



[The Bright Side Episode 4: Michigan Places](#)

Produced by
CEDAM

Underwritten by
Michigan Municipal League

Brittney Hoszkiw Hello and welcome to The Bright Side, a show where we shed a light on the people, places and stories that make Michigan great. I'm Brittney Hoszkiw, Executive Director of the Old Town Commercial Association, one of the grassroot programs in the Old Town neighborhood that focus on community economic development in Lansing's arts and entertainment district.

I'm here today standing in front of Polka Dots, one of several retailers in the Old Town neighborhood.

In today's episode, we're going to take a look at other Main Street programs and downtowns across the state to give you a flavor of what makes Michigan great.

Dana Kollewehr The list is a mile long of things that I love about Michigan. I grew up in West Michigan not far from Grand Haven where I'm a Main Street manager, and I love the UP. I love the outdoors. I'm a big outdoor fan. I love the people. I love the seasons and there probably isn't anything I dislike about Michigan. So I'm a lifer I think for Michigan.

Katie Woodhams What I love about Michigan is just the seasonality, and you can never get bored. There's so many activities you can do all year round. You don't have to live in another state or travel that far.

What makes a place to me is not necessarily just the way it looks, but the way it feels. So whether it's smells or sights or sounds, but you do, you get a feeling and it brings back a lot of memories. And so there's some places that I may come back to multiple times and they always invoke those memories. And so that's what's special to me.

Juan Ganum What don't I love about Michigan? [laughs] But I can say with great certainty that I love chili dogs from Coney Island and walks along Lake Michigan. So from one coast to the other. I love Michigan.

Linda Skwarcan I guess I still like being in the Midwest with the change of seasons. People tend to be more down to earth and friendly. Moved here in fourth grade and probably will never leave.

Joe Agostinelli Born and raised in the state of Michigan. I've lived kind of all over, from up north to Kalamazoo to the east side and, you know, there's an entrepreneurial spirit I think around Michigan and in this community in particular, and I think there's a lot of opportunity here.

Antonio Evans It's like I grew up here. So everybody knows my name. Remember the movie Cheers? Yeah, it's kinda like that. Yeah. I love it.

Bob Donohue What do I love about Michigan? My family, when we go on vacations, we only go where the downtowns are. And then we match the downtowns with what is the surrounding environment, if it's the great state parks, beaches, but it all starts with the downtown for us.

Gary Heidel I love the downtowns. I mean, I'm getting a chance to travel all over Michigan and I just love what's happening in our downtowns. There's a lot of electricity, lot of energy, and the people are so passionate about their work in downtown areas. And so you just gotta love the enthusiasm.

And it's paying off. Downtown Flint is probably one of the most distressed cities in our state. If you go into the downtown area you are just amazed at some of the things they've done and the events that they host. And people come from all over the region just to be part of those events.

Dayne Walling Well my favorite place in Flint is downtown on the historic bricks at about an hour after dusk. To just look up, see the Vehicle City arches, stars in the sky, bricks on the street. It's a really magical environment. We've got a lot of great places in Flint, but that's one place that I think is truly world class. I had the

privilege of living and traveling to cities all over this country and world and there's no place like that.

Joe Borgstrom There's a tremendous amount of pride in this state and I think folks who are here and folks from outside of Michigan who come and experience Michigan really get a sense – and we hear this from staff who joined us from other places – what a beautiful place it is. It is a really underrated... the natural beauty and the physical beauty of our places. We've got beautiful downtowns. Sault Ste. Marie is one of the oldest downtowns in North America. I mean, we've got just an amazing infrastructure.

And the thing that we hear time and time again is the people. We hear it from the people who are born and raised here. You know, their family and friends are all here. It's something that we're brought up in. But we hear it from people who have moved from somewhere else and just can't get over how friendly Michiganders are. And to me it's part of our DNA and it's a place that you want to be at, it's a place where you enjoy the people, and you can't help but root for those two things.

Brittney Hoszkiw As you saw from our last segment, there are many things that make a place special and make you want to be there. This is called placemaking. What is placemaking, you ask? Lets talk to Dan Gilmartin from the Michigan Municipal League and find out.

---The 411---

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic Welcome to the 411. I'm Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic and we're here today with Dan Gilmartin from the Michigan Municipal League.

Thanks for being on the show Dan.

Dan Gilmartin Great to be here.

Tiffany Great! So we've heard a lot about this term placemaking lately. Can you kind of define for our viewers what exactly that means?

Dan Sure. I mean, placemaking is really the art of taking the assets in a community and really building a community around it. We spent, in Michigan especially, we spent the last forty or fifty years building our communities around cars and big huge roads and getting people in and out of towns as fast as we can, and we're really missing the opportunities of what makes a place special. What makes it authentic. How can we sort of bring out those attributes in the community.

And the concept of placemaking is really getting community leaders together with people in the community – business leaders, citizens, whoever it might be – and

pushing an agenda for what it really means to live in a small town, a big city, whatever it might be. So that concept leads to really building communities around people instead of around cars, and we think that that's a real economic boom for us here in Michigan.

Tiffany So really a sense of place is about taking what's unique about a community, embracing it, and celebrating it?

Dan Sure, because again, think about it in economic terms. And in this state we sort of have the disease that whenever we talk about creating jobs in Michigan we talk about tax rates, and we talk about a regulatory environment. And we don't lose on those things anymore when you're talking about comparing us to places that are doing really well.

We undertook a study several years ago and I've been working with a whole bunch of different groups to look at the research. Why do we get beat by this town, or why are all the young people that are graduating from Michigan or Michigan State or Central or Eastern or Western or somewhere else, why are they moving to certain places and not others? Why aren't they staying here? And it's place. It's really what they're looking for, and that's again, you know, you're talking about an entrepreneurial generation.

Tiffany And we've heard that you guys have, at the Municipal League, have put out a book called *The Economics of Place*. And when did you guys, when did you put this out?

Dan Basically the book has been out for about a month. It's available at our blog at economicsofplace.com or on Amazon, and there are nine essays in there that really get to a whole bunch of different areas about place, whether that be entrepreneurs who want to live in authentic places, whether that be walkability issues. We see people now, both retiring baby boomers and millennials, looking for places to live.

People want to walk. They don't want to drive. The importance of things like cultural amenities and really having these types of places where you want to be.

I mean, that's what it really comes down to. In this age where you're sort of not stuck with the next door floor plan. People are mobile and the most mobile generation that we've ever been in. They move around quite a bit.

We're finding out that people and jobs and entrepreneurs are choosing where they want to live first, then looking for or creating their own jobs. That's why we're getting beat by the Chicagos and the Portlands and the Seattles in the world. So pushing this agenda and finding out about what that means and how we can affect that kind of change in Michigan is really what's behind the book.

And not only is it a quality of life issue, which is extremely important, we think it's an economic one too because that's where the numbers bear out. We don't lose to Chicago on taxes or regulations or Seattle or Austin or Boston or wherever you want to hold up there as sort of the best place, the best region, the best state in the country to do work.

We lose to them on this stuff.

So we've really got to focus on that and get our communities, get our state around a placemaking agenda.

Tiffany So I heard when you visited the White House that one of the staffers there had actually read the book.

Dan Yeah that was awesome. I was honored to be part of a group through the National League of Cities where I sit on the Board of Directors that went to meet with President Obama a couple weeks back. And I walked in and the Director of Intergovernmental Relations was there and said, "Hey, I read your book." So that made us feel real good that the message is getting out there.

It's a really powerful message I think and it's something people can relate to, whether they're from a small town or a big city. So obviously at that level we were really pleased to see that the book had made it through.

Tiffany So if people want more information about placemaking or what you're doing at Michigan Municipal League, where can they go?

Dan They can follow economicsofplace.com, which is our blog. They can check out, they can get the book there. They can also buy the book on Amazon. They can follow me on Twitter. I'm @DPGilmartin. They want to check that out. And they can find us at mml.org. We're doing some really cool stuff and we're really proud to be part of this movement that's out there of reenergizing our communities.

Tiffany I can't wait to read the book.

Dan Great! Let me know what you think.

Tiffany I will. I definitely will.

[to the audience] Well thanks so much for joining us on the 411. I'm Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic and we'll see you on The Bright Side.

Michigan Municipal League
mml.org

Brittney Hoszkiw We're standing here in front of Tallulah's Folly, an eccentric boutique in Old Town Lansing. But we're going to be taking a trip to southwest Michigan to check out one community that has reinvigorated themselves by embracing their unique identity.

---Niles Main Street---

Lisa Croteau Main Street's a really wonderful method of commercial revitalization that engages the community in the process. It's based on four points, those being promotion, design, economic restructuring and organization. And no point has more value to the program than any other. You've got to be working on all four points at the same time and then you come to a really wonderful town.

The things that makes Niles so special is it has some really wonderful, authentic, owner-occupied, owner-run stores and this is a wonderful example. This is the Red Purl. You will come in here and you will always find the owner, Amy Smerekanich, and her dog Purl. Amazing shop. And this is one of the things that makes Niles so special.

We're in front of the Paris Soda Shop. It's got a vintage 1930 soda fountain and you can get wonderful things like phosphates and green rivers and ice cream and sundaes and really great quiche and paninis. Hamburgers and fries. Just about anything that you want in this great, great restaurant.

Right now we're inside Veni's Sweet Shop. It's at the corner of Third and Main in downtown Niles and it is one of the most amazing places you'll ever be to in your life.

Linda Skwarcan From handmade chocolates to hard candies, peanut brittle. We always have fun with the seasonal things. We're in Halloween right now. We do thousands of caramel apples. We have candy corn, jelly pumpkins, all sorts of fun stuff for the season.

Even before working down here, my husband and I have always liked Niles. It's a nice small town, great community feel, great people. It's just a very pleasant place.

Juan Ganum This area was settled in the late 1600's. There was a fort here built in 1691 by the French, so it's been continuously populated for quite some time. And we are uncovering that history right now thanks to the help of Western Michigan University's archaeology team.

Riverfront Park, which is the city's pride and joy. Defines the city of Niles, I think. It's the hub, the focal point of the community. It bisects the city. St. Joseph River bisects

the city east to west and the city's fortunate enough to own two-thirds of the east bank of the river.

This is Riverfront Trail. It runs from city limits to city limits. There's a wonderful walking path. In the park itself we have a playground, a volleyball court, skate park, amphitheater, along with the really wonderful trail.

Lisa Croteau We've won Main Street Program of the Year, Main Street Manager of the Year, Promotion of the Year for our Hunter Ice Festival. We won the Design Award for the project of the year for becoming... our national historic district listing in the registry of historic places, and Economic Restructuring Project of the Year for a business recruitment and retention program that we created.

Niles Main Street
uncoverniles.com

Brittney Hoszkiw Next up we'll visit a part of Detroit that shows what is possible through collaboration and over 30 years of placemaking efforts.

---Midtown Detroit---

Larry Ladies and gentleman, I'm Larry, that's my name. Here we go. [plays percussion]

J. Douglas Dunn Actually, I like everything about Midtown. I mean, I like the people, I like the businesses. It's just a very, very nice place to hang out. You have real people, real businesses and just you get a taste of the best of the city.

Bob McClellan I've always lived in cities, different cities my whole life. I've never felt quite so comfortable and part of a community as I have the last few years.

Janet Webster Jones So as a retailer, I think it's a great place to be. I'm a bookseller. You know, people are talking about bookstores going out of business and all, but I intend to go into business some more.

Karen Gage Midtown Detroit Inc. is actually a merged organization of two separate distinct organizations. It was the University Cultural Center Association, which oversaw the development and management of Midtown as a distinct neighborhood and New Center Council, which was a nonprofit business organization that likewise had come together to develop and manage the New Center area. And now we've been working together on various different projects to help beautify and develop Midtown as a unique neighborhood in Detroit.

The Green Garage got together and partnered with the Motor City Brewing Works to develop a green alley working through a grant provided by Midtown Detroit Inc. They went ahead and ripped out all the concrete and put in permeable materials and it looks awesome.

We have two projects that we're currently working on right now, the Woodward Willis is a mixed use new construction development project and over here is what we call the Agave development where the former Agave restaurant once was.

We're here on west Willis Street, which is just west of Cass Avenue. I wanted to bring you here because this is a great example of what we're trying to develop in Midtown as a sense of place. We have a great mix of different retailers here. We're activating the street by providing outdoor seating here and the businesses are very, very much involved in the beautification of this area.

Empress Desta I enjoy the area because this location, it has helped out a lot. It gets people to interact.

Felice Rizzo I love this area. This area to me reminds me of when I lived in San Francisco and Seattle. It's just so cosmopolitan. You know, there are people of literally every ethnic group and every religious group you can imagine, and we all live here peacefully together. And Wayne State's right there of course, and that helps with the diversity of the people around here.

Karen Gage What we feel contributes to these sense of place in Midtown is really activating the streetscape, providing a mix of uses so we can get 24 hour uses in each of our development projects, and really paying attention to what's already existing. Replicating buildings that have been here in the past and putting a modern twist. So we're just... we don't want to cover up our past. We want to celebrate the past and create an interesting place to live.

Janet Webster Jones Well Detroit's my home. It's all, all of Detroit is my favorite because I was born here. My parents came here in the early 1930's and so I like all of Detroit. I like the up and the downs, the good and the bad, but I think the future is bright for Detroit. There's so many people who are coming to Detroit because they are pioneers or they're explorers or they're people that want to do well or do good things for the community. And then they're always talking about the people who've always been here, who laid the foundation for me and many others. So we need to pay attention to those people as well.

So Detroit has a very bright future.

Midtown Detroit Inc.
detroitmidtown.com

Brittney Hoszkiw Michigan's upper peninsula is indisputably one of the most beautiful places in the United States and provides its own unique character. Next we're going to go to one of my favorite places, downtown Calumet.

---Main Street Calumet---

Calumet Main Street Staff Welcome to Calumet Main Street.

Boone Fiala We are in historic downtown Calumet Michigan around the corner of 5th and Elm at my coffee shop, 5th and Elm Coffee House.

Tom Tikkanen When we talk about what it takes to become a national park, a national historical park, you have to have those elements in place as far as your architecture, your history, your historic resources.

We are a real community, not a contrived historic atmosphere, but a genuine historic setting. The Village of Calumet, of course it was always referred to as the Village of Red Jacket up until 1929, but the whole area here community wide was always referred to as Calumet.

As the copper mining developed around here, over a course of 100 years there were 400 mining companies created. They produced at times most of the world's copper at a time when industry was just developing. So as a result, you had such a monumental impact on the American industrial development.

The trick is to preserve our downtowns because with a Main Street program, it's fundamental to the safety and health and welfare of a community. You know, talk about business incubators and all these wonderful projects, and they're great things don't get me wrong, but there's no greater, finer, more successful track record available for business incubators than affordable space in a downtown commercial district. So you can go off in any direction and find reasons why the Main Street program and traditional downtowns are an integral part of a community's long term success.

Shelly Hahn I'm Shelly Hahn, and this is Hahn Hammered Copper, and we've been here for two years.

Jamie Schriener-Hooper And what made you decide to come downtown?

Shelly Well, I love downtown Calumet and I love the whole area, so. The place came up for rent and we had been talking about it and finally the opportunity presented itself and we just decided let's go for it. And it was scary, but here we are.

Tom Tikkanen In the long run, they start to understand that these are the businesses that are supporting their schools systems. These are the businesses that

are providing quite often more jobs than any other business or industry in the area, and that it's a place where people can start businesses.

Tom Dumble I've worked all over the world and lived on the west coast and in the Sierras and the Cascades and the beach areas and it beats almost all of those places because of the cool air and the climate and the people.

Boone Fiala The eccentricities. [laughs] It's, we've got a really good artist community up here. It's really fun. I like it. You just never know what you're going to get when you walk down the street. Every day you'll see your friends and you'll see something new.

Shelly Hahn So many people are so surprised at Calumet in the last even 10 years how it's coming back to life.

Tom Tikkanen This is the holy land for a lot of people. With that kind of passion and that kind of heart, you know our communities will always survive. People are here.

Main Street Calumet
mainstreetcalumet.com

Brittney Hoszkiw Now let's catch up with Olivia Courant at a special event that's bringing people to downtown Lansing.

Olivia Courant I'm Olivia Courant, and this is Fun in 5 and today also happens to be the first Friday of the month, which means it's Lansing First Fridays. Restaurants, galleries, businesses, you name it, there's probably a great deal going on right now in Lansing, so we're going to go take a look at some of those deals. What kind of deals? [deals show on screen]

Oh, and did I mention? There's free trolley rides.

I'm standing in front of Power On, a new business here in downtown Lansing, where today, on First Fridays, you can get a free checkup on your computer.

Grand Traverse Pie Company Staff Today is the first Friday of October, so you get a free slice of apple crumb pie with that.

Olivia Courant Excellent, all right!

We're here at Hager Fox Heating & Air Conditioning and today the special is you buy one air filter and you get the next one half off. And they also have this wonderful photo exhibit and free snacks.

We're here now in Rethreads where today you can get 10% off your total purchase price.

I'm going to grab dinner at Così, where it's buy one meal and get one meal free right here in East Lansing on Grand River.

Now to wrap up the day, let's grab ice cream sundaes from Sparty's Sundae on Clippert Street. Buy one two scoop sundae and get the second half off on Lansing First Fridays.

All of the businesses we've been to today have been really great. Kudos to them for making our downtowns awesome. You can see all participating businesses, great deals, and sign up your business at LansingFirstFridays.com.

I'm Olivia Courant, and this has been fun in five, four, three, two, one.

Brittney Hoszkiw Place isn't about buildings, streets, sidewalks. It's about experiences and people. Placemaking is taking the essence of a community and inviting others to share in what makes it unique.

As you've seen here today, Michigan is working hard to enhance and preserve the wonderful things that make our places and spaces unique.

Thank you for watching The Bright Side. I'm your host, Brittney Hoszkiw and I invite you to submit ideas and make donations at www.brightsidetv.com.

---Outtakes---

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic How long have you lived in Niles?

Juan Ganum I actually don't live in Niles. [Tiffany and Jessica AcMoody start laughing] I'm the Community Development Director for Niles, but yeah, I live in St. Joseph and I've been commuting for 13 years.

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic [talking to the dog Purl] Are you asleep? Although she kinda looks dead.

Olivia Courant And today also happens to be the first Friday of the munch.

Brittney Hoszkiw What am I supposed to be saying? I totally just made that up.

Maggie Kelley [Olivia sneaking halfway into trolley] Go all the way!

Olivia Courant Okay, alright!

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic Alright. So I can't wait to read the book.

Dan Gilbert Let me know what you think.

Tiffany I definitely will. [take 2] Alright, so... I can't wait to read the book.

Dan I... [pauses, everyone laughs]

Tiffany It's so hard to do it naturally when you do it for the third time!

---Credits---

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Music

Tyler Vander Maas – The Bright Side Theme

_ghost – “Reverie (small theme)”

Ivan Chew – “Dollheads”

Do Kashiteru – “ditto, ditto!”

grapes – “I dunno”

Pitx – “Chords for David”

Dominic Tremblay – “Arabic Umbrella”

Tom Cusack – “01 Electro 3 – Guitars”

Herbert Boland – sound effects

hjcrbass – “Bossa Nova Loop”

Michigan Montage Intro

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Fun in 5

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