



# This Week

## With the Mayor



**March 15th, 2019**

## This Week With the Mayor

### Upcoming Council Business

Look for us to be discussing the following items in the next few council meetings:

1. Tightening up staffing after the resignation of Darwin McClary as our City Manager.
2. We have the results from the Damn Dam Poll (ok, really the poll to get your feedback on what to do with the Peninsular Dam).
3. We are setting up a joint work session: City Council and DDA to work on (drum roll please).... **PARKING SOLUTIONS!** Yes, you heard it here first. Coming to a city near you will be long term parking solutions.

### Mayoral Office Hours

I move the location of my office hours each month, Ward 1, 2, and then 3. I want to make sure that I am nearby everyone at some point, being accessible to YOU is the most important thing.

Ward 1 this month! This Sunday, I am holding my Mayoral Office Hours at Parkridge Community Center. The Center has graciously opened up it's doors so I can meet you! Please come by and say hello.

The usual rules apply, like basically no rules. Ask me anything. Tell me anything. I will be bringing some light snacks and look forward to seeing you then. There is a lot going on and last I checked, our community members (you, again) have strong opinions and like to share them. Turns out, I like to hear them.

See you this Sunday!

**Jobs alert!**

The 2020 Census is coming and they are hiring field staff. The pay is good, \$19 per hour, and. The work is engaging, direct contact with residents in local communities educating folks about the coming census and reasons to make participating in it a priority.

We all know the census has some legitimate problems and criticisms. These two problems are just a couple of them, and are major flaws. Both of these are being challenged both through legislative and court actions.

1. Questions asking about citizenship status, intended to intimidate some targeting minorities from participating
2. All questions about LGBT people and households have been eliminated, erasing that populations' existence from all data.

All the more reason to help make the Census be accurate!

These weaknesses in the census are intended to reduce participation. The outcome of lower participation is that local communities will have less federal support for many of the programs that base their distribution on census data, basically all of them. Keeping participation high will be utterly key to the next decade of programs and funding.

That makes the jobs available here VERY IMPORTANT! Apply, share, get the word out. <https://2020census.gov/jobs>

For more information or help applying, please call 1-855-JOB-2020

## Rest In Peace, Ralph Lange

I received the news that Ralph Lange, former Ypsilanti city manager, passed away on Monday 3/11/19. Mr. Lange was an important part of Ypsi city government and we mourn his passing. A short excerpt from his obituary: Mr. Lange earned a bachelor's degree from George Washington University in political science and master's degree in public administration from Purdue University. Ralph worked for 35 years as a public administrator and served as chief administrator and officer for six cities (including Ypsi) and one county. He was the first charter established administrator for the city of Oregon, Ohio. Ralph worked hard to provide effective, efficient, honest and fair local government services. He also achieved his lifetime goal of obtaining his Episcopal Church lay preacher license in the fall of 2018. Ralph's greatest accomplishments were spent with his family, enjoying 34 years of marriage to his wife, Kay, and being a proud father of 2 daughters, Janelle and Marissa. Visitation will be on Friday, 3/15 in Oregon, OH. More details available here: <https://goo.gl/ohjJqs>

## Despite 2015 Package, State Will Be 'Plagued' With Poor Roads

MIRS News Article - Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Requests for road repairs are one of the more frequent communications I receive from constituents. Pot holes filling, long overdue repaving, etc. are needs that we can all see easily and feel daily as we walk or drive our our city.

Why the roads are bad in our city is harder to understand. I am sharing this article with you to help understand that a little more. The State of Michigan has funding issues that are impacting roads at all levels, state, county and city. I hope this adds to your understanding of some of the challenges we face at the local level.

All that said, we will always do the best we can with the resources available. Read the article:

As if your drive into the office today wasn't jarring enough, the Citizen's Research Council of Michigan has this tidbit: Even with the 2015 road funding package that phased in \$1.2 billion more for the roads, only half of the state's roads will be in good or fair condition by 2025. That's down from 77 percent last year.

"Michigan's roads are in relatively bad shape and without an infusion of new resources they are destined to deteriorate further," concluded an *Evaluation Of Michigan's Options To Increase Road Funding*.

The new report examines the three possible sources of funding: Increasing taxes; funding shifts; and/or borrowing. It concluded that none of the three options would be an easy row to hoe for lawmakers or Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Exactly how much is required is the first thing they'll have to decide.

The report notes that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure Commission pegged the needs at \$2.2 billion in annual funding beyond the \$1.2 billion raised by the 2015 package. A recent Senate Fiscal Agency report suggests that even with another \$2.2 billion, the state's road wallet might be a tad light (See "[State Needs \\$4B Per Year For 20 Years To Close Infrastructure Gap.](#)" 12/5/16, and "[The Rising Costs Of Road Repair.](#)" Winter 2019).

Take the traditional tax route of hiking the gasoline tax for example. The state's gasoline tax, despite past increases, is declining as cars become more fuel efficient.

In 2017, cars averaged 25.2 miles to the gallon. In 1975, cars averaged 13 miles to the gallon. The report notes that "From FY 1997, when the state raised the Gas Tax from 15 cents to 19 cents per gallon, to FY 2016, the year before the tax was hiked to 26.3 cents per gallon, revenues dropped by 12 percent."

So, how about raising registration fees?

The CRC notes that following the 2015 road funding package "Michigan has one of the highest fuel tax rates, and one of the highest registration fees. Yet state road spending is towards the bottom of the national rankings.

Former legislative leaders have already suggested a whopping 47 cent per gallon jump in gasoline taxes to raise an estimated \$2.6 billion. A call that Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) dubbed as placing a "greater burden on families and household budgets without solving road funding for the future" (See "[Former Leaders Support 47-Cent Gas Tax Boost For Roads.](#)" 1/31/19).

Motor vehicle registration fees in the state ranked 14<sup>th</sup> highest prior to the 20 percent increase scheduled by the 2015 road funding package. If you take into consideration taxes on gas paid at the pump, including sales tax, the state has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest gasoline tax rate in the country.

As for option two, diverting General Fund dollars from other places to fund the roads, the CRC claims that approach was baked into the 2015 fix.

"The 2015 road funding package diverts resources that had been destined for the General Fund, the state's main discretionary account. However, funding diversions will reduce funding available for other state functions."

The General Fund, according to the Senate Fiscal Agency, only provides lawmakers with true discretion of \$5.25 billion out of the \$11 billion general fund. When the 2015 road funding package is totally in place, it will consume 5 percent of the entire General Fund.

"Over the short term, General Fund growth will be limited," reads the report. "In fact, the General Fund is not projected to exceed FY 2018 levels until FY 2022."

One possible solution? Shift higher education spending off of the General Fund and onto the School Aid Fund (SAF). Currently, the GF provides 62 percent of the \$1.6 billion in higher education spending the state provides . . . probably not a move the K-12 community would embrace.

Another option: dedicate sales tax proceeds at the pump to the roads, with no diversion for the SAF -- that would raise \$900 million -- but again, not likely to be embraced by the K-12 community.

So, that leaves borrowing -- a method current legislators have not shown much interest in.

Currently, the state's Treasury is making annual payments of \$160 million in debt service on money borrowed the same year the Unabomber was sentenced to four life terms, Donnie **OSMOND** was at the top of the Pop Charts and the nation had its first balanced budget in 30 years.

## Rethinking Farmers Markets

Farmers Markets aren't just about fruits and veggies! This week at the indoor market you'll find frozen fish from the Straits of Mackinac, farm-fresh eggs, local honey, Srodeks and Susie the Pierogi Lady selling Polish food from Hamtramck, and so much more. Don't worry--there's produce, too! Farmer Bruce will be there with microgreens grown at his home in Ypsi's West Willow neighborhood. Want a reminder to come to market? Text YpsiMarkets to 84483. The next market is Tuesday March 19th 3-7 at 16 S Washington: the Robert C Barnes Sr MarketPlace Hall.

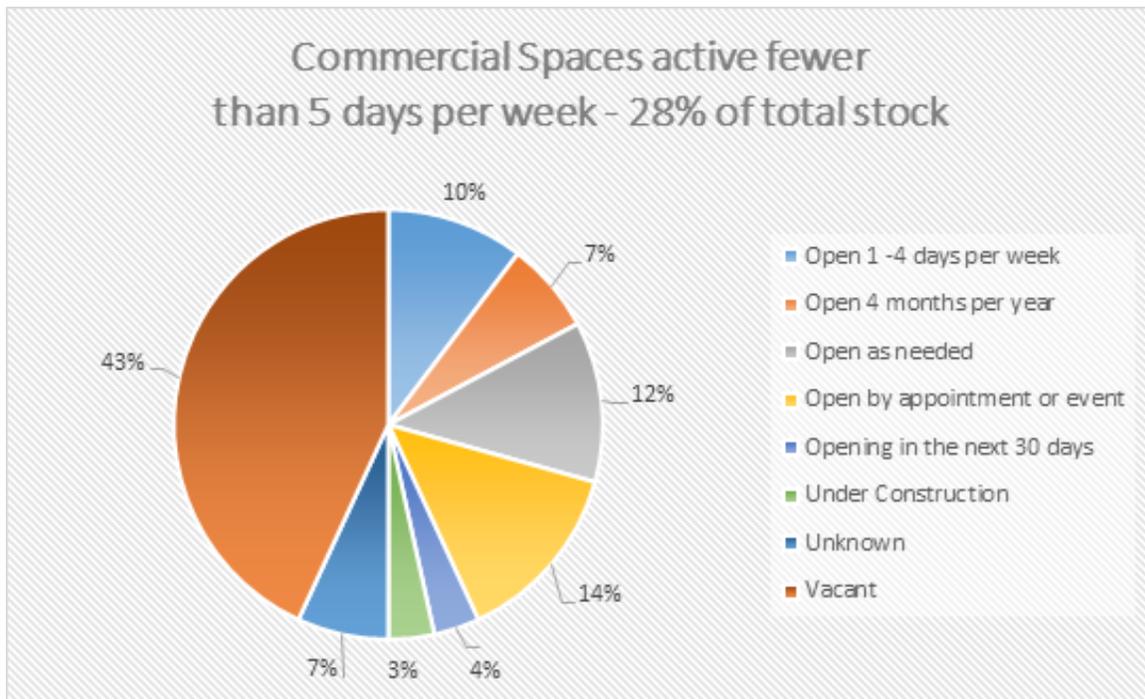
--Dayna Popkey, Growing Hope

## Vacancies in Downtown

I asked our Economic Development Director, Joe Meyers, about some of our empty properties downtown, especially on Michigan Avenue. As always, the answer is much more complicated than I expected. I am getting used to that, in my ever-increasing learning curve as your fairly new Mayor.

What I learned was so interesting that I want to share it with you all. Please take a moment to thank Joe Meyers and Chris Jacobs who wrote the article below. It took a fair amount of their time. This might help you understand some of the reasons why we are more successful in developing some parts of city than others.

As you may have noticed, over the past 5 years Downtown Ypsilanti has seen a resurgence of businesses. Some of our new storefronts include but are not limited to Unicorn Feed and Supply, TinkerTech, Massage Mechanics, A2 Vintage, Michigan Advocacy Program, Decode Ypsilanti, Dolores, Evenstars Chalice, and Twisted Things Gallery. About 72% of the approximately 208 commercial spaces identified are active 5-7 days per week and represent the core draw to our unique downtown destinations. The graph below illustrates how frequently the remaining 28% of commercial spaces are being used:

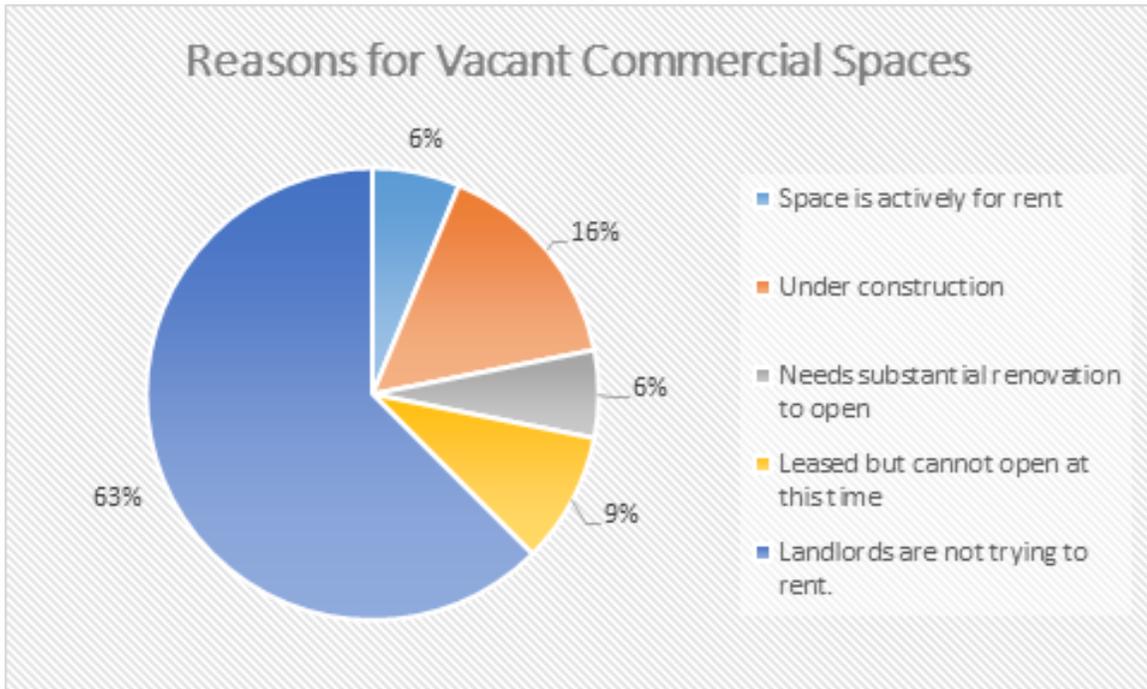


While we have seen a large swell of new investment and exciting offerings, there are still some commercial spaces that remain vacant. About 32 total or 15% of all commercial spaces remain vacant at this time. Reasons for vacancies in Ypsi can be categorized 5 different ways:

1. Spaces actively for rent
2. Under Construction
3. In need of substantial renovation to open
4. Leased but cannot open at this time
5. Landlords are not trying to rent.

While it might surprise everyone, there are only 1 to 2 storefronts currently for rent. Anyone interested in renting a space in downtown can contact the DDA at [christopher@ypsilantidda.org](mailto:christopher@ypsilantidda.org). There are also multiple individuals that are looking to purchase property in the downtown and cannot find any space to purchase. The second kind of space are properties under active construction. The city has five active construction projects downtown currently underway. Due to the historic nature of our city, construction projects can be a slight inconvenience in downtown taking up essential parking spaces. With this being said, the current property owners investing and adding value to our city and the short term pain will be a long term gain. We applaud these property owners for their investment. The third kind of space is vacant is a space that requires massive amounts of renovation. Five years ago, we had many more spaces in the city that met this criteria but thanks to property owners like the Michigan Advocacy Program

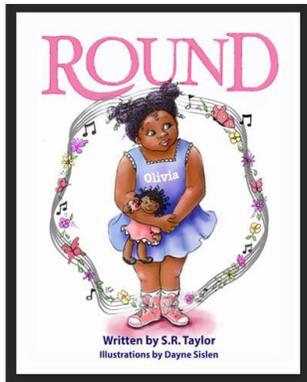
(Smith Furniture Building) and Decode Ypsilanti (16 N. Washington), these spaces have been reactivated.



The fourth kind of space is leased but cannot open at this time. The city has a total of 7 medical marijuana provisioning center permits and 7 active medical marijuana provisioning centers. There are approximately 3 additional vacant spaces in the city that are leased (or have the intent to lease) to new medical marijuana provisioning centers. With storefronts that could be rented to active businesses, it is an active challenge for us to help fill a space that is actively rented. The last category is spaces that are not for rent. This has nothing to do with the condition of the building or the location. They have owners that have owned the building for many years and have no interest in finding a tenant. The DDA has worked hard over the past years to reach out to these owner and has not been successful. While the city does have their hands tied in what they can do to get these spaces activated, we continue to reach out to the owners and educate them on the current market.

--Joe Meyers & Chris Jacobs, City of Ypsilanti

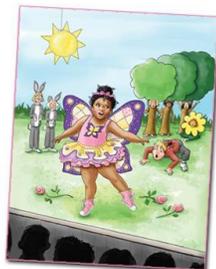
## Local Author Shervonne Taylor



An inspirational, anti-bullying children's book entitled "ROUND."



S.R. Taylor, Author



"Everybody deserves a chance to dance...to sing ....to spread their own unique wings!"

**"Free2Bee" Books**

**248.850.6354**

**[www.roundthebook.com](http://www.roundthebook.com)**

**[facebook.com/roundthebook](https://www.facebook.com/roundthebook)**

I had the pleasure of meeting Shervonne Taylor, the author of the YA book Round, (described below in her own words) at a Black History event at Ypsilanti Community Schools High School recently. The event was called No Dream Deferred and it included a Live Museum and show about Black History performed by local teens.

Ms. Taylor is passionate about the book and the positive body message she is communicating through this book. I encourage you to check out the book, and hear more about how we can teach our children more about the important message about size and possibilities.

In her own words: Shervonne Taylor:

I was inspired by my daughter Athena to write "ROUND" after the cruel treatment she encountered in elementary school. The main character, Olivia Cathrine Amanda Mae Brown (named after just about every woman in her family) wants to be a butterfly and dance in the community school play 'The Backyard Ballet.' Unfortunately she's taunted and teased (similarly like the Ugly Duckling) into thinking she's

much too big to be a butterfly and must go on a journey (with the help of her grandma and fairy Godfather Mr. Butterfly) to learn to trust & believe in the power cocooned inside. The simple words of encouragement and faith from Olivia's grandmother heighten the experience of Olivia's journey. While ROUND has an antibullying message, it is much more than that. It's an imaginative story that encourages children to embrace their unique individuality and truly believe in themselves from the inside out.

According to Dove global research, only 11% of girls are comfortable describing themselves as beautiful while 72% of girls feel tremendous pressure to be beautiful. Free2Bee Books and The Butterfly Girl Project mission is to reach 1 million girls throughout Michigan, across the country and around the world one

book at a time. Through our positive self-esteem and writer's workshops, the book ROUND has yielded important conversations with our girls about truly accepting and loving themselves. At the end of our Butterfly Girl workshops and tea parties every participant looks in the mirror and repeats: "I am free to be me. When I look in the mirror I like what I see."

For more information about Free2Bee Books (Teacher's Guide or Spanish version), booking SRTaylor or joining the movement, visit us at [www.roundthebook.com](http://www.roundthebook.com) or [facebook.com/roundthebook/](https://facebook.com/roundthebook/)

## Highlighted Events of the Week:

### Pride: YYO 20th Anniversary Celebration!

Our Ypsilanti Youth Orchestra is celebrating a big anniversary! I have supported and been a fan of this fantastic organization for many years. I cannot tell you how much I enjoy them at our local events including the Normal Park Ice Cream Social, concerts around town, evenings at Ypsi Food Coop, at Go Ice Cream...

The dedication of Verna and William Hayes to this group is simply amazing. They work tirelessly (well, they probably get tired, ok?) to get instruments, music, gigs, lessons, and everything else young musicians need. If you want to know what passion looks like, this is it. Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$45 at the door. Please help them celebrate at 6:30 PM on Friday, April 26, 2019 at the Concourse Hall, 4531 Concourse Drive in Ann Arbor <https://www.facebook.com/events/284324425561632/>

### Diversity: DO (something)

The conference for those who (want to, need to, try to, can) do. Designers, artists, photographers, developers, creatives and entrepreneurs... Anyone who has ever had an idea that makes their pants tingle. It's time to stop messing around and do what you've always wanted to do. At this day-long event, spend the day being inspired, encouraged and supported by creative leaders and fellow doers. There are no more excuses. Tickets are \$55 General • \$15 student. DO (something) TICKET INCLUDES: Inspiration talks by creative leaders. Breakout discussions with speakers and fellow doers. Portfolio review with area creative professionals. Pop-Up shop with vendors from across the state. 99 Beers after-party at Cultivate Coffee & Tap House. For more info see: [dosomethingypsi.com](http://dosomethingypsi.com)

DO (something) takes place 9am-4pm on Thurs 3/28 at Riverside Arts Center, 76 North Huron Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/do-something-tickets-54425082888>

**THIRD ANNUAL BOOKDAY**



**FRIDAY APRIL 5, 2019  
5-10PM**

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HOLIDAY CELEBRATION  
BLACK EMPOWERMENT AWARDS  
BLACK BUSINESS BLOCK PARTY  
WCC-MORRIS LAWRENCE BUILDING**

**SATURDAY APRIL 6, 2019  
12-2PM**

**BOOKDAY GARDEN DEVELOPMENT  
PARKRIDGE COMMUNITY GARDEN  
5-10PM**

**BOOKDAY ART & TALENT SHOW  
RIVERSIDE ARTS CENTER**

**SUNDAY APRIL 7, 2019  
3:30-6:30PM**

**BOOKDAY BOOK SIGNING AND READING  
BLACK STONE BOOKSTORE**

**FACEBOOK: BOOKDAY : BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HOLIDAY**

## Heritage: BookDay

BookDay is coming. Per Wikipedia (because I am inadequate to the task of describing this great man) Booker Taliaferro Washington was an American educator, author, orator, and advisor to presidents of the United States. Between 1890 and 1915, Washington was the dominant leader in the African American community.

The Third Annual BookDay will take place April 5-7th in Ypsilanti. Booker T. Washington Holiday Celebration Presents: The First Black Empowerment Awards with Special Guest: Marshall Washington; Award Winners: Yusef Shakur, Jewell Jones, Malik Yakini, Twin Flame Coalition; Performance by: Alnur African Dance Troupe, Athena Johnson, and more... The Black Business Block Party featuring the area's quality black businesses, Authors, Scholars, Leaders & Entertainers! Thanks

for any and all support! Sponsorship at all levels available! For more info, please contact Noah Rucker. E-mail: [starsixent.photo@yahoo.com](mailto:starsixent.photo@yahoo.com)  
Phone: 313.740.1642 <https://www.facebook.com/events/546738175788951/>

Contact Mayor Beth Bashert  
FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/bashert4ypsi/>  
Email: [mayor@cityofypsilanti.com](mailto:mayor@cityofypsilanti.com)  
Phone: 734-483-1100 x39644