



Memorandum

To: Mayor Edmonds and City Council Members

Ralph A. Lange

From: Ralph A. Lange, City Manager

Date: June 26, 2015

Subject: Council Information Letter

City Manager's Office

April 2015 Action & Request Center Report:

The following is an update of the Action Center support tickets:

- ✓ 16 online support tickets were opened since the last CIL (May 29, 2015)

Abandoned Vehicles	1
Animal Control	2
Board Ups	0
Criminal Activity (Non Emergency)	1
Graffiti	1
Dangerous Buildings	1
Dumping	1
Noise Complaints	
Other violations	1
Park Maintenance	1
Parking Complaints	2
Public Facilities	3
Sidewalks	2
Street Conditions	3
Trash/Litter	2
Trash Pick Up	1
Weeds	3
Zoning Violations	1
Total	26

7 Closed
 7 In Progress
 12 Open

- Starting in mid-March thru mid-June, 2015, and with the support of Parkridge leadership, (Anthony Williamson and Charles Bibins), Izak Sims and I sponsored a Wednesday afternoon Chess Club, from 5- 6 p.m.

This activity has been embraced by Mr. Bibins and well received by the children who see us either playing or teaching someone how to play chess. From its humble beginning, the chess club has grown with the center buying several chess clocks and my contribution of books geared toward showing young children how to play.

The school year is over for now but summer camp will be starting soon. I hope that the chess club will be one of the myriad of opportunities that the center will continue to offer in future months and years.

On a personal note, this experience has been an enormous benefit. It has helped me to better connect with the young people who live in and around Parkridge Center. I have also had the opportunity to witness first-hand the tremendous good the center does. This good is powered by all the people who work there, both paid and volunteers, as well as the children who have a chance to experience new positive learning opportunities that they would never have unless it was offered to them at the Parkridge Center.

I now fully understand why Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson, ex-Council member Ricky Jefferson, John Barfield, Tommy Frye and countless others, have been so passionate in their support for Parkridge Center.

- **County Center Update.** I have been serving as the lead agent for moving the County Recreation Center project to be located on Water Street. We are scheduling a critical meeting between the parties in early July to finalize all the terms and conditions necessary for the City to transfer the property to the County Parks & Recreation Commission. We are hoping to have the necessary contracts to accomplish the transfer of the City's four acres to the Parks & Recreation Commission at the July 21st City Council meeting.

City Clerk/Treasurer's Office

- 2015 Summer Tax Bills will be mailed on Tuesday, June 30th.
- Clerk/Treasury is at full staffing levels with the return of the Treasurer Generalist.
- Staff will soon begin examining liability insurance bids for submission to Council.

Department of Public Services

- **LED Conversions.** The DTE agreement to install an LED cobra headlight for the parking spaces located between Parkridge Community Center and the Public Housing Commission Office Building has been submitted and we are awaiting the installation. DPS yard exterior lights have been installed; the test light for the Riverside park trail lights and an exterior light at Parkridge Community Center will be installed soon.
- **Sidewalk Ramp Replacement Program.** Staff, along with OHM, will issue an RFP for Sidewalk Ramp Replacement Program next month (July) for the \$50,000 allocated in CDBG

funds. Bids are schedule to be opened on July 23, 2015 at 2:00 pm with the contract award scheduled for the August 7th council meeting. Work should commence the second or third week of August 2015.

- **Pavement Maintenance.** Highway Maintenance and Construction, Co. has been in the city spray patching. Congress between Mansfield and Summit, Wallace between Congress and Cross, Normal between Pearl and Congress, River between Forest and Holmes have been spray patched. Summit between Michigan Ave. and Washtenaw, Roosevelt between Washtenaw and Collegewood is scheduled to be patched. Also, budget permitting, the Ballard Street and Washington Street parking lots will be patched.
- **CDBG.** The 2010, 2011, 2012 CDBG Facilities Improvement Project for Ypsilanti Senior Center Kitchen Renovation and Electrical Upgrade Project is at substantial completion. The punch list has been addressed by the contractor and a final walk through will be conducted. There are some questions about the electrical portion of the project which will be addressed for clarification by the architect.
- **Tot Lots.** Play equipment selections have been made for the Hefley and Mattingly Tot Lots; the equipment will be identical to the play equipment that has been installed in the Charles Street Tot Lot and will be ordered when the CDBG funds are made available. CDBG will begin its environmental reviews of the project areas soon. Staff will be bringing an agreement between the City and CDBG to Council for approval to secure CDBG funds for the playground improvements after successful environmental reviews are completed. We are still awaiting the CDBG agreement from the County.
- **Solar Projects.** The installation of the solar array for at the DPS yard (truck port roof) has begun. The solar array is slated to be functional sometime next week.
- **PRIP Project.** This project is under way. The curbs and drive approaches have been completed. The ADA Ramp installation is being prepped for installation. The electrical work of the signal improvements with the conduit installation at Cross and Oak has begun. The electrical work for the signals is slated to continue on Friday, June 26th. The road crew will begin final grading of the roadway in preparation for asphalt paving slated to begin Monday, June 29th. ADA ramp installation, along with remaining concrete flatwork, will follow the paving of the base and leveling courses. The wear course will be paved after all the concrete work is completed. This project is ahead of schedule.
- **Adams Street Reconstruction Project.** MDOT bid letting was conducted on June 5th. Council approved the contract with MDOT, and for construction engineering and geotechnical testing with OHM for this project at the June 16th council meeting. The project is scheduled to start in early July with completion by November 15th.
- **DPS Truck Port.** The DPS truck port construction is near completion with only the siding installation on the front of the roof trusses remaining. Upon completion, the floor of the truck port will be leveled with asphalt millings.
- **Sweeping Containment and Dumpster Pad.** The structures have been installed and the pad area has been rough graded. The preparation for the installation of the concrete pad is slated for the end of this week with the concrete poured early next week (June 29th).
- **Street Sweeping.** The first round of sweeping all city streets has been completed.
- **Michigan Ave.** The MDOT resurfacing project is slated for the 2015 construction season. The project limits will be just east of the Michigan Ave. Bridge and going east to the Wayne County border on Michigan Avenue. The project will include a mill and overlay with ADA ramps replacement at River Street, Park Street and Groove Road. The pre-construction meeting was conducted on June 9th. This project was slated to begin June 22 but, has been pushed back to Monday, June 29th. The first phase of the project will include the installation of ADA ramps and

joint repairs in the roadway. The paving will be coordinated with the YCUA water main renewal between Prospect and Park or River (not sure).

- **Penn Park.** Met with Cristi and Lou from WCC Construction Institute and discussed the project scope and schedule. Cost estimates for this project are being generated.
- **Michigan Avenue Signal Upgrade Project.** All of the necessary grading permits and construction easements have been acquired for this project. This project is expected to begin sometime in Spring of 2016.

Economic & Community Development

Action Item	Status	Update	Misc.
Blight Elimination Grant	Due to State Land Bank 6/1/15	Grant application has been prepared. Proposed demolition maps are attached. The areas being proposed are the Parkridge neighborhood and the former Boys and Girls club. These areas best meet the guidelines of the grant proposal.	Awards are anticipated after 6/30.
23 N. Washington – Former Club Devine	On-hold	The property has been purchased. No development plans have been proposed at this time.	
MEDC/Pure Michigan	In-Progress	The State House approved a proposal to cut Community Revitalization Programs (CRP) and redirect funds to street projects. CRP funds are a major incentive for development used by local communities to incentivize desirable projects that add to the local tax base and create jobs within the community. MEDC provides loans and up to \$1million grants for these types of projects. Staff is following the proposal and will be asking Council to sign a resolution supporting the CRP program as a vital community reinvestment tool for Economic Development.	State House will consider proposal. MML will create resolution to be used by municipalities. Community lobbyist was asked to follow closely on City's behalf.
Ypsilanti CVB	In-Progress	Staff has had several discussions with the Ypsilanti CVB regarding how they can broaden their scope and assist with Economic Development Activities in the City. Staff will be supporting the	County mediation and meeting scheduled for July.

		Ypsilanti CVB remaining independent and not being merged to Ann Arbor CVB by Washtenaw County.	
UMCU/EMUCU	Waiting Response	Staff has had several contacts with UMCU/EMUCU and developing a downtown location. Information has been provided.	
Herman and Kittle/Riverwalk Apartments	In-progress	Alternate plans are being created and will be brought to the Plan Commission to address additional MSHDA requirements on the site.	
		Staff has been working with consultants to finalize due care plans, brownfield plan and reimbursement schedules.	
B2B Trail and Bridge Projects	On-going	Staff has been working with Mannik and Smith to arrange a pre-con meeting for bid contracts with Fisher Contracting.	Construction is expected to begin late summer, early fall.
Water Street	On-going	Staff has had several meetings with stakeholders concerning possible developments and collaborations with properties on Water Street.	
WCC/Youthbuild	Waiting for Response	Washtenaw Community College is seeking a Youthbuild Grant to create an at-risk trade/GED program. The participants would get hands-on trade experience with GED instruction. They have asked the City to consider donating a vacant house for their students to demolish and rebuild for sale. The program benefits at-risk youth, the community college, and the City. Further information will be provided upon receipt of grant funding.	
Ypsilanti Historic District	In-Progress	Planning staff with the HDC Intern are working to update HDC materials on the website and create a flyer to be distributed to Realtors to share with new homebuyers in the Historic Dist.	

Economic Development Communications	In-Progress	The Community and Economic Development Departments are exploring new ways to communicate and engage with residents primarily through social media. Plans will be developed in the coming months.
Bortz Healthcare/Villa Healthcare	On-Going	Villa Healthcare is purchasing Bortz Healthcare on Prospect Road as of July 1 st . Staff has met with the new owners and they have assured the community their commitment to keep jobs within the community, provide quality rehabilitation services and long-term care services, and engage with the larger community. Several renovations are being planned for the facility.
Towner Street Rezoning	In-Progress	Staff has started the process for rezoning of Towner Street. The rezoning will create consistency within the area and match the Master Plan zoning designations.
6-Month Review: Zoning Ordinance	In-Progress	Planning staff is preparing several amendments to the Zoning Ordinance as part of the six-month review.
Associate Planner Position	Completed	Cynthia Kochanek has been hired and will start full-time as the Associate Planner on 6/28/15. Cindy has been a planning intern for the past six months and was the HDC intern for 18 months prior. Cynthia comes to us with a Master's Degree in Historic Preservation from EMU. Cindy has been crucial in preparing the Freighthouse bids and working on improving communications from the HDC. She also has excellent research and communication skills. Please welcome Cindy to our team!

Project Management Software	Started	Building and Planning staff have been investigating implementing project management software that is available as a module from our Assessing and Inspection software provider BS&A. The project management module would allow for electronic tracking of projects and would also allow anyone with access to the software to access the database.
LOCUS Leadership Summit	Completed	Planning staff attended the LOCUS Leadership Summit on 6/23/15. LOCUS partnered with the MML to provide a summit on integrating walkable communities with economic development. Several contacts were made and renewed with developers and other communities.

Fire Department

- **Activity Report:**

The following are the statistics for the current period reflected by the past three months.

April	May	June 1 to June 25
67 Fire Calls	62 Fire Calls	61 Fire Calls
129 EMS Calls	122 EMS Calls	72 EMS Calls
29 Inspections	50 Inspections	65 Inspections
9 Non-emergency	12 Non-emergency	7 Non-emergency

- **Automatic and Mutual Aid Statistics**

Date	Address	Jurisdiction	Dispatched for
4/2/2015	1076 Ecorse Rd	YTFD	Building Fire
4/2/2015	5900 Bridges Rd	YTFD	Building Fire
4/6/2015	3375 E. Mich. Ave	YTFD	Building Fire
4/8/2015	9691 Textile Rd.	YTFD	House Fire
4/8/2015	409 S. Huron St.	YFD	House Fire
4/10/2015	1457 Ainsley St.	YFD	House Fire
4/14/2015	1775 Lynn St.	YTFD	House Fire
4/14/2015	2124 Lake View D	YTFD	Building Fire
4/14/2015	105 N. Hamilton	YFD	Apartment Fire
4/20/2015	LeForge /Huron	YTFD	Natural Gas Leak
4/20/2015	8884 Nottingham	YTFD	House Fire
4/23/2015	209 Holmes Rd.	YFTD	House Fire
4/28/2015	5566 New Meadow	YTFD	House Fire
5/3/2015	657 Villa Dr.	YTFD	Apartment Fire
5/5/2015	2881 International Dr.	YTFD	Apartment Fire
5/5/2015	7478 Textile Rd.	YTFD	House Fire
5/5/2015	6256 Creekside Cir.	YTFD	House Fire
5/14/2015	1978 Chevrolet	YTFD	House Fire
5/15/2015	3101 Andora	STFD	House Fire
5/19/2015	3110 S. Grove St.	YTFD	Building Fire
6/1/2015	1380 Elmwood	YTFD	House Fire
6/2/2015	760 Fox	YTFD	House Fire
6/4/2015	187 Russell Blvd	YTFD	Building Fire
6/5/2015	3725 Palisades Blvd	PTFD	House Fire
6/13/2015	721 Green Road	YFD	Apartment Fire
6//13/2015	827 Jefferson	YFD	House Fire
6/24/2015	527 Emerick	YTFD	House Fire

- **Fire Station Roof:**

OHM will have a short presentation to address alternative for the roof repair and answer questions (see attached roof bid report).

- **Staffing:**

All the new firefighters completed the necessary training to count for minimum staffing. This will benefit in reducing overtime.

- **Facilities:**
Six contractors came to the pre-bid meeting for the Fire Department roof renovation project. Contractor(s) have submitted bids.

Fiscal Services

- Summarized the budget changes and adjusted the revenues and expenses of the affected funds
- Filed the 2015 (FY 2015-16) request for state reimbursement of TIFA, tax increment small taxpayer personal property loss for DDA TIF Districts.
- Compiling the budget book for printing and for submission to GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award Program.
- The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting has been awarded to the City by the Government Finance Officers Association. Marilou Uy, Finance Director, is primarily responsible for preparing the CAFR and the attainment of the award, which is a significant accomplishment by her and the other staff members.

Human Resources

Activities that occurred in June:

New Hires/Separations/Status Changes:

- The City Manager Intern, Sean Sonneveldt, resigned effective June 26th.
- Cynthia Kochanek, Planning Intern, will be promoted to the Associate Planner position.
- Yan Li was promoted from Temporary to P/T Finance Generalist
- Police Officer, Brad Compton, resigned effective June 17th.
- Human Resources Generalist, Mary Kornacki, was laid off effective 6/30/2015.

Employees Off From Work:

- Fire Department - Two are on light duty
- Police Department – One is on FMLA
- Department of Public Services – One on FMLA

Current Job Postings:

The following job is posted:

- Police Officer (3 Openings)

Miscellaneous:

- A Fiscal Wellness training was offered by Fifth Third Bank, which was well received by those who attended.
- An Identity Theft Training will be held for all staff on July 8th at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall Council Chambers.

Police Department

- **Activity Report:**

Following are the statistics for the current period reflected by the past three months with 5 days left in June:

April	May	June
1131 Calls for Service	1191 Calls for Service	996 Calls for Service
192 Arrests	155 Arrests	121 Arrests
171 Tickets Issued	124 Tickets issued	62 Tickets issued
354 Case Reports Written	352 Case Reports Written	121 Case Reports Written

- Officer Green's performance continues to improve and will be certified for solo patrol at the end of the month. Officer Ali is in the second phase of the FTO Program and is performing to expectations. Applications are still being reviewed and interviews will be scheduled in July.
- **The Ypsilanti Police Department Honor Guard update.** The unit attended training in Alpena and performed very well. They will be part of a multi-agency color guard in the July 4th Parade.
- **Grants.** This month the police department applied for a USDOJ COPS Hiring Grant, a USDOJ Community Policing Development Grant and the Byrne Memorial Grant.
- On June 18th Sergeant Compton resigned from the Ypsilanti Police Department. Officer Robert Murphy was promoted to Sergeant.



Ypsilanti

The blue-collar town embraces creativity to spark a rebirth

STORY BY JUD BRANAM
PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN WEATHERSTON

On a recent sun-drenched Friday evening, the usual Michigan Avenue traffic whirred through downtown Ypsilanti as it has for decades, mostly without stopping or apparently even noticing what's happening. But for residents and enthusiasts of the gritty urban enclave six miles east of Ann Arbor, the first Friday of each month has become a time for taking stock and rejoicing in the results.

That's because the growth and momentum of creative and artistic businesses and initiatives in Ypsilanti

are pulled to the forefront for each First Fridays program, a self-guided gallery walk through an ever-increasing roster of art and retail spots. Last December's event included nine stops, this May had 22. And as businesses and momentum continue to grow, those who have made a bet on Ypsilanti feel rightfully proud of their town and themselves and they dare to push it even further.

After struggles with vacancy and underutilization that one native traces to the 1965 opening of Arborland

Mall on the east side of Ann Arbor, it seems downtown Ypsilanti is on a bit of a hot streak.

"It's the best kept secret in the county," says Ed Penet, who owns and runs Mix, an eclectic fashion and arts boutique with locations in downtown Ypsilanti and Nickels Arcade in Ann Arbor. From clothing and crafts made by local artists to a small theater in the back, Mix is on everyone's short list of bright spots in downtown Ypsi.

Indeed, the new players in the

Ypsilanti

Ypsilanti economy show the long-struggling town of 20,000 moving beyond its blue-collar, heavy-industry past into a diverse jobs base that pulls from academia, urban agriculture and the arts. Community-generated events like the First Fridays walks, DIYpsi craft show and sale and Totally Awesome Fest of music and performance have become staples on the town calendar.

"I think the arts and creativity are as much as 30 to 40 percent (of the upswing)," Penet says. "The creative class has come in — young couples, single professionals, gay people, they've all had an impact. People come for all their own reasons, it's all helping and, of course, the economy's getting back on its feet as well."

One of those initiatives is coming from Eastern Michigan University business Professor Diana Wong, who is renovating the former Pub 13 piano bar at 13 N. Washington St. into a co-working and meeting space.

Wong, who lives in Ann Arbor but

has worked in Ypsilanti for 13 years, needs a home for her Sensei Change consulting practice, and is excited that her move creates more capacity for an area on the rise.

"There's a lot more happening in this space than people realize," she says. "It looks pretty quiet, but if you lift open the lid on the pot, there's a lot of stuff brewing here."

A FOCUS ON CREATIVITY

The city's master plan has identified three emerging sectors for focus and nurturing: local food, arts/maker/small manufacturing, and green energy/sustainability. Mayor Amanda Edmonds, who took office last year, said the arts leg of that triangle "is really buzzing right now," but she worries that too much of the current progress traces to "awesome individuals" to keep growing at its current pace.

"There's a need for something, whether it's an organization that

incubates these projects or a facility or infrastructure, but something needs to emerge," Edmonds says. "I don't think it's at a standstill, but there are some limiting factors to it going forward. Some level of propellant is needed."

Edmonds recently convened meetings with city, EMU and Michigan Economic Development Corporation representatives to talk about the best way to sustain and grow the momentum. Talks centered on "technology transfer" approaches designed to keep creative young EMU graduates in town and working, either in affordable studio space or startup businesses. The MEDC was preparing to recognize Ypsilanti as a "Redevelopment Ready Community" as this article went to press.

Up Washington Street on the other side of Michigan Avenue, another project is happily fitting into the zeitgeist. Yen and Nick Azzaro opened Chin-Azzaro, a multifaceted art and marketing business, at ➔

➔ 9 S. Washington St. Yen calls Washtenaw County a “seasonal” art-buying market, with that season being the late summer Ann Arbor Art Fairs. While that works for perennial fair artists, it doesn’t create a sustainable income for most.

“I’m trying to change that market because there’s no retail art market here,” said Azzaro, who has worked as an art-buying consultant and museum curator in Chicago. Her decision to locate in Ypsilanti came due to several factors, including cost and finding an ideal facility for the multi-pronged business she runs with her husband, Nick. “It had everything we needed,” she said of the gallery, office and classroom space in the rented building on Washington. “And things are definitely happening in this corridor.”

For Jennifer Goulet, an artistic renaissance in Ypsilanti is fulfilling on a couple of levels. Goulet is executive director of Creative Mahy Michigan, a statewide arts advocacy group that quantifies the impact of creative professions on the state and advocates to increase officials’ awareness of that contribution. Previously, she worked for a decade in Ypsilanti city

eyes, ‘Oh you arts people.’ Today that’s a very rare experience — the arts and creative sector have gained a tremendous amount of credibility as a key player in economic revitalization and growth.

“Ypsilanti is a great example of a smaller city that over the years has been facing economic challenges and has smartly and strategically employed arts and creativity as one of its strategies for revitalizing the community and the local economy. You’ve got a lot of really creative people who want to be part of making a difference.”

RISE IN STATUS

Creative Many distilled Michigan employment data to show some 74,000 jobs and \$3 billion in annual payroll in creative professions like advertising, design, performance and film. Washtenaw ranked the fourth largest county in the state in terms of creative jobs and economic boon, with 462 establishments paying \$181 million in wages to employees in creative pursuits. Goulet cites the ArtPrize in Grand Rapids, the Flint Public Art Project, the Traverse City

Street in Ann Arbor to watch firefighters spray water on a blaze that consumed much of the soon-to-be demolished Ann Arbor Tech Center.

That rundown factory had housed dozens of artist studios, band-practice spaces and a small theater, but was slated for demolition to make way for the new Ann Arbor YMCA.

“In my head, that’s a definite moment,” says Maynard, a blogger, radio host and community organizer in Ypsilanti. “That being bulldozed and replaced by an upscale Y — that kind of signified the arts scene being over in Ann Arbor.”

After graduating from the University of Michigan and moving to Ypsilanti, Maynard helped create the Shadow Art Fair, an event designed to offer an alternative and a job to the massiveness and commercialism of the Ann Arbor fairs. “I lived in Ann Arbor for a bunch of years and I always hated the art fair and resented it,” he says. “Artists need to make a living, but it’s easy to parody that whole art-on-a-stick thing.”

Whether the Ann Arbor arts scene is over is open to debate, but no one questions that Ypsilanti is the new kid on the arts block.

**“It’s not Jimmy John’s hanging local artwork on the walls.
We’re all just in it for the community, for the good of the place.”**

government, including five years as the director of the city’s Downtown Development Authority.

“When I was working for the city and the DDA, having a strong and vibrant arts community centered downtown and in Depot Town were high priorities for the city,” Goulet says. “Statewide, we have seen a huge shift in the level to which communities and leaders value the arts and creativity. I don’t miss the days when you had to get past the rolling

Film Festival and related arts businesses as major bright spots in the state’s creative economy.

While Ann Arbor remains the hub of Washtenaw County’s arts economy, and its economy in general, the affordability and less stratified feel of Ypsilanti are drawing creative energy eastward.

Tracing the roots of the Ypsilanti art scene, Mark Maynard thinks back to a summer evening in 2003 when a crowd gathered on Washington

The Shadow Art Fair was successful, but it folded after several organizers left town and logistics became more complex. Nonetheless, Maynard says, the event planted seeds. “For a little guy like Ypsi to fight something as big as Ann Arbor — a David and Goliath thing — it’s a way to make a point,” Maynard says. And now, “Certain things that are happening in Ypsi that are positive, like the First Fridays events, trace back to Shadow Art Fair and that ➔



➔ energy. It created a kind of community that hadn't existed before."

Now, employees from Beezy's Café book musical acts who appear on Maynard's radio show and have portraits taken by local photographers during their visit. "It's all very incestuous and complex," Maynard says. "It takes a long time to build these things, and now we've got it. It's in the air and people are just sort of up for these kinds of things."

At Bona Sera, at Red Rock, at Beezy's, "there are a bunch of musicians and artists working at these places," Maynard says. "They're not dissimilar."

Mayor Edmonds adds that the local ownership, control and character of the new wave of businesses allows for such cooperation and innovation.

"There's a synergy among the locals," Edmonds says. "It's not Jimmy John's hanging local artwork on the walls. We're all just in it for the community, for the good of the place."

Across Washtenaw County, "We

kind of run the gamut of it, and the authenticity of how each of these communities define themselves through their creative sector is really cool," says Deb Polich, president and CEO of the Washtenaw County Arts Alliance.

"Ypsilanti finds itself in a position where there is real estate and location that is wonderful but underutilized. Arts and creativity tend to move into situations like that, and now that the organic movement has started, more people are pursuing alternatives and looking at investing and getting involved."

'LOTS OF FREAKS'

The current scene is a good mix of community-based efforts and do-it-yourselfers, says Barry LaRue, former city councilman who has served for a decade as board member at the city's Riverside Arts Center theater and gallery.

The center "is one piece of the puzzle," says LaRue, who works in

the performing arts as senior house technician for the University of Michigan's University Productions. "There are a lot of artists who don't cling to doing work in a traditional setting. We have a theater, a gallery, and some people are good with that, others are more drawn to an old auto garage or factory and doing the pop-up thing. It's great to have both."

LaRue, a lifelong Ypsilanti resident, says he appreciates the bohemian vibe from the new scene.

"I think it's pretty cool," he says. "Lots of people in their twenties and thirties — the demographic has changed quite a bit. Lots of freaks — in a good way — people I would have called 'counterculture' a while back who seem quite mainstream."

And unlike the many who have lived in Ypsilanti for cost reasons while pining to live in Ann Arbor, LaRue says, "They like Ypsi expressly because it's not Ann Arbor. I don't think that's anti-Ann Arbor, they're just happy to be in a place they can forge their own thing without

someone's preconceived notion. And it's still really affordable."

The decentralized, organic way Ypsilanti has been developing may be fortuitous. Architecture critic and consultant James Russell posed some interesting questions in a recent blog post, positing that the community-driven processes typically associated with placemaking simply don't measure up to the public places "... created by insightful designers who happen to be good listeners, good observers, and are capable of stirring together the sometimes-conflicting wishes of clients and citizens into a transcendent result none could have anticipated."

Many are hoping that will be the result for the Water Street property, 38 acres of prime downtown property the city bought and cleared in 1999 for a large residential development that never happened. The property houses only a Family Dollar store and some do-it-yourself gardens and sculptures, and three acres are slated for an affordable housing development. The bulk is uncommitted and waiting for "transcendence."

Two blocks from the eastern edge of the Water Street land, another quiet turnaround is revitalizing South Street. "I've heard a few legends from people who lived here earlier," says Jim Roll, who owns Backseat Studio in Ann Arbor. Roll moved into a formerly foreclosed home in Ypsilanti for several personal reasons — his young kids needed more space, his wife owns Beezy's Cafe downtown and doesn't drive, credit options for entrepreneurs are few — and finds himself on the tip of the comeback story.

"I heard it used to be a crack circle where people would just drive through. I feel a bit of almost Southern, post-industrial vibe. When you're

WILL THIS BE THE REBOOT THAT WORKS?

When *The Ann* asked me to write a story on Ypsilanti's rise as a cool, happening spot, I must admit I felt an uncomfortable sense of déjà vu. I moved to Ypsilanti in 1987 to write for the late *Ypsilanti Press*, and the town has been a renaissance in production ever since.

Granted, the late 1980s were still about the auto plants and whether Chevrolet or Ford might move a new car line or a components job into Willow Run or Ford Ypsilanti to stem the ongoing loss of those great jobs. In those days, Ypsilanti was a blue-collar town with a heavy dash of Southern flavor. It was not arty. While Eastern Michigan University had a successful arts program, the retail mix leaned toward antiques, older traditional businesses hanging in there and urban curios like wig stores. Big retail stories in those days were the arrival of Walmart just west of town and leaders' hopes that key properties near Depot Town, such as the Thompson Block, freight house and train station, would soon be renovated.

Coolness arrived in mid-1990s, with record stores and boutiques providing fun places for a Saturday in downtown Ypsi. Unfortunately, most of those businesses lasted a few years and closed. But a fresh look at the town today shows a spirit of cooperation and loyalty, with local businesses pulling together to have fun and attract customers. There are still some vacant storefronts and it's gritty in spots, but a lot of interesting businesses have opened in the past year or two and some long-timers are stronger than ever. Will it last? We'll see. But it's definitely fun, creative and moving in the right direction.

Editor's note: Jud Branam worked as a reporter at the *Ypsilanti Press* and *Ann Arbor News* from 1987-96 before trying his luck with a shiny new thing called the Internet. He now runs a digital marketing consultancy, Ink by the Barrel New Media. Two of his nonprofit activities share the values of this story: He's a volunteer board member with both Creative Many Michigan and Think Local First of Washtenaw County.

See **YPSI** page 25 ➔

➔ **YPSI** from page 21

living in houses that were abandoned and then came back to life, there's a laid back vibe to it."

Roll recalled playing shows at the Elbow Room bar in Ypsi years ago and he's still in a band with Ypsilanti stalwarts Misty Lyn and Matt Jones, but he considers his current address more happy coincidence than good planning. "I'm always improvising," Roll says. "I just kind of improvised my way into Ypsilanti and I like it."

HELP FROM A NEIGHBOR

Another source of inspired, creative residents for the city is EMU's art program.

"There's a great energy," says Colin Blakely, who heads the program. "We're training people in the visual arts, which includes creative problem solving, thinking outside the box and being comfortable with ambiguity. Artists can't help but bring these skills to whatever they're involved in."

Blakely says his department has increased its presence in the community in recent years, working to display work from area high school

esting things going on in Ypsilanti."

As an EMU art student, "We fell in love with Ypsi," says Elize Jekabson, who volunteers coordinating First Fridays and works at Bona Sera. She's also working with friends on a bold idea: Converting a currently vacant building into 40,000 square feet of shared art studio space. "If we can't make it work here, we're going toward Detroit," she said.

Among her friends, the Dexter native says, "Everyone I know who moved to Ann Arbor and hangs out in Ypsi is kicking themselves. I heard one person call Ann Arbor 'Ypsi West.'"

Annette Weathers, co-owner of Bona Sera, says, "I think Ypsi's a lot like Ann Arbor used to be." Her business partner launched First Fridays after gazing out the front window in hopes of seeing more customers walking by.

"That's what we enjoy about Ypsi," Weathers says. "If you can think of something you can probably do it."

And you can probably find someone who wants to help out. After sizing up the community, Nick Azzaro of Chen-Azzaro has taken a collaborative approach to his photography

businesses like Puffer Red's have as anchors for the new energy. "It's that quiet magnet of people, they just do what they do.

"During the day, there isn't a lot of pedestrian traffic because everyone's working (elsewhere). We miss the good old days with the Ford plant and GM, but those are never going to come back. If we can get more people working down here in online businesses or whatever, that will keep a lot more traffic down here."

In addition to the more than 20 businesses and galleries at May's First Fridays event, there was a children's play tent and an open rehearsal for "The Women of Lockerbie" at the Riverside Arts Center.

Jim Spencer, longtime area musician with the RFD Boys who had followed his wife's career to the South, bought 21 North Huron with his wife as an "up North" retirement abode. While her job keeps her in Louisville, he's splitting time and using the space for everything from art gallery to concert space to meeting facility. He's also launching a mobile music recording business from there.

"For a little guy like Ypsi to fight something as big as Ann Arbor — a David and Goliath thing — it's a way to make a point."

artists and to expose EMU students to design clients from area businesses and nonprofits. Overall, he says, there's a new spirit in Ypsilanti over the past five years or so, adding that the newly expanding array of studios and galleries is giving that energy a great outlet.

"Ann Arbor has always had more of the blue-chip arts venues," he says, "but in terms of people being willing to take experimental views of artistic endeavors, there's some really inter-

work, shooting neighbor businesses as pieces of a larger marketing effort for the city, rather than treating them as individual clients.

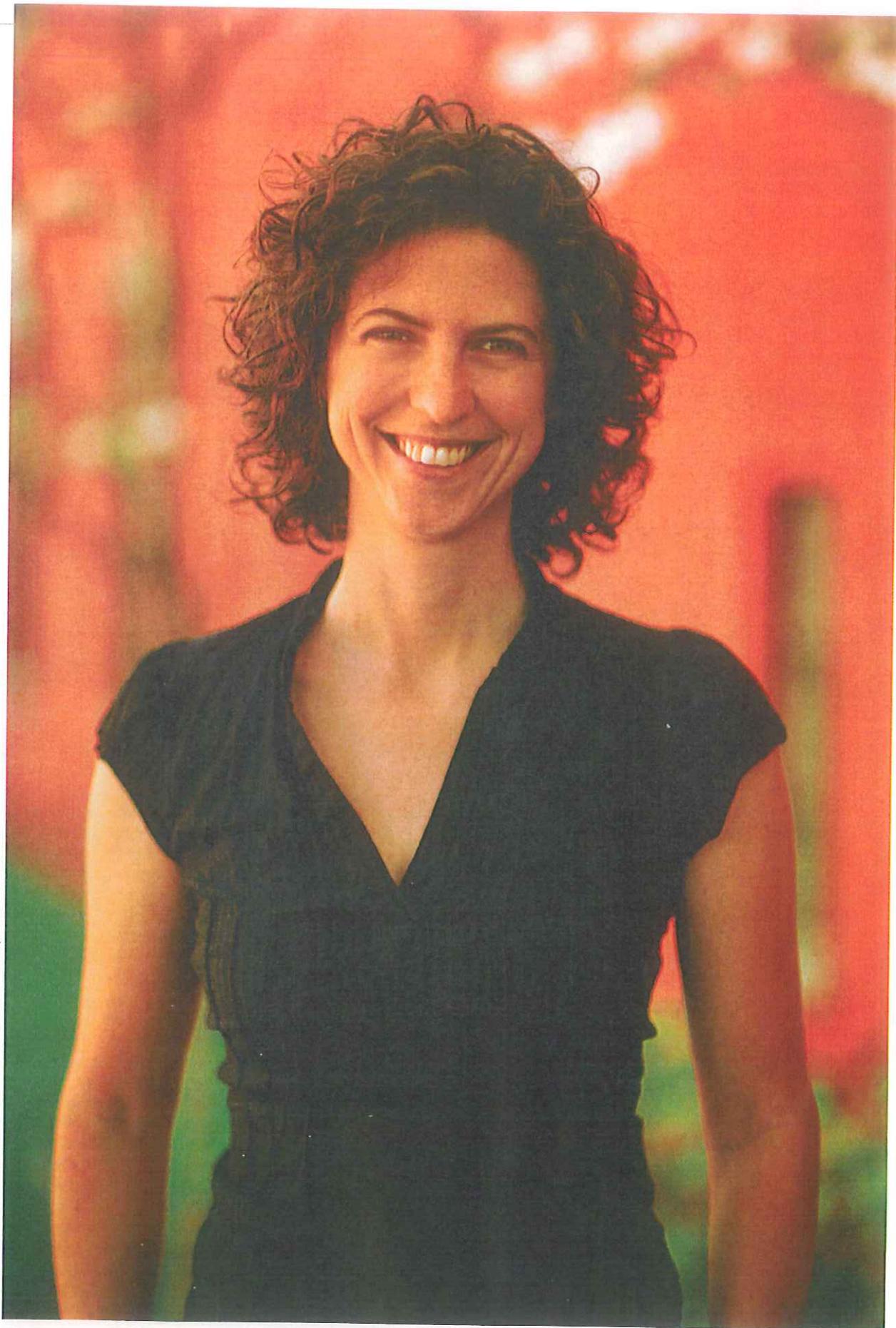
"We want to market (Ypsilanti) the way we'd work with any commercial client," he says. "We're becoming a go-to place for a lot of this stuff — it's a different business approach."

Penet feels the cooperative approach will be best as the city continues to develop. He also pointed out the role that longstanding

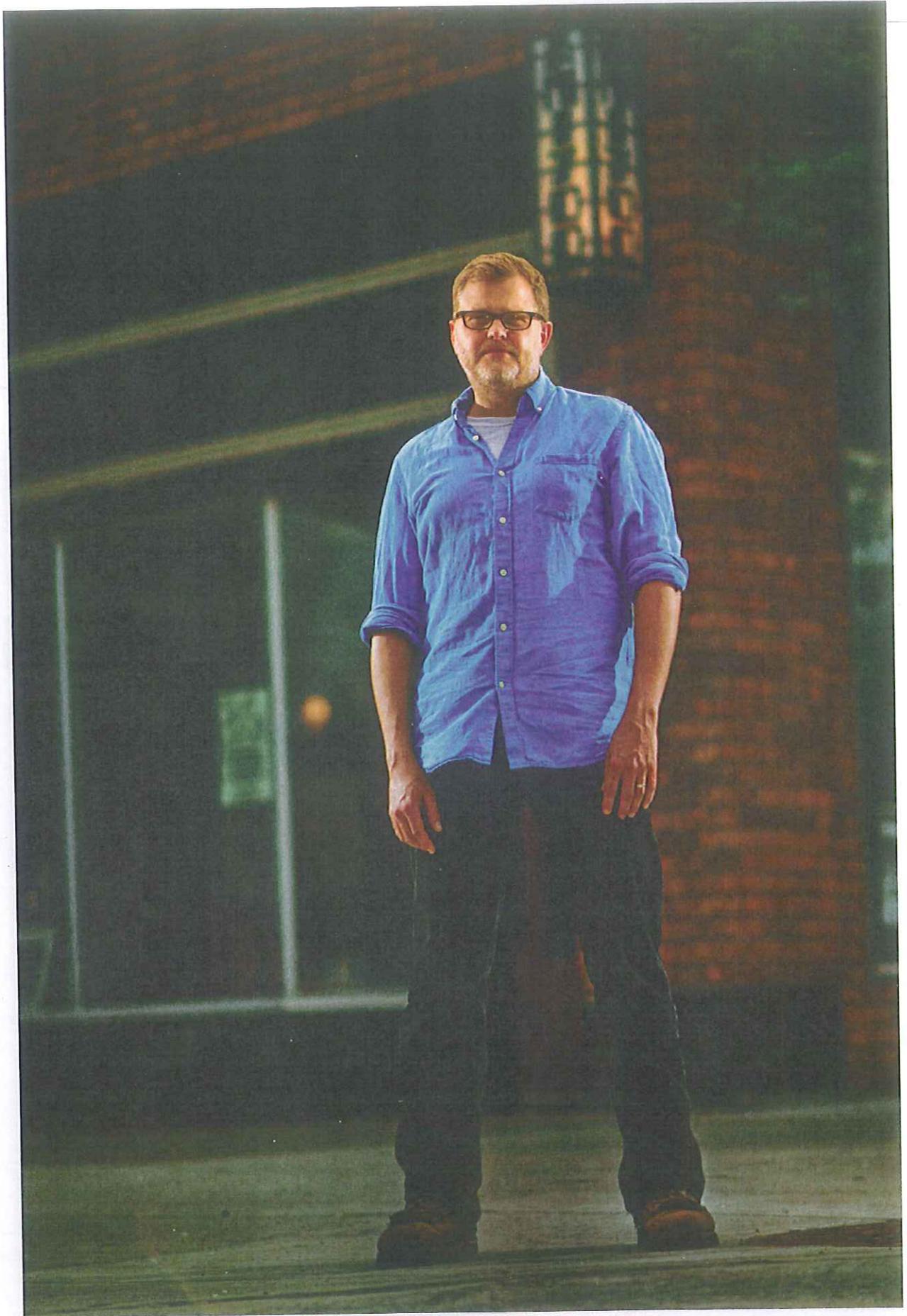
"It's all about people, not just arts," Spencer says. "If you do things that attract people then the whole thing can work and grow together."

The long shadow of Ann Arbor is ever visible — Totally Awesome Fest began there, as did Bona Sera and many other Ypsi traditions — yet the town retains a healthy sense of defiant independence.

"We need Ann Arbor," Jekabson says. "We just don't want to be Ann Arbor."



Mayor Amanda Edmonds





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06/16/2015

NEWS RELEASE

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(Chicago)--The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting has been awarded to **City of Ypsilanti** by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

An Award of Financial Reporting Achievement has been awarded to the individual(s), department or agency designated by the government as primarily responsible for preparing the award-winning CAFR. This has been presented to:

Marilou T. Uy, Director of Fiscal Services

The CAFR has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving approximately 17,500 government finance professionals with offices in Chicago, IL, and Washington, D.C.



ARCHITECTS. ENGINEERS. PLANNERS.

June 24, 2015

Max Anthouard
Chief
City of Ypsilanti
525 West Michigan Ave.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

RE: Roofing Bid Report

Dear Mr. Anthouard:

On June 10, 2015 OHM Advisors assisted the City of Ypsilanti in receiving bids associated with the work to replace the existing roofing system at the Fire Station.

The project entailed the removal of the existing roofing system over the administrative area (low roof) and the truck bay areas (high roof). Separate roof assemblies were designed for the low roof and the high roof. Each assembly consisted of at least two layers of rigid roof insulation with staggered joints between each layer, a layer of roof protection board intended to provide long term protection to the insulation, and finally a thermoplastic (TPO) membrane. Each layer required an intervening layer of adhesive. The adhesive is required due to the concrete decking. Most other decking materials will enable the use of a mechanically fastened method.

The high roof is intended to support a future system of roof mounted solar collectors. Thus a flat level assembly was proposed. To accommodate the flat roof two additional drains and associated drain lines were proposed. At the low roof, a pattern of slopes were designed to pitch to the existing drains. The distances between each drain, combined with the ¼ inch per 12 inch slope, resulted in a significantly thicker cross section of insulation at the roof's perimeter. Thus the perimeter fascia flashing also needed to increase in height. The overall appearance of the fascia flashing is approximately 12 inches.

During the bid process, there was a mandatory pre-bid meeting held on May 20, 2014. Six potential bidders attended the meeting. Each bidder was a roofing contractor. Subsequent to the mandatory pre-bid meeting, OHM issued an addendum that clarified several questions raised by the attendees. One of these items included the extension of a roof drain previously not required per the bid documents.

On bid day, one bid was received and opened. The bid by VJM Design and Build appeared to be in proper order, and in the amount of \$168,339.00. This exceeded the estimate of \$151,865.

Subsequent to the bid opening, I reviewed VJM Design and Build with the firm's Owner. He claims to have an inclusive bid and after discussing the project with him I had concluded that he does in fact have a reasonably complete bid. The addendum added some cost that would push the estimate to at least \$155,000+/- . The addendum was not reflected in the estimate.

I also reviewed with the contractor how monies can be saved and still provide the City of Ypsilanti with a new long lasting roof system. The most significant areas involve the extent of layering of rigid insulation boards and plumbing work with related demolition. We specified at least two layers with each layer overlapping. This is the recommended practice within the roofing industry. The staggering of layers improves the overall energy efficiency of the roof



assembly. However, the code will allow for a single layer system. Given the existing concrete decking we had no choice but to specify a glue down or adhered system as solid mechanically fastened systems are generally not considered feasible for such decking systems. The cost of the glue between each layer below approximates the cost of membrane alone, then add the labor. A single layer system could be installed over the high bay roof as this is only a partially occupied space. However, I would continue to recommend the staggered layer over the low roof.

Another area where some money could be saved is the deletion of a 1/4 inch thick protection board that was included in the specifications. The purpose of the protection board is to prevent crushing of the rigid insulation caused by foot traffic. We were informed that the cost for such a board is between 10 – 20 cents per SF. We view this as cheap insurance for the long term durability of the overall roof assembly and the fact that a system of solar panels is proposed to be placed on top of this roof system in the near future. It could however be eliminated if the Owner understood the role of the protective board.

Finally, there was the need to add additional plumbing lines for additional roof drainage. This was done at the high roof. The high roof was level flat. If pitch were added to the high roof, the plumbing lines may be able to be eliminated, however, we would then be adding back cost for the additional layers of insulation required to make the pitch. There is also the cost to cut, patch, and repair certain parts of the exterior soffit and interior ceiling pads to accommodate the new roofing drainage pipes. This required work begins to take the project from a simple pure roofing project to one that now involves other trades. This also explains the limited number of bids received.

In summary, costs can be reduced from the contractor's bid price, but likely only to some value nearer our estimate. Not to the allocated amount of approximately \$70K

The Owner may elect to have the roof redesigned incorporating the items above. The Owner might also consider other capital improvements to the building that would help to move the project from solely a roofing project to more of a general contracting project.

I plan to attend the July 7th Council meeting. I will be preparing a report that formalizes what I describe above.

Sincerely,
OHM Advisors

Lee J. Mamola, AIA
Senior Project Manager

cc: Kent Early
File