



***EMBARGOED UNTIL  
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## **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION TO LEAD MAJOR PLACEMAKING PROJECTS**

***“Penny for Your Thoughts” contest generated 59 ideas for corridor improvement***

**LANSING, MICH.** – The Community Foundation announced it will develop public areas of the downtown riverfront and explore development of an urban market on or near Michigan Avenue between the capitol and Abbot Road. These projects resulted from the foundation’s “Penny for Your Thoughts” contest held in March, which generated 59 ideas from the community to help create a vibrant urban core to attract and retain talent in our region.

A committee of urban planners and placemaking experts screened the 59 ideas and made these recommendations to the Community Foundation, based on the feasibility, creativity and potential impact of the projects. Several smaller projects were also recommended for implementation along Michigan Avenue.

“We are thrilled that so many residents care about making our city and region vibrant and are participating in the process,” said Dennis Flieman, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “Just as community foundations in Port Huron and Muskegon have revitalized their communities with similar placemaking projects, we will lead projects big and small that, collectively, will make our community more vibrant and attractive to talent. Ultimately, a revitalized urban core will enhance economic prosperity, benefitting everyone who lives and works throughout the tri-county region.”

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Plans for the downtown riverfront include improved watercraft access and docking, enhanced parks and fishing areas, artwork and creative lighting, public seating areas with fireplaces, and an outdoor “classroom” on the riverbank. Other ideas for improvements are encouraged from the public. The foundation will focus on areas between the Cherry Hill boat launch and the Brenke fish ladder.

The urban market project has not yet been developed, and may be modeled after similar markets in downtown Grand Rapids and Flint. The foundation is currently exploring business models and possible locations on or near the Michigan Avenue corridor.

“Along with LEAP and our other partners, our Community Foundation has been instrumental in leading regional placemaking efforts,” said Bob Trezise, president and CEO of LEAP. “The Penny For Your Thoughts campaign is a great example of this commitment, and it provides us with important insight we can use to strengthen our growing success in attracting and keeping world-class talent in the region.”

“Our Community Foundation will be engaged in fundraising for all of our placemaking projects,” said Flichman. “Already, we have received positive feedback from several individuals and businesses that understand placemaking is an investment that attracts and retains a talented workforce and jobs. We know an improved economy helps everyone, especially the disadvantaged.”

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*Our Community Foundation is passionate about creating vibrant, thriving communities throughout the capital region. The Foundation works with donors to meet their unique charitable goals, supports area nonprofits with grants and coaching, and leads innovative projects that drive community growth. The Community Foundation (also known as the Capital Region Community Foundation) is a tax-exempt public charity that serves the charitable needs and enhances the quality of life for people in Ingham, Clinton and Eaton counties.*