

# **Moving Michigan Forward: State Thought Leaders Helping Michigan Find Answers**

Real Estate Class

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# **Moving Michigan Forward: State Thought Leaders Helping Michigan Find Answers**

- Volume 2 of a 3-part series.
- Based on interviews by students in ESA 450, Smart Growth and Strategic Land Use Decision Making, F 2010
- Edited by Dr. John Warbach, Professor and Associate Director, MSU Land Policy Institute

# **Moving Michigan Forward: State Thought Leaders Helping Michigan Find Answers**

## **Voices from within the state:**

- We can no longer chase our economic past—a path set a century ago has run its course.
- World economy has changed and with it, different drivers of prosperity, requiring us to embrace new strategies.
- Difficult for the state to adopt a mindset change.
  - Difficult for people to change their basic values and world views.
  - Thomas Friedman, in his recent book, “That Used to be Us,” says we do not currently have identified an “enemy” to fight and have become complacent.

# Interview Subjects

- **Amy Arnold**, Preservation Planner for the State Historic Preservation Office in the Michigan Historical Center.
- **Guy Bazzani**, President of Bazzani Associates Inc.
- **Patty Birkholz**, Director, of the Office of the Great Lakes in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and former State Senator.
- **Matthew Cullen**, President and COO of Rock Ventures LLC, Chair of the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, and volunteer CEO of the M-1 Light Rail Initiative in Detroit.
- **Pat Gillespie**, developer, and Founder and President of the Gillespie Group.
- **Pete Hardigan**, Manager for Environmental Policy for the Sustainability Business Strategies Group at Ford Motor Company.
- **Gary Heidel**, Director of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.
- **Jim Lively**, Program Director for the Michigan Land Use Institute.

# Interview Subjects (Cont.)

- **Larry Merrill**, Executive Director of the Michigan Townships Association.
- **Greg Main**, President of St. Gregory's University, and former CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.
- **Eric Schertzing**, Ingham County Treasurer and Director of the Ingham County Land Bank.
- **Michael Score**, President of Hantz Farms in Detroit.
- **Sam Singh**, Senior Consultant at the New Economy Initiative of Southeast Michigan, and former Mayor of East Lansing.
- **Conan Smith**, Executive Director of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance.
- **Marsha Smith**, Executive Director of Rotary Charities of Traverse City, a CORE Group Member of the Grand Vision; and Advisory Committee Member of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments' New Designs for Growth Program.
- **Tom Woiwode**, Director of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan's Greenways Initiative.

**“Michigan is in its current economic crisis because of the lack of a diversified economy. Michigan is in the position of where Connecticut’s whaling industry went out or when coal mines shut down in the Appalachians.”**

Larry Merrill, Executive Director of the Michigan Townships Association

**“Taking no risk at all is the greater risk, and there must be individuals at both the local and state level willing to take on these risks. At the local level, land banks are the ones that should be willing to take those risks.”**

**Land banks can become an “economic hub that can coordinate activity in multiple cities and multiple townships.”**

Eric Schertzing, Ingham County Treasurer and Director of the Ingham County Land Bank

**“[earlier leadership was] committed to this idea that growth is good, that all growth is good, wherever it is, and the policies were essentially, ‘We don’t need environmental regulation, we need more growth, and wherever that goes, if it’s further out, that’s fine.’”**

Jim Lively, Program Director for the Michigan Land Use Institute



**“A return to prosperity is on the minds of Michigan leaders and citizens. Wealth only makes up one component of prosperity, certainly not the entire thing. Providing an excellent sense of community and sense of place more accurately describes prosperity.”**

Conan Smith, Executive Director for the Michigan Suburbs Alliance

**“The greatest threat to the future success of Michigan is the current lack of education in the state. This includes early education through the university level. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis cites a rate of return of \$3–\$17 for every \$1 spent on early education.”**

**[http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications\\_papers/studies/earlychild/lessonslearned.pdf](http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers/studies/earlychild/lessonslearned.pdf)**

Patty Birkholz, Director of the Office of the Great Lakes in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and former State Senator.

**“Local government plays key roles in moving Michigan forward, but while their power is limited; their capacity to help shape a forward-looking vision for Michigan is not so limited. Townships need to address a number of land use decision-making issues. [However] the public expects the government to act inconsistently with the law.”**

Larry Merrill, Executive Director of the Michigan Townships Association

**“There has been some thought that past land use policies are partly to blame for the current economic crisis in Michigan. There is some truth in that in the ever extending grabbing up of more properties, urban sprawl creates a cost for municipalities, both in term of capital improvement and maintenance cost.”**

Greg Main, President of St. Gregory's University, and former CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

**“When people around the world begin to compliment the beauty and festive nature of a place, those who live there develop a sense of pride limitlessly beneficial to the city. Once the people of a place have gained a strong emotional attachment to their city, they push to make it even greater.”**

Tom Woiwode, Director of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan’s Greenways Initiative.

**“Now, more than ever, businesses are going to where the talent is, not the other way around, so attracting and retaining young talent ensures a city’s ability to continually attract new businesses, as well as money. That is why it is crucial for future growth.”**

Gary Heidel, Director of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)

**“The vitality of Southeast Michigan inner-ring cities *depends* and is *directly linked* to the vitality of the City of Detroit.”**

Conan Smith, Executive Director of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance

**Conan Smith sees renewable energy being heavily integrated into the future of the state of Michigan. He sees renewable energy as being the next generation of great jobs. He also sees urban agriculture playing a role, due to its richness in social capital.**

Conan Smith, Executive Director of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance



# Summary of Contributed Thoughts

- ***A better educated population is needed:*** This includes a high-quality general education for our children and greater skill training and technical knowledge for adults.
- ***The economy needs greater diversification:*** For a long time Michigan hung its future on the automobile industry, and suffered through its ups and downs. However, that industry and manufacturing in general, while still important, operate differently now, requiring fewer, but better educated workers. This means that the large numbers of jobs in the auto industry will never return, and displaced auto workers need to find other areas for employment, which may include the need for retraining.
- ***A green economy will be an important growth industry for Michigan:*** This includes renewable energy, energy efficiency and renewable use of the state's natural resources, and requires both a better educated workforce and support for public policy to incentivize these economic sectors for Michigan to move forward.

# Summary of Contributed Thoughts (Cont.)

- ***Regional cooperation is vital to moving Michigan forward:***  
The problems and opportunities Michigan communities face cannot be solved except at a regional scale. Therefore, public policy can stimulate such cooperation, as well as the understanding of local community leaders that this is an essential way to do business.
- ***Transit for and between urban areas is essential for communities:*** This will help Michigan become more efficient and attract the kind of talent that is needed for a modern economy.
- ***Detroit is vital to the eventual turn-around for Michigan:***  
This includes mass transit, urban farming, historic preservation and investment in technology and the arts are part of the story of reinventing Michigan's first city and major metro.