated 96 acres land to the city for a nature and recreation area. A master plan for winter usage was developed for the site and included a lighted sledding hill, back country ski/hike/bike/nature trails, and a warming chalet. Features of the Nara trail system include:

- linkage to Michigan Technology University trails
- over 50 miles of trails for hiking, biking, running, skiing, and snowshoeing
- 20 miles of trails groomed for Nordic skiing

The West Houghton Park has become very popular for its outdoor skating and hockey rink. Since the ice is mostly maintained by volunteers, a new concrete slab surface was added to make their job easier, and the city is planning a roof structure to keep snow off the ice.

Winter and the Pedestrian

Houghton has constraints to being a good walking town—its hillside geography makes walking harder. Some areas of the city have slopes in excess of 18 percent. Lake effect snowfalls with an annual average around 220 inches can be counted on from November through April, and beyond—more than five months out of the year. Abundant snow, ice, and extended periods of darkness are some of the unique winter conditions that are a part of life in Houghton. These conditions make walking difficult. Walkway maintenance becomes expensive and ineffective.

In order to improve the general quality of life for residents, the Houghton Planning Commission carried out a study to determine how pedestrian conditions could be improved in the city. There was growing interest by residents to walk to their destination, for going to Michigan Technological



City employees constructed a snow house for the annual Snow Festival with MTU.

University (MTU) and/or work, to the downtown area or the city's waterfront recreational attractions. People also desire to walk and/or run for health and recreation purposes.

Specifics of the plan include:

- Implementing “raised crosswalks” for easier pedestrian crossings
- Ensuring public ramps and stairs are all-season accessible by being gradual covered where appropriate and designed as integral parts of the landscape
- Increasing surface traction with textured paving surfaces for safer pedestrian use
- Preventing or managing snow and ice buildup on sidewalks (canopies, enforcement, shared clearing machines)

Quality of life is recognized today as one of the most important factors in a community's image, business climate and economic vitality. This is even more important for Houghton, due to the city's remote location. The overall environment for pedestrians, or walkability, is one of the quality of life indicators in the 21st century. Creating good walking conditions in Houghton presents challenges due to topography and the winter climate. Investment in pedestrian improvements will result in long-term benefits to the community, primarily in health, less dependence on the automobile, and reduced traffic volume.

Winter Fun

The winter planning workshop resulted in a recommendation requiring immediate attention—creating winter activities that are expressive of winter's unique attributes. The city has responded remarkably well, with a snow house built in conjunction with MTU for the winter carnival, creating a luge track for sledding down a street right in the downtown, and the Jibba Jabba Rail Jam

JIBBA JABBA RAIL JAM A SUCCESS, COUNCIL SAYS

By Garrett Neese, *Daily Mining Gazette*, January 27, 2009

The Jibba Jabba Rail Jam Snowboard & Ski Competition earlier this month drew a sizable crowd both to the event and to downtown businesses, Houghton City Council members said at Monday's meeting.

The competition, organized by the owners of Rhythm, was held on Jan. 17 on a course set up on Huron Street.

Mark Zenner, director of the Department of Public Works, said work on the course took 10 hours, and many volunteers came out to help with the course. “It's nice to know there are kids who like to shovel,” he said.


Mayor Pro Tem Robert Megowen said people had come in from Marquette and Sault Ste. Marie for the event. He said there was an uptick at business at Armando's Restaurant that day; other businesses, such as the Lunch Bag, saw even more.

“Rhythm really had a good day, and The Bike Shop and everyone else,” said City Manager Scott MacInnes.

Megowen predicted, “If they do it again, it'll have twice as many people.”



Sean Vestula does a grind on a rail in front of the huge crowd during Saturday's Jibba Jabba Rail Jam on Huron Street in Houghton. He took first in the advanced division. Photo by David Archambeau. Article reprinted with permission by the Daily Mining Gazette.

(see sidebar) winter festival, for instance. The city has worked hard on developing high quality year-round living. The result is a more economically healthy and socially vital city, building on an improved sense of place. 

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Winter Festivals

Maintain Momentum

During the Off-Season

By Jennifer Eberbach



"Frozen bed racing" at the Traverse City Cherry Capital Winter WonderFest.

Community-wide cultural events impact us. They express the charm of our cities, villages, and townships. They put fun back into our lives when we need it the most. They also bring business to downtown, generate tourism, and sustain communities through the slow months. If you are just dying to brave the cold, jump into a frozen lake and let your kids

paint their faces like a tiger while you cheer on the parade, then Michigan has got you covered. From ice fishing in Tawas Bay, at their annual Perchville USA event, to racing your snowmobile across Sault Ste. Marie or Caro during Midwest International Racing Association events, Michigan's winter festivals capture our state's spirit and get people excited.

Profiling a selection of Michigan's winter festivals, it becomes apparent that these events have a positive impact on local businesses, especially those in the hospitality industry, retail shops, and restaurants. A well-planned event can be used as a tool that generates community spirit and economic growth during tough months. It gets serious, but it's also about having fun.

Houghton Lake's winter festival Tip-Up Town USA is celebrating its 60th anniversary. For its diamond anniversary, a diamond studded entrance badge will be raffled off to one lucky attendee. Event planner George Geisenhaver of the Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce, explains many badge collectors have held on to their personal experiences of the festival by holding on to these items—even passing them down from generation to generation. This attests to the impact the event has on individuals. Along with reoccurring events like "turkey bowling," a polar bear dip, and a family-friendly carnival, this year's installment of Tip-Up Town will feature a second-annual family skate night, which has been extended to both weekends, airboat rides for an extra fee, and illuminated torch parades at dusk around the lake.

Geisenhaver thinks the event has had a positive impact on tourism and the economic health of Houghton Lake's business community. "This event really helps us through the month of January, which would typically be a slow month for people in other northern Michigan communities. The event draws in thousands of people. It's pretty important for the businesses here," he says.

The Frostbite Festival in **Harrison**, Michigan has roots that were planted 21 years ago, however the event has only recently transformed into a city-wide festival featuring a wide range of activities. For years, golfers headed out on the frozen lake for an annual ice-golf tournament where participants bat around tennis balls. Frostbite has expanded to include snowmobile races, a carnival, sleigh rides, an ice fishing contest, and a ton of other events and activities, on top of the traditional ice-golf outing.

Frostbite planners wanted to encourage local businesses and restaurants to get involved in the festival. Collectively, downtown businesses will be competing in the festival's snow sculpting contest, honoring discounts and specials to Frostbite event badge holders, and planning special events. As the event takes on a new shape, festival planner Tammy



Top Left: Houghton Lake's Tip-Up Town USA.

Right: Harrison's annual Frostbite Festival ice-golf tournament.

Bottom Left: Feeding reindeer at the Harrison Frostbite Festival.

Carlstrom has found that “the enthusiasm of the Frostbite Festival committee has been contagious,” and she is pleased that “everyone is excited to get involved and help,” she says. “It needed a facelift,” Carlstrom concludes.

Caseville, Michigan’s Shanty Days features one of the largest parades in Michigan, drawing around 100,000 people. Shanty Days “used to be the big event in town,” centered around snowmobile races, explains Ann Clark of the Caseville Chamber of Commerce. However, “A lot of northern communities had dropped their winter festivals, but it’s coming back now,” she says. Back to life and in the mindset of being better than ever, Shanty Days now features 10 days of diverse activities.

Clark says that “Human Bowling” has been one of the most popular new events. Planners also wanted to make sure that kids had plenty to do, because these events “contribute to their memories. For the children who come, those are memories that last forever of things you did with your family,” says Clark. This year, kid-friendly activities will include a “Potty Trotty,” the Polar Bear Dip, and they can participate in “Human Bowling,” as well as other games and creative activities.

Clark encourages people to “rediscover northern Michigan,” and thinks festivals are a great way to draw in tourism, business, and people in general. In and around Caseville,



Sled racing at the Traverse City Cherry Capital Winter WonderFest.

many retirees leave during the cold months, and “things are definitely quieter here in the winter, but that doesn’t mean that things stop. There’s not the high level of energy that there is during the spring, summer, and fall. But there is energy here that people sustain.” She adds that Shanty Days serves as a draw during slow months that sustains motels, hotels, businesses, and restaurants.

Zehnder’s of **Frankenmuth** has become a player in the world of competitive snow-carving, in the midwest and the world. For this year’s Zehnder’s Snowfest, they are combining two separate competitions that they have hosted in past years to form the new “World-Class Snow-Carving Competition.” Teams from around the U.S. and the world will compete. This year’s event will also feature master ice sculptor Greg Butowski, who will transform 60 blocks of ice into “The Lost City of Atlantis.”

The event also includes a college ice tournament and a state-wide ice carving competition for high schoolers. Zehnder’s representative Linda Kelly explains that as a creative pursuit, “The art of ice and snow-carving is kind of minimal. Not very many people do it. So, we promote it through the high schools and elementary schools—to benefit future generations,” and she agrees that Zehnder’s involvement with students is a great example of how education, events, art, and community can work together toward a shared goal.

The biggest improvement to the fourth installment of **Traverse City’s** Cherry Capital Winter WonderFest is that “you’re gonna see more activities in the downtown area,” explains Mike Norton, media relations for the Traverse City Convention and Visitor’s Bureau. When the festival first began three years ago, activities were hosted at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, and only one activity happened downtown. Last year, activities were added at the Mount Holiday Ski Area. This year, even more activities will happen downtown on Front Street.



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Ice carving at Zehnder's Snowfest in Frankenmuth.

Downtown restaurants are competing in the “Soup’r Bowl” again this year to make a go at the best bowl of warmth on a cold day. Norton explains that this was the anchor event in the downtown area in the past, but “we knew we needed more things to keep people occupied. When they came downtown, they enjoyed that event, but then they wanted to know, what else is there to do?”

The answer is, this year’s downtown activities will include a “Frozen Bed Race,” a cherry pit spitting contest, a “brain-freeze” ice cream eating contest, and a 21+ beer tent for the adults. Another unique addition to the Cherry Festival is a large-scale laser light show, which will be projected on a huge metallic screen stretching down Front Street.

According to Norton, “There is a geographical disconnect between the resort area and the downtown area. We wanted to bring some of that celebration, some of those events, into the center of town,” because it generates tourism, supports downtown businesses, and facilitates “the totality of a Traverse City weekend, which includes our commercial areas and a walkable, quaint downtown.” 

Jennifer Eberbach is a freelance journalist and professional copywriter. You may contact her at 734-929-2964 or jen@jenthewriter.info. Visit her online at www.jenthewriter.info.

Survey Says:

Citizens Want an Ice Rink

By Kris Kearney



For more than half a century, making an ice rink in the city of St. Joseph was as easy as turning a hose on the grass in Whittlesey Park. Then, children and adults of all ages would pull out their skates and wait anxiously for the water to freeze. Unfortunately,

winters along the lake can be unpredictable and skaters could go weeks—sometimes entire winters—without getting on the ice if the weather didn't cooperate.

With few winter activities available in the area, resident demand for a permanent ice rink started to rise. A citizen survey conducted in 1988 revealed that residents felt the construction of an ice rink should be one of the city's top priorities. Over the next few years, there was also a rapid increase in the formation of youth and adult ice hockey leagues. Without a local rink, leagues travelled for an hour or more to rent practice ice time in Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, or South Bend. It was that demand that drove the city commission to include a new NHL-sized rink as a top priority when it drafted its five-year recreational goals in 1996. Ultimately, the city wanted to give residents a venue for fun activities during cold weather and draw tourists to the city during the long winter months.

In early 2001, a generous donation for the project from local philanthropists John and Dede Howard "started the ball rolling." With the city's pledge to provide the remaining monies, Abonmarche Consultants, Inc. was contracted to design and oversee construction of the new facility. We took an empty field that saw little use near the center of town, and designed and built a partially enclosed ice rink. Original plans for the 85 x 200 foot rink called for a concrete refrigerated floor system, a metal roof structure to protect the ice from the weather, and a Plexiglas dasher board enclosure, which would allow the rink to be utilized by hockey leagues. The facility would also include a viewing area, warming hut with a wood burning fireplace, seating areas, restrooms, and a vending area. The combination of the refrigerated flooring and roof would make the rink operable five months out of the year, and the concrete flooring would allow for rollerblading during the summer months.


On a sweltering August day in 2001, groundbreaking took place and construction began. As construction proceeded, the city continued to provide any additional funding needed, determined to build a first-class community facility. A private foundation grant was made toward the project, allowing the purchase of a used Zamboni and additional skates for rental. The local hockey association donated a professional ice hockey scoreboard.



St. Joseph's indoor/outdoor ice rink.

On January 19, 2002, the John and Dede Howard Ice Arena opened its doors to immediate success. At the end of the first season, over 2,000 people per week had passed through the doors, and the facility took in approximately \$35,000 a month in revenue, far surpassing original estimates. As the rink continued to increase in popularity, it was evident that expansion was needed. In 2003, Abonmarche was contracted to design additional seating, four locker rooms and a party/concession area, all funded entirely through private donations.

Today, the rink is filling a number of voids. Casual skaters of all ages looking for a family oriented activity have one more option to consider during the long winter. Figure skating classes are held, and virtually all remaining time is rented by ice hockey leagues of all ages for both practice and tournaments. With the popularity of hockey, teams from as far south as Indianapolis, and as far north as Ludington, are frequent competitive visitors.

In recent years, the city has worked hard to add other winter attractions to entice tourists to the area. The Luminary Festival at Christmas time, Light up the Bluff—a winter light display, and the Magical Ice Carving Festival, all add to the attraction of visiting this small city during the blustery months of winter. With a great place to skate, quaint downtown shopping, excellent eateries, and plenty of "small town hospitality," St. Joseph is setting a standard for increased tourism during the wintry months in Michigan. 

Kris Kearney is the marketing director for Abonmarche Consultants, Inc. She can be reached at 269-927-2295, x158 or at kkearney@abonmarche.com.

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Northern Field Report

A column by Caroline Weber Kennedy

Maximizing Winter Assets

Ah, Winter

Squeaky, crunchy boot steps on freshly frozen snow; breath condensing into crystal beards on fleecy neck-wraps . . . and that giddy re-realization that sunglasses are not just for July! My good friend, Pat Coleman, founder of the Winter Cities Institute, often says, “There is no bad weather, just poor clothing,” and I have applied that concept to become an aficionado on winter wardrobe must-haves. What I learned: Pat’s right. When well-prepared, the human species can truly enjoy the snow and cold. Municipalities need to think in the same terms. What winter assets do you have, and how can you help grow them economically, so that people can patronize your community all winter long?

What’s Your Winter Asset?

While some people tend to seek serenity by interfacing naturally with their winter sports, others are motivated by physical adventure—the alpine skiing/boarding/jumping variety or the off-road vehicle type. Maybe you offer some of these, or perhaps a cozy indoor alternative? Again, what can you build upon to maximize economic impact? The League’s 21c3 program, found at www.mml.org/resources/21c3, helps communities focus on the eight asset areas that have proven through national research to be key elements in attracting and retaining people. When you look at these asset areas, you likely aren’t going to have them all—but you can develop the assets you do have. Each city and village can strive to be the best of what it already is, enhancing the region as a whole.

The First Reliable Snow-Band for Metro Michigan

“Grayling is the first reliable snow-band that Michigan’s metro people reach when heading north to snowmobile,” contends Grayling City Manager David Thayer. Grayling is handily located a quick drive up either I-75 or 27, where the highways converge, offering an extensive network of groomed trails and accommodations geared toward the sport. “Our hotels, restaurants, and taverns get an economic shot in the arm during the fall color and hunting seasons. We make the most of canoeing and fishing the rivers,” Thayer pauses here for emphasis, “but *snowmobilers* are loyal to their sport. We count on them to provide significant revenue to our economy.” The city works specifically to ensure they are ORV-friendly by providing trail access to the types of amenities these sportspersons seek.



Photo courtesy of the city of St. Ignace.

Welcoming Both Visitor and Resident Riders

Sault Ste. Marie last year passed an ordinance allowing snowmobilers access to downtown streets. Sault Ste. Marie is the historic home to the International 500 Snowmobile Race, where a group of 35-42 competitors brings in 7,000-10,000 fans. According to Sault Area Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Linda Hoath, a two-night stay with those numbers yields an infusion of approximately \$1.5 million. “Allowing snowmobiles downtown created visual awareness that we are embracing their presence. It lent an air of fresh character downtown; a celebration of all being in this season together and making the most of it.”


Hoath says it was great to work with a commission that understands economic impact. Allowing access in town was also a bonus for residents with snowmobiles. Not always having to trailer sleds makes a world of difference in the ease and frequency a resident enthusiast now has to enjoy this sport. “People invest a lot in their sleds,” says Commissioner Jeff Stefanski. “Now they can enjoy a spontaneous evening or family ride without the extra time and hassle that may otherwise have prohibited them.”

Volunteers Maintain Trails and Post Conditions

“**St. Ignace** becomes a snowmobile mecca when the ice bridge forms to Mackinac Island,” declares St. Ignace City Manager Eric Dodson. This city also welcomes snowmobiles downtown. Little Bear East Ice Arena and Conference Center provides a convenient trailhead, sending folks in nearly any direction to a welcoming daytrip destination—Moran, Newberry, Sault Ste. Marie, or

Cedarville, to name a few. There is also a convenient storage business encouraging visitors to leave *all* of their four-season recreation gear in town, rather than hauling it to and fro. This is one strategy to keep them coming back! The eastern U.P. has 12 groomed trails, covering hundreds of miles. "This is our economy once the snow flies," says Dodson. "We are grateful to the local snowmobile club that purchases and maintains trail groomers, and the many volunteers who run the groomers and post trail conditions on the internet. The postings, the trailhead, the storage, and the ordinances, combine to make St. Ignace an easy, reliable choice for base camp."

Each Journey Begins with a Step

Each community was a snowmobile destination for its own reasons, but each took additional steps to develop their assets. These are manageable steps: an ordinance allowing off-road vehicles downtown; trail condition postings on the internet; local storage . . . manageable yet critical steps on the path to developing this one asset in these communities. What are your winter assets, and what more can be done? 

I-500 Snowmobile Race

Sault Ste. Marie will host the 42nd consecutive I-500 snowmobile race on February 6, 2010, touted at www.i-500.com as "the world's oldest, longest, fastest and most exciting snowmobile endurance race." This year, the venue also offers sno-cross races.



Photo courtesy of the city of Sault Ste. Marie.

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

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Winter Transit Perspectives

International Perspective: Toronto

Beating the Suburban Winter Transit Blahs

By Mathew Katz

The streetcar, subway, or bus is never a fun place to be during rush hour, and it's even worse during those slow, wet, and frustrating during- and post-snow storm trips, where the *better way* can turn into hell on wheels/rails. Between angry drivers, puffy coats, and that strange gentleman who mutters to himself about Polish androids eating his muffins, you've got to wonder just how taking transit could ever seem like a nice ride, even if it did save you from digging the car out of that snow bank that formed on your driveway.

Fortunately, the folks to the north have a great idea. Remember the massive snowstorm we had earlier this month?

While you were struggling through the curmudgeonly crowds, folks in suburban Thornhill (Vaughan, technically) woke up to the sight of kindly transit representatives shoveling their driveways and offering them free York Region Transit/Viva tickets, giving them the choice of either foregoing their SUV for transit that day, or taking the bus next time around. Commuters already used to taking transit were given a nice surprise when they discovered even more transit reps were giving out free hot chocolate on their usual trip.

They're calling themselves the Snow Angels, the brainchild of YRT/Viva's PR folks. Despite this, their random

acts of kindness not only encourage drivers to take transit, they also—in their own small way—make taking transit a bit nicer. In the car-laden suburbs, anything that gets residents to take a bus is a step in the right direction.

But then there's Toronto proper, where an exponential amount of people rely on transit daily. We have to wonder how such a brilliant, quasi-whimsical idea hasn't hit the TTC yet. A less toxic environment on the bus would make everyone's day a bit better and get rid of that commute-induced depression that reigns all winter long. Besides, hot chocolate is *tasty*.

Then again, hot chocolate on a crowded streetcar could just lead to spills and more self-righteous anger. Maybe the solution to winter-transit rage is twofold—streetcars coming more often *and* free hot chocolate.


With snow expected a bit later this week, the Snow Angels will probably have one or two more chances to make someone's day this season. As for unlucky Toronto commuters, there's always next year. Or free transit-lemonade in the summer. 



Photo by Soren Frederiksen from the Torontoist Flickr Pool.

Mathew Katz is a freelance journalist based in New York. He can be reached at mathew.a.katz@gmail.com.

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Young Professionals Perspective:

What does winter transit mean to you?

Editor's note: The League asked three DeWitt, Michigan natives now living outside of Michigan about their views on public transit.

In New York, public transit is crucial, and more or less reliable. I take the subway from Brooklyn to Manhattan and back every day for work. I moved out here with a car, but haven't had it for over a year now. In winter I could not have a social or work life if it weren't for trains and buses. I use public transit almost exclusively. I enjoy not having to deal with driving through snow and slush, searching for parking. It also eliminates the driving under the influence issue (something I pretty much never hear about in the city), not to mention being more environmentally friendly.

—Hailey Wojcik, 24, Brooklyn NY



I use the train to get to and from school every day. It's fairly reliable—usually arriving within 10 minutes of waiting at the platform. During the winter I tend to use public transit less often for recreation (since I rarely go out in the winter), and usually hop in a cab if I'm going out at all. It's much more affordable to take the train, but does require some planning.

—Shaina Reed, 24, Chicago IL



Living in Chicago, I have come to rely on public transportation in the winter. This is when public transportation binds a city together—it allows you the same freedom you have the rest of the year, without having to encounter slippery roads, bicyclists riding on ice, or just an awful case of the shivers. That's one of the things I love about living in a city with the option of such prominent public transportation. Life doesn't stop in the winter due to transportation obstacles, it just gets cozier.

—Jessica Rosenberger, 25, Chicago IL



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LEARNING TO LEAD IN ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

By Jennifer Eberbach

Paragon Leadership International's recent "Environment & Energy Epprentice Experience" was a one-day leadership-training program where teams brainstormed solutions to challenges facing the energy industry and environmental sustainability programs. Paragon's training programs aim to teach leadership skills and support the individual growth of participants, however, by focusing on real challenges facing cities and organizations, Epprentice Experiences also create opportunities to implement team members' solutions and ideas in the real world, and inspire action well after the day's exercise is done.

Four real-world challenges were posed to teams by Michigan non-profits, including the Michigan Municipal League in collaboration with the city of Linden, Michigan; WARM Training Center

(a non-profit organization with expertise in energy conservation, green building, and sustainable development); and The Michigan Wind Institute in collaboration with Global Wind Systems. Team members included a mixture of young and experienced professionals, as well as university and high school students. Next Energy in Detroit sponsored the October 15, 2009 event.

After a day of brainstorming, teams presented their solutions to a panel of judges that selected the best idea of the day. The winning team produced a presentation about how Facebook can be used to "educate people how to find employment in the wind energy industry." Gilbert Borman, the executive director of the Michigan Wind Institute co-authored the winning challenge with CEO of Global Wind Systems Chris Long.

Winning team member Reema Gupta, an operations analyst at DTE Energy's Performance Center, explains that her team contemplated "how do we reach out to high school students, recent college grads, or professionals who want to go into wind energy? We wanted to produce some kind of communication tool, where young entrepreneurs can get connected with wind energy associations," she says. Gupta concludes that Facebook is a low cost, yet effective way for "young people to advertise themselves and organizations to come in and find employees."

The League's Associate General Counsel Sue Jeffers co-authored two challenges, along with Linden City Manager Christopher Wren. Both challenges asked teams to brainstorm ways that social marketing and communications technology can be utilized to improve recycling practices in Linden. Jeffers also participated as one of the panel judges and thinks "there definitely are some components of each of the presentations that we'd be able to use."

Two teams of high school students from Novi High School and Detroit International Academy report that they are taking their ideas about recycling in schools back home with them in order to improve their schools' recycling programs in the future. Epprentice Experience Leader Diane Ring predicts a sustaining impact on the young leaders and explains, "We tied the project back into their world, so that they could see that they can influence their world, and walk back in with a plan of action for their school."



City of Farmington Hills participants Diane Ring, Janice Krupic, and Nate Geinzer.

WARM Training Center, a non-profit dedicated to education, developing skills, providing access to resources, advocacy, and acting as a catalyst for individual and community change, challenged teams to create a “social media campaign that attracts traffic to WARM’s website, increases the overall visibility of WARM’s work, and inspires ‘Eco Evangelists’ for WARM,” according to project authors Bob Chapman, Laurie Diener, Jacob Corvidae, and Alicia Miller.



Paragon’s training programs teach leadership skills and support the individual growth of participants.

A handful of team members shared their feedback about Paragon’s training at a reception at the Capitol in Lansing. Participants from the “Environment & Energy Epprentice Experience” and Paragon’s earlier “Food Epprentice Experience” were in attendance, as well as leaders in energy and elected officials stopping through to share their insight with emerging leaders. Representatives from the professional teams and each of the high schools spoke about how they benefitted from the leadership training experience. Collectively, participants agreed that the one-day event was a constructive use of their time, and they particularly enjoyed working together with people from many different backgrounds and levels of experience and exposure to environmental and energy-related issues.

Epprentice participant Nate Geinzer, the assistant city manager in Farmington Hills, gives the advice, “Don’t be afraid to step outside” to get ideas from all different types of people—anyone in any field who is looking for opportunities to share workable ideas. Aside from strengthening his own personal leadership skills, he likes the format of the Epprentice Experience as an implementable strategy in its own right. “In Farmington Hills, we are going to be moving forward in the next couple of months on a visioning process for the community. I could see this type of model working during this process. Getting people together and asking them to focus on one of the challenges we are facing for the future, as budgets decline, will help us figure out how to do our jobs better,” he says.

Gupta agrees with Geinzer that one of the best parts of the Epprentice Experience “was that we had so many different types of people—that added value to it. The one thing that we all had in common was the vision and the passion. We’ve all been able to envision a future where we would be more energy efficient, use renewable resources, and we would be more globally independent, as the state of Michigan or as the whole country,” she says. Gupta found the training “really encouraging” as an emerging young leader, and particularly appreciated opportunities to get feedback from her teammates on her performance.

Paragon’s aim is not only to support the individual leadership skills of Epprentice Experience participants, but also to produce workable solutions that can actually be implemented in real world situations. “We ask each non-profit to give us a challenge that’s real to them, so that they would be able to use the outcome if they felt it was applicable—it would go forward into implementation and usability for the organization,” Ring concludes.

Visit <http://www.paragon-lead.com> 

Jennifer Eberbach is a freelance journalist and professional copywriter. You may contact her at 734-929-2964 or jen@jenthewriter.info. Visit her online at www.jenthewriter.info.



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The League's January & February Training Seminars

Public Employment Law Seminar Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Statistics indicate that municipalities continue to experience high levels of financial loss due to errors and poor judgment calls in employment situations. This full-day seminar is designed to provide municipalities with the information and tools they need to reduce their risks related to public employment issues. Presenters will provide general overviews of these topics: hiring considerations, personnel files, whistleblower cases, termination procedures, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), discrimination, employment records, and privacy issues. At the conclusion of this seminar, attendees will be able to recognize areas of risk in public employment law for their municipality, and define and put to use procedures to reduce risks. This is a must-attend seminar for every municipal manager, mayor, attorney, and human resources professional.

About the Speakers

A panel of experienced speakers

Agenda

Check-in 8:30 am; begin 9:00 am; lunch; adjourn 3:00 pm

Cost Per Person

Special pricing: League Pool members \$10; League members, \$115; nonmembers, \$160; add \$35 if received after January 13, 2010.

Location (directions at www.mml.org)
Michigan Municipal League Capital Office
208 N. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 800-995-2674, 517-485-1314

Education Credits: .6 CEU, 6 EOA, CC 12-Human Resources Management

Competent Person Training Tuesday, February 9, 2010

This is an intensive eight-hour seminar designed for those in positions of authority relating to any type of excavation work, including municipal public works directors, professional engineers, and site personnel. Attendees will be instructed in a variety of methods including lecture/PowerPoint presentation, a "hands-on" session with soil samples for required analysis, and a video demonstrating protective systems to be used in excavation. This seminar will conclude with a quiz. The answers will then be discussed to ensure all attendees will be able to apply what they have learned. After attending this session, participants will be able to conduct proper soil analysis, determine and implement the proper protective systems to use in trenches and excavations, cite OSHA Standards, and handle an actual OSHA inspection.

About the Speaker

Dan Sheffer, principal, Sheffer Engineering Co., Inc.

Agenda

Check-in 7:30 am; begin 8:00 am; lunch; adjourn 4:00 pm

Cost Per Person

Special pricing: League Pool & Fund members, \$57.50; League members, \$115; nonmembers, \$160; add \$35 if received after February 2, 2010.

Location (directions at www.mml.org)
Michigan Municipal League Capital Office
208 N. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 800-995-2674, 517-485-1314

Education Credits Approved For This Program

.8 CEU, 8 EOA, .7 CEC

Confined Space Entry Training Wednesday, February 10, 2010

This eight-hour course is designed to educate all personnel employed in general industry, including municipal public work directors who have locations that require employees to work in "confined spaces," and for employees working in those spaces. Attendees will be instructed in a variety of methods, including lecture/PowerPoint presentation, videos demonstrating the consequences for violation of procedures, and planning for successful entries. This seminar will conclude with a quiz. The answers will then be discussed to ensure all attendees will be able to apply what they have learned. After attending this session, your employees will be able to cite the current OSHA Standards and "confined space" permit requirements, recognize and assess hazards associated with confined space entry, and choose the techniques, methods, and equipment used to ensure a safe entry.

About the Speaker

Dan Sheffer, principal, Sheffer Engineering Co., Inc.

Agenda

Check-in 7:30 am; begin 8:00 am; lunch; adjourn 4:00 pm

Cost Per Person

Special pricing: League Pool & Fund members, \$57.50; League members, \$115; nonmembers, \$160; add \$35 if received after February 3, 2010.

Location (directions at www.mml.org)
Michigan Municipal League Capital Office
208 N. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 800-995-2674, 517-485-1314

Education Credits: .6 CEU, EOA 6, .5 CEC

Sign Up Online at www.mml.org

Elected Officials Academy Core Weekender Friday & Saturday, February 26-27, 2010

All elected municipal officials must have a basic foundation of knowledge upon which to build their effectiveness as community leaders. This weekend seminar offers the most critical information in four short courses—legal framework, leadership roles & responsibilities, financial management, and planning & zoning—in a compact format. Upon completion of this program attendees will be able to differentiate between the role of the councilmember and the role of the mayor/president, discuss the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, identify where taxes and revenue sharing come from, use zoning checks and balances, and make effective zoning decisions.

About the Speakers

A panel of experienced speakers

Agenda

Friday, February 26, 2010

Check-in 6:30 pm; a light dinner; begin 7:00 pm;
adjourn 9:00 pm

Saturday, February 27, 2010

Check-in 7:30 am; begin 8:00 am; lunch; adjourn 3:00 pm

Cost Per Person

League members, \$115; nonmembers, \$160; add \$35 if received after February 19, 2010.

Location (directions at www.mml.org)

Bavarian Inn Lodge
One Covered Bridge Lane
Frankenmuth, MI 48734
Phone: 888-775-6343

Education Credits: .8 CEU, 8 EOA

Elected Officials Academy Advanced Weekender Friday & Saturday, February 26-27, 2010

Veteran elected officials who have attended the EOA “Core Weekender” are ready to jump up to the next level of service with more in-depth knowledge of municipal issues. Formal presentations about advanced planning and zoning issues, intergovernmental cooperation, and financial modeling, are just some components of this invigorating learning experience. This session offers an excellent opportunity for networking and discussion in a relaxed environment. Upon completion of this program, attendees will be able to develop financial policies regarding long-term budgeting, be able to utilize financial models to make sound policy decisions, show a working knowledge of the components of planning and zoning, and demonstrate ways to increase intergovernmental cooperation.

About the Speakers

A panel of experienced speakers

Agenda

Friday, February 26, 2010

Check-in 5:30 pm; a light dinner; begin 6:00 pm;
adjourn 9:00 pm

Saturday, February 27, 2010

Check-in 7:30 am; begin 8:00 am; lunch; adjourn 3:00 pm

Cost Per Person

League members, \$115; nonmembers, \$160; add \$35 if received after February 19, 2010.

Location (directions at www.mml.org)

Bavarian Inn Lodge
One Covered Bridge Lane
Frankenmuth, MI 48734
Phone: 888-775-6343

Education Credits: .9 CEU, 9 EOA

Capitalizing on Community: The Value of Parks and Recreation to the Local Economy March 10, 2010

This workshop is brought to you by the Michigan Municipal League and the Michigan Recreation and Park Association, and is sponsored by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). It will focus on the economic value that parks and recreation add to communities. Upon completion of the program, participants will be able to calculate the beneficial impact of parks on property values, health care cost containment, and reduced rates of crime. Attendees will acquire tools that can be used to position parks and recreation departments for sustainability, and they will be able to demonstrate the value of parks and recreation to a community. Examples will be drawn from communities across Michigan to substantiate the League’s place-based economic development vision.

About the Speaker

Ann Conklin, Leisure Services Director, Canton Charter Township

Agenda


Check-in 9:30; begin 10:00 am; adjourn noon

Cost Per Person

League members, \$10

Location (directions at www.mml.org)

Michigan Municipal League Capital Office
208 N. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 800-995-2674, 517-485-1314

Education Credits: .2 CEU; 2 EOA 

Greener Communities. Greener Michigan.

Hastings Transforms Library From Brown to Green to Gold

By Stevan J. Jurczuk, AIA, LEED AP®



The city of Hastings, Michigan, located in central Berry County is not unlike many municipal communities. It has a charming historic central business district, plenty of amenities such as good schools and parks, and the desire to continually improve its offerings. And

also much like other communities, it faces two challenges: funding operating expenses for municipal buildings, and developing what is considered unbuildable sites. Sustainable design was the solution to these challenges when the city began the process of designing a new library to replace the existing undersized facility.

From the beginning, the library staff was adamant that the new library be “green,” so sustainable design was a top priority. By following the “green” methodology of design and construction, the new library would be environmentally AND fiscally friendly. The goal was to attain Silver Level status according to LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) principles.

Blending with the Community

When choosing a site for the new library, the location to the downtown area and access to public transportation was of utmost importance. The chosen location, a brownfield site normally considered unbuildable, rests on the east end of the city’s main route through downtown. To help reduce the building footprint, a two-story, 20,000 square foot library was built on a .75-acre site.

The design of the exterior building envelope provides a high performance enclosure that blends with the 1900s-era façade character of the downtown area and utilizes commonly



The library’s exterior blends with the 1900s-era façade character of Hastings’s downtown.

available materials. Brick and tinted concrete blocks were used in harmony to provide an exterior surface that blends aesthetics and economy. Generous amounts of glass maximize views of the outside while providing an abundant amount of daylight.



Light shelves help reduce energy costs

Reducing Energy to Create Inviting Spaces

To reduce energy costs, a glazing system coupled with exterior sunshades and interior light shelves was chosen over a traditional system for increased thermal resistance and user comfort. C2AE calculated that the higher cost of the system could be recovered in only 2.5 years. The sunshades utilize passive solar fundamentals, reducing the amount of direct sunlight during the summer months and reducing the cooling load, while allowing the winter sun to provide warmth. The light shelves receive the sunlight and bounce it deep within the library, reducing the amount of energy necessary to provide lighting.

Within the library, spaces are arranged to take advantage of views while still adhering to the fundamentals of sound library design. Showers and changing rooms allow library employees to change after biking or jogging to work, and finish materials are more than meets the eye. Paints, floor coverings, and sealants all take advantage of recycled or low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) organic materials, reducing the amount of potentially harmful gases emitted into the environment. Even the wood paneling was chosen for its impact on the environment, as it was harvested sustainably and did not come from old growth forests.

The heating, plumbing, and electrical systems all take advantage of the previously mentioned design features and provide additional attributes that maximize comfort and provide efficient operation for the life of the building. Through



Entry with low VOC wood paneling

careful selection of systems and thoughtful design, the library averages a 46-percent reduction in overall energy costs. Conditioned air delivered via floor diffusers allows occupants to control the amount and direction of airflow. Water use is reduced through the use of low flow faucets, waterless urinals, and dual flush toilets.

Two vegetative roof garden systems were chosen for sustainability, and are available for use by library patrons. Vegetative roofs are low maintenance systems that not only increase the R-value (thermal resistance to heat flow) of the roof and protect the roof membrane, but also treat and reduce the storm water that falls on the roof, and reduce the “heat island” effect.




The library's rain garden reduces water run-off.

Site amenities include bicycle racks and drought tolerant landscaping. On-site storm water is treated and reintroduced to the aquifer via a rain garden, the first of its kind in Hastings. With the reduction of paved areas and plantings that require virtually no irrigation, lifetime maintenance costs were reduced.

Extra Effort Pays Off

All of these items came together to create a facility that benefits the community by being both well designed and highly sustainable. But, the library design didn't stop there.

C2AE assisted the library in developing a “green” cleaning program eliminating harmful chemicals from the cleaning process, and keeping the interior of the building chemical free. The library also installed solar panels on the library roof to generate electricity to further reduce the energy use on site.

All of the above, plus additional credits awarded for innovative design exceeded our initial goal of LEED® Silver. The Hastings Public Library achieved LEED® Gold Certification—the ONLY library in Michigan to reach such a goal. Only through the commitment of the design team, contractors, owners, and community can a project this challenging become so successful. 

Stevan J. Jurczuk, AIA, LEED AP® is the architect/project manager for C2AE. He can be reached at 616-454-9414 or steve.jurczuk@c2ae.com. Website: www.c2ae.com.



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Come explore our new website—the Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3)—devoted to helping Michigan’s leaders make their communities vibrant places in the 21st century. You will find a lot to get you started, including comprehensive resources, solutions, 21c3’s calendar of education opportunities and events, multimedia, and the latest breaking news.

Dan Matson's "Unique Technique"

City of St. Johns Displays Art by Municipal Attorney

By Ron Huard

One of the primary ways to create 21st century vibrant places where people want to live, work, and play is through arts and culture. A special group of Clinton county residents is leading the growth of cultural interests and activities throughout the area by overseeing operations of the Clinton County Arts Council (CCAC). The Council's mission is to promote, encourage, and economically support the arts, artists, and the cultural heritage of Clinton County. Dan Matson is a CCAC board member, a long-serving municipal attorney, and an accomplished, well-recognized artist in his own right.

Samples of Matson's work were displayed at St. Johns municipal offices at the Clinton County Courthouse as part of the Traveling Art Program offered by CCAC. The city managed to bring art to an untraditional setting by displaying paintings in individual offices and in common areas, enabling employees and visitors to enjoy art for arts sake. The city demonstrated to its citizens that art is an important part of building a 21st century community.


Matson calls his method of painting a "unique technique," which engages physical science in its application. Matson's abstract style has delighted viewers throughout mid-Michigan at numerous gallery exhibits and special showings. His



Matson's work displayed in St. Johns municipal offices at the Clinton County Courthouse.

philosophical approach observes that "art tastes dreams and feeds appreciation's senses with it. Art is what enthusiasm looks for as it plays with common stuff. And art is the taste of tastes that takes it past its place."

While painting holds a strong attraction for Matson, he is able to juggle several other interests, responsibilities, and volunteer commitments, including ownership of the DeWitt Art Gallery and author of *The Art of Art*, which is a compendium of poetic statements on all disciplines of art.

Along with his full-time law practice, Matson has served for 39 years as DeWitt city attorney and is also the attorney for the village of Fowler. In 2008, he received the Distinguished Municipal Attorney Award from the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys, of which he is a past president. 



Artist and municipal attorney Dan Matson.

Ron Huard is a member of the Clinton County Arts Council. He may be reached at 989-224-6071 or ronh15@verizon.net.

2010 Community Excellence Awards Call for Entries

Enter the fourth annual “Race for the Cup”

Step 1: Register

The only way to enter is to attend your Regional Meeting and give a presentation on a municipal project or program. Register for your Regional Meeting, mark “yes” to enter the Community Excellence Awards (CEA), and fill out the entry form. There are seven regions, with seven different meeting dates, so each region has a different submission date.

Step 2: Prepare Entry

Prepare a five (5) minute presentation (past presentations have included DVDs, PowerPoints, display boards, show-and-tell—we encourage any and all displays of creativity).

Requirements

- Presentations can be no longer than five (5) minutes.
- PowerPoints or DVDs must be submitted to the League two weeks prior to the date of your Regional Meeting.

Step 3: Voting

Regional Meeting attendees vote for the winner on-site, and the winner is announced at the conclusion of the meeting. The seven regional winners go on to represent their communities in the final round at the League’s Annual Convention. Votes from the Convention delegation are counted by CEA official auditors Plante & Moran, and the winner is announced at the Convention’s final event.

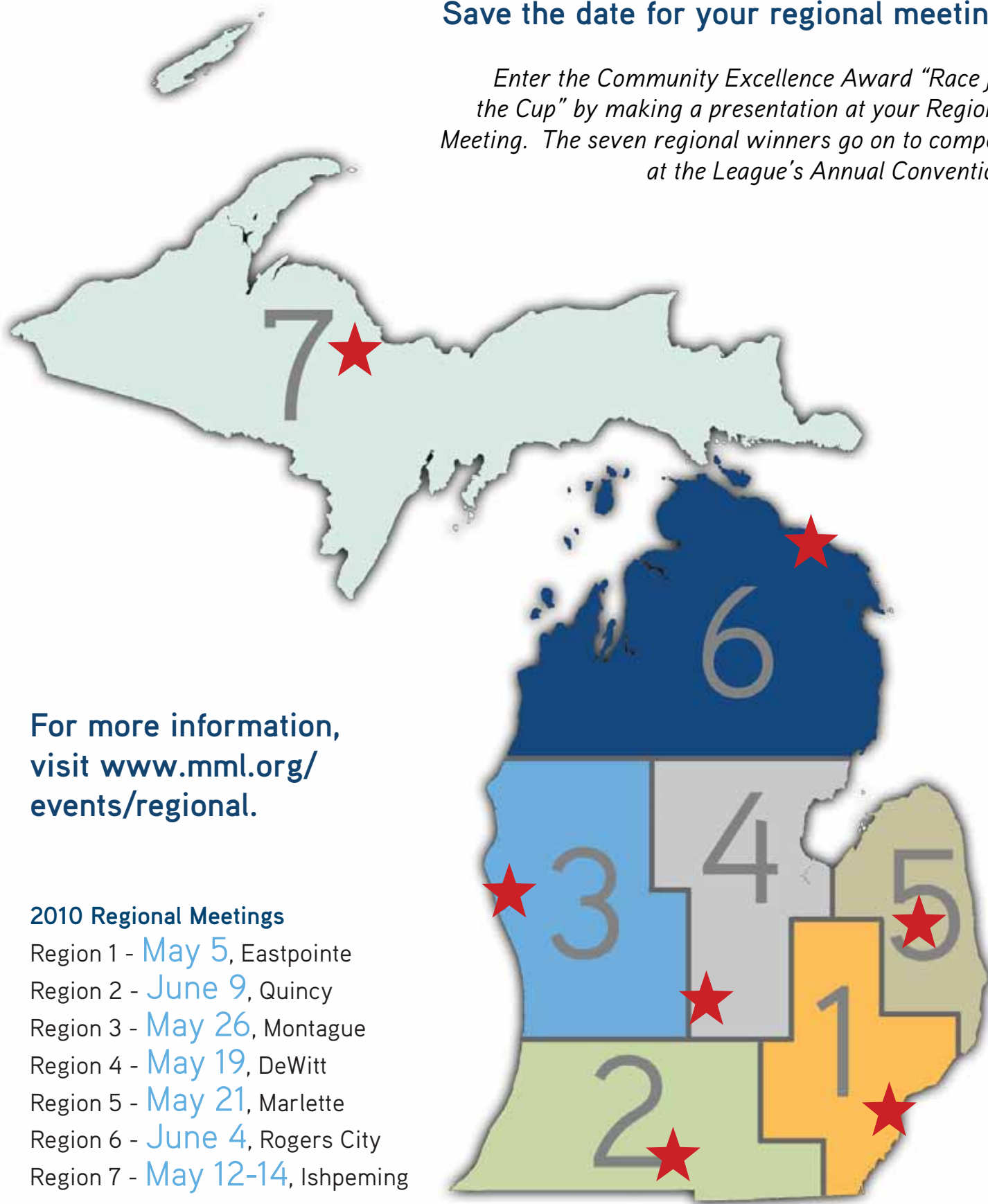
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'09 CEA winners Lathrup Village

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For more information,
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2010 Regional Meetings

- Region 1 - May 5, Eastpointe
- Region 2 - June 9, Quincy
- Region 3 - May 26, Montague
- Region 4 - May 19, DeWitt
- Region 5 - May 21, Marlette
- Region 6 - June 4, Rogers City
- Region 7 - May 12-14, Ishpeming



Legal Spotlight

A column by Sue Jeffers

The Impact of a City Snowmobile Ordinance on Snowmobiler's Claim for No-Fault Benefits

Facts:

The city of Negaunee had adopted an ordinance prohibiting snowmobiles on any roadway within the corporate limits of the city. The ordinance provided, however, that a snowmobile could be operated at speeds not to exceed 10 miles per hour between the hours of 8:00 am and 11:59 pm on the extreme right-hand shoulder of the road if available or upon the extreme right-hand edge of the road if no shoulder is available . . .

Between 1:00 am and 2:00 am on January 17, 2001, John Allan Kennedy left Ed's Iron Inn on his snowmobile. While riding his snowmobile in Negaunee, Kennedy collided with the rear of an automobile that had been parked near a snow bank by Jeri Barabe. Kennedy was injured and sued Barabe seeking to recover first-party no-fault benefits (personal protection insurance benefits (PIP)) from Barabe based upon the unreasonably parked vehicle exception of the no-fault statute (MCL 500.3106(1)(a).

A snowmobile is not a vehicle for purposes of the Michigan no-fault statute precluding Kennedy from recovery on that basis. Nor, as a general rule, are injuries compensable under the no-fault act if they arise out of the ownership, operation, maintenance, or use of a parked vehicle as a motor vehicle. An exception exists, however, if the injuries arise if the vehicle "was parked in such a way as to cause unreasonable risk of the bodily injury which occurred." As a result, Kennedy claimed he was entitled to compensation on the basis that his injuries arose from Barabe's "unreasonably parked vehicle."

Barabe argued, however, that since Kennedy was prohibited from driving on the road in the first place, Kennedy was not within the class of persons to be protected by the city's parking ordinance. Kennedy argued that he was not excluded from coverage for first-party benefits merely because he was operating his snowmobile unlawfully, i.e. operating his snowmobile in violation of the city ordinance. Kennedy claimed that a jury should decide whether the Barabe vehicle was parked in such a way as to cause unreasonable risk of bodily injury.

Question:

Was Kennedy within the class of persons to be protected by the city's parking ordinance if he was not legally on the road by virtue of the no snowmobile ordinance?

Answer, according to the trial court:

No. Since Kennedy was not legally on the road at the time of the accident, Barabe owed him no duty with regard to the parking of her vehicle. The trial court had also found, however, that Kennedy was speeding and driving his snowmobile while impaired and that because of all three reasons, Kennedy was operating his snowmobile illegally and was precluded from recovery of no-fault first-party benefits.


Answer, according the Michigan Court of Appeals:

No. Barabe owed no duty with respect to her parked vehicle to Kennedy since he was prohibited from the road and,



Photo by the International Snowmobile Manufacturer's Association, courtesy of Travel Michigan.

as a result, was not within the class of persons to be protected by the parking ordinance and therefore was not within the class of persons to which Barabe owed a duty. The court noted that Kennedy's actions of speeding and impaired snowmobile driving, although evidence of negligence, would not have precluded a claim for first-party no-fault benefits since benefits are normally paid regardless of fault. The court further noted that it was not necessary to determine whether the vehicle was reasonably parked or not, since Kennedy was not within the class of persons protected by the unreasonably parked vehicle exception.

Kennedy v State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance Company, No. 251004, May 27, 2004. The case is an unpublished decision of the Michigan Court of Appeals with limited precedential value. 

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2009 Wage and Salary Survey

The state's most comprehensive pay and benefits data is at your fingertips! The League is currently conducting its annual pay and benefits survey and only respondent communities are provided access to the results. This is the only survey of its kind in the state; it covers 143 municipal job titles and includes data on both pay and benefits. Our searchable database allows users to set parameters such as population and geographic area, and to export results into user-friendly Excel spreadsheets in a matter of seconds. Don't miss your chance to participate! Contact Heather Van Poucker at hvanpoucker@mml.org for more information.

Behind the Scenes: Snow Removal

By Samuel P. Lamerato



Troy,
pop. 80,959

Long before snow and ice appear on the roads, the city of Troy's fleet division is in high gear preparing the city's medium and heavy duty trucks for the upcoming winter season. The city has approximately 28 salt/plow trucks, which are responsible for maintaining 260 miles of local roads and 104 miles of major roads.

The fleet division begins the time-consuming winter prep of these vehicles in mid-August. When the salt truck is brought into the shop, a detailed checklist—designed and updated by technicians and supervisors—is meticulously followed. Over 70 items are checked, tested, disassembled, inspected, reassembled, and replaced, if necessary. This inspection starts at the front bumper and ends at the back of the truck:

- Hundreds of feet of high pressure hydraulic hose and electrical wiring are inspected for wear, deterioration, or damage;
- All standard and emergency lighting is inspected;
- The engine is checked for proper and efficient operation;
- Electrical controls and components are tested for maximum output needs;
- The hydraulic system is tested and adjusted to assure proper hydraulic pressures and flows are obtained;
- The air brake system is completely disassembled and inspected;
- Pins and seals are replaced;
- Salt spreaders and plows are mounted and tested; and
- Any worn components are replaced, as needed.

The fleet division has experienced very little downtime or overtime in the past several years, due to the excellent job of prepping these first responder vehicles. A complete check of the vehicle allows potential problems to be identified and remedied before they become a major issue.


Employees who operate these trucks are assured that they have safe and reliable vehicles to accomplish most any task the unpredictable Michigan winter season brings. Many times during the winter, the salt trucks will run continuously for up to 48 hours, with the exception of time for refueling. Over 100 gallons of diesel fuel is consumed per hour when the city's fleet of trucks are clearing snow and salting.



Troy's salt/plow trucks maintain over 260 miles of road each winter.

The new salt trucks are equipped with electronic salt spreading controls that monitor how much salt is being used per lane mile. This system will automatically adjust to assure a uniform amount is being spread, regardless of the vehicle's speed. This feature prevents too much salt from being spread, which is a waste of resources and tax dollars.

The city's salt trucks are also equipped with temperature sensors so that the operator knows the outside air temperature, as well as an infrared sensor to inform the operator of the pavement temperature. The onboard pump starts pumping a 27-percent salt brine solution from 100-gallon onboard tanks onto the salt being spread when the pavement temperature drops to below 20 degrees. The effectiveness of the salt is greatly inhibited by extremely low temperatures. The addition of the salt brine solution helps to expedite activation of the salts' melting process at extreme low temperatures. This technology allows the roads to be cleared quickly, with less salt being used.

It takes a team of dedicated technicians and support staff to ensure the city's snow removal vehicles are ready to respond to any snow emergency. They maintain the fleet at a high availability during a storm so the city's public works and parks department staff can perform the job at hand—to keep our local and major roads safe for the public. We are fortunate that city management and council understand the need to have the correct equipment necessary to accomplish the day-to-day requirements of maintaining our infrastructure at a level the citizens of Troy have come to expect. 

Samuel P. Lamerato is superintendent of fleet maintenance for the city of Troy. He may be reached at 248-524-3390 or lameratosp@troymi.gov.



Municipal Q&A

A column coordinated by Mary Charles

Q: We've been told that it is more effective to use sand than salt on icy roads. Do you have any information on this?

Salt melts snow and ice on the road by lowering the freezing point. Salt is not effective when pavement temperatures are below 18 degrees F. Under icy conditions, sand may be applied to provide road friction until the salt can begin to work.

Ten years ago, the Ann Arbor City Council passed a resolution to switch from 100 percent salt application on residential streets to a mixture of 95 percent sand and 5 percent salt. This decision was based on research and recommendations from the Huron River Watershed Council, which had found high levels of salt contamination in the Huron River. High levels of salt harm fish, aquatic plants, and other organisms, and increase costs to process the river water for drinking water at the municipal water treatment

plant. In neighborhoods, high levels of road salt can also have a detrimental effect on grass and trees and can promote rust on the metal undersides of vehicles.

Because of salt's environmental impacts, Ann Arbor's policy is to use the least amount of salt that allows for safe driving conditions. The amount of salt used depends on snowfall rates, time of day, and pavement conditions. The city uses a road weather-information service, which estimates road and pavement conditions based on current weather conditions, and air and pavement temperatures throughout the day. The city also uses portable pavement temperature readers to determine pavement temperatures. Even on very cold days, solar warming can raise pavement temperatures 20-30 degrees above air temperatures, so that no road salt is needed.

When sand is added to roads, it acts as an abrasive to add traction. A small amount of salt in the mixture prevents

the sand from freezing. Although using sand decreases the salt contamination of our waterways, large quantities of sand clogs street gutters, which requires additional maintenance to sweep streets and clean drains.

(Resource: The city of Ann Arbor's "White Snow, Green Streets" fact sheet available at <http://www.a2gov.org>)

Q: We had problems obtaining salt for road maintenance last year. Then we found the neighboring city was purchasing its salt through a state contract. Is it available to villages also? How do we find out about it?

Road salt, along with a number of other services and supplies are available through MiDeal (www.michigan.gov/localgov).

MiDEAL (Michigan Delivering Extended Agreements Locally) allows Michigan local units of government to benefit from the state's negotiating and purchasing power by permitting them to purchase from the state's contracts on the same terms, conditions, and prices as state government. Locals benefit not only from the reduced cost of goods and services, but also from indirect savings related to writing specifications, researching industries, processing invitations to bid, recruiting a diverse pool of potential suppliers, and making awards. The MiDEAL program is authorized by Michigan legislation (www.legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-18-1263) and has been in existence since 1975.



Ship delivering salt in the UP. Photo by Caroline Weber Kennedy.

Membership is open to any city, village, county, township, school district, intermediate school district, non-profit hospital, institutions of higher learning, or community or junior college in Michigan. All it takes to join is an email to MiDEAL@michigan.gov and payment of the membership fee.

Q: We have received a number of complaints about mailboxes damaged and/or destroyed during snow plowing operations. What are other communities doing about these complaints?

A number of Michigan communities have established requirements for the installation of mailboxes to provide for efficient snow clearance and right-of-way maintenance; to enhance traffic safety; and to establish standards for reimbursing property owners for damages done to the mailboxes. You can find these on the League website (www.mml.org) under snow removal ordinances.

Q: During a snow emergency, we make radio, television, and cable announcements, but many residents claim either they didn't know we were under a snow emergency or that they didn't know that meant they had to move their car off the street. Has anyone come up with a better process?

The city of Plymouth makes extensive use of its email and fax distribution system. The city has several different

lists that users can sign up for to get news from the city. In addition, the use of a municipal website will provide residents with up-to-date information.

Q: We are having a problem with snow-mobilers riding not only on their own property, but also on city streets claiming state law gives them the right to do so. Can we regulate snow-mobilers within our city limits?

The short answer is “yes.” You can find sample ordinances on the League website (www.mml.org) under snowmobile ordinances.


If you haven't already, you will need to adopt both the Michigan Vehicle Code and Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (Act 451 of 1994) by reference. Together, they permit cities, villages, and townships to regulate use of snowmobiles on their streets with certain limitations. The One-Pager *Plus* on Adoption of the Michigan Vehicle Code and Uniform Traffic Code (www.mml.org/pdf/opp/opp_UTC.pdf) provides sample ordinances for adoption of these Acts by reference.

Q: With our current budget issues, which I know are being shared by other communities, we have had to stop removal of snow from the sidewalks. What are other communities doing?

You are right—many communities are having to make adjustments in sidewalk snow removal.

Some still remove from the business district, sometimes under a contract with the DDA, and sometimes billing the property owners.

Some remove snow from the sidewalks only in public areas, e.g. schools, public buildings, etc. And a few, mostly smaller communities, remove the snow from all sidewalks.

Most communities, however, require the property owners to shovel their own sidewalks. There are a variety of sample ordinances and policies on our website (www.mml.org) under snow removal ordinances. 

Request for Information

The Resource Center relies on contributions from local officials to keep materials current.

Please mail copies of your municipality's new ordinances, policies, resolutions, and innovative ideas to the League's Inquiry Service, 1675 Green Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105; fax it to 734-663-4496 or email it to info@mml.org. Thank you!

FOCUS ON

Douglas

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Douglas,
pop. 1,214



A very warm welcome is extended to everyone on behalf of the city of Douglas. The "village" became a city in December 2004, and in addition to being

home to 1,200 year-round residents, Douglas is a premier location for vacation homes and tourist lodging. Located in the southwest portion of the state of Michigan, we enjoy nearly a mile of coastal frontage on the shores of Lake Michigan, more than two miles of frontage along the Kalamazoo River, and a small harbor for recreational boaters.

Douglas was recently designated as one of twelve "Distinctive Destinations 2009" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We are a vibrant, growing community reflecting 150 years of history while welcoming a modern perspective on traditional neighborhood design. Established neighborhoods, schools, and churches are just steps away from the center of town, appropriately located along Center Street. Our downtown focuses on the pedestrian experience and is complete with a full-service grocery store, a bakery, and a vibrant mix of shops, services, cafes, and award-winning dining establishments. The retail market is flush with quality home décor, antiques, and fine art galleries, not to mention clothing, handcrafted jewelry, children's books, and specialty kitchen supplies.

Throughout the year, Douglas offers special events, parades and festivals with community building in mind. Whether enjoying a Thursday evening at the summertime socials, an Oktoberfest bratwurst during an Indian summer, or a storybook snowy street gleaming with festive holiday lights, there is always something to see and do in Douglas.

If considering an overnight visit, Douglas boasts some of the most prestigious B&Bs in West Michigan. Spend a crisp winter day cross-country skiing or snowshoeing on one of the area golf courses and along the Lake Michigan lakeshore. Warm up with specialty coffees, teas, and hot cocoas at the Respite Cappuccino Court, and then spend a long evening with good friends and fine dining at Everyday People Café, Wild Dog Grill, or the Fifth Season. Whatever your winter activity, the city of Douglas has much to offer for the outdoors lover, the foodie, and the discriminating shopper.

You are invited and encouraged to explore our neighborhoods, kayak our rivers, surf our waves, and sample all that Douglas has to offer.

Welcome to the city of Douglas.
<http://www.ci.douglas.mi.us> 