



How Cool Is That? Lansing Wins Grant

Stadium District to get Cool Cities cash to spruce up

Lansing's newly created Stadium District received a \$100,000 boost Thursday in the form of a Cool Cities grant awarded by the state.

That money is expected to go toward new signage, a mural on the Riverwalk Theater and streetscape work, city officials said.

And the district isn't Lansing's only cool spot: On Thursday, Old Town was designated a Michigan Main Street program area by the state. That means it will receive a marketing research study and \$166,000 in assistance to help small businesses, city officials said.

Lansing was the only mid-Michigan municipality to receive a grant; 23 projects across the state were announced in all.

The Cool Cities initiative, part of Gov. Jennifer Granholm's economic development plan, is aimed at attracting new jobs and revitalizing urban areas by bringing in young entrepreneurs and skilled professionals.

"Winning these cool Cities awards adds to the tremendous energy and excitement we're seeing in and around downtown," Mayor Virg Bernero said. "Momentum is definitely building, and we are moving Lansing forward every day."

Downtown District

The Stadium District – an 11-block area bounded by the Grand River, Pennsylvania Avenue, Kalamazoo Street and Oakland Avenue – recently was created as a marketing tool to sell downtown.

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

The expected anchor of the district is a \$12.3 million project by local developer Pat Gillespie. It includes 54 condominiums and apartments, as well as retail and office space in what is now a parking lot across from Oldsmobile Park.

The state also recently awarded Gillespie a \$1 million tax break for the Stadium District project. Construction is slated to start next month.

"When I first envisioned Stadium District, I thought we could create a unique identity for part of downtown Lansing, similar to what San Diego has done with their Gas Light District," Gillespie said. "This grant brings Lansing one step closer to truly being a cool city."

Old Town Revisions

As for Old Town, the \$166,000 grant it receives will go toward hiring experts to help its business owners with architect designs and promotion efforts.

"It's the extra boost we've been waiting for," Jamie Czekai, president of the board of the Old Town Commercial Association.