

Results and Discussion

Michigan Municipal League PlacePlans Survey

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Background

Over period of three years, the PlacePlans program provided funding and/or technical assistance to support placemaking efforts in selected Michigan cities. In October 2016 Dr. Carolyn Loh of Wayne State University, in conjunction with Michigan Municipal League Staff, carried out a survey to evaluate the impact of the League's PlacePlans initiative. The purpose of the survey was to see if we could quantify the impact of PlacePlans relative to the experience of municipalities that had not participated in the program, and to see if we could find differences in benefit between different types of PlacePlans interventions among the participating cities. This report presents and discusses the results of the survey.

Program Overview

MIplace is a statewide initiative to apply the concept of placemaking—that a unique local sense of place supports economic competitiveness—to both state policies and local practice across Michigan. As part of this initiative, MSHDA, the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority, provided financial support to three rounds of PlacePlans. This program was a collaboration between the Michigan State University School of Planning, Design, and Construction and the Michigan Municipal League to provide technical assistance to local placemaking priorities, with goals of both accelerating adoption of these principles in those communities as well as creating case studies that other communities could learn from.

PlacePlans were developed in three rounds, with four completed in 2013, eight in 2014, and seven in 2015. In each round, four local projects relied on a faculty-led team from MSU and focused on public engagement and development of a physical plan for a plaza, street, or other space in or adjacent to the community's downtown. The additional projects in 2014 and 2015 used combinations of League staff and private consultants to develop physical plans, market assessments, or other strategies for local placemaking priorities. Additionally, the League sub-granted a portion of MSHDA's 2015 funds to some communities who had received technical assistance in previous years to support implementation of their PlacePlans. Finally, three communities directly contracted the League for placemaking technical assistance after their proposals were not selected for the grant-funded assistance; these communities were also included in the survey.

Survey Methodology

Michigan Municipal League staff identified participants in each city in each of five key roles in the PlacePlans process: the staff lead for the project, an elected official, a business stakeholder, a residential stakeholder, and a critic of the process. We wanted to try to capture a range of experiences within the PlacePlans process, and a range of interests coming into the process. We especially wanted to oversample those who might have been critical of the process so that we did not give undue weight to those who would be inclined to be city boosters. League staff were unable to identify all five roles in every city, so the sampling technique resulted in about 80 participants combined in the 22 cities. Of these, we were able to find viable email addresses for 77. Since it is also possible that none of the types of assistance the League provided were particularly effective, or no more influential on plan implementation than efforts the cities could have conducted on their own, we also surveyed a key contact in each of 42 cities that applied for PlacePlans assistance but were not selected. In both sets of cities, turnover of staff and elected stakeholders since the PlacePlans process was often a problem in identifying appropriate survey respondents. In these cases, the League attempted to identify the person currently holding the position that had been involved. Our response rates were 48% from PlacePlans cities and 40% from non-selected cities. We asked all survey participants about their placemaking efforts and progress toward implementation, as well as local planning capacity and public

participation. We asked PlacePlans participants about their experience with PlacePlans and about local attitudes toward the plan before and after PlacePlans involvement.

Overview of Results

Respondents from participating cities felt overwhelmingly positively about PlacePlans and its impact on local placemaking efforts. There are statistically significant differences between participating and non-participating cities’ characterizations of their relationships with the League, as well as statistically significant differences between cities’ reported relationships with the League before and after the PlacePlans experience. Cities who went through the PlacePlans program reported a stronger relationship beforehand with the League than cities that did not go through the program, and reported an even stronger relationship after going through the program.

Beyond the relationship with Michigan Municipal League, however, there are few statistically significant differences between outcomes in participating and non-participating cities. Aside from funding, we are similarly unable to find statistically significant differences between the different types of interventions available through PlacePlans. This may initially seem disappointing. However, it is important to keep in mind four points. First, the time between PlacePlans involvement and administering the survey was very short—63% of respondents had participated in PlacePlans in the most recent year. It would be surprising if very many of the cities had made substantial progress in their implementation efforts. Second, it is notoriously difficult to quantify the impact of placemaking efforts. Often placemaking results in outcomes like residents and officials feeling more pride in their communities, more people out and about, and stronger connections between volunteers and city staff. These types of outcomes are valuable and desirable, but hard to measure. Third, the types of statistical tests we used to see if there were significant differences between groups, such as testing to see if levels of implementation were different between participant and non-participant cities, are more likely to return Type II errors (false negatives) due to the small sample size. In other words, there might be a real difference, but the tests cannot pick it up. Finally, there is a decades-old debate between planning researchers about what implementation means. Many researchers tend to think of a plan as a blueprint to be executed with precision. However, municipal planning processes, even in small municipalities, are complex, lending support to the idea that a plan may play an outsize role in the life of a community even if it is not possible to draw a straight line between its recommendations and the on-the-ground outcomes. In some ways, the act of planning becomes an outcome in itself, because it changes the conversation around what is possible. Some of the survey comments support this last point, with one respondent saying, “The project got people talking about the future of the downtown and what it could, and should, look like.” The following pages present the survey questions and answers in order, with accompanying discussion when appropriate. All answers to open-ended questions are printed here, edited in some cases to conceal identifying details about the city or the respondent.

Existing Conditions

We first asked respondents about what led them to apply to the PlacePlans program, and the level of support for the project before applying to PlacePlans.

Q2 - What was the primary reason your city decided to apply for PlacePlans assistance?

Answer	Selected cities	Count	Non-selected cities	Count
We needed funding.	9.1%	3	84.6%	11
We needed technical assistance.	66.7%	22	7.7%	1
Other (please specify)	24.2%	8	7.7%	1
Total	100%	33	100%	13

Other (please specify)

we needed both funding and technical assistance

We needed assistance in developing a strategic plan for underdeveloped areas in our downtown.

Besides funding, we were in need of a plan for a targeted project to focus on as the right next step.

we never applied

As a community we were interested in placemaking but did not have funding or staff time to commit to it. The program seemed to be a logical fit for the community and our interests.

I wasn't involved during the application process.

I don't think I know what the reason was.

Sounded like a great collaborative opportunity to address a specific challenge

Based on our statistical analysis, the reason for seeking PlacePlans funding was the biggest difference between selected and non-selected cities. Selected cities overwhelmingly sought technical assistance while non-selected cities even more overwhelmingly sought money. According to League staff, the criteria for selection included project feasibility, project match to technical staff skillset (which favored projects that could use landscape architects), links to possible future private investment, local staff capacity to partner with the League, and geographic distribution/equity. Since the League had more to offer in terms of technical assistance than they did in grant funding, they were able to help more cities that needed technical assistance.

Q4 - Did you submit the same plan to other funders and/or other technical assistance programs?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities	Count
Yes	17.2%	5	27.3%	3
No	82.8%	24	72.7%	8
Total	100%	29	100%	11

There are not significant differences between selected and non-selected cities in whether they applied for other support—most did not.

Q6 - Why did your city choose this particular plan to submit to the PlacePlans program?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities	Count
High priority, as identified in Master Plan, DDA Plan, or other adopted policy	37.0%	10	44.4%	4
High priority, as identified by city staff	29.6%	8	33.3%	3
High priority, as identified in earlier placemaking engagement with MSU or MML	3.7%	1	0.0%	0
Better fit for PlacePlans RFP than other, higher-priority projects	7.4%	2	0.0%	0
Developed plan specifically for submission to PlacePlans	18.5%	5	11.1%	1
Other	3.7%	1	11.1%	1
Total	100%	27	100%	9

A high proportion of both the selected and non-selected cities' projects were identified as priorities in the master plan. City staff identified another large proportion of the projects as high priority. The selected cities were slightly but not statistically significantly more likely to have developed the project specifically for PlacePlans, but even so less than 20% of cities reported doing so.

Q7 - How strong was community support for the plan before applying to PlacePlans?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities	Count
Very Weak	0%	0	0%	0
Weak	0%	0	0%	0
Neither weak nor strong	44.4%	12	56.6%	5
Strong	25.9%	7	11.1%	1
Very Strong	3.7%	1	11.1%	1
Were not aware of of project prior to PlacePlan	25.9%	7	22.2%	2
Total	100%	27	100%	9

Q8 - How strong was City Council support for the plan before applying to PlacePlans?

Answer	Selected cities	Count	Non-selected cities	Count
Very Weak	3.7%	1	0.0%	0
Weak	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Neither weak nor strong	33.3%	9	62.5%	5
Strong	40.7%	11	12.5%	1
Very strong	7.4%	2	12.5%	1
Were not aware of of project prior to PlacePlan	14.8%	4	12.5%	1
Total	100%	27	100%	8

There are not significant differences in prior support for the project between selected and non-selected cities, for either city council members or the general public.

Q10 - What program year did MML accept your plan proposal?

Answer	%	Count
2012-2013	11.1%	3
2013-2014	25.9%	7
2014-2015	63.0%	17
Total	100%	27

The survey responses were heavily skewed toward the most recent year of the program. Part of the reason for this may be that there were more projects in the second two years of the program. Local contacts who had actually worked on the project were more likely to still be around from the most recent year, and therefore were likely more willing to respond to the survey. Finally, in the third year of the program, the League established formal stakeholder steering committees in each city that increased the number of involved contacts. In earlier years, the League relied on one or two staff contacts at each city, and the involvement of other stakeholders was much more informal.

Perceptions of PlacePlans Interventions

The three types of assistance that were most often ranked as very helpful by participants were facilitation (steering committee or focus groups) (65%), concept design (56%), and popup placemaking/demonstration projects (48%). In written comments, respondents described especially how League staff and partners' facilitation helped the process. One said, "The MML and MSU staffs did a tremendous job of getting stakeholders to participate in a way that avoided stakeholders becoming territorial. [City] staff would have a difficult job getting so many stakeholders to work towards a common goal." Another pointed out that "Public meeting facilitation is a very specific skill and it takes a well-qualified individual to be able to get the most out of that kind of process. MML staff were very helpful in getting us through this part of the process." Another said that those providing assistance made the process "Very visual, very inclusive. We had people, families, kids engaged. Many of the participants we interacted with were people we typically do not see at public meetings and events." The main criticism leveled at the PlacePlans program was that in a few cases design concepts and cost estimates didn't seem sufficiently grounded in what the city was capable of implementing, or the scope wasn't tied to the reality of the city's budget. It's important to note that it appears from the written comments that some respondents may have marked an intervention unhelpful if they didn't experience it, rather than marking not applicable. It's also important to note that we deliberately reached out to stakeholders we knew to be critical of the process to reduce the chances that our results would be skewed by too much participation by those inclined to be optimistic about the city.

Q11#1 – How helpful did you find each of the following types of assistance?

Type of Assistance	Very Unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	N/A	Total
Concept Design	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	22.2%	59.3%	7.4%	27
Design Cost Estimates	11.5%	15.4%	11.5%	19.2%	3.9%	38.5%	26

Market Study	7.7%	7.7%	26.9%	3.9%	15.4%	38.5%	26
Marketing or developer materials	3.9%	15.4%	19.2%	19.2%	7.7%	34.6%	26
Facilitation (steering committee or focus groups)	7.1%	7.1%	0.0%	10.7%	64.3%	10.7%	28
Zoning updates	11.5%	3.9%	26.9%	0.0%	11.5%	46.2%	26
Popup Placemaking/ demonstration projects	7.4%	3.7%	7.4%	18.5%	44.4%	18.5%	27
Implementation mini-grants	8.0%	0.0%	20.0%	24.0%	12.0%	36.0%	25
Other	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	30.0%	60.0%	10

Q12 - Of the types of assistance MML provided to your city, which one do you think was the MOST helpful in implementing your plan?

Answer	%	Count
Concept design	30.8%	8
Design cost estimates	0.0%	0
Market study	3.9%	1
Marketing or developer materials	0.0%	0
Strategic facilitation	30.8%	8
Zoning updates	3.9%	1
Popup Placemaking	19.2%	5
Implementation mini-grants	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	11.5%	3
Total	100%	26

Other (please specify)

Stakeholder engagement we could not have pulled off ourselves

While our plan was never implemented as designed, aspects and the spirit of the plan has been the guiding force. The Strategic Facilitation and Concept Design were of memorable help.

PlacePlans helped us think through an approach to expanding our farmer's market as well as how to integrate multiple planning efforts into a single cohesive strategy.

Q14 - What made it especially helpful?

It provided us with ideas that we could begin implementing immediately.

The TMA is a tangible document we can provide potential investors proving case.

We were able to visualize the re-use of blighted buildings and abandoned parking lots in our downtown area.

The MML and MSU staffs did a tremendous job of getting stakeholders to participate in a way that avoided stakeholders becoming territorial. City staff would have a difficult job getting so many stakeholders to work towards a common goal which became the [area] Placeplan concept. Many features from the PlacePlan concept were incorporated into the final design.

It built on concepts in a Master Plan

The public charettes and concept design that resulted.

MML staff were great to work with, very knowledgeable and provided helpful resources/best practices.

Our placeplan centered on renewal and relocation of our farmer's market. The concept designs illustrated limitations of the current location and potential of an alternate location.

It was a real, tangible, visible, hands-on experience that brought together excellent ideas, vibrant creativity, positive energy, and practical real-world implementation approaches.

Gave the process and resulting concept more credibility.

The experience of MML with PlaceMaking and their technical support.

third party process

They provided outside the box thinking and vision for a project that people weren't necessarily all that excited about.

Very visual, very inclusive. We had people, families, kids engaged. Many of the participants we interacted with were people we typically do not see at public meetings and events.

Cool ideas we hadn't thought of.

It was the only help we received from MML on the project after being denied for regular Place Plans.

We are currently in the process of creating a form based zoning code for our [area] district. This was recommended as a result of the PlacePlan project; MML assisted with funding and also secured partial funding from the State. It's important to note that the city did not have a specific project in mind for the PlacePlan study, but more of a [area] (re)Development concept.

Quality work based on public input and sound practices

Access to tactile placemaking amenities and onsite facilitation from staff.

Through the facilitation to the plan there was concept that were adopted into the Plan and the Plan professionally presented the thoughts of the community

engagement by staff and organizing the troops

Public meeting facilitation is a very specific skill and it takes a well qualified individual to be able to get the most out of that kind of process. MML staff were very helpful in getting us through this part of the process

Q13 - Of the types of assistance MML provided to your city, which one do you think was the LEAST helpful in implementing your plan?

Answer	%	Count
Concept design	4.0%	1
Design cost estimates	36.0%	9
Market study	0.0%	0
Marketing or developer materials	8.0%	2
Strategic facilitation	0.0%	0
Zoning updates	16.0%	4
Popup Placemaking	4.0%	1
Implementation mini-grants	4.0%	1
Other (please specify)	28.0%	7
Total	100%	25

Other (please specify)

Nothing has been implemented

Least helpful was likely the underestimation of the community’s resistance to change and lack of plan to continue forward once the team left.

Only design and cost estimates were provided initially. Mini-grant funding for traffic analysis came later. All 3 were helpful.

Not applicable; the services we've received have been very helpful indeed

They were all helpful, sorry!

All of the aspects were helpful. I cannot think of an area that was "least" helpful.

N/A- all forms of assistance were helpful

Q15 - What made it particularly unhelpful?

They did NOT provide this information or any estimates.

They didn't exist.

There was no direct connection between the design concept and real-world costs.

Nothing has been implemented yet

Zoning updates were not included but it would have been very useful to have zoning recommendations to help implement the PlacePlan vision.

NA

We've been very satisfied with all of the services and products that the league has provided for us, and there's nothing that has been unhelpful thus far.

It was not unhelpful we just did not need/utilize this service.

concept wasn't close to what we ended up with, and key local assets were not part of the concept design

The cost estimates are tough to use because it's sometimes difficult to determine what items in the estimate are for exactly.

Don't feel the consultant really studied the issue. Pretty basic, generic analysis.

It WAS helpful.

Estimates were almost irrelevant.

Didn't tell us anything we didn't already know. No doors opened to new pots of money.

N/A Scope was designed so that each element could/would prove useful.

They did not exist

Not that it was unhelpful, there just was not much that needed to be changed through zoning

concept design were impractical - pie-in-the sky , nice to dream but not useful for the necessary use of the designated area

not realistic

There really wasn't much effort put into these (by design) since the entire design concept was perhaps a tad grandiose in parts.

PlacePlans Effects

Half of the respondents said that PlacePlans led to an increase in community pride. Almost 40% said that PlacePlans led to improved connections to local volunteers, while almost 35% said that PlacePlans had built community capacity. Twenty-three percent said that they had not noticed any other positive effects of PlacePlans. These responses help to illustrate some of the benefits of placemaking work, and some of the challenges of evaluating it. An increase in community pride is a real benefit, but a difficult one to measure. However, if the effect is real, it may lead to other, more easily measurable results. For example, one of the respondents mentions that local investors are taking another look at the project because it now seems more realistic. If the city is able to carry out the project, or if interest in the project leads to more private investment, those effects will eventually become noticeable. There

were not statistically significant differences between community and city council support before and after participating in PlacePlans.

Q16 - Have you noticed any other positive effects of PlacePlans in your city? Please select all that apply.

Answer	%	Count
Staff capacity building	15.4%	4
Community capacity building	34.6%	9
Steering committee took on additional projects	7.7%	2
Improved connections to local volunteers	38.5%	10
Increase in community pride	50.0%	13
Increase in economic activity	23.1%	6
Other	15.4%	4
No other positive effects	23.1%	6
Total	100%	26

Other

Nearby property owners making capital improvements to their properties.

We were able to apply the spirit of the project in smaller ways that the community could appreciate. We are now starting to receive feedback from businesses to take another look at the project because they now see the value.

No longer there. I don't think anything has happened.

The project got people talking about the future of the downtown and what it could, and should, look like.

Q17 – Q18 How strong was support for the plan after the PlacePlans experience?

Answer	Community %	Count	City Council %	Count
Very weak	7.7%	2	3.9%	1
Weak	7.7%	2	3.9%	1
Neither weak nor strong	26.9%	7	38.5%	10
Strong	38.5%	10	38.5%	10
Very strong	19.2%	5	15.4%	4
Total	100%	26	100%	26

Alternative Sources of Funding

Almost half of the selected cities and around 62% of non-selected cities did not apply for other funding or assistance related to their project. None of the small sample of non-selected cities received funding from another source. This is interesting, because the non-selected cities were more likely to apply for PlacePlans because they needed money. Every one of the selected and non-selected cities would be interested in applying for PlacePlans again if the program continued.

Q17 - Did you receive funding or assistance from another funder besides MML to help implement the project?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities %	Count
Yes, we applied for and received funding.	24.0%	6	0.0%	0
Yes, we applied for and received technical assistance.	8.0%	2	25.0%	2
Yes, we applied for and received both funding and technical assistance.	16.0%	4	0.0%	0
No, we applied for funding and/or assistance but the proposal was not funded.	4.0%	1	12.5%	1
No, we did not apply for funding and/or assistance from another funder.	48.0%	12	62.5%	5
Total	100%	25	100%	8

Q18 - If additional PlacePlans support becomes available, would your city be interested in applying again?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities %	Count
Yes	100.00%	22	100.00%	8
No	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Total	100%	22	100%	8

Placemaking Implementation

PlacePlans participants' most commonly reported placemaking efforts were public plaza or park improvements, public art, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Most respondents reported, however, that their cities had not yet made much progress implementing the plans. Only about 15% of selected and 25% of non-selected city respondents said that their cities had made "quite a bit" of progress or more implementing the plan. These differences in implementation level between participants and non-participants were not statistically significant. Among participants, neither the year of participation (2013-2015), nor whether technical assistance was provided by the MSU team vs by private consultants was associated with any significant differences in implementation level. However, cities that received an implementation grant reported a significantly higher level of implementation progress.

As 63% of the participant respondents had participated in PlacePlans in the most recent funding cycle, it is not surprising that so little progress has been made. However, respondents provided many written comments listing already implemented projects, including a temporary ice rink, grant applications, trails and other recreational facilities, policy and regulatory changes, land acquisition, public plazas, and a road diet. Besides the short amount of time since the PlacePlans process concluded, which likely accounts for quite a bit of the lack of implementation progress, respondents identified lack of funding, lack of staff capacity, and changes/losses in project leadership as the most significant barriers to implementation. In contrast, 100% of the non-participants identified lack of funding as a significant barrier to implementing their plan, with no other factors receiving more than one response.

Q20 - Which of these types of projects have you engaged in as part of your placemaking implementation? (Choose all that apply.)

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities %	Count
Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure	46.2%	12	62.5%	5
Public plaza or park improvements	65.4%	17	62.5%	5
Public art	50.0%	13	50.0%	4
“Pop-up” temporary placemaking projects	19.2%	5	25.0%	2
Parks and recreation programming	34.6%	9	37.5%	3
Festivals/events	26.9%	7	75.0%	6
Streetscape improvements	30.8%	8	75.0%	6
Branding or marketing campaign	34.6%	9	37.5%	3
Business/entrepreneur support	15.4%	4	25.0%	2
New development incentive programs	7.7%	2	37.5%	3
Zoning or regulatory changes	23.1%	6	75.0%	6
Sale or development of publicly-owned properties	15.4%	4	37.5%	3
Acquisition of property	23.1%	6	25.0%	2
Other	15.4%	4	0.00%	0
Total	100%	26	100%	8

Q21 - How much progress has your city made implementing the plan?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities %	Count
None	19.2%	5	0.0%	0
Very Little	15.4%	4	12.5%	1
Some	50.0%	13	62.5%	5
Quite a bit	3.9%	1	25.0%	2
A great deal	11.5%	3	0.0%	0
Total	100%	26	100%	8

Q22 - Which components of your placemaking plan have been most successfully implemented?

Selected Cities

Landscaping and placemaking improvements along the railroad berms/property.

Pop up opportunities

We added an outdoor ice rink to the area, which was shown in the plan, and we also invested substantially in maintenance and beautification of the area to better market it for sale. This included sealcoating and cracksealing the parking lot, repairing and reactivating lighting in the parking lot, and working with local businesses for pop-up events, including a brew festival and fireworks.

The concept that MSU presented is now a nearly completed plaza that is within an area we have branded as the [] area. It includes the plaza, [] City Park, a performing arts pavilion, and hopefully within two years a new market facility for events including moving our Farmers Market to the site along with a new trail head designating the most northern point on the [] Trail which extends over 90 miles. Our performing arts pavilion was completed renovated and completed in the spring of 2016.

Nothing has been implemented

The overall Placemaking theories and guidelines have been injected into the downtown on a smaller scale.

Road diet

None

The reports and outputs from the workshops and pop-up experiments have been very helpful as we made further progress, and we reference those shared experiences quite regularly with our residents and business owners.

Business/property owners and community awareness of the plan.

phase 1 and 2 of pavilion and parking lot. next are market and trail head for Whitepine trail.

We're initiating the redevelopment of a parking lot that was part of the plan, and are going to fund it with the help of Patronicity.

Very little time has been invested in the placeplans due to other pressing matters and limited staff capacity. The intention is to implement as time permits. The plans have elevated the discussion on the long term vision for the street corridor.

Acquisition and grant applications in progress for 4.5-acre prominent lakefront property that city would like to turn into a park.

A hike/bike trail, a new ballpark and independent baseball league, park development, parking lot development, outdoor art, signage, façade improvements, zoning changes

We are currently in the process of updating our zoning code to reflect recommendations from the PlaceMaking initiative and the [] project.

Moving forward with waterfront property acquisition funding and redevelopment of City Hall site and [] Park Pavilion. Increased public art has helped connect the study areas.

Have progressed to a demonstration of the space in order to showcase the potential for a permanent public plaza.

Continued buy in and agreement on the priority area to initiate project

n/a

Attempting to market properties now. Most of the improvements in the plan would need to be done by private developers. Current property owners are in no position to help advance the plan except through the sale of their property to a funded and experienced developer.

Non-selected cities

Bicycle infrastructure

Bus rapid transit stations and streetscapes, also development of an urban street through a retail center.

Streetscape

We are early in the process, we have conducted community input sessions to prioritize projects as well as approved a public parks project and are beginning the revision of the DDA Masterplan.

Public Outreach, property acquisition, zoning regulation changes and initial Placemaking training and public education

Q23 - What new private development, business growth, or resident quality of life improvements have you seen as a result of your placemaking efforts, if any?

Selected cities

The railroads actually provided the financial support to implement some of the recommendations from the report.

A new senior housing tax credit project has passed approvals for a key parcel in downtown.

None yet, but we are still actively working on identifying developers.

Multiple abutting and nearby property owners to the plaza have made improvements to their properties since the PlacePlan concept was unveiled.

None

We have had residential development, new development, and business growth.

There are some development plans in the works, but nothing finalized yet.

None

Residents have enjoyed the experiment and we look forward to learning more as we make continued progress (we're still in the trial phase before we prepare any final decisions).

Enhanced interest in property adjacent to [] Center Park and greater awareness of the need to implement for economic growth.

New businesses locating in vacant space(s)/re-tenanting of existing commercial buildings/units.

Less empty Downtown Business storefronts on Main Street. none other to note.

None yet.

None. This question would be better asked in 2 years from now. So little time has passed since plans have been produced. It takes many years to implement public projects.

Two new downtown restaurants have opened this summer and one will open in November.

the ballpark and league, vacant stores reoccupied, façade improvements and signage upgrades, better maintenance of private parking areas

None, at this time.

Recent private property acquisitions and re-developments adjacent to study area and opening of several new businesses.

Have observed both active and passive use of the space from residents.

Increased building improvement and activity in Downtown

n/a

Not much yet. Last winter, the DDA installed a temporary ice rink in the approximate location one was recommended and it seemed to see frequent use.

Non-selected Cities

Less commercial vacancies, more multi-family housing and mixed-use from private development, more people cycling downtown.

Demolition of a portion of a shopping center, along with two additions to the center.

Sustained values and continued growth in employment City-wide

We are just now beginning the housing conversation that is in our plan, no changes are visible just yet.

Although we are in the beginning stages, we have seen new business start-ups and recently more properties on the market for redevelopment and more constructive uses. We have also been successful in obtaining funding for pedestrian and bicycle transportation enhancements, streetscaping and other forms of development technical assistance from outside agencies.

Q24 - How closely has the plan adhered to the proposed/desired completion timeline?

Answer	Selected cities %	Count	Non-selected cities %	Count
Plan implementation is not scheduled to begin yet	44.4%	12	12.5%	1
A great deal of delay	14.8%	4	25.0%	2
Some delay	29.6%	8	50.0%	4
Right on time	7.4%	2	12.5%	1
Somewhat ahead of schedule	3.7%	1	0.0%	0
Significantly ahead of schedule	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Total	100%	27	100%	8

Q25 - Which of the following, if any, do you feel are barriers to implementing your city's placemaking plan?

	Selected cities	Non-selected cities	Selected cities	Non-selected cities	Selected cities	Non-selected cities
	Significant barrier		Minor barrier		Not a barrier	
Lack of funding	75.0%	100.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lack of staff capacity	28.6%	14.3%	52.4%	71.4%	19.1%	14.3%
Lack of community support	25.0%	14.3%	20.0%	14.3%	55.0%	71.4%
Lack of Council support	14.3%	0.0%	19.1%	14.3%	66.7%	85.7%
Mismatch between project needs and support received	25.0%	14.3%	15.0%	28.6%	60.0%	57.1%
Changes/losses in project leadership	33.3%	14.3%	11.1%	42.9%	55.6%	42.9%
Plan was not specific enough	15.0%	14.3%	30.0%	14.3%	55.0%	71.4%
Zoning ordinance needs to be updated to reflect plan or project objectives.	15.8%	14.3%	31.6%	42.9%	52.6%	42.9%
Other (please list)	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Other (please list)

Our plan involves private property owners selling the land. This has not happened yet.

Not there

Lack of private market interest. We are attempting to make headway in this area, however.

Relationship with Michigan Municipal League

Selected cities reported a statistically significantly better relationship with Michigan Municipal League after the PlacePlans experience compared to before their participation, meaning that the mean reported answer for after was significantly higher than the mean reported answer for before. Selected cities also reported a statistically significantly better relationship with the League than non-selected cities, even before going through PlacePlans. It is not surprising that an intense and, based on our survey results, positive interaction with League staff would improve a city's relationship with the League. However, it is somewhat surprising that there was an a priori difference between selected and non-selected cities. What might be going on here? First, it's possible that the selected city respondents' memories of their prior relationship with the League were influenced by their current, even more positive, relationship, although if that were the case then the difference between before and after PlacePlans for the selected cities would be less likely to show significance. The other possibility is that one or more of the League's selection criteria inadvertently or purposely selected for cities with better existing relationships with the League. For example, having a reliable, responsive staff contact was one of the criteria for selection, and that responsiveness could be the result of or result in a better relationship with the League. In either case, it seems that whatever else it might have accomplished, PlacePlans was very successful as a relationship-building tool.

Q27 - How would you characterize your city's relationship with the League?

Answer	Selected cities BEFORE PlacePlans %	Selected cities AFTER PlacePlans	Non-selected cities
Very weak	0.0%	0.0%	12.50%
Weak	0.0%	0.0%	0.00%
Neither weak nor strong	23.1%	15.4%	25.00%
Strong	46.2%	30.8%	37.50%
Very strong	30.8%	53.9%	25.00%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Suggestions for Future Assistance from Michigan Municipal League

Q29 - Which type of assistance or service (not limited to placemaking initiatives) could the League provide that would benefit your community the most?

Selected cities

Which type of assistance or service (not limited to placemaking initiatives...

Assistance in hosting additional charettes.

Identifying funding for implementation.

Helping us actively identify developers to implement downtown housing construction, specific to the [] PlacePlan and surrounding properties.

Our City Manager would be the most appropriate person to respond to this question.

How to enlist the citizens of the city to share ideas. Only the "most important" people are involved and making the decisions and they do not live in the city.

Development technical assistance, access to resources to fund plan implementation.

In addition to existing services and products, perhaps some form of coordinated access to draft policies and ordinances so we can learn from one another and help move forward together

Help educating community leaders about the role and implications of effective governing & policy making.

Current assistance/services from MML are great. Thanks!

a Marketing plan

Marketing and perhaps Technical Assistance

MML has been of great help. The bureaucratic parts of the program are light, staff assistance is great. MML staff does real work to help City staff. This helps so much because our time to spend on projects, any projects is so limited. I give staff an A+

I know our city manager has a good relationship with MML, and he is always looking for opportunities to get assistance from organizations such as yours.

Redevelopment ready activities and training, specific fiscal changes in Michigan law that would restore appropriate state revenue sharing, asset management help

Communication with legislators, communication and interaction with the executive branch, technical assistance

Improved state and federal funding options and opportunities. League seems to be attempting to tackle these issues.

All services currently provided are adequate.

staffing and funding

Outside of this project, my position interacts with the MML on a fairly limited basis so I don't have the breadth of knowledge to provide a truly comprehensive answer to this question.

Non-selected cities

Educational Lobbying Wage & Salary survey Networking Opportunities

Funding

I don't feel I am familiar enough with the services available to adequately answer this question.

Additional technical support in public educational efforts.

Q35 - Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with PlacePlans or the implementation of your plan?

n/a

We owe a tremendous thank you to the MML and the MSU School of Planning, Design and Construction for helping us bring so many stakeholders within our community together and to work towards a new common goal of developing a plaza in our business and city park area.

To my knowledge nothing has been implemented yet. There is a lot of "good ole boys" making decisions for what they want. The citizens need to be involved.

Community opposition to the proposed relocation of the farmer's market caused financial backers to withdraw and the project stopped as a result. More emphasis on public participation may have helped. The overall experience with the program was, however, still positive.

The league continues to be a valuable, trusted partner and we're very thankful for their tremendous talent and creative solutions. And thanks to you for offering this survey as a way to share a few thoughts about them!

It was a great experience. Very grateful for the opportunity to work with MML & MSU teams.

Not at this time. Thank you.

transparency in funding for the new projects seems to be an issue... patronicity funding is good idea, however when you can't easily explain to the public how it's all being funded, it causes issues.

This is a great program. It provides the nudge to move projects ahead that would otherwise languish. We have a great set of plans and a draft code to make our street corridor great. We appreciate all the assistance and the genuine interests MML staff gave to this project to make sure we had a product that will give us many returns in terms of community enhancements.

This project was very helpful to [] City and will be in the years ahead as funds become available to make improvements.

MML is by far our greatest help in placemaking but [] County is finally on board as well.

It was a very positive experience that benefited our community greatly. Thank you. It is up to us to implement.

The facilitators seemingly refused to consider an additional concept design that was more down-to-earth and useful - kept saying about their design concepts "this is what you could dream or shoot for in a perfect world"

Love the MML staff. The MML crew was professional, organized and very engaging. Did exactly what they promised and set out to do. The problem with the project and moving it forward is the dysfunction at the City level...that should be an entirely different study...on how to rework a culture of negativity and apathy.

We really appreciated the assistance! It is always valuable to have an outside perspective to allow one to see what may not always be obvious.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Respondents from participant cities were on the whole extremely enthusiastic about PlacePlans. These positive experiences further strengthened already good relationships with Michigan Municipal League. Although it is not apparent from the statistical analysis, many of the written comments suggest that PlacePlans have already made a difference in these cities in extending their staff capacity, gathering and focusing community input, and expanding the idea of what placemaking projects might be possible. Based on these early, positive signs, we would expect to see more concrete evidence of implementation in the next few years. Funding was the only type of PlacePlan intervention that had a statistically demonstrable impact on implementation progress. It is not surprising that funding is very helpful in moving a project forward—a majority of both selected and non-selected cities reported

that a lack of funding was a major barrier to implementation, so removing that barrier would allow the project to advance. It was also the case that the League chose to fund projects that seemed particularly well-planned and shovel-ready, so the infusion of money allowed the city to move quickly and therefore to report results.

If possible, it would be helpful to revisit this survey in another year or two when cities have had more time to make progress on implementing their plans. Going forward, it also seems that studying more explicitly the role of community support and involvement would be informative. Although the statistical analysis did not indicate a significant difference between pre-and post-PlacePlan community support, the written comments emphasize its role. Several critical commenters expressed concerns that community involvement was not broad-based enough, that the same insiders would ultimately control the process, and that internal dysfunction among city leadership would derail the project. On the other hand, many of the positive comments focused on the benefits respondents had already seen from successful community participation processes, whether it was bringing in new participants or creating a space for important community conversations around future placemaking efforts.