



## Stadium District Gets Boost From Tax Break

\$1M incentive from State to help developer create lost retail site

Around a vacant lot that once was part of Lansing's "Sin Strip," city officials and a local developer plan to create a new destination complete with housing, bars and restaurants.

The catalyst: The Stadium District project, a \$12.3 million proposal by local developer Pat Gillespie that includes 54 condominiums and apartments as well as retail and office space across from Oldsmobile Park.

The envisioned result: a newly created district surrounding the project that would provide a much-needed boost to Lansing's downtown, which often resembles a ghost town come evening.

"We are trying to create an identity for this area," Gillespie said. "We want people to be aware of this area like they are with Old Town."

His project, slated to start in August and be finished by fall 2007, took a step closer to becoming a reality Thursday after the state awarded it a \$1 million tax break.

Gillespie said he couldn't do the project without it. "When the state invests in projects like this, it is investing in the growth of Michigan," Gov. Jennifer Granholm said in a new release.

The Stadium District - an 11-block area bounded by the Grand River, Pennsylvania Avenue, Kalamazoo Street and Oakland Avenue - was recently created as a marketing tool to sell downtown, said Bob Trezise, director of the Lansing Economic Development Corp.

The hope is the district will connect Old Town, the Capitol and Michigan State University, Trezise said.

"We want this to be a major entertainment hub to the region," Trezise said.

The area was infamously known as the "Sin Strip" for its high crime, drugs and prostitution on street corners.

But those problems seemed to almost disappear overnight when then-Mayor David Hollister was successful in getting the city to build the 13 million Oldsmobile Park in 1996.

Now, the city is looking to build on the stadium's success. The city recently applied for a \$100,000 Cool Cities grant that would provide new signage, a new mural and streetscape work within the district.

The city has long-term plans for the district as well. They include installing rain gardens, making it easier for walkers to cross major intersections, and widening and expanding sidewalks.

Matt Fisher, who owns the Abrams Aerial Survey Building - a stone's throw from Gillespie's project - said he was excited about downtown's future.

"The Stadium District is long overdue for the development of the city of Lansing," he said. "If downtown is ever going to reach its potential, this needs to happen."

Mayor Virg Bernero, whose campaign was bringing more people downtown, said the district would be a magnet for 20- to 30-year-olds.

"We are turning the corner downtown," Bernero said.