



# great lakes REPORTER

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# great lakes REPORTER

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bob Belair, Charter Township of Northville

Hello again Michigan Chapter members.

It is hard to believe, but I am already nearing the end of my term as President. Everyone was telling me how quickly the year would go by, and you were all correct! I feel like we just started this adventure a few weeks ago. It has truly been an honor serving our membership this past year. I have gotten to meet and work with so many wonderful people. The duties and interactions I have had as President just further instilled in me how great of an organization this is.

There are so many opportunities within our organization for our membership to grow; both professionally and personally. If you are a member that does not take advantage of these opportunities, then I urge you to start now. It is very easy. Contact your local branch, attend a local meeting, sign up for a networking event, or sign up to attend the Great Lakes Expo (GLX). The APWA Michigan Chapter's website has a wealth of information, including member contact information, educational opportunities, networking events, and state chapter events.

For those seeking the best training around, look no further than the Michigan Public Services

Institute (MPSI), or the Road's Scholar program. These programs both offer unparalleled training that is specific to Public Services. The MPSI has been offered annually for the past 32 years, and is still selling out years in advance. That alone should indicate how popular this training is. If you cannot attend one of these trainings, then there are other offerings such as snow plow rodeos and winter workshops, equipment tradeshow, lunch & learn events, and numerous social networking activities. There is literally something for everyone to get involved with.

As I come to the end of my term, I look forward to continuing my involvement and promoting all things Public Works for our organization. Thank you again for the opportunity to represent and lead the APWA Michigan Chapter this past year. It has been a great experience!

Best regards,

*Bob Belair, PE*  
*Director of Public Services*  
*Charter Township of Northville*  
*bbelair@twp.northville.mi.us*



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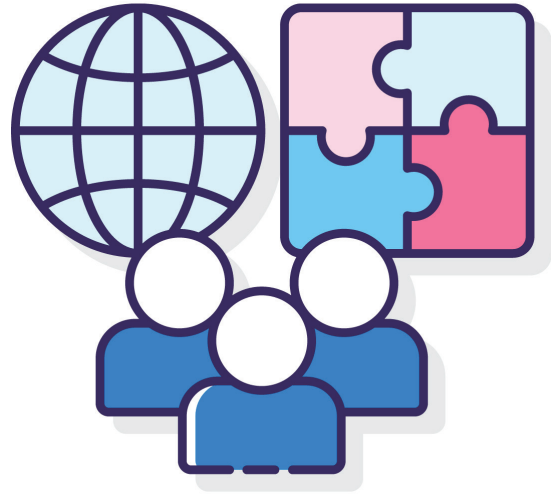
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# REMOTE TEAMS: Leadership Challenges



Lewis G. Bender, Ph.D.

It doesn't seem to matter. Whenever I encounter an organization comprising of a central operation and one or more satellite teams, I will hear the same things from the leader: "We're not on the same page. They (the remote team) are so negative when I show up. Most of my issues and problems come from that garage." Leaders' concerns remain the same whether it is a road commission or DPW remote garage, a separate water distribution or filtration operation, or a separately housed billing operation: Communication, coordination, and working as a total-integrated team, as opposed to working against each other as separate teams with different missions.

It isn't always hugs and kisses at the central operation. Conflicts occur in all teams. But why do remote teams pose as many challenges as they frequently do? To answer that question, we compare the circumstances and behaviors of in-person versus remote teams. We then make suggestions that a team leader can take to at least mitigate-if not resolve-these challenges. We look at five interlocking elements that make teams strong and effective. We compare how those interlocking team elements differ within a central versus remote team operation. Suggestions on how to address these challenges then follow.

## TEAM ELEMENT ONE: SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS OF BEHAVIORAL AND WORK UNDERSTANDINGS

Shared, person-to-person expectations related to work, personal behaviors, and goals provide the basis for understanding and trust within a functioning team. Team members can create contrary and negative narratives about each other when they don't have opportunities to work with each other and observe each other's work behaviors. Without a shared understanding of how we treat each other and each person's "fair share" of work, a team quickly degenerates into "islands" and "us versus them" games.

### Within In-Person Teams

- Mutual expectations are made in real-time, and team members discuss issues and ideas as they occur and make corrections throughout the day.
- Adjustments to behavior can be made in a "friendly" supportive manner.
- Inter-personal flare-ups can be addressed successfully or unsuccessfully in real-time.

### Remote Teams from Each Other

- Mutual expectations are developed separately from the central office or garage, and adjustments are made well after the issue has occurred.
- Adjustments to behavior between the two teams are more frequently seen as negative "judgments" or discipline.
- Inter-personal flare-ups between central and remote team members often linger and don't get resolved. Others get "poisoned" by the conflicts of a few people.

## REMOTE TEAMS CONTINUED

### TEAM ELEMENT TWO: SUPPORT "DO YOU HAVE MY BACK?"

Element one leads into this team element. A key shared understanding between team leaders and members is: "Do you have my back?" There are many implications if team members do not feel supported in their decisions and overall work. Without a sense of backing, calculated risk-taking, individual and team creativity, and successful adaptation to new circumstances and challenges don't happen. Several essential individual and team behaviors don't happen. Inevitably, this feeds into a perpetual cycle of suspicion and distrust between the central and remote team leaders and members.

#### Within In-Person Teams

- Support or lack of support is immediately evident to team members and can be addressed or avoided.
- Opportunities to successfully address negative perceptions or misunderstandings are more frequent. Correspondingly, interpersonal conflicts can become more intense.
- Leaders and team members can be caught in the middle but have more opportunities to intervene.

#### Remote Teams from Each Other

- Support and lack of support are sometimes not immediately evident. Infrequent contact allows people to avoid possible conflict. Thus, when they occur, conflicts become more intense and toxic.
- Narratives and negative perceptions grow on all sides. Honest communication is undermined.
- Leaders and team members get trapped in an "us-vs-them" drama. In a toxic situation communicating with members of the other team is seen as collusion or even betrayal by members of each team.

### TEAM ELEMENT THREE: SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE JOB AND CONTROL BOUNDARIES

Not all jobs and tasks can be pre-defined by job descriptions, policies, and written and verbal instructions and protocols. There are subtle understandings-sometimes called team culture that develop among team members over time. Even when members move from one team to another, they are expected to follow the new team's rules, protocols, and culture. Statements such as: "The way we did it at the Central Garage..." undermine the new person's acceptance into the adopted team. Clashes and misunderstandings between teams and team leaders can occur when these subtle understandings and boundaries form separately.

#### Within In-Person Teams

- New team members quickly pick up on key things: How hard do we work? How often do we take breaks? Who are the informal leaders etc.?
- How much freedom do we have to make job-related decisions? Do we work independently of each other or mostly inter-dependently?
- How much is seniority a factor? Questions are answered directly, subtly, or not at all. Issues can be addressed in real-time and not delayed.
- Creativity in pushing old boundaries and trying new approaches is often a team discussion. It is either encouraged or discouraged, depending on the leadership and the team's culture.

#### Remote Teams from Each Other

- Boundaries, job approaches, and underlying assumptions are more difficult to determine in separated teams.
- The independence and freedoms of the remote team in defining job boundaries different from the central team are often seen as dysfunctional or not in line with the central team practices.
- Remote teams sometimes attract members who wish to be distant from the controls pushed by the central team or boss (es)
- Creativity in accomplishing the job by the remote team may require explanations and even justification.



## TEAM ELEMENT FOUR: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

"What we have here is failure to communicate." The words of the passive-aggressive warden in the movie Cool Hand Luke ring true in the relationships between central and remote teams. High-performing teams communicate with ease and trust. Healthy teams and people thrive on effective interpersonal communication. Similarly, a lack of communication between teams and team members can be an indicator of deeper issues, including mistrust or lack of mutual respect.

### Within In-Person Teams

- Communication is often face-to-face and synchronous.
- Real-time discussions tend to undermine (not eliminate) assumptions and pre-determined explanations.
- We often determine whether a person is sincere and telling the truth by their body language and voice tone. Body language consists of 55% of the meaning when two people are in each other's presence (38% of the meaning in each other's presence).
- Problem-solving, ideas and handling challenges are easily communicated. Feedback is often immediate.

### Remote Teams from Each Other

- Communication is asynchronous. This forces many "after-the-fact" discussions, which can quickly sound or be judgmental.
- Delayed conversations allow for more negative assumptions to creep in. "I know why they didn't get the job done. I have heard these excuses before." Pre-determined explanations undermine honest problem-solving between members and their teams.
- Telephone, Zoom calls, emails, and texts are very weak substitutes for in-person discussions. 87% of the meaning in a telephone call is ascertained by voice tone. With emails, texts, etc., we only get 7% of the in-person meaning of a discussion.
- Problem-solving and discussing challenges often occur when things are broken. This can complicate communication and trust.



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### TEAM ELEMENT FIVE: A SHARED SENSE OF MISSION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The ongoing debate between the central operation and outlying teams often centers around their differing realities and views regarding what is and isn't important or a priority. In some cases, the remote team may serve a very different constituency than the home-based team. In other cases, the histories and cultures of the two or more teams have evolved to the point where they see themselves as totally separate entities with differing views of purpose and mission. Without a shared mission and mutual respect for each operation's variations in accomplishing the mission(s), the teams and team leaders quickly become judgmental of each other.

#### Within In-Person Teams

- Everyone is looking at the same jobs and challenges under real-time circumstances.
- Agreements and disagreements over the relative importance of jobs and challenges can be addressed immediately.
- Recognition of accomplishments and failures are discussed in real-time, adding to a sense of shared mission. They become part of the shared culture.
- Team members and top team leaders more easily reinforce the pride of accomplishment and one's self. A sense of being "special" can become part of the team's self-perception.

#### Remote Teams from Each Other

- The remote team may be looking at a very different set of jobs and challenges under different circumstances on the same day.
- Agreements and, more notably, disagreements over the relative importance of a job often come well after the fact in the form of "second-guessing" and defensiveness.
- Recognition of accomplishments can be slow in coming. Failures and problems are often recognized much earlier. This can reinforce the "us vs. them" mentality of problem employees.
- Remote teams can feel pride and have a sense of being special. However, it occurs separately and can be a source of friendly competition or reinforce separateness from the central team.

### FOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Every team is different. Multiple factors and variables impact how teams operate. Cookie-cutter solutions and one-size-fits-all approaches are naïve and rarely work. The following suggestions are just that—suggestions. They are derived from several decades of successfully and unsuccessfully grappling with this problem. Each of the suggestions focuses on reducing the gaps between teams.

- 1. Get the Leadership Team on the Same Page.** Most team leaders are members of two teams. The boss' team and the team they lead. This potentially inherent conflict can be intensified with remote team leaders. Regular ongoing leadership team meetings are essential for closing the gap between the central and remote offices. The agendas, ideas, and issues addressed by the team should come from all members—not just the big boss. A great way to start is to ask the group: "What are the topics we should

discuss as a group?" You will quickly fill a flip chart of topics that you will probably never finish.

- 2. Increase Opportunities for Total Team Interactions.** Training sessions, safety workshops, and barbecues are all great opportunities to decrease remoteness and increase familiarity. Total team workshops can be an opportunity to praise and recognize accomplishments, hard work, and individual initiatives with the remote and central teams. Work-related workshops where members must work on the same problem together are most effective. For example, the boss says: "Here is the data and analysis on when and where we have the most accidents. Each table comes up with ideas on how we can solve this." Arrange it so people have assigned seating and don't just sit with their familiar friends. They won't like it. It will, however, break down walls if they are asked to work on a problem with others at their table.



### 3. Use Combined Member Task Teams.

Getting everyone's fingerprints on addressing an organization's challenge is a very effective approach to reducing dissonance between teams. If you are a control freak and don't want to involve others in the decisional process, you won't like this approach. It starts with bringing members of the two teams together and giving them a charge. "We have had a consistent problem with 'X.' Please check it out and come back with options that I should consider. I may or may not go with what you suggest. But I sure want to hear from you." CEOs will often have the appointed task group meet with her and the management team before starting the actual work. If the task group answers are workable, make a big deal about it in front of both teams.

**4. Show Up. Be Honest and Direct.** Regularly scheduled and spur-of-the-moment are both great. Don't only show up when there is a problem, such as discipline. Congratulate them. Discuss an idea or an issue. Start of work, end of shift, while they are working. It really doesn't matter. If you can be accessible, honest, and non-judgmental, you can avoid much garbage from negative people with negative narratives. This includes addressing rumors and gossip. "The latest rumor I heard going around is...This is pure BS-it isn't true. Or, We are looking at changing...." The point is to be accessible and a source of truth. Mold hates sunshine. Gossips and rumor mongers hate honesty and directness.

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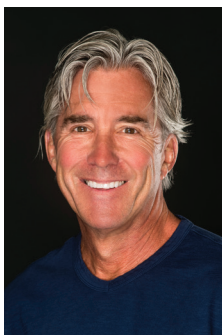


# JOIN US AT GLX 2023!

Don't miss the 2023 Great Lakes Expo, one of the largest public works shows in the Midwest. We're proud to host programming and events for everyone, at all professional levels. The lineup includes motivating presentations by inspirational speakers and individual education tracks for management, fleet and operations. Take time out during our social events and establish new relationships through networking. Also on the agenda are award presentations, and our exhibit floor, featuring the latest in equipment and technological advances in the field.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Danny Bader



Danny Bader is a best-selling author and sought-after speaker whose life was transformed by a near death experience. Danny speaks to audiences nationwide teaching people to invest in themselves, develop vision, and leverage useful thoughts to build momentum in the midst of monotony, burnout and despair. His message is simple; "ALWAYS COMMIT TO BETTER DAYS AHEAD."

His unique perspective and trusted voice have taken him into many Fortune 500 organizations—like Marriott, Lincoln Financial, Astellas, Comcast, Merck, Eisai, and others—infusing their people with the vital need for vision and inspiring them to live their best lives. Danny's reputation as an influencer in this arena continues to grow among some of the most well-respected brands and organizations nationwide.

Danny's best-selling book, "Back to Life; The Path of Resilience", has received rave reviews, reaching a #1 ranking on Amazon. He also pioneered the jckrbbt® principles and energizes audiences worldwide through his Back to Life podcast. Danny is also the author of 3 other books: "I Met Jesus for a Miller Lite"; "Abraham's Diner, Simple Wisdom for Moving from Stress to Relaxed Focus & Inspiration"; and "Taking The Sh\*t Out of the Show."

# 2023 GREAT LAKES EXPO

**MAY 23-25, 2023**

**Grand Traverse Resort | Acme, MI**

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### TUESDAY, MAY 23

11:30am - 6:30pm	Exhibitor Set up
12:30pm	Golf Outing
1:00 - 5:00pm	Wine Tour
7:30 - 9:30pm	YP Welcome Reception

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 24

7:00 - 8:30am	Registration Open
7:00 - 11:00am	Exhibitor Set up
7:30 - 8:30am	Breakfast
8:00 - 8:30am	Annual Meeting - Branch President & Past President Awards
8:30 - 9:30am	MML Update
9:30 - 11:00am	Keynote Speaker
11:00am - 4:30pm	Exhibit Floor Open
11:00 - 11:30am	Break - Visit Exhibitors
11:30am - 12:30pm	Concurrent Sessions
12:30-2:00pm	Lunch with Exhibitors
2:00 - 3:00pm	Concurrent Sessions
2:30 - 3:00pm	Break - Visit Exhibitors
3:30 - 4:30pm	Concurrent Sessions
4:30 - 5:30pm	Social Hour on Exhibit Floor

### THURSDAY, MAY 25

7:30 - 8:30am	Breakfast on Expo Floor
7:30am - 2:00pm	Exhibit Floor Open
8:30 - 9:30am	Concurrent Sessions
9:30 - 10:00am	Break - Visit Exhibitors
10:00am - 12:00pm	Concurrent Sessions
12:00 - 2:00pm	Lunch with Exhibitors
2:00 - 4:00pm	Concurrent Sessions
2:00 - 3:00pm	Vendor Takedown
5:30 - 6:00pm	Cocktail Hour
6:00 - 7:00pm	Awards Presentation
7:00 - 10:00pm	Vegas Night

### 2023 AWARDS CEREMONY

Don't miss the 2023 Expo Awards Ceremony and Banquet May 25th from 6:00 - 7:00 PM where we'll honor our 2023 award winners!

Following the presentations join us for Vegas Night from 7:00-10:00 PM.

**Register at**  
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# THE BIG SHEBANG:

## Finding my People at the Great Lakes Expo

By: Tyler Kearly, ROWE Professional Services Company

The 2023 Great Lakes Expo kicks off in May, and if you're like me, you can't wait. As Michigan APWA's most monumental annual event, the 2023 Great Lakes Expo is what I've come to think of as, "The Big Shebang."

Last year, I attended my first GLX and might have become one of APWA's most enthusiastic spokespeople for the event. The attendees are undoubtedly some of the best people in our industry, and many of the motivating and thought-provoking presentations are still stuck in my mind. Plus, it was sincerely the most fun I've had with my colleagues at an event since starting my career. I couldn't stop joking, "We get paid to be here?"

There is so much good to come from attending GLX, be it networking opportunities, educational sessions, or earning PDH/CEC credits. It's also a good chance to try to shut the laptop and get away from the emails and noise of day-to-day work back home.

The conference takes place May 23 to 25. If you are arriving at Grand Traverse early, we welcome you to join the YP Committee for an informal meet-up Monday evening, to get to know the committee and other fellow YP members. Be on a lookout for more information coming soon via email to the chapter to RSVP. On Tuesday night, per tradition, the YP group will host the welcome reception following the golf outing and wine tour.

But the networking opportunities don't end with GLX. Following the conference last year, I was fired up to attend YP APWA events. The YP committee plans about one per month, generally leaning toward the Southeast Michigan or Grand Rapids areas. In February, we had a fantastic dinner before a Grand Rapids Griffins game. We've had successful plant tours, such as the Grand Rapids Water Resource Recovery Facility, Northern Concrete Pipe, and are planning more for 2023. My personal favorite was watching baseball and gorging on hotdogs with good people this summer at Jimmy Johns



*Young Professionals at the Great Lakes Expo Conference*

Stadium in Utica. Many of our events end with grabbing a drink together and chatting about the happenings in our industry. Something about public works really draws a friendly, down-to-earth crowd.

At last year's GLX, my supervisor, a longtime APWA member, helped to paint my initial impression of the group. He told me: "They're my people. They are not pretentious. They will be a good group to be a part of as you move forward in your career." And nearly a year of APWA membership later, I've found that to be very true.

The graphic is a vertical poster. At the top, the words 'WELCOME RECEPTION' are written in large, bold, green, block letters. Below this, in smaller blue text, is 'APWA 2023 GREAT LAKES EXPO KENTUCKY DERBY THEMED'. The central image is a colorful illustration of a woman in a light blue dress and a wide-brimmed hat with a red ribbon, holding a drink and a small bag. In the background, there's a depiction of a horse race track with a grandstand. A red speech bubble on the left says 'Prizes for Best Dressed and Best Hat!'. At the bottom, a blue banner reads 'TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023'. Below that, in green text, is 'JOIN THE MI-APWA YP GROUP 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM AT THE MANITOU/NORTHWOODS ROOM'. At the very bottom, it says 'Food, Spirits, Games, and Prizes' and features the YP logo.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## Downriver Branch General Member Meeting

May 4  
TBD

## Midwest Branch 2nd Annual Eric Scott Fishing Tournament

May 17  
Grand Haven, MI

## Great Lakes Expo

May 23-25  
Grand Traverse Resort  
Acme, MI

## Downriver Branch Dan Brooks Annual Scholarship Golf Outing

June 7  
Lakes of Taylor  
Taylor, MI

## Detroit Metro Branch Golf Outing

June 16  
TBD

## Midwest Branch Rod Korhorn Memorial Scholarship Golf Outing

July 19  
Saskatoon Golf Club  
Alto, MI

## Southwest Branch Golf Outing & Dinner

August 3  
Medalist Golf Club  
Marshall, MI

## PWX 2023

August 27-30  
San Diego, CA

## MPSI Fall Session

September 17-22  
Comfort Inn & Suites Conference Center  
Mt. Pleasant, MI

## Snow Plow Rodeo

October 11  
Norton Shores, MI

## Road Scholar Program

October 23-27  
Comfort Inn & Suites Conference Center  
Mt. Pleasant, MI

Visit our website, [michigan.apwa.net](http://michigan.apwa.net), for details on these events and more!



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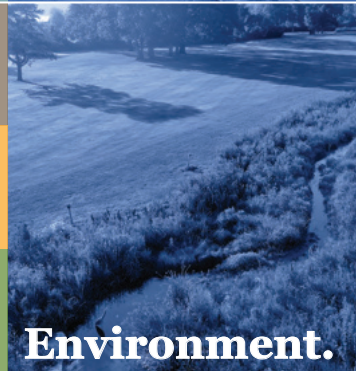
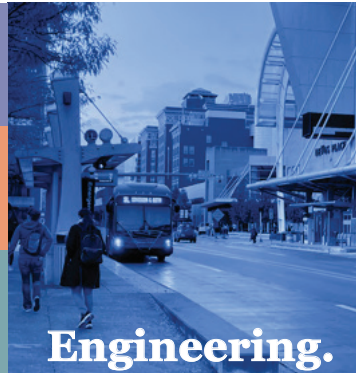
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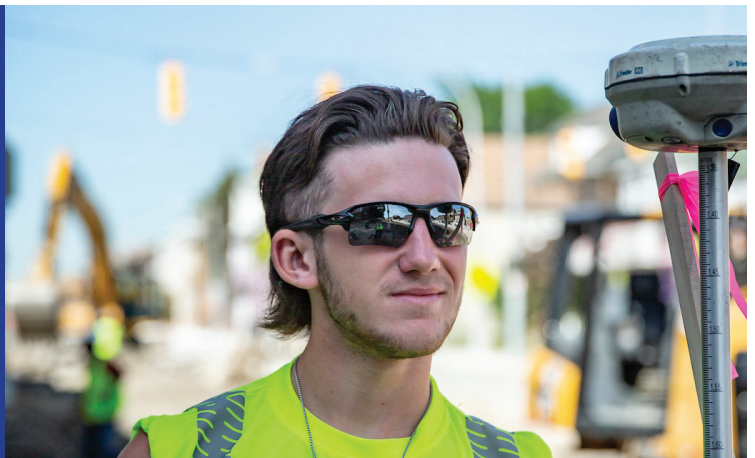
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# AUBURN ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

2022 Project of the Year—Quality of Life \$5 to \$25 Million Category

By: Paul M. Davis, P.E., City of Rochester Hills

Harvard University professor, Dr. Howard Gardner, has said that, “Stories constitute the single most powerful weapon in a leader’s arsenal.” With this thought in mind, Rochester Hills is excited to share our story of the Auburn Road Reconstruction project, the winner of the 2022 APWA Michigan Section Quality of Life Award, \$5 to \$25 Million category.

The segment of Auburn Road that was reconstructed resides in the southeast corner of Rochester Hills and is a half-mile stretch between Culbertson and Dequindre Roads. Five subdivision plats recorded between 1929 and 1937 that are adjacent to the road corridor currently include over 900 residential homes. Further, this portion of Auburn Road was owned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and served a greater importance to the state road network prior to the building of the nearby M-59 freeway section in 1972.

The city studied this corridor for redevelopment in the past, but unfortunately, few if any improvements were implemented subsequent to the earlier study phases. A renewed review of the corridor began in late 2016 that included a market analysis, transportation assessment, and existing zoning overview of the properties fronting Auburn Road. The resulting Auburn Road Corridor Plan completed by MKSK and partner OHM Advisors became an important kickoff to an initial effort of soliciting feedback from and engaging project stakeholders in creating a new vision for the study area.

The city engineering, planning, and economic development divisions then continued conceptual efforts with their engineering consultant, OHM Advisors, to complete an early

preliminary engineering study to better define a preferred road rehabilitation design. Some early concerns for the corridor included access management for adjacent properties, poorly defined routes for pedestrian travel, eight short block lengths about 335-feet long each, and an available right-of-way width of only 100-feet.

It became quickly apparent that the road corridor would need to be completely reconstructed if the city was going to accommodate multiple competing travel needs while also encouraging adjacent commercial landowners to develop, rehabilitate, or reinvest in their properties.

The existing 40 miles per hour Auburn Road corridor speed limit presented an early challenge that would likely limit the extent of



*Before the project  
(Photo credit to OHM Advisors)*



*After the project  
(Photo credit to OHM Advisors)*



## AUBURN ROAD CONTINUED

the city vision being created for the corridor. Thus, city representatives met with MDOT to discuss the possibility of a road jurisdiction transfer. Subsequent meetings resulted in an agreement to transfer ownership of two miles of Auburn Road to Rochester Hills. MDOT also agreed to provide a \$1.23 million contribution towards future roadway improvements for the transferred two miles. This jurisdictional transfer was key to the future design of lowering the speed limit from 40 to 25 mph along the half-mile corridor and also allowed the design to incorporate adjacent on-street parallel parking.

The design team then began to review options for tackling the access management concerns and had the daunting task to approach all the adjacent property owners and ask them to forfeit their direct driveways and perpendicular parking to Auburn Road. The primary concern that we heard was that parking in the district needed to be increased, not decreased. We listened and then successfully convinced our business owner partners that a walkable pedestrian corridor paralleling Auburn Road was essential and that the available parking could actually be increased along Auburn Road by incorporating parallel parking bays. The access management of the corridor was dramatically improved by the project.

Only one property owner, a gas station, still held firm that direct access to Auburn Road was necessary for their survival. We listened, agreed, and actually moved the location of one of the two planned corridor roundabouts to better accommodate the fuel deliveries to the gas station site.

The roundabouts and parallel alleyways were important features to help reduce the access concerns from eliminating direct left turns from the seven side street intersections to Auburn Road. Paving of the existing 20-foot alley right-of-way widths, and proposing two roundabouts helped mitigate the access management benefit of eliminating left turns by installing a continuous center median across four side street intersections.



*An example of the median and roundabout layout  
(Photo courtesy of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments)*

In addition to providing a secondary access to the Auburn Road businesses, paving and better utilization of the alleys was another major travel alternative for the corridor. Existing alleys went from unpaved with little buffer to residential areas to 20-foot wide, two-way access and fencing buffer to the adjacent residential properties.

Another unique design feature for this project is the incorporation of 50 rain gardens for storm water runoff. The city took advantage of existing sandy soils to infiltrate storm water runoff into the decorative rain garden areas. In addition to their important function contribution, the rain gardens were also treated as an aesthetic enhancement by adding trees, landscape vegetation and low profile decorative border fencing to them. An example of a typical rain garden installation for Auburn Road is shown in the “after” access management photo.

The city continued to pursue other funding assistance programs and received approval for three other grants toward the project:

1. Federal Transportation Alternatives Program award of \$481,319
2. Federal Surface Transportation Funds award of \$593,221
3. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Green Streets Grant for \$40,000

This funding, along with the MDOT agreement funding, helped provide over \$2.3 million towards the Auburn Road expenses.



*Before and after photos of typical alleyway conditions in the corridor.  
 (Alley fencing, photo courtesy of Allan E. Schneck, P.E, former Director for the RH Department of Public Services)*

One unanticipated outcome that the project team continued to take advantage of was to seize opportunities throughout the course of the project. Bobby Unser, an Indy-car racing legend once said, “Success is where preparation and opportunity meet” and this quote proved itself true multiple times during the Auburn Road project. Individual meetings held with two Auburn Road business owners resulted in them offering to donate two residential properties that they owned adjacent to the alley. The combined home donation was valued over \$445,000. The city then demolished the existing homes and used the properties to create an 87-space public parking lot for the district. Other subsequent business owner meetings resulted in eight other property acquisitions finalized by the city and each with a desired adjacency to the corridor for three other public parking areas. Each of these property purchases was unexpected, but the city was prepared to quickly act and continue to build on its commitment to the future success of the corridor.

One of the properties was only about 48-feet wide but vacant and adjacent to Emmons Road north of Auburn. This parcel was in an ideal location to tempt the city leadership to consider

converting the Emmons Road public right-of-way from a road use to a public gathering area for the corridor. Rochester Hills pursued the property purchase opportunity and the first splash pad installation owned by the city was on the way to becoming a reality. This originally unanticipated addition to the project was eagerly supported even though it was an additional \$2.5 million expense!

The Auburn Road plaza at Emmons has easily become a favorite destination for the neighborhood and community. Although it wasn’t even initially planned for the road reconstruction project, the city leadership realized the potential benefit of escalating the project by also reinvesting in a quality of life recreation accommodation. And if the plaza wasn’t enough of a community engagement display, the city then followed up the plaza project with an art competition to fund the installation of 7-foot diameter pavement murals along the corridor. This initiative, Art on Auburn, was a city partnership with the Paint Creek Center for the Arts and the Rochester Community Schools. Student artists were invited to submit proposed art that reflected their view of, “What Community Means to You.” Hundreds

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## AUBURN ROAD CONTINUED

of submissions from Kindergarten to 12th-grade students were reviewed and narrowed down to 50 finalists. Online voting from the Rochester Hills community then determined the winning 25 entrees. The city contracted with Ennis-Flint to create the murals and city staff installed them at the triangular ends of the parallel parking sections. Each winning entry, along with the artist explanation of community meaning for their work, can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/artonauburn>.



Examples of the winning murals from the Art on Auburn contest.

Overall, the project team received invaluable support from the Rochester Hills mayor, city council and planning commission. Each voiced and voted with strong support throughout the project for the numerous funding commitments needed by the project team through all the stages of design, right-of-way and property acquisitions, and construction. Their continuous support and a proactive effort of public participation and communication were key to the project success.

A few communication examples of how the city actively communicated were holding public information gathering meetings, scheduling one-on-one meetings with each adjacent Auburn Road property owner, personal visits to residences adjacent to the public parking and alleyways, and using the Constant Contact app during the various construction phases. This is a project that reflected good and effective communication. A successful outcome was almost guaranteed with the strong emphasis



placed on communication and stakeholder education by the City.

Come visit our Auburn Road corridor project and we guarantee that you won't be disappointed in the worthiness of this award selection. This project serves as another example of how engineers, planners and community leaders directly improve the quality of life for their residents and businesses.



(Photo credit to OHM Advisors)



The new splash pad constructed within the new community plaza at Emmons and Auburn is a new popular destination for kids on hot summer days. (Photo courtesy of the Rochester Hills Media Department)



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# 2022 SW Branch Michigan APWA Award Winners



## **TRANSPORTATION GREATER THAN \$1,000,000**

Project Name: Parkview Avenue Infrastructure  
Managing Agency: City of Kalamazoo  
Consultant: Hurley & Stewart, LLC  
Contractors: Peters Construction

This project included water infrastructure upgrades along Parkview Ave including water main upsizing, lead service line removal, stormwater infrastructure upgrades, improvements to the deteriorated pavement, implementing traffic calming measures, and completing street facilities for pedestrian and motorist safety.

*Photo (l to r): Jamie Harmon, Anthony Ladd, George Waring, Eric Sajtar, Anna Crandall, and Alex Phelan*



## **TRANSPORTATION LESS THAN \$1,000,000**

Project Name: South Westnedge Avenue Improvements  
Managing Agency: City of Portage  
Consultant: Fleis & VandenBrink  
Contractors: Pavement Maintenance Systems | Lopez Concrete Construction

This project included the redesign of public sidewalks, business approaches, and intersections to meet federal ADA accessibility standards and the replacement of curb and gutter ahead of microsurfacing work along the busiest corridor in the City of Portage.

*Photo (l to r): Muhammad Arif, Matt Johnson, Larry Hummel, Jamie Harmon, Kendra Gwin*



## **STRUCTURES GREATER THAN \$1,000,000**

Project Name: Portage Community Senior Center  
Managing Agency: City of Portage  
Consultant: Hurley & Stewart, LLC | Byce & Associates  
Contractors: AVB | USA Earthworks

This project included the construction of the Charles & Lynn Zhang Portage Community Senior Center which is a 2-story, 36,000-square-foot senior focused multi-function community center.

*Photo (l to r): Matthew Double, Rodney Russell, Adam Herringa, Jamie Harmon, Kendra Gwin, Ashley Double*



## SW BRANCH AWARDS CONTINUED



### QUALITY OF LIFE GREATER THAN \$1,000,000

Project Name: Farmer's Market Renovation  
Managing Agency: City of Kalamazoo  
Consultant: Prein&Newhof  
Contractors: Miller-Davis Company

This project included street realignment, vender shed upgrades, Kalamazoo River Valley Trail access, restroom and office facilities construction, property purchases, and a new playground while dealing with site contamination and drainage concerns.

Photo (l to r): Janet Puvogel, Mary Whitaker-Duncan, Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Ryan Russell, Jeff Chamberlain, Jamie Harmon



### ENVIRONMENT GREATER THAN \$15,000,000

Project Name: Water Reclamation Plant Improvements—Contract 74  
Managing Agency: City of Kalamazoo  
Consultant: Jones and Henry Engineers, Ltd  
Contractors: LD Dosca

This project replaced the City of Kalamazoo's belt filter presses with centrifuges while updating several conveyance systems which were past their useful life. Several equipment demos were done and the final design was heavily influenced by the operators using the equipment on a daily basis. The project also updated odor control systems and the bar screens.

Photo (l to r): Scott DeVoll, Brian Stygar, Bret Eckhart, Aaron Davenport, Matt Adkins, Ryan Stoughton, Jamie Harmon, Dan Bogema, Steve Helmer, Brandon Jung, Brian Mulheisen, Jason Docsa, Drew Posey



### DISASTER OR EMERGENCY CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR GREATER THAN \$1,000,000

Project Name: Cooper Richland Township – PFAS Watermain Project  
Managing Agency: City of Kalamazoo  
Consultant: Prein&Newhof  
Contractors: Lounsbury Excavating, Inc. | USA Earthworks, LLC | Pajay Excavating, Inc.

This project provided safe drinking water to over 3,000 customers who were impacted by PFAS contamination in the City of Parchment's municipal wells and several private residential wells. With funding from the DWRF the project team was successful in an expedited design and construction schedule that involved several agencies and public engagement.

Photo (l to r): Matthew Double, Ashley Double, Brian Vilmont, Paul Oselka, Jamie Harmon, Eric Sajtar, Anna Crandall, Mike Hiestand



### DISASTER OR EMERGENCY CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR LESS THAN \$1,000,000

Project Name: Treasure Island Drive  
Managing Agency: Road Commission of Kalamazoo County  
Consultant: Road Commission of Kalamazoo County  
Contractors: Lakeland Asphalt Corporation

This project protected Treasure Island Drive from rising Eagle Lake levels. Through coordination with EGLE, the road elevation was increased and a new drainage system was installed to handle both public and private drainage concerns in order to maintain access to the neighboring residential properties.

Photo (l to r): Jamie Harmon, Dean Disterheft, Mark Worden, Bill Oxx, Sarah Phillips



## GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GREATER THAN \$1,000,000

Project Name: Watkins Road Improvements  
Managing Agency: City of Battle Creek & Road Commission of Kalamazoo County  
Contractors: Hunter Prell Company  
Consultant: Wightman & Associates Inc.

This project included intersection improvements, road widening, temporary and permanent easement acquisition, and drainage improvements necessary for accommodating a new speculative economic development. The project was located in both Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties and required project coordination between the City of Battle Creek and the RCKC.

Photo (l to r): Darren Campbell, Aaron Neitling, Jarret Geering, Randy Pufpaff, Carl Fedders, Jamie Harmon

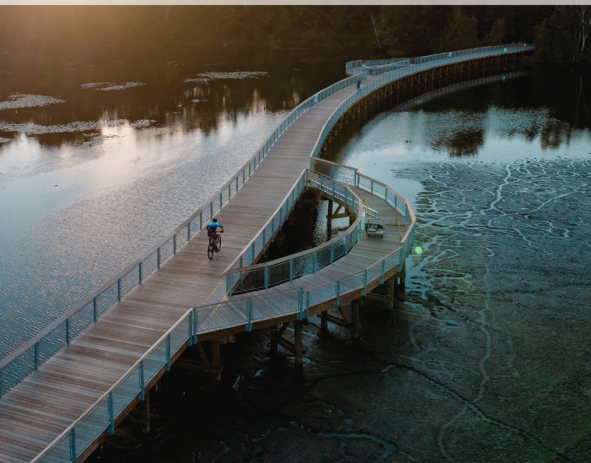


## ENVIRONMENT \$1,000,000 TO \$15,000,000

Project Name: Vicksburg Infrastructure Improvements  
Managing Agency: Village of Vicksburg  
Consultant: Prein&Newhof  
Contractors: Milbocker & Sons Inc.

This project resolved utility system deficiencies, updated roads, improved storm issues, installed a new downtown street scape, and redeveloped a downtown park. Even with all these improvements, community relations were maintained and businesses were accommodated through the duration and completion of the project.

Photo (l to r): Randy Schippers, Christian Wines, Jim Mallery, Jamie Harmon, Tim Frisbie, Zac Culbert, Mike Schwartz, Jason Washler



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# MEMBER NEWS

## F&V ADDS 14 NEW STAFF INCLUDING A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Fleis & VandenBrink (F&V), a full-service civil engineering firm, has added 14 new staff including a business development representative.

Matt Biolette, business development representative, is among eight new hires at the firm's headquarters in Grand Rapids. He brings more than 17 years of experience forging professional relationships with clients.

"We are excited to continue to attract great people in this competitive market," said Bob Wilcox, a principal and vice president of operations at F&V. "This speaks highly of our HR team and our employees who love to tell others about what a great place F&V is to work at.

"There is no better way to recruit than through employees who enjoy what they are doing."

Other new hires in the Grand Rapids office include two in the construction services group. They are Jordan Pasternak, construction technician, and Dave Matelski, construction site superintendent. Two process group engineers-in-training (EITs) join F&V. They are Conrad Truettner and Kennedy Coxon. Environmental group additions include Tage Heyn, EIT, and Alex Jend, technician. Samuel Strobel, IT technician, is also among the new Grand Rapids hires.

Additional hires company-wide include Scott Morris, construction technician, and Mary Ollis, traffic EIT, in the Kalamazoo office, Susan Peters, part-time chemist, Scott Davis, environmental specialist, and Luke Bushey and Jason Chrumka, civil EITs.

As a West Michigan business development representative, Biolette will be responsible for finding new opportunities and maintaining community and other professional relationships. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in the public sector as well as the municipal sector.

Pasternak, who has experience reading and creating construction plans, will work as a construction technician inspecting infrastructure projects around the state. He will test, measure,

and map locations of installed materials, confirming their accuracy to plans.

Matelski brings over 17 years of experience in construction projects ranging from commercial manufacturing and office buildings to medical facilities. The site superintendent will lead and coordinate daily on-site construction activities for projects within the Design-Build group.

Truettner is a recent graduate of Michigan Technological University and working toward continued development of his engineering skillsets. He will be responsible for water and wastewater design engineering. His duties include design development, evaluation of treatment alternatives, and detailed design including selection of treatment processes, process calculations, and design drawings and specifications.

Coxon, an engineering graduate from Michigan State University, will be responsible for sewer feasibility studies, basis of design reports, process data evaluation, and 3-D modeling. Her communication and organizational skills make her a valuable team member.

Heyn, a former F&V Operations & Resources Management intern, brings his operations experience and his degree in environmental engineering. He will be involved in projects that require remediation systems and will be designing vapor mitigation systems.



*Biolette*



*Pasternak*



*Matelski*



*Truettner*



*Coxon*



*Heyn*

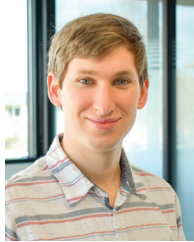


Jend, who has four years of environmental experience, will provide field supervision of demolition and other environmental site restoration projects. His technical skills will be helpful in supporting remedial investigations, leaking underground storage tank closures, PFAS related projects and associated compliance sampling.



*Jend*

Strobel, a Grand Valley State University graduate, will provide IT help desk support for office and field staff. He will also be working with the IT team to deploy and maintain IT technology.



*Strobel*

Morris, a recent graduate of Western Michigan University, will provide construction technician services on local and MDOT funded projects and engineering technician assistance.



*Morris*

Ollis, a graduate of Michigan Technological University, will provide traffic analysis, operations and design services for F&V communities and private development projects throughout Michigan and Indiana.



*Ollis*

Peters works part time at a southeast Michigan operations site as a senior advisor/chemist. She has over 40 years' experience in analytical chemistry including laboratory management positions.



*Peters*

Davis brings expertise in environmental construction and remediation. He will be providing environmental operations in southeast Michigan operations.



*Davis*

Bushey, a recent graduate of Lawrence Technological University, will be assisting with the design of municipal infrastructure projects and acting as a resident project representative on municipal construction projects throughout the East Michigan region. His prior experience working with MDOT while he was attending college will benefit the Midland office.



*Bushey*

Chrumka, another Lawrence Technological University grad, will be working out of the Traverse City office. Chrumka's decade of experience with the USACE will aid him in providing broad, engineering technician assistance with federal and state-funded infrastructure projects.



*Chrumka*

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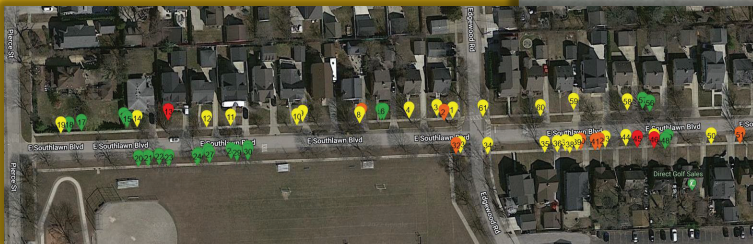


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