



MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
CONVENTION 2024
WELCOME!

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2024

Equitable Small Business Ecosystems: Tangible Ways to Support Your Business Community

Richard Murphy, Program Manager, Policy Research Labs
Rachel Skylis, Program Manager-Business Development, MML Foundation



We love where you live—and we want it to thrive

Policy

For “the general improvement of every branch of municipal administration”

Partnerships

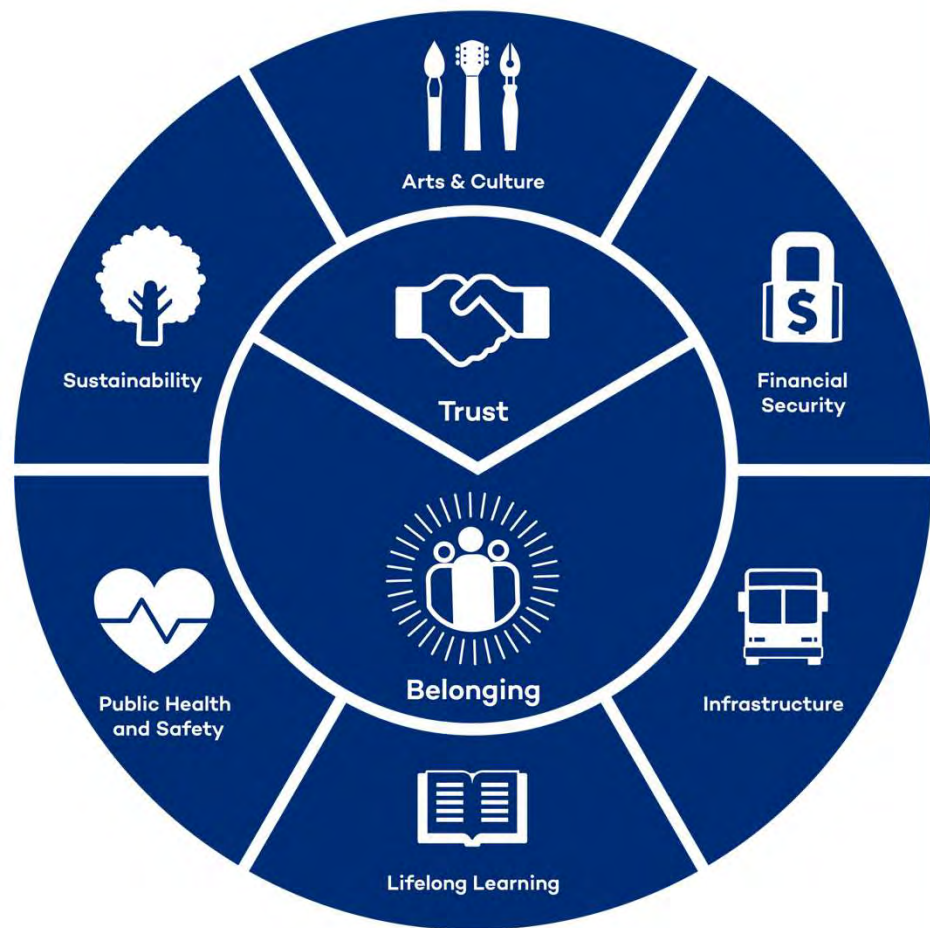
Conveners of place, stewards of community

Placemaking

This place matters and is worth investing in—together

People





Creating thriving communities

A thriving community embodies connection, accessibility, and opportunity for its residents. It fosters a mindset of inspiration and optimism among leaders, prioritizing trust and belonging in everyday municipal decisions.

It is **placemaking**, it is **community wealth building**, it is **growing Michigan together**, it is **resilience**.

**Placemaking
+ Financial Security
= Local Economies**

COVID showed our members the fragility of their local small businesses—both as sense of place assets and as people’s livelihoods.

New willingness to act quickly, try new things—but still constrained by capacity and lack of needed partners.



Our local economies initiative

- Entrepreneurs face gaps in access to space, capital, technical assistance, and support networks
- These gaps are more pronounced in smaller communities outside economic centers—resources often out of sight and out of reach
- Addressing these gaps can especially help first-time, low-income, or low-status entrepreneurs—those with the least personal capital or connections to leverage

Local government can tackle some of these gaps and can be a bridge to resources that fill others.



Current work

1. Convenings in local communities
2. Technical assistance to increase access to space
3. Development of best practices guide
4. Ongoing engagement with Michigan microbusiness policy roundtable

Southeast Michigan focus,
support from Ralph C. Wilson Jr.
Foundation



Local Economies Deep Dive



Deep Dives

- On-site engagement with business owners, municipal staff & elected officials, local and regional support organizations
- Understand what's working, what's not, what opportunities are available
- “Opportunity Report” prepared for each community with findings, recommendations, resources

Deep Dives

1. Microbusiness coffee hour
2. Downtown/business district walking tour
3. Lunch!
4. Stakeholder discussion
5. Wrap up meeting with municipality



Deep Dives

- Pilot: Monroe, Brighton, Howell
- Current: Ortonville, Milan, Belleville, Chelsea
- Upcoming: Marine City



Theme: (re)building connections

- Neither businesses nor municipalities know what supports exist
- State and regional actors are often unknown or absent—and don't know who to reach out to locally
- Our on-site engagements are creating bridges between locals, financial, and business support organizations





Theme: placemaking remains a powerful tool

- Placemaking can impact foot traffic, business recruitment, infrastructure investment, and more
- Opportunity for “friendraising” community building
- Can spur further community led change and maintain momentum

Theme: it takes a village

- Municipalities, microbusinesses, non-profits and more all expressed the same concern—no one can own all of this
- Cross-sector partnerships are critical to sustainable community progress





Microbusiness Ready Best Practices

Microbiz best practices

- Playbook for communities to better support their entrepreneurs
- Inspired by and extends on MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities program to look not just at sites and structures, but who ends up in them
- Online Idea Bank of case studies and inspirations from around Michigan





Process

- Learnings from our local engagements
- Interviews and focus groups with municipal staff, BSOs, financial institutions
- Lit review of national resources and guidance (typically for bigger places!)
- Consultant team: McKenna, Life's Journey

Playbook

- Booklet of first-step, “essential” actions
- Heavier guide to support continuous improvement
- Procedure for periodic, collaborative self-review and goal-setting
- Supplemental materials and templates
- Resource list



Best Practice Categories

1. Friendly town hall
2. Policy (zoning, permitting, incentives, procurement)
3. Relationship building
4. Education
5. Placemaking and promotion



BP1: Friendly town hall

- Website and social media audits
- Designated business support staff, training on available resources
- Clear office hours and contact info
- One-page guide on how to open a business

Tl;dr: an entrepreneur's first contact with the municipality shouldn't be an enforcement action!

HOW TO OPEN A NEW BUSINESS IN EASTPOINTE

Welcome to the City of Eastpointe! The Gateway to Macomb County. Starting a business can be both exciting and challenging. The City of Eastpointe is here to help and created this flowchart to assist you throughout the process.

Have questions? Flip the page over for our contact information.

Need more information?
Scan this QR code for a thorough
step-by-step checklist regarding
how to open a business.



BP2: Policy

- Expand low-barrier-to-entry opportunities: home-based business, pop ups, food trucks / mobile vending
- Enable additional housing options in zoning
- Reduce off-street parking requirements
- Stop duplicating state/county processes, e.g. in-home child care requirements
- Review license/permitting requirements and fees for necessity

Regulatory reforms can streamline entrepreneurship, increase equity of access, and reduce municipal workload



BP3: Relationships

- Know your BSOs: chamber, banks, SBSH, real estate agents, schools...
- Understand & train on the specific needs of your community members
- Promote events for both networking and cultural awareness
- Meet people where they are

BP4: Education

- Provide training on business essentials and financial literacy for new and potential entrepreneurs

Don't reinvent things: the municipality is a convener and a connector, not the service provider!



BP5: Placemaking and Promotion

- Invest in public spaces
- Activate vacant properties—temporarily until permanently
- Coordinate with businesses to take advantage of special events

Host the party, don't be the party!



Themes, Learnings, Impacts, and Next Steps

Municipalities are often microbusinesses themselves

- All the same capacity challenges!
- Relationships can be fragile—elections or job changes can cause big gaps in institutional memory
- How do we best target and size our support to meet communities where they are?





Tackling space needs

- Finding appropriate space is a challenge for entrepreneurs in every community
- Municipalities have very direct role through zoning and economic development tools
- Adapting Redevelopment Ready approaches to target microbusiness space needs

Microbusiness policy engagement

- Connecting state-level initiatives to on-the-ground experience
- Conduit for local communities to connect with regional and state actors, and for those organizations to broaden and deepen local engagement
- Will be key partners as we begin sharing lessons learned from site visits and shaping a cohort gathering in 2025

Other tools

Coming soon to the League website
<https://mml.org/resources-research/local-economies/>

- Idea Bank: online database of case studies
- Community data dashboard
- Extended best practices guide





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