

FOCUS

THE MONTHLY BUSINESS NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FEBRUARY 2026

Infrastructure Beyond the Pavement

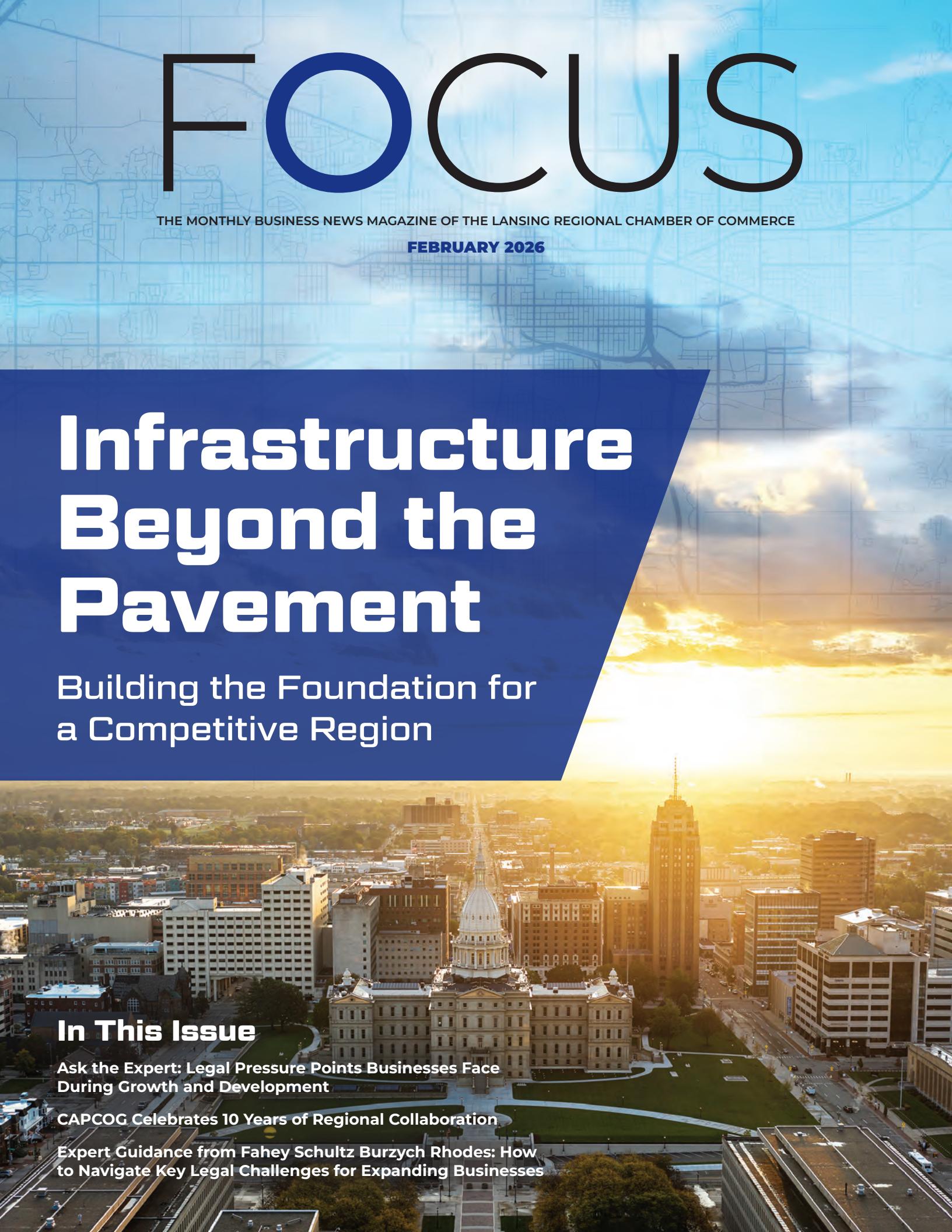
Building the Foundation for
a Competitive Region

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Ask the Expert: Legal Pressure Points Businesses Face
During Growth and Development

CAPCOG Celebrates 10 Years of Regional Collaboration

Expert Guidance from Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes: How
to Navigate Key Legal Challenges for Expanding Businesses





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LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER



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PRESIDENT AND CEO
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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



“

As we look ahead to the next chapter of the Chamber's history, I am energized by the momentum we are building and grateful for the members, partners, and leaders who continue to invest in the future of the Lansing region.”

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER

A Milestone Year Worth Celebrating

This year marks a truly milestone moment for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, and we invite our business and community partners to celebrate with us. On February 25, we will gather for the 125th Anniversary Gala, a reimagined event replacing our traditional Annual Dinner and serving as the cornerstone celebration of this historic year. As the Lansing region's longest-running and most prestigious business event, the evening will honor our past, celebrate the present, and inspire the future of our region.

As we celebrate this historic anniversary, we also take pride in the significant progress made throughout 2025—progress that reflects the strength and engagement of our members, business community and partners.

Over the past year, the Chamber:

- ✓ Membership growth that continues to strengthen our business community
- ✓ Successfully retaining a 5-Star Accreditation, placing the LRCC among the top 3% of chambers nationwide
- ✓ Rolling out a refreshed strategic plan focused on business value and engagement, achieving 81%-member engagement
- ✓ A strong year of policy influence and local election success, ensuring our region's business voice and priorities are represented

As we step into our 125th year, we are also honored to celebrate the exceptional individuals and organizations who will be recognized at this year's Gala—leaders who embody the values, innovation, and community spirit that define our region:

2026 Award Honorees:

- ✓ **Community Service Award:** Mark McDaniel, Cinnaire
- ✓ **Outstanding Small Business Award:** Duckett Brothers Distributing
- ✓ **Diversity Star Award** (with LEAP): Lansing Board of Water & Light
- ✓ **Legacy Award:** Michigan State University
- ✓ **Ambassador of the Year:** Kat Gandolfo, Rooted Real Estate of Greater Lansing with RE/MAX Real Estate Professionals

Each honoree represents the leadership and dedication that have guided our region's growth for more than a century—and will continue to shape our shared future.

The 125th Anniversary Gala also launches a year filled with meaningful milestones. In 2026, we proudly celebrate 20 years of the Ten Over the Next 10 Awards, recognizing emerging leaders who are shaping what's next for the Lansing region. Later this year, we will host the 20th Annual Celebration of Regional Growth Awards, honoring the businesses whose leadership, investment, and innovation continue to drive economic vitality across Mid-Michigan.

We are also marking 10 years of collaboration through the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG). Formed to bring regional partners together across Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties, CAPCOG was created to move beyond political boundaries and jurisdictional lines. Its purpose is clear: to work collaboratively to identify projects of regional importance and advocate for them with a unified regional voice.

These milestones reflect the power of collaboration and a shared commitment to progress. As we look ahead to the next chapter of the Chamber's history, I am energized by the momentum we are building and grateful for the members, partners, and leaders who continue to invest in the future of the Lansing region.

I invite you to join us as we celebrate 125 years of impact and continue building a vibrant, prosperous future for the Lansing region together. ♦

Welcome New Members

A.T.S - Airport Tavern Steakhouse - ME Powers Co, LLC
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www.ingstrupdoors.com
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www.massageblissokemos.com
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Serra Auto Campus
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University of Michigan Health - Sparrow Lansing
Warren - St. Mary Investment LLC

Chamber Milestones

Granger Waste Services
35 years

Wieland
35 years

Canada Dry Bottling Co. of Lansing
30 years

Kia of Lansing
20 years

CAMPGROUNDS-R-US
10 years

Coolidge Place Townhomes
10 years

DK Security & Investigations
10 years

Howard Hanna Real Estate Executives
5 years

Lansing Family and Lifestyle Medicine
5 years

Zeineh Law
5 years

We'd like to offer a special salute to these great organizations who reached milestone anniversaries as Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce members this month. Thank you for your continued support throughout the years!



CONNECT.

GROW.

THRIVE.

A New Way to Connect. Grow. Thrive. with LRCC

We are excited to announce the Chamber's new look for 2026!

As part of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's mission to **Connect**, **Grow**, and **Thrive**, all events and programming will be rebranded into an integrated business resource hub. This approach will support small businesses, entrepreneurs, and larger employers by providing the education, leadership development, and connections needed to succeed in today's dynamic business environment.

CONNECT

WHERE RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN AND BUSINESS CONNECTIONS FLOURISH.

All Member Mixers, Business Roundtables, and similar networking events will be promoted through the **Connect** Series. Designed to bring professionals together, Connect creates meaningful opportunities for members to build relationships, share insights, and strengthen the local business community. It is where connections spark collaboration, partnerships take shape, and business grows.

GROW

FUELING GROWTH AND UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

The **Grow** programs empower business professionals with the tools, education, and inclusive perspectives needed to advance. Through the Growth Series, the Chamber brings together experts and peers to support innovation, professional development, and long term success. In 2026, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce will offer more than 20 programs led by LRCC member experts representing a wide range of industries.

THRIVE

CULTIVATING LEADERS WHO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF OUR REGION.

We will promote all of our leadership programs through **Thrive**. The Thrive Talent and Leadership Series will help empower employees, strengthen leaders, and foster a culture of continuous learning that drives organizational success. In 2026, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce will launch a new leadership program, expanding its leadership development portfolio alongside Leadership Lansing, Aspiring Leaders, and Inclusive Leadership.





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Perhaps no part of the economy affects each of us as personally as health care. It brings new life into the world. It cures diseases. It saves lives.

It's also expensive. Your ability to afford health care is essential — and affordable health insurance is a big part of that. As prices for medical services and prescription drugs continue to rise, so does the pressure on health insurance affordability. Last year, our prescription drug costs alone grew 15% — five times faster than inflation. This concerns us, because it pressures your health insurance costs.

We want you to better understand why this is happening. We want you to know everything we are doing about it, including our efforts to lower the costs of running our company by \$600 million while we maintain the quality services our members expect.

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REAL SOLUTIONS

Legal Pressure Points Businesses Face During Growth and Development

By: Hannah Morgan Smith, Associate Attorney with Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC

Periods of economic development bring opportunity for businesses, but they also expose legal pressure points that may not exist during routine operations. Two of the costliest areas where businesses commonly encounter problems are employment compliance and real estate obligations.

Wage and hour compliance is one area that regularly creates issues during expansion because the rules are technical and easily misunderstood. As a business becomes more profitable, it can feel natural to move long-term or high-performing employees to a salaried structure as a way to reward loyalty, provide stability, or signal advancement. However, paying an employee a salary does not automatically mean the employee is exempt from overtime laws. Under federal law, most employees are entitled to overtime pay when they work more than forty hours in a workweek unless a specific overtime exemption applies. Typically, overtime exemptions require meeting both a job duties test and a minimum salary threshold. When a salaried employee does not meet those strict exemption requirements, they are legally entitled to overtime pay.

Problems arise when salaried employees regularly work extended hours without overtime compensation, an issue that often goes unnoticed until an employee complaint or government audit reveals months or years of unpaid overtime, penalties, and interest. These situations are typically preventable. Businesses



Morgan Smith

should consult with legal counsel to review the role and day-to-day responsibilities of salaried employees to determine whether they qualify for an overtime exemption under applicable law.

Real estate decisions present similar risks. Infrastructure investment often leads businesses to relocate, expand, or enter new commercial developments. Commercial leases are frequently drafted to favor landlords and impose significant liability on tenants. Insurance obligations, maintenance responsibilities, and indemnification provisions are often buried in the fine print. Without careful review, a business may find itself responsible for damage it did not cause, exposed to uninsured losses, or unable to recover costs when a landlord fails to perform required obligations. Another recurring issue involves common area maintenance charges. Many leases allow landlords to pass through shared costs with little transparency and without audit rights. Over time, those charges can escalate and materially affect operating budgets, particularly for businesses operating in multi-tenant developments.

Employment and real estate risks are far more manageable when addressed before practices are established or long-term obligations are set. Proactive legal review allows businesses to address potential exposure early, preserving flexibility and reducing the likelihood of disruption as the business grows. ♦



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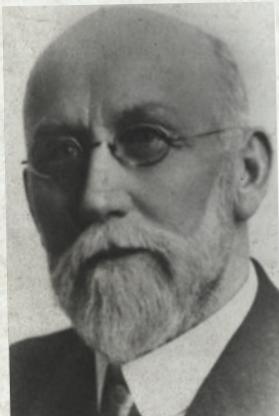
Presidents & Chairs of the Lansing Chamber and its Predecessors

Presidents / Chair of Board of Lansing Chamber of Commerce - Established January 15, 1912 - The title changed from President to Chairman of the Board in 1988.

Presidents of the Lansing Chamber of Commerce**Est. JANUARY 15, 1912****Charles P Downey - 1909 & 1910**

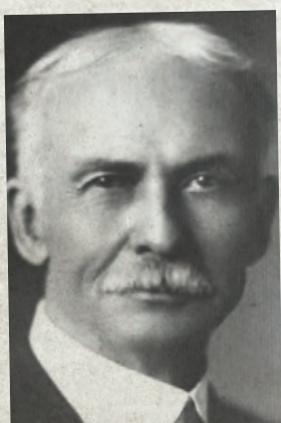
Downey was born in 1869, the son of H.J. Downey. In 1888 the Downeys purchased the Lansing House and changed its name to Hotel Downey and immediately remodeled the building at a cost of \$75,000, thereby creating a first-class hotel. The hotel was a popular convention location for businesses

and organizations wishing to meet in the capital city. The second floor contained committee rooms and while the Legislature was in session, the hotel was the most popular restaurant and watering hole in town. Governor Rich called the Downey his home while in office. Mr. Downey died in 1921

**James Henry Moores - 1912 & 1913**

First Chamber President 1912 & 1913. Moores was born in Ohio in 1846 and by way of Alabama came to Lansing around 1906. He was an organizer of the Atlas Drop Forge Company and became a real estate developer. In 1909, Moores donated the land for Moores Park (also known as Belvedere Park), which became a zoo until Potter Park was donated and developed.

Moores died in 1918 and gifted to Lansing the land for Frances Park in his will. The Country Club of Lansing's history began in 1908 when a group of 17 men formed what was called the Lansing Golf Club which leased the land and the soon-to-be built "locker house" from J.H. Moores. He envisioned the golf club as a booster to his subdivision along the Grand River.

**William K. Prudden - 1914 & 1915**

Prudden was a pioneer in the automobile wheel business. The Prudden Wheel Company became one of the leading industries of Lansing and largest manufacturer of wheels in the world. The American Savings Bank was organized largely through his efforts in 1910 and in 1921 the bank merged with another bank to form the American State Savings Bank. The Prudden building, when built, was known as Lansing's

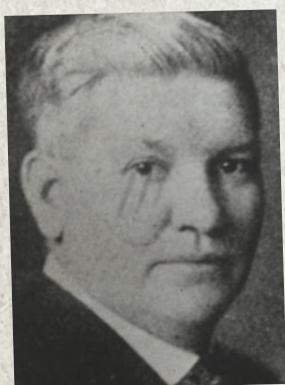
first tall building. The first paved road from Lansing to Detroit and westward to Grand Rapids is cited as a monument to Prudden's foresight in championing better roads in Michigan and it was Prudden's initiative which resulted in the first concrete road between Lansing and East Lansing. Prudden also gifted to Lansing the Prudden Auditorium, which was completed in 1916.



J. Edward Roe - 1916 & 1917

Roe was a founder and president of Lansing State Savings Bank, which opened in 1892. He was a charter member of the Lansing Rotary Club in 1916 and its first president. It is believed he was born in 1862 and died January 17, 1939. Roe held various offices in numerous civic

organizations, including the Grand River Boat Club, one of the most prominent social organizations in the late 1800s and early 1900s and the site of the organizing meeting of the LBMA in 1901. Roe was elected a board member of LBMA, served as president as well as treasurer and secretary.



F.N. Arbaugh - 1918 & 1919

In 1896, Arbaugh left Pennsylvania for Lansing to join his college roommate, Basil Cameron in the operation of Cameron's uncle's department store which was a one story building near the corner of S. Washington and Kalamazoo streets. In 1897 the uncle sold a half interest in the business to young Arbaugh. The store became the first in Lansing to accept employees'

paychecks from the newly established Olds Motor Works. A new store was constructed in 1906, which still stands today. In 1909, Arbaugh became the sole owner of the store and named it F.N. Arbaugh Company. In 1953 a "sizable interest" in the business was sold and Clarence R. Knapp replaced Arbaugh's son as manager. The store closed in 1972. Arbaugh died March 5, 1955



Clarence Edwin Bement - 1920

Bement moved to Lansing in 1869. In 1876, he entered the University of Michigan but did not finish his studies there. Instead, he went into business with his father and brothers after his second year at the university. The family business, known as E. Bement & Sons, in 1890, was the largest factory in Lansing and its sales force serviced the area from the East Coast to Texas. Bement's product line was extremely diverse. Bement

always regretted leaving college early and accumulated a library of more than 5,000 volumes, largely on historical and classical subjects. In 1898, he was elected a member of the Lansing Board of Education, a position he held for 12 years. He was named superintendent of Lansing Schools and then became general manager of Novo Engine Company. Bement died in 1935.



M.R. Carrier - 1921 & 1922

Carrier was born in Calhoun County, Michigan and moved to Lansing in 1881. The firm he was involved with started out as a patent medicine manufacturer established by Dr. Eugene Robertson and B.D. Northrop. The business started in 1874 and later became a jobber of drug and grocery specialties. The company was located at 114 and 116 Ottawa Street and soon branched into other cities throughout

the Midwest. Carrier was the junior partner in the business but served as the business manager. Carrier was president and general manager of Federal Drop Forge and also served as vice president of American Savings Bank. Carrier formed Carrier-Stevens Chemical Company, which was located in Holt and continued in business into the 1970s. He was also president of Lansing Rotary 1917-1918. He died in 1944.



Donald E. Bates - 1923

Bates was born in Lansing in 1883. Bates was secretary-treasurer and later president of REO Motor Car Company, an alternate delegate to Republican National Convention from Michigan in 1932 and was an initial organizer of the Community Welfare Fund in 1919 in conjunction with Ray Potter, W.H. Prudden, Frank N. Arbaugh, C.E. Bement

and Charles W. Nichols. The fund was a community organization which worked to consolidate and organize the large number of charitable solicitations being made. The organization is now known as the Capital Area United Way. Bates was also a founding member of Lansing Rotary and president in 1918-1919. Bates died in 1949



John W. Haarer - 1924 & 1925

Haarer was born April 21, 1876 in Ann Arbor. He was involved in the insurance business much of his life and was a candidate for Michigan State House of Representatives from Washtenaw County 1st District in 1902. He was

the Michigan state treasurer from 1913 through 1916. He was also vice president of the City National Bank of Lansing and appointed by Gov. Fred W. Green as chairman of the Bath General Relief Fund.



Hugo B. Lundberg - 1926 & 1927

Lundberg was born on March 7, 1877 in Sweden. During his years as president, chamber erected the first hanger at what would become the Capital City Airport. Also, during his presidency, the Chamber formed its first Legislative Committee. Lundberg was a very successful industrialist having been a founder and owner of Michigan

Screw Company which was formed with the assistance of R.E. Olds to ensure a reliable supply of parts for his auto company. Lundberg was chair of the Board of Water and Light for many years. He was also President of Lansing Rotary 1919-1920. Lundberg died on December 5, 1967.





Businesses for Federal Research Funding (BFRF) Coalition

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) remains actively engaged with the Businesses for Federal Research Funding (BFRF) Coalition, a national alliance of employers and organizations advocating for sustained federal investment in research and development (R&D).

Federal R&D funding is a critical driver of innovation, job creation, and long-term economic competitiveness. Strategic research investments support emerging industries such as advanced manufacturing, health sciences, artificial intelligence, and clean energy—strengthening regional economies while ensuring the United States remains globally competitive.

LRCC ENGAGEMENT

On behalf of the Greater Lansing business community, LRCC has reinforced the importance of federal research funding with Michigan's congressional and legislative delegation through formal advocacy and grassroots engagement. Michigan State University serves on the Chamber's Executive Board through its Regional Initiatives Division Director, positioning university leadership to help guide long-term strategies for growing an innovation-driven economy.

In close collaboration with MSU, LRCC has engaged directly with Congressman Tom Barrett, U.S. Senators Gary Peters, and Elissa Slotkin to emphasize the role research universities play as anchors of innovation and regional growth.

LOOKING AHEAD

Now representing 85 members across 36 states, the BFRF Coalition continues to advocate for stable, sustained federal research funding, timely action on approved grants, and a strong R&D pipeline to protect American leadership.

For more information, contact LRCC SVP of Public Affairs Steve Japinga at sjapinga@lansingchamber.org. ♦

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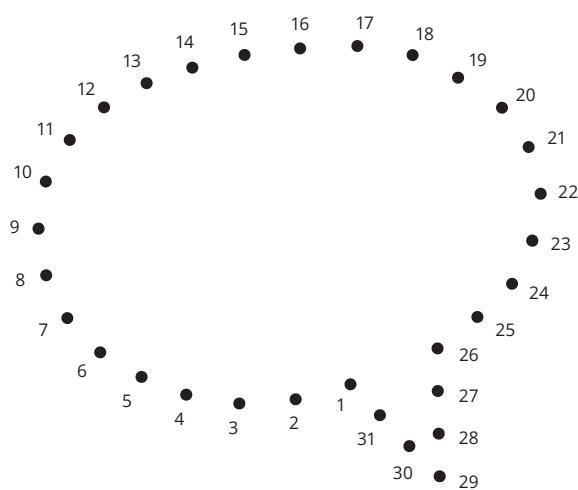
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CAPCOG Celebrates 10 Years of Regional Collaboration

In 2026, the Capital Council of Governments marks ten years of bringing regional partners together to advance shared priorities across Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties. Formed to move beyond political boundaries and jurisdictional lines, CAPCOG was created with a clear purpose: to work collaboratively to identify projects of regional importance and advocate for them with a unified voice.

CAPCOG brings together county leaders, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Michigan State University to support economic development and growth opportunities for the Greater Lansing region at both the Michigan Legislature and in Washington DC. Over the past decade, the partnership has helped elevate infrastructure needs that no single community could advance alone.

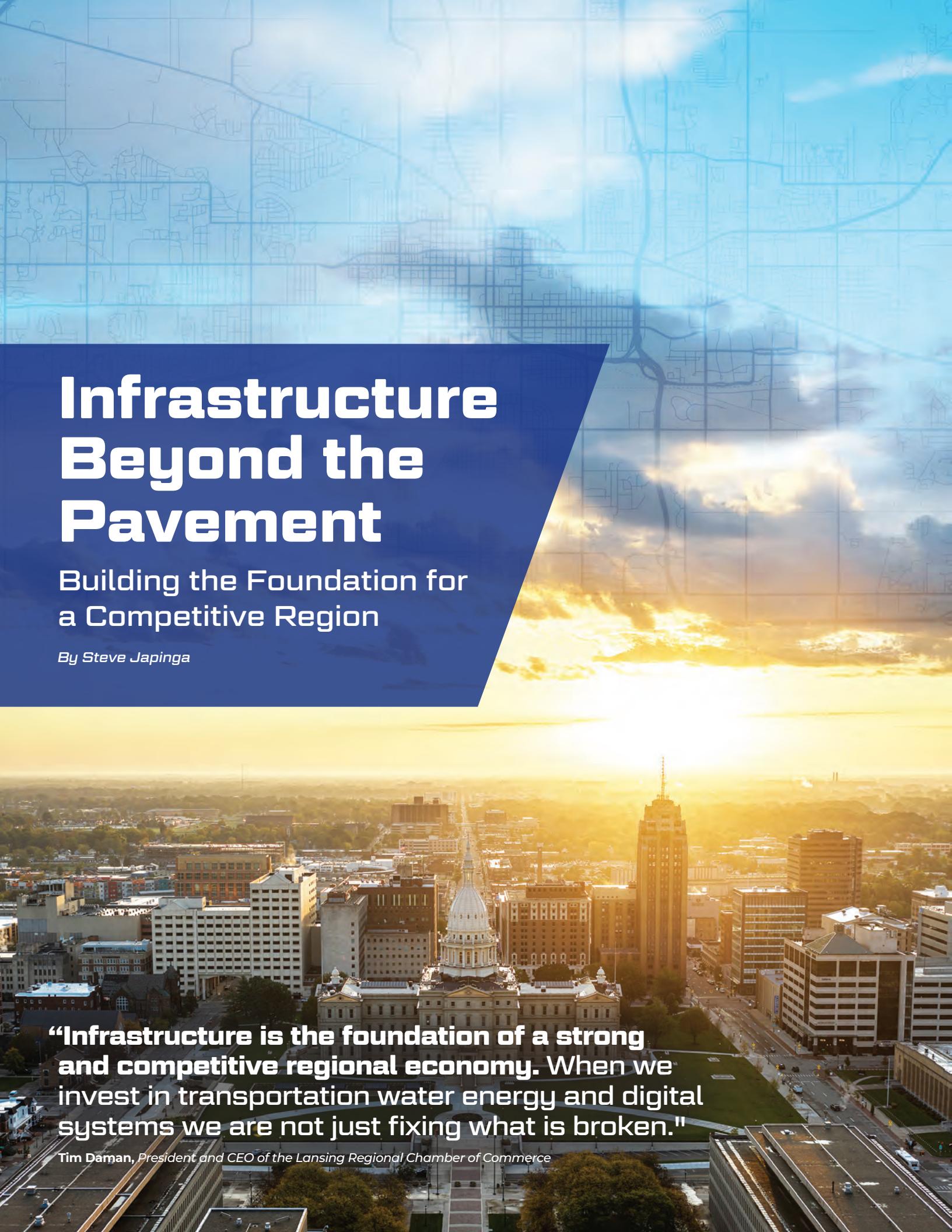
"It was critical for our region to move past politics and focus on what was best for the entire area," said Bob Showers, Clinton County Commissioner and founder of CAPCOG. "By working together across county lines, we were able to identify projects of real need and be effective advocates for those investments at the state and federal levels."

As the region continues to pursue major infrastructure and economic development initiatives, CAPCOG remains a model for how collaboration and shared leadership can deliver results. Ten years in, the partnership continues to strengthen the region's ability to compete, grow, and succeed together. ♦

Ten Key Regional Infrastructure Successes Advanced Through the Capital Council of Governments

Over the past decade, the Capital Council of Governments has helped elevate and advocate for major infrastructure investments across Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties. Together, regional partners have successfully advanced the following priority projects.

1. The Coleman Road Extension, improving regional connectivity and supporting economic development.
2. Heritage Hall at the Michigan State Capitol, enhancing public access and supporting the Capitol complex.
3. Rebuilding Michigan transportation investments, strengthening roads and bridges throughout the region.
4. M99 resurfacing, improving safety and reliability for a critical regional corridor.
5. Capital Region International Airport cargo ramp expansion, supporting logistics, commerce, and regional competitiveness.
6. Chandler Road reconstruction, improving transportation access and local connectivity.
7. Dewitt Road improvements in the City of St Johns, supporting growing residential and commercial activity.
8. Funding for the Eaton County Intercounty Bank Drain infrastructure project, addressing long standing water system needs.
9. Michigan Avenue reconstruction in the City of Lansing, reconnecting downtown Lansing, the State Capitol, and Michigan State University.
10. St Johns M-21 water main reconstruction, strengthening water infrastructure and supporting future growth.



Infrastructure Beyond the Pavement

Building the Foundation for
a Competitive Region

By Steve Japinga

“Infrastructure is the foundation of a strong and competitive regional economy. When we invest in transportation water energy and digital systems we are not just fixing what is broken.”

Tim Daman, President and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

“Infrastructure decisions made today will shape how our region competes tomorrow.

Kwafo Adarkwa, Lansing Regional Chamber Policy Committee Chair and Principal at Kelley Cawthorne

When businesses talk about infrastructure the conversation often starts with roads and sidewalks. Safe and reliable transportation networks are essential to moving people, goods, and services efficiently throughout the region. But infrastructure today is far broader than what we see from behind the wheel. It includes the systems that support modern commerce, protect public health, power our economy, and connect communities to opportunity.

That broader understanding of infrastructure is why it remains a core policy priority of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. Our members consistently tell us that long term economic growth depends on sustained investment in the systems that allow businesses and communities to function grow and compete.

“Infrastructure is the foundation of a strong and competitive regional economy. When we invest in transportation water energy and digital systems we are not just fixing what is broken. We are positioning Greater Lansing to attract investment support businesses and create opportunity for the long term.” explains Tim Daman, President and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Transportation remains the most visible and widely understood form of infrastructure and it continues to be a critical focus. Over the past several years the region has seen major progress on the US-127, I-496, and I-69 corridor which serves as the central spine of commerce in Greater Lansing. This network carries workers north and south, connects east and west, and supports everything from daily commutes to regional freight movement.

These improvements did not happen overnight. They reflect a phased, multi year approach that required coordination, patience and sustained investment. Recently, a major milestone in this corridor was completed with additional work continuing toward a



Photos from the US-127 rebuild; courtesy of MDOT

targeted completion in 2028. Once finished, the corridor will provide improved reliability, reduced congestion, and stronger regional connectivity. These benefits directly impact employers employees and customers alike.

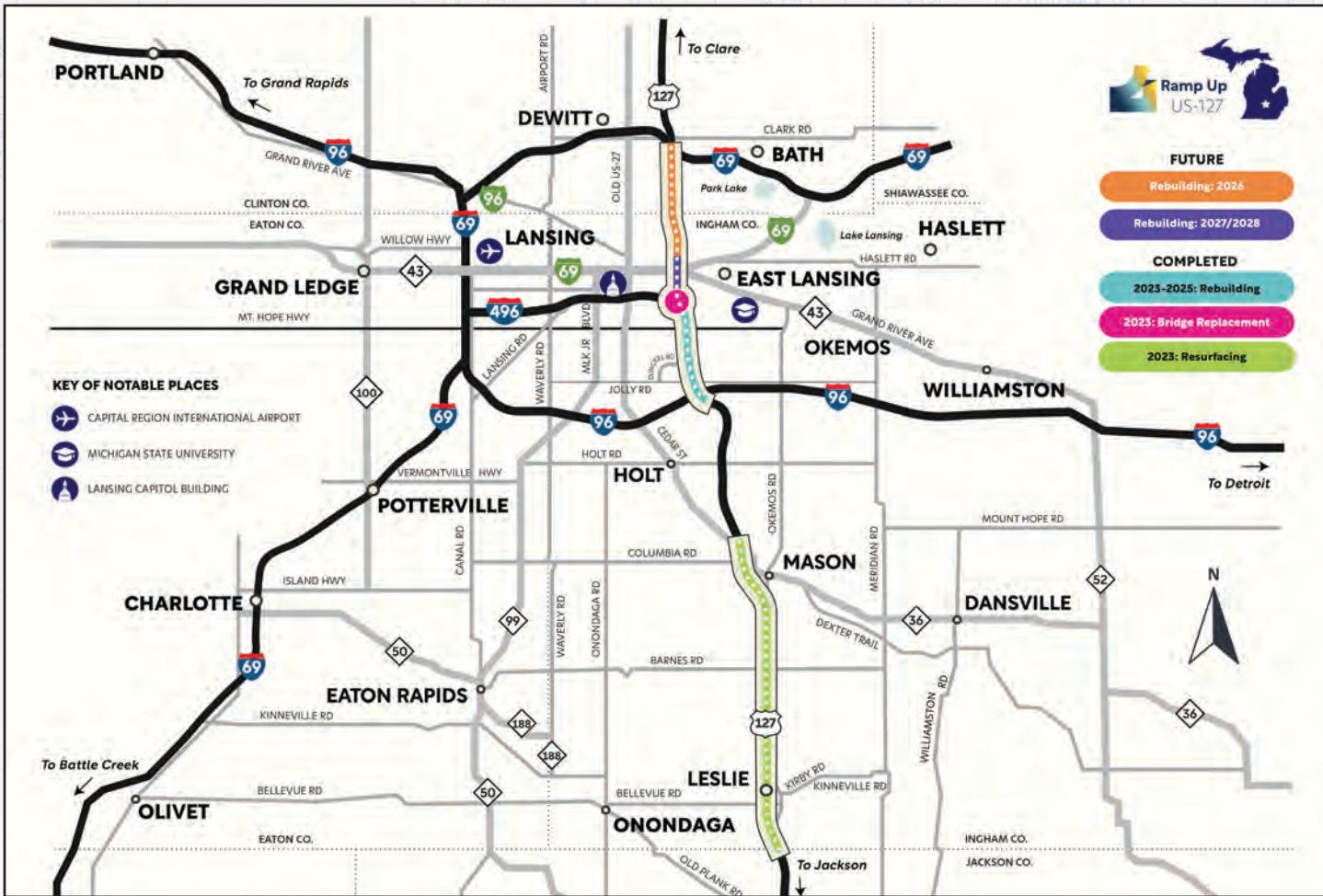


Michigan Avenue Corridor ribbon cutting; courtesy of Lansing Mayor Andy Schor

Another highly visible transportation investment is the Michigan Avenue Corridor. The 14.1 million dollar project restoring a critical connection between downtown Lansing the State Capitol and Michigan State University is now complete. While construction was challenging for nearby businesses, the long term payoff is significant. The corridor now provides improved mobility, safer access, and renewed opportunity to reactivate sites along one of the region’s most important commercial and civic corridors.

Transportation projects like these illustrate why infrastructure matters but they are only part of the story.

Infrastructure Beyond the Pavement Building the Foundation for a Competitive Region



An overview corridor map showing the US-127 work in phases.

“Our business community has been clear that modern, reliable infrastructure is essential to growth and that is why the Chamber continues to lead and partner at every level.”

Steve Japinga, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Beyond roads and bridges, communities across the region are addressing decades of deferred investment in water infrastructure. Projects such as the Montgomery Drain improvements on the east side of Lansing and East Lansing, the ongoing Eaton County Bank Drain work, and collaborative efforts between the City of St Johns and Bingham Township highlight the scale and importance of these investments.

Water infrastructure may be out of sight but it is fundamental to economic stability and public health. Aging systems, capacity limitations, and climate pressures have made upgrades unavoidable. While disruptive during construction, these projects ensure long term resilience and create the conditions necessary for future development.

Electrical infrastructure is another essential but often overlooked component. Modern commerce depends on reliable, resilient power systems. Across the region transmission lines and electrical systems are being upgraded to support current needs and future demand. These investments are critical to attracting and retaining businesses supporting advanced manufacturing and ensuring communities are prepared for a modern economy.

Digital infrastructure rounds out the picture. The pandemic underscored the importance of broadband access for businesses, schools, healthcare providers,

and residents. In response hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested across urban and rural areas to expand broadband availability and capacity. As conversations continue around data centers and emerging technologies, the need for strong and modern digital infrastructure has never been clearer.

"What we are seeing across the region right now is the result of years of advocacy and collaboration. These projects are not easy and they are not quick but they are necessary," says Steve Japinga, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Our business community has been clear that modern, reliable infrastructure is essential to growth and that is why the Chamber continues to lead and partner at every level."

What connects all of these efforts transportation water energy and digital infrastructure is timing. For decades many of these systems were underfunded or delayed. Today communities are confronting that reality head on. The result is a period of intense activity that can feel frustrating in the short term, but is essential for long term success.

Kwafo Adarkwa, Lansing Regional Chamber Policy Committee Chair and Principal at Kelley Cawthorne explains, "Infrastructure decisions made today will shape how our region competes tomorrow. From roads and water systems to power and broadband these investments give businesses the certainty they need to plan grow and succeed in a modern economy."

Infrastructure is not an abstract policy concept. It is the foundation that allows businesses to expand talent to move freely and communities to thrive. While not every project is immediately visible, together they represent a region positioning itself for the future.

As these investments continue, the Chamber remains committed to advocating for infrastructure that reflects modern needs, supports economic growth, and strengthens the region as a whole. Progress can be challenging, but a connected, competitive, and resilient region is well worth the effort. ♦

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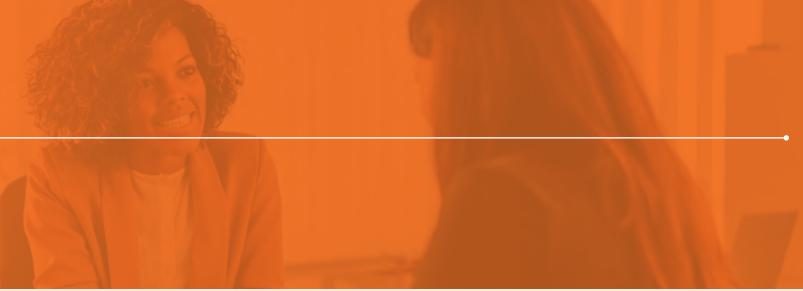
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ATHENA WIN Aspiring Leaders: Leading from Within

ATHENA WIN Aspiring Leaders, a program run through the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce's Thrive Series, is a leadership development program designed to help women build deeper self-awareness around their impact as leaders and how they can create meaningful change within their organizations and communities.



Facilitated by Gina Lisenby, the program offers a highly interactive and experience driven environment where participants learn leadership concepts and apply them in real world settings while building strong connections with fellow leaders. The six-month professional development journey blends facilitated learning, peer mentoring, and

practical application, encouraging participants to take what they learn back into their own environments to strengthen their leadership approach and expand their influence.

A defining element of Aspiring Leaders is its peer mentoring model. The Aspiring Leaders meet monthly with their mentors, building meaningful relationships that provide support, inspiration, and perspective.

The first session, which kicked off in October, *Leading from Within*, focused on discovering guiding values and exploring how to bring authenticity into both life and leadership. In November, the second session, *Know Yourself, Lead with Impact*, helped participants uncover strengths and blind spots and learn how to leverage self-awareness for meaningful leadership. In January, the third session, *Networking: Connect with Purpose*, centered on building authentic professional relationships, expanding networks, and creating opportunities through intentional connection.

Throughout the program, participants are experiencing an engaging and supportive environment where relationships continue to deepen. As they progress, they are building leadership skills, forming lasting connections, and gaining insight into the impact they can create in their communities. ♦

Mentees

Amber Hamilton / FD Hayes Electric
Ashley Crosser / Highfields
Carolyn McQuillan / McLaren Greater Lansing Foundation
Cat Cook / Maner Costerisan
De'Anna Smith / Capital Steel & Wire
Hannah Morgan Smith / Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes
Katie Sullivan / CG Financial
Katlyn Henson / PNC
Kelly Scanlon / Peckham
Kylie Humble / InVerve Marketing
LaQuicia Gibson / Lansing Housing Commission
Lynn Munoz / UM Health-Sparrow
Renee McNutt / Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce
Sara VanOver / RPK Group

Mentors

Amy McNamara / Mercantile Bank
Breina Pugh / ITC Holdings
Carrie Rathbun Hawks / Rathbun Public Relations
Cindy Kangas / CAMC
Courtney Millbrook / Lansing Symphony Orchestra
Deb Horak / Gud Marketing
Deb Slezak / McLaren Health Care
Joy Wagner / Granger Waste Services
Julie Mann / Lead With Collective
Kate Powers / Michigan League for Public Policy (MLPP)
Leslie Batchelor / PNC
Melissa Nay / Choose Lansing
Michelle Lantz / Lansing Food Bank
Shelley Davis Boyd / M3 Group

Looking Ahead to 2026: Building Connection, Growth, and Belonging through ATHENA WIN

By Amy McNamara, Board Chair, ATHENA Women's Interest Network (WIN)



McNamara

As we move into a new year, I find myself energized by what lies ahead for the ATHENA Women's Interest Network (WIN). Looking toward 2026, our focus is clear and deeply rooted in what matters most: our members. Everything we do, our programs, events, and connections, is centered on creating meaningful, welcoming experiences that support women at every stage of their professional and personal journeys.

ATHENA WIN continues to be a place where women show up as they are, build authentic relationships, and grow together. In the year ahead, we are intentionally enhancing the member experience across all of our offerings, ensuring that every interaction feels engaging, accessible, and impactful. Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning as a longtime member, we want you to feel connected, supported, and inspired.

Our 2026 social calendar is designed to foster both connection and fun. We're excited to host three informal networking meet-ups throughout the year, offering relaxed opportunities to build relationships and strengthen our community. In addition, we have two planned social events on the horizon, a summer kayak trip and our annual holiday social, along with our much-anticipated Summer Social in July, a favorite tradition that brings our members together in a celebratory way.

Professional growth remains at the heart of ATHENA WIN. Our program calendar will feature three Professional Development and Growth programs focused on skill-building, leadership development, and personal advancement. We are also thrilled to launch our third Aspiring Leaders cohort this September, continuing to invest in emerging leaders who are ready to take the next



step. Our signature event, the Evening of Empowerment, will once again take place in September, offering an inspiring evening of connection and leadership celebration.



Majeske



Davis Boyd

I'm also pleased to welcome two new board members to ATHENA WIN: Shelley Davis Boyd of M3 Group and Sara Majeske of Custom Built. Their perspectives and passion will strengthen

our work as we continue to serve this incredible community.

As always, you'll find all events and programs listed on the LRCC calendar as dates and venues are confirmed. We look forward to welcoming new and returning members alike and to another year filled with growth, connection, and empowerment. ♦



Courtesy/Photo

Deep Green Data Center: A Strategic Opportunity for Lansing's Business Community

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) is actively engaged in supporting the proposed Deep Green Data Center because it represents the type of forward-looking, high-impact investment our region needs to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving economy.

Deep Green is proposing a first-of-its-kind, 24-megawatt ultra-efficient data center in downtown Lansing—the first facility of its kind in the United States. Unlike traditional data centers, Deep Green captures and reuses the heat generated by advanced computing, returning carbon-neutral heat directly into the Lansing Board of Water & Light's hot water system through a closed-loop cooling process. This innovative approach reduces emissions, minimizes water use, and delivers tangible community benefits.

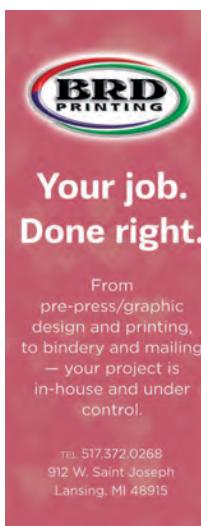
From an economic perspective, the project brings more than \$120 million in private investment, creates over 50 good-paying jobs, and converts currently tax-exempt land into private ownership—generating an estimated \$800,000 annually in new property tax revenue. The project is also expected to generate approximately \$1 million each year in additional revenue through BWL return-on-equity payments to the City of Lansing.

As part of its advocacy efforts, the LRCC is asking members of the business community to sign on to a letter urging the Lansing City Council to support this important project. Demonstrating broad business support sends a strong signal that Lansing is ready to

welcome innovative infrastructure investments that strengthen the local economy, grow the tax base, and position the region for long-term success.

For more information or to add your business or organization to the support letter, please contact LRCC Senior Vice President of Public Affairs Steve Japinga at sjapinga@lansingchamber.org.

This project is more than a single development—it is a catalyst for growth, sustainability, and regional leadership in emerging technology. ♦



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Chamber in Action



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, joined by its Ambassadors, congratulates the **Michigan Bitcoin Trade Council (MiBTC)** on becoming a new Chamber member with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Based in Lansing, the Michigan Bitcoin Trade Council is a trailblazing membership organization dedicated to championing Michigan's growing Bitcoin community. MiBTC's mission is to position Michigan as a premier hub for Bitcoin innovation and investment by advocating for sound digital asset policies that foster economic growth, attract developers and entrepreneurs, and protect the public from cryptocurrency scams and criminal activity.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with its Ambassadors, city leaders, and public officials, proudly congratulates **Premier Restoration and Cleaning, Pressure-Shine Power Washing Services, Premier Roofing of Mid-Michigan, and Revall Embroidery and Direct to Film** on becoming new Chamber members. The businesses were welcomed with a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating their commitment to serving the community.

At **Premier**, they offer more than just services, they focus on building trust and lasting relationships. Their mission goes beyond fixing or cleaning; they strive to enhance both living and working environments. Serving Greater Lansing, Jackson, Okemos, and surrounding areas, Premier provides a wide range of services including water and fire restoration, pressure washing, and roof restoration to help protect and improve homes and properties.

Revall DTF & Embroidery Co. specializes in custom embroidery, screen printing, and more. They offer Direct-to-Film (DTF) transfers, a modern custom printing method known for producing high-quality apparel and merchandise. Their designs often focus on meaningful themes such as cancer awareness, inspiration, and mental health advocacy.



The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with its Ambassadors, congratulated **Branches Lansing**, a service of Cedar Creek Hospital, on becoming a new Chamber member with a ribbon-cutting and open-house celebration.

Located at 3645 E. Jolly Road, Branches Lansing provides outpatient behavioral health services. The organization supports individuals experiencing mood and anxiety disorders, trauma history, and related challenges by offering stabilization, support, and opportunities to develop positive coping skills.

Through a variety of services, including therapy, art, and yoga, Branches Lansing provides a framework for recovery and healing, empowering people with the skills and education needed to take positive steps forward on their mental health journey.

Members on the Move

NEW HIRES



Kalat



Perrault

Custom Built is pleased to welcome two new team members to its growing organization: **Rhett Kalat** and **Gracie Perrault**. Kalat joins the team as a Project Development Advisor, bringing specialized expertise in roofing and exterior projects, including siding, along with a strong understanding of materials, structural integrity, and long-term durability to help homeowners find the right solutions for their homes. Perrault also joins Custom Built as a Project Development Advisor, adding an entrepreneurial perspective as the founder of Glow by Gracie and Cultivate Collective. She leverages her business leadership, creativity, and strategic mindset to guide clients through confident, informed remodeling decisions.



Pugh

ITC Holdings Corp. welcomes **Breina Pugh** as Area Manager for Local Government and Community Affairs, serving the Central Michigan region. She works with local

governments and community stakeholders to support ITC's electric transmission mission and regional growth efforts. Pugh previously spent seven years at the Lansing Board of Water and Light as Government and Community Relations Manager. She holds a bachelor's degree from Alma

College and serves on the boards of the Greater Lansing Arts Council, Capital Area Humane Society, ATHENA WIN, and the Library of Michigan Board of Trustees.



Jones

Lake Trust Credit Union has welcomed **Drew Jones** as Government Affairs Manager. Jones brings nearly 15 years of public sector experience, having worked

in both the Michigan House and Senate, where he navigated complex policy issues and played a key role in the state budget process. A graduate of Grand Valley State University with a degree in political science, Jones lives in West Michigan with his wife, Annie, and their four children, and remains active in the community through local recreation service and youth basketball coaching.



Hall

LAFCU welcomes **Ally Hall** as Digital and Graphic Designer, supporting the organization's marketing and creative efforts through visual storytelling,

video production, and digital design. A graduate of Spring Arbor University, Hall brings experience creating digital campaigns and educational content that connect with communities and strengthen brand awareness.

Tri-Star Trust welcomes **John Shaski** as Vice President, Relationship Manager. Shaski brings nearly two decades of leadership experience from University of Michigan Health Sparrow, where he most recently served as Director of Development



Shaski

and Community Relations after 16 years as Government Relations Officer. Shaski looks forward to helping individuals, families, and

organizations achieve their financial goals through Tri-Star Trust. He currently serves as Chairman of the Capital Region Airport Authority Board of Directors and President Elect of the Rotary Club of Lansing Foundation.



Conner



Gallagher



Reid



Shudark



Yono Jr.

Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC has welcomed five new associate attorneys—**Rachel A. Conner, Lisa V. Gallagher, Olivia K. Reid, Allison**

N. Shudark, and **Badri Yono Jr.** following their participation in the firm's 2024 summer associate program. Conner joins the Trusts & Estates practice in the Lansing office, supporting clients with

estate planning and administration, and is an alumna of Michigan State University College of Law. Gallagher joins the Litigation practice group in the firm's Grand Rapids office and earned her Juris Doctor from Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Reid joins the Business & Tax practice in Lansing, assisting clients with entity formation and business planning, and earned her law degree from Michigan State University College of Law. Shudark joins the Litigation group in Lansing after graduating magna cum laude from Michigan State University College of Law. Yono joins the Business & Tax practice in the Southfield office and earned his Juris Doctor magna cum laude from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.



Fowlerville Community Schools has selected **Molly Moulton** as Principal of Little Glad Early Childhood, effective January 2026. Moulton earned a BS from Michigan State University, a BA in Elementary Education with a minor in Early Childhood Education from Baker College, and a Master's in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University. She previously served as a paraprofessional, teacher, and Student Behavioral Specialist, supporting student readiness and growth.

APPOINTMENTS



Ghena announced the appointment of **Josh Ghena** as President of Cinnaire Equity Partners. Ghena previously served as Interim President and has been with Cinnaire since 2014,

holding several leadership roles within the organization. Over the past three and a half years, he has helped lead more than 1.8 billion dollars in Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity closings, supporting the development of 14,501 affordable housing units across the Midwest and Mid Atlantic.



Swiger



Griffin

LAFCU has made several key promotions and additions to its team. **Kellie Swiger**, promoted to Head of Creative, leads the creative team and oversees innovative projects across multiple platforms. Swiger joined LAFCU 16 years ago and holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. During her tenure, the creative team earned multiple honors, including four CUNA Diamond Awards and the MCUL Dora Maxwell Award. **Tanya Griffin**, promoted Community Financial Education and Executive Assistant, manages financial literacy programs and provides executive assistance to the CEO of the StableCommunities Foundation. Griffin brings 24 years of financial services experience and a passion for education, holding a bachelor's degree in business organizational management summa cum laude from Cornerstone University.

AWARDS



McLaren Greater Lansing recently recognized two team members with BEE Awards for outstanding support and compassion. **Annalecia "CiCi" Franco**, a phlebotomist in the



Davis



Corless

laboratory department, was honored for her skill, professionalism, and kindness, particularly for promptly

handling difficult draws and providing exceptional care to ICU patients. **Ronda Davis**, a unit assistant in the surgery department, was recognized for serving as a trusted resource for staff, coordinating communication across departments, and helping ensure smooth surgical operations.

AF Group President and CEO Lisa Corless was recently named one of 10 Iconic Leaders by *Business Insurance*

as part of the 20th anniversary celebration of its annual Women

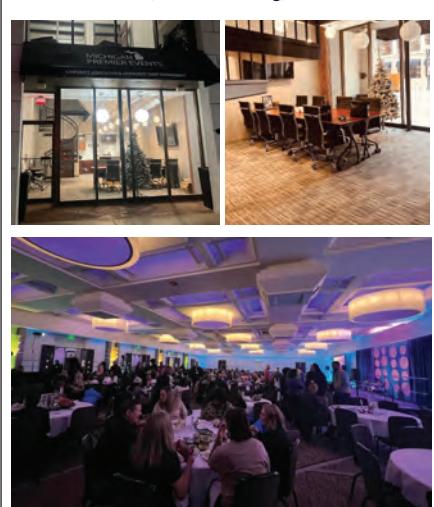


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**Maner
Costerisan**
has been
named one
of Accounting

Today's 2025 Best Firms for Young Accountants, ranking No. 18 nationally and earning distinction as the only Michigan-based firm recognized in 2025. The recognition reflects the firm's commitment to providing early-career accountants with meaningful work, strong mentorship, career growth opportunities, and a culture that supports balance and purpose.

COMPANY NEWS



**Debbie
Petersmark**
recently
celebrated 25
years at WILX-
TV, where
she serves as
Vice President
and General
Manager.
She began

her career at the station as an Account Executive, later advancing into sales leadership before being named General Manager in 2018. Throughout her tenure, Petersmark has remained committed to local news, strong community partnerships, and impactful initiatives such as Make an Impact. She takes pride in how WILX-TV's television and digital advertising solutions have helped local businesses grow and thrive, and in the station's continued role in informing, connecting, and uplifting the Mid-Michigan community.



**Cedar
Creek
Hospital**
has

received state Certificate of Need approval to develop a new 48-bed remote behavioral health hospital in Lansing. Operating under Cedar Creek's St. Johns license, the facility will include adult and adolescent inpatient units to meet growing regional demand. Construction is expected to be completed in spring 2027 and will create approximately 100 jobs. The new facility, located at the intersection of State Road and Felton Road, will help ensure individuals and families in the region receive timely, compassionate behavioral health care close to home.



**PFCU Credit
Union** celebrated
the grand reopening of its newly upgraded Lake Odessa Branch with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in partnership with the Lakewood Area Chamber of Commerce. The renovated branch at 2025 Lapo Road features enhanced spaces designed to improve member experience and convenience. Serving the Lake Odessa community since 1998, PFCU continues to reinvest locally to better support members' financial needs and long-term well-being.



Cinnaire has been awarded an \$85 million New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) allocation through the U.S. Department of the Treasury's CDFI Fund as part of the historic 2024–2025 funding round—the largest in the program's history. The allocation will support high-impact projects in underinvested communities, expanding access to capital, advancing workforce development, and strengthening local economies across Cinnaire's multi-state footprint.



**PFCU
Credit
Union's**
Executive

Team recently made a donation to Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP), a volunteer driven nonprofit that builds, assembles, and delivers beds including mattresses and bedding to children who would otherwise sleep without one. The contribution will support local Michigan chapters by providing materials, tools, and logistical assistance, helping more beds reach families in need. PFCU continues to champion community well being through initiatives that uplift children and families across the region.



**Anna's
House**, the
beloved

Michigan breakfast and brunch brand known for its retro-modern style and inclusive menu, is offering franchise opportunities for the first time. Since opening its first Grand Rapids location in 2003, the company has grown to 13 restaurants across the state. Franchise partners will benefit from Anna's House's proven systems and award-winning menu, helping bring its vibrant, community-focused dining experience to new markets across the Midwest and beyond. ♦



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