



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Outcomes for Michigan's Future

Preparing Communities for a New Economy

In Brief

Today's Successes

- Since 2001, the Small Town Design Initiative has **helped 35 communities in 22 Michigan counties plan for brighter futures** through improved infrastructure, more inviting commercial districts and attractive living spaces.
- Eight MSU Extension educators helped communities secure **more than \$4 million in grants** to rebuild or develop new infrastructure, redevelop industrial brownfield sites, and helped businesses secure grants of **nearly \$6.5 million**.
- In Grand Rapids, where downtown redevelopment led to a shortage of affordable housing, **MAES researchers worked on a project to explore what makes up a stable mixed-income neighborhood**. The results will help Grand Rapids preserve its stock of affordable housing while the city continues its economic growth.

Tomorrow's Results

- Using evaluation, MSUE Urban Collaborators team members will provide information on the progress and results of various Michigan **"Cool Cities"** projects around the state. A second phase of this project will include services such as urban design consultation to selected communities.
- Fifteen MSUE educators will provide **entrepreneurial training for 450 people per year**, about half of whom will start new businesses.
- The MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources will conduct initial consultations with 400 Michigan producers, processors and other agribusiness operators that will lead to the **launch of 25 new businesses or new product lines**.
- In 2005, the Small Town Design Initiative **will take planning and visioning expertise to six Michigan communities**. MSU students and faculty members and local MSUE educators will work with residents to develop plans for their consideration and implementation.
- MSUE is developing a training program targeted at helping local leaders **build community capacity**. The program will comprise four modules that will be piloted and delivered to 100 community volunteer leaders in 2005, then expanded into a statewide certificate program in the future.

Michigan's Priorities in Economic Development and Quality of Life

Developing Michigan's entrepreneurs: Michigan communities need to find new, uniquely tailored ways to compete in today's global economy. Traditional smokestack-chasing approaches often fail to create desired jobs and leave communities with debt for new infrastructure that sits vacant. When firms are recruited, bidding wars among states and communities translate into costs that can easily reach \$60,000 per job created.

Helping small towns survive: Rural communities are an important component of quality of life for many Michigan residents. In recent years, however, economic pressures have put the survival of many of Michigan's rural communities in question. Declines in the number of farm units and businesses have contributed to a steady out-migration of residents, leaving fewer individuals to address an increasing number of challenges. Communities must produce more innovators and entrepreneurs and rethink their local development and redevelopment strategies.

Enhance vitality in key urban communities: Cities and urban areas of all sizes face issues related to downtown planning, design of walkable communities, neighborhood development and revitalization, land use planning and brownfield redevelopment. Infrastructure in Michigan cities must be reconfigured for today's needs, and cities need to become more attractive places for skilled individuals to live and work.

MSU Capacity:

- **Reach:** The MAES and MSUE conduct research and deliver information quickly and efficiently to a wide range of community types and sizes. Research is conducted on the MSU campus and by MSUE offices serving every Michigan county. The MSUE network can quickly put information in the hands of those who need it.
- **Experience:** The MAES and MSUE have well-established track records of helping Michigan's communities in development, planning and problem solving. From research efforts aimed at land use and brownfield redevelopment to programs in community capacity building and entrepreneurial development, MSU knows how to tailor-make solutions in collaboration with community decision makers.
- **Expertise:** The MAES and MSUE draw on the wealth of knowledge across the university, including the Center for Urban Affairs, the School of Planning, Design and Construction, the Land Policy Program, and Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Sciences.
- **Track record:** The seamless movement of information from research into the hands of community decision makers is at the heart of the land-grant university's commitment to the people of Michigan.
- **"Feet on the street":** MAES scientists conduct research on the MSU campus and in communities across the state, working with local elected officials, community planners and residents during project formation, implementation and evaluation to provide ongoing community support.
- **Trust:** MSUE and MAES provide unbiased research and education to the public to help ensure that Michigan citizens can make educated decisions at local, regional and state levels to produce desired outcomes.
- **Content:** MSUE educational programs are set apart from other informational sources by their foundation in MAES-generated science. Researchers rigorously adhere to the scientific method, and their work faces strenuous peer review before it is considered for dissemination or publication.

Sampler of Success:

The MAES and MSUE are good investments for Michigan — they have a proven record of success in research and education to improve economic growth and development in Michigan communities. A few MAES and MSUE successes that affirm our capacity include:

- The MSUE-supported Small Town Design Initiative is helping communities reinvent commercial or other public areas while preserving character and history. Since 2001, the program has supported **in-depth planning for 35 communities in 22 Michigan counties, helping them plan for brighter futures** through improved infrastructure, more inviting commercial districts and attractive living spaces.
- MSUE educators helped communities secure **more than \$4 million in grants** to rebuild or develop new infrastructure and redevelop industrial brownfield sites. They've also helped Michigan businesses secure strengthening or expansion grants of **nearly \$6.5 million**. They've trained volunteers to conduct assessments with more than 100 business owners to explore options to maintain or expand operations in communities across Michigan.
- The MSUE Urban Collaborators program is delivering university-backed research to core urban centers in Flint, Grand Rapids, Pontiac, Saginaw, Lansing and Grand Rapids. In Grand Rapids, where downtown redevelopment led to a shortage of affordable housing, **MAES researchers worked on a project to explore what makes up a stable mixed-income neighborhood**. The results will help Grand Rapids preserve a stock of affordable housing while the city continues its economic growth.
- An MAES scientist is measuring the **value of alternative agricultural production systems to rural communities and the environment**. This evaluation may help preserve Michigan's medium-scale farms and their rural communities, 71 percent of which will be lost by 2040 if current trends continue.

Outcomes for Michigan's Future:

MSUE and the MAES provide research and education that will promote economic growth and development in Michigan communities.

Our MAES research initiatives over the next year will focus on:

- Exploring revitalization strategies to assist Michigan cities in creating healthy neighborhoods.
- Researching the protection of Michigan's water resources.
- Generating market solutions to land use problems while maintaining a viable agriculture for Michigan's economy.
- Investigating factors leading to volatility and quality of rural labor markets.
- Developing land use management approaches to sustain Michigan's water and natural resources and related industries.

Preparing Communities for a New Economy

Using research results, MSUE will deliver educational programs to Michigan citizens that support economic growth and development. Our goals and objectives include:

- Fifteen MSUE educators will provide **entrepreneurial training for 450 people per year**, about half of whom will start new businesses. A community-based business retention and expansion program will save 150 jobs and create 75 new jobs.
- The Small Town Design Initiative provides environmental design assistance in community development and land use. MSUE and the landscape architecture program supply on-site community expertise to address environmental and community challenges to improve the quality of life in Michigan's small towns. The program helps communities re-assess their physical, environmental and cultural assets through computer visualization, modeling and facilitated dialog. In 2005, the Small Town Design Initiative **will take planning and visioning expertise to six Michigan communities**. MSU students and faculty members and local MSUE educators will work with residents to develop plans for community consideration and implementation.
- The MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources will do initial consultations with 400 Michigan producers, processors and other agribusiness operators. The center will help foster Michigan entrepreneurs to **launch 25 new businesses or new product lines**.
- MSUE is developing a training program targeted at helping local leaders **build community capacity**. The program will comprise four modules that will be piloted and delivered to 100 community volunteer leaders in 2005, then expanded as a statewide certificate program in the future. Participants will acquire skills in facilitation, issue identification, and managing conflict.
- The Tourism Assistance Program works intensively with local tourism industries and leaders to realistically assess an area's potential for tourism, identify plans for improving the quality of local tourism businesses and target potential funding sources. In 2005, this program will work intensively in four economically depressed western Michigan counties that have the potential to increase their tourism industries.
- Michigan launched the Cool Cities pilot program by announcing 20 project award winners in June 2004. **Several MSUE faculty and staff members associated with the Urban Collaborators program received grant funds enabling them to help support these projects**. The first phase of the project is to help the state assess project development at the local level. Using evaluation, several researchers will provide information on the progress and results of various projects around the state. A second phase of this project will include services such as urban design consultation to selected communities.

Spotlight on Success

"Preserving the hometown atmosphere of this community was my main goal when joining the planning commission in 1998. The Citizen Planner program provided me with the necessary methodology to accomplish this goal."

Michael Bailey, Oakland Township Planning Commissioner

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity institution.

For more information:

Thomas Coon, director, MSU Extension (517-355-2308 or msuedir@msu.edu)

John Baker, acting director, Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station (517-355-0123 or maesdir@msu.edu).