

From Executive Director Hans Voss

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Earlier this year, I wrote to you asking what you think of when you hear the name “Michigan Land Use Institute.” We wanted to know what aspect of our work resonates with you. Is it our policy advocacy? Our journalism? Our efforts to build coalitions? We wondered if you were most inspired by our work to grow the local food economy, strengthen the clean energy movement, or help create thriving communities that attract people and jobs.

After all, with our 20th anniversary on its way next year, it’s a great time to reflect on our effectiveness and purpose, and how people perceive our work.

So, in recent months, we have spoken with and surveyed hundreds of supporters—as well as folks who may have only heard of us in passing, or not at all—to gauge the effectiveness of our marketing. The research was illuminating.

Our existing supporters understand our work and how it helps to build resilient communities. MLUI members and partners understand the importance of our pro-environment, pro-economy mission.

But we also learned that there’s an opportunity to reach even more people about the good work being accomplished here at the Institute. Despite our heavy emphasis on communications, our name leads many people to think of us as a “land preservation” group. For example, among community members who aren’t as acquainted with our work, 80 percent believe we preserve natural areas like a conservancy, yet only 10 percent know of our work to promote energy efficiency or increase the amount of local food in schools and institutions.

In other words, we need to do a better job defining MLUI. It’s crucial, because achieving tangible results for us depends on recruiting the active engagement of people from all walks of life.

So as we turn 20 next year, we find ourselves asking: Where do we see ourselves in another two decades? Without a doubt, we will remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting resilient communities where environmental protection and strong economies exist side by side. This is, after all, what we’ve been up to for the first 20 years and, based on the success and support we’ve met along the way, we don’t see any reason to change direction.

But making sure we find the means to communicate that important mission is paramount. We’ve taken all your feedback and are crafting a new brand to be unveiled as part of our 20th anniversary that will carry us forward for at least another 20 years.

If you were one of the many people who filled out our survey or engaged in an interview, I want to thank you. It’s your energy and backing that inspires us to push forward. And it’s your generous financial support that makes it all possible. We really couldn’t do it without you.

Stay tuned. 2015 is going to be an exciting year.

Hans Voss





Oct. 11, 2014
mlui.org/harvest

For more than a decade, MLUI has been working closely with farmers, producers, retailers, chefs, and fellow advocates to cultivate a thriving local food system. We think it's time to celebrate our joint successes, and you are invited!

Join us for Harvest@theCommons on Oct. 11, 2014. The authentic farm-to-table experience at the Grand Traverse Commons will celebrate the best of northern Michigan with a family-style feast made from the finest local ingredients in honor of our region's farmers.

Special highlights will include the 2014 Milliken Award dedication to Ray Minervini in recognition of his legacy: the transformation of the Grand Traverse Commons.

The evening will be one to remember in this historic setting, a microcosm of vision and purpose accented by prospering local businesses, mixed-use living, and miles of forested trails. This event will be an excellent opportunity for the Institute to connect with its members; to spread the good word about our work to strengthen local food, energy, and transportation systems; and to build strong models for resilience and sustainable living. **Visit www.mlui.org/harvest to get your tickets now.**

CLEAN ENERGY

Oil and Water Don't Mix

Two 61-year-old pipelines pumping oil through the Straits of Mackinac pose an unthinkable risk—not only to the largest source of freshwater on the planet but to Michigan's economy. The lakes define our landscape, our culture, our history, and our tourism industry more than anything else.

Oil pipelines, and their inherent risks, don't belong in the Great Lakes.

MLUI has joined more than a dozen environmental groups to launch a new website and TV commercial to raise awareness of the threat. We're also encouraging citizens to sign on to a letter to Gov. Rick Snyder urging immediate state action to regulate Enbridge's "Line 5." Take a minute to visit www.OilandWaterDontMix.org and join us to protect our lakes.



Shining a light on solar

The cost of solar electricity is dropping like a rock and MLUI is busy carving out ways to make it more readily available in Michigan. Our Senior Policy Specialist, Jim Dulzo, reported extensively on the state's solar working group this year, the results of which show huge potential in power from the sun being a viable source of power for our energy future. Visit mlui.org/solar to read his coverage.

Come learn more about the future of solar! The Michigan Land Use Institute clean energy team is gearing up for an exciting day focused on solar powering our state. On Friday, Sept. 12, 2014, the Solar Powering Michigan Conference at Northwestern Michigan College will provide an opportunity to learn about the many opportunities that are emerging in the state's solar market. Details are on our website and we hope to see many of you there!

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Getting Back on Track



MLUI's latest report describes the potential for running a train on an 11-mile stretch of railroad tracks between Traverse City and Williamsburg, Michigan.

Getting Back on Track: Uncovering the Potential for Trains in Traverse City explores how rail travel could boost tourism and development in the area; the upgrades needed to run passenger trains along the tracks; and how comparable towns around the country restored old train lines.

A seasonal tourist-shuttle could be a low-cost, achievable first step to expanding rail options in northern Michigan. It's a way to add capacity to our transportation network while supporting development along the track at the same time.

Planning ahead

Policy Specialist James Bruckbauer is keeping tabs on regional transportation officials as they plan to tackle one of the Grand Traverse region's most pressing topics: traffic.

The region's transportation planning agency, TC-TALUS is looking for comments on their draft long-range plan. While the draft has some bright spots, it assumes we can build our way out of traffic problems with new roads, including the controversial Hartman-Hammond bridge.

MLUI believes it's important to fix the roads we already have, and to prioritize "demand-side" strategies for managing traffic like parking management, reliable express transit during busy hours, and safe bike networks.

Bruckbauer will submit comments on behalf of MLUI. You can submit your own to TC-TALUS before August 31. Visit mlui.org to find out how.

FOOD & FARMING

Taste the Local Difference in '14

Our Taste the Local Difference™ program continues to expand, making it easier than ever to buy local food in northern Michigan. In addition to the popular food guides and smartphone apps, this year TLD is working closely with Tom's Food Markets on a new marketing strategy to help shoppers identify local food in their stores.

Tom's is featuring brightly colored "shelf talker" labels, designed to show how far each product was grown or made from that particular store. It helps consumers determine for themselves what "local" means to them, and moves us closer to our goal that by 2020, 20% of northwest Michigan's food will be supplied by local growers and food entrepreneurs.



10 Cents a Meal expands

Last fall MLUI and the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District launched a new initiative called 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms. It financially supports schools in purchasing locally grown fruits and vegetables, and puts money into the economy for our region's farms. Last year, the program provided Traverse City Area Public Schools, Suttons Bay Public Schools and Glen Lake Community Schools with \$20,095 to spend on locally grown produce, which the districts matched penny per penny—and then some. Overall, the districts spent a total of \$84,621 on local fruits and veggies.

This spring, we expanded the program to add five more districts thanks to funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Oleson Family Foundation. And we've almost raised the entire \$100,000 needed for the school reimbursements to take us through March 2016, but not quite. If you'd like to contribute, please visit utopiafound.org/product-category/utopia-gifts/.

Just clip out this card and send it back to us at:
 148 E. Front St., Suite 301, Traverse City, MI, 49684.

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