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MERIDIAN MONITOR

Vol. 16 Issue 2

Construction Numbers Continue to Climb in Meridian Township

By: Staff

Over the last year Meridian Township has focused on economic development efforts and dedicated a full-time staff member to the position. A member of the Planning staff is now assigned to work solely on engaging and serving the business community by spending time doing personal visits with business owners and their staff to let them know that there is someone available to call if they need assistance.

“Our economic development staff is here to untangle the sometimes daunting maze that is local government and work to simplify the public process, so businesses know where and how to get what they need. Our staff can make the connection and do the legwork for them,” said Peter Menser, Meridian Township Associate Planner.

As a result of some of these new efforts, business is booming with new businesses and renovation projects. Meridian Township will soon be welcoming big named retail stores H&M, Gordman's, and Whole Foods to the area. In December 2013, the Township Board approved Meridian Mall's request to add 19,000 square feet to accommodate new stores.

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DID YOU KNOW?

NEW HOMES IN 2012/2013

In 2013, as of November, there were 104 new homes built at an average construction cost of \$282,032. In 2012, at this time, 59 new homes were constructed with an average cost of \$290,440.



CONNECT with MERIDIAN



Meridian Township Wins eCities Award

By: Natalie Nako

Meridian Township has been ranked as one of eight top performing communities in the state of Michigan at fostering entrepreneurial growth and economic development in a study by researchers at iLabs, University of Michigan-Dearborn's Center for Innovation Research.

Meridian Township Associate Planner Peter Menser, Economic Development Corporation Chair Marsha Madle, and business owner, Meridian Area Business Association (MABA) member, and tenant of the Meridian Asset Resource Center (MARC) Randy Willett were honored to accept the eCities award on behalf of the township as a top ranked community.



Researchers at iLabs surveyed 140 communities from 37 counties in Michigan. These communities had more than \$1.8 billion in 2012 commercial construction. The annual eCities research project uses a 32-item index of entrepreneurial activity, looking at such factors as clustering, incentives, growth, policies, community, and education. Meridian has been recognized every year since 2009. ●

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Outdoor entrances to the mall have already been added for Shoe Carnival and Planet Fitness. Some companies and business owners are redeveloping empty store fronts for new uses such as the Bosworth Redi-Care at the former Boston Market location and the renovation at the former Blockbuster space by Hampton Jewelers. In 2013, 34 new businesses have called Meridian Township home and 78 have begun remodeling projects. ●

YEAR	2012	2013
# Building Permits	745	877
# Home Permits	61	104
Construction Value (\$ million)	41.7	77

Reuse Stores Sell Goods and Endless Creativity

By: Andrea Mantakounis

With growing popularity from sites like Pinterest and DIY Network, repurposing and refurbishing household items has become easier than ever. For Meridian Township residents looking to remodel their living spaces, reuse shops in the area offer plentiful resources ready to be made over.

“When you come to the ReStore, bring a pencil, a pad of paper, measuring tape and your imagination. There are so many things you can be creative with, it is unbelievable,” encourages Deb Mason, Co-Manager of Haslett ReStore in Haslett and Lansing. “We suggest looking here first, and if we don’t have it now we may next week.”

Not only can you find great steals at great deals at reuse shops, purchasing from one can be even more environmentally friendly than recycling the articles. Often when people no longer see a use for their belongings, they either throw them away or drop them off to be recycled. To break down something like a glass window into a recyclable form takes more energy and money. If instead, the glass window went to a reuse store, it could be purchased and renovated to become a unique table top, saving the cost and energy of breaking down the original form to be recycled into new materials.

“Shopping at locally-owned stores helps ‘recycle money’ in the local economy. Buying locally re-used and recycled products at locally-owned businesses is a win-win-win... for jobs, the economy, and the environment,” comments LeRoy Harvey, Meridian Township Recycling and Energy Coordinator.

Meridian Township is home to more than half a dozen reuse shops. The most recent addition has been the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Haslett. Peter Menser, Associate Planner of Meridian Township, says that the ReStore has become a very valuable community asset in a short time. “Given there are so many quality places in the region, we are thrilled that these folks choose Meridian Township as a place to start and grow their business.” ●



Cornell Road Completion and Projects to Come

By: Andrea Mantakounis

It was two steps forward and one step back for the Cornell Road project this autumn. With an initial competition date of November 21st being pushed back due to a string of bad storms, downed trees and fallen debris, and an early onset of winter weather, the road closed signs were removed before Thanksgiving.

Bill Conklin, Managing Director of Ingham County Road Department, said, "It was long overdue. It was one of the worst local roads in the township, one of the worst roads in the county. And it was time to do it." Although the signs are down for now, Conklin said this isn't the end of working on Cornell Road.

In the spring, the road department will complete the road-side restoration on the Cornell Road project. Work remaining to be done includes completion of ditching in several areas, fine grading the side slopes, placing topsoil, and then seeding and mulching throughout. This will involve some equipment on one side of the road at specific work zones and will be done under flag control at the various work zones. Cornell Road will not be completely closed and detoured again.

The timing of the completion work depends on favorable weather this coming spring and will take approximately two to three weeks to finish. Future construction projects in Meridian Township include construction of a pedestrian bridge across the Red Cedar River west of the southbound Okemos Road bridge, a pathway extension along the south side of Mt. Hope Road west of Okemos Road, and general sidewalk and pathway repairs. A complete list of roadway and pathway construction projects can be found on Meridian Township's website under the "Township Projects" tab. ●

DID YOU KNOW?

2013 SIDEWALK/PATHWAY UPDATES

Meridian Township repaired 1,000 feet of sidewalks and pathways.

Three 8-foot wide, off-road pathway gaps were completed in 2013:

- East end of Raby Road to the Inter-Urban Pathway
- Jo Pass to the Inter-Urban Pathway
- East end of Robins Way to the north end of Kansas Road

Design Charrette

By: Andrea Mantakounis

The 19-mile corridor stretching from the Capitol Building to Webberville has been hailed as the economic engine of our region. Its rich history dates back before the 1850's when it was Old Plank Road, connecting Lansing to Detroit. This year, another page has been added to the history book.

The Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue Vision Charrettes held in 2013 were part of the Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability. The charrettes created a team approach where information, input, and ideas from community members, businesses, organizations, and elected officials provided assistance to a team of national and local experts who will be drafting an action plan for the corridor. The goal of the town-hall style meetings was to produce sustainable plans to be executed over the next 20 years.

The charrette design team led by National Charrette Institute with town planning firm Dover Kohl & Partner created a three step planning process for the transformation.

Beginning back in May, the Charrette Preparation Phase was followed by the Open Event Charrettes in October and will conclude with the Plan Implementation Phase.

"Cities are always continually works in progress. It's true of the regional metropolis; it's true of the small towns and the crossroads communities in it. They always start with one state and over the course of a generation or two or three, they transform into another," shared Victor Dover the Principal-In-Charge/Charrette Team Leader at the second Charrette gathering.

The diverse corridor includes a range of developments from bustling urban commercial areas to older housing and rural zones. This main street sees more than 1.7 million transit trip annually.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission will host a recap event on February 26, 2014 at the Hannah Community Center to summarize the ideas from the intensive vision and design Charrettes.

For more information on the upcoming events, visit migrand-charrette.com. ●





Meridian Township Snowman/Snow Sculpture Contest

Have fun in the snow this winter by creating an awesome snowman or snow sculpture in your yard or in a Meridian Township Park. Each entrant must build their snowman/sculpture during the 2013/2014 winter season and prior to Friday, February 28th. Email your photos to grothous@meridian.mi.us or mail to: Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department, 2100 Gaylord C. Smith Court, Haslett, MI 48840.

Include your snowman/sculpture's name, address of snow creation, names of builders, and contact information of lead builder. One picture must have at least one of the builders in the photo for scale. Families and groups in the pictures are welcomed. All entries must be in good taste. Entrants are encouraged to add their own creative touches that will make their snowman/sculpture unique. Prizes will be awarded for "Most Original Snowman", "Most Original Sculpture", "Most Meridian Township Spirit Snowman", and "Most Meridian Township Spirit Sculpture". For more information call 517.853.4600. ●

Chinese New Year

Greater Lansing Chinese Association together with ten other Chinese organizations in the Greater Lansing Area are planning a festive day to celebrate the beginning of the Chinese New Year. The event is taking place at the Meridian Mall on Saturday, February 1st from 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the center court area.

This festival is focused on bringing the entire community together in celebration of the Chinese culture that will include a parade, fashion show, music, dancing, singing, carnival games, and more. "Over 1,200 visitors enjoyed the entertainment last year and this year looks to be bigger and better than ever" stated event coordinator, Julie Jiang, Board member of the Greater Lansing Chinese Association. "This collaboration is bringing together resources that will make for an incredible program to celebrate the Chinese Culture and we are inviting everyone in the community to attend." ●

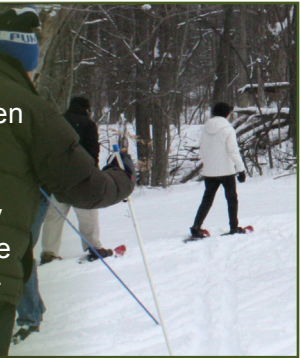
Schedule of Activities:

- 1:00 p.m. Lion Parade
- 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Entertainment
- 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Display & Games



Meridian Skis

Meridian Township has more than 20 miles of trails open for cross country skiing. The trails are wide enough for people and dogs to share the trails without damaging the ski tracks. Meridian Riverfront Park provides plenty of parking with ski rentals available at the Harris Nature Center building. North Meridian Road Park offers year-round public rest rooms open dawn to dusk. ●



Family Winter Sports Weekend

By: Andrea Mantakounis

Pull on those long johns and get ready for the annual Family Winter Sports Weekend January 24th-26th! The weekend activities kick off at the MSU Demmer Center on Friday for Target Practice from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. All types of target shooting are offered at a reduced rate.

Saturday is a really big day starting with "Winter Wonderland" at Harris Nature Center where you can participate in snowshoeing, skiing, sled dog demonstrations, ice sculptures, a silent auction and games. Join the Lansing Curling Club later that day at the Central Park South Pond for an introduction to the Scottish sport known as "Chess on Ice." When the sun goes down, head over to North Meridian Road Park Sledding Hill for "Family Moonlight Sledding". Slide down the lit hill, enjoy hot chocolate, and keep warm by the campfire.

Pin on your race bib number on Sunday morning for the 7th Annual Polar Bear 5K Run/Walk. The race is open to all ages and abilities. Participants registering before January 17 will receive a special race shirt. Awards will be handed out to the top three finishers in 14 divisions. Later in the day head indoors for free family bowling at City Limits East Lansing and then round out the afternoon with target practice again at Demmer Center. Take a dip in the MAC's pool that evening to relax after a busy weekend from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. ●

DID YOU KNOW?

SKI & SNOWSHOE RENTAL

Cross-country skis and snowshoes can be rented from the Harris Nature Center by the hour (\$5/hour weekdays and \$7/hour weekends) or by the day (\$15/day weekdays and \$20/day weekends). Equipment Rental Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sunday
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Feeding the Hungry – Deer Harvest

By Lia Davis

10,585 meals to the hungry have been provided to the food banks through the Meridian Township Managed Deer Harvesting program from 2011 to present. During the 2013 regular archery hunting and early antlerless seasons, qualified hunters harvested 113 deer. In previous years, 90 deer were harvested in 2012 and 43 deer in 2011.

Hunters were allowed to keep their second deer taken, and all additional deer harvested were donated to the hungry through Okemos Community Church, Haslett Community Church, Lansing City Rescue Mission, 1st Presbyterian Church of Lansing, Gayelord Mankowski's Annual Holiday Party, and Haven House of East Lansing.

Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger provided funding for the processing fee, which has led to 691 pounds of venison donated to local food banks in 2013. It is estimated that one pound of venison equals five meals; therefore, 3,455 meals have been donated through the Deer Management Program this year. ●



Senior Center Renovations

By: Lia Davis

Plans for the Meridian Senior Center renovation considered functionality as well as aesthetics with the 2013 improvements. The addition of a new reception desk and check-in area provides a warm welcome to members. A new space known as the “work café” has wireless internet, new tables and chairs with decorative and functional drum lights. This popular area is where seniors almost always find people congregating over a hand of cards or a cup of coffee. The new television seating area was warmed up with the addition of an electric fireplace, multi-media cabinet, new window treatments, and new furniture.

Bookshelves were newly positioned to provide a library area along a circulation corridor. Members can now select books from the shelves and take a seat at a table nestled in between the bookshelves for a quiet read or

a discussion with friends. These functioning areas still provide for adequate open space for physical activities such as Jazzercise and the weekly meal program.

Future phases will continue where the project left off with new coordinating tables and stacking chairs for large events, portable dividing screen, and updates for the classroom and game room. A warm color palette of browns, rusts, teals, and burnt and bright reds tie together the new carpet and paint selections.

The Meridian Senior Center is a meeting place in Meridian Township for all citizens age 55 and over. The Center is operated under the auspices of Meridian Township and Okemos Public Schools and is supported by the Meridian Township Community Services Millage. Call 517-706-5020.

Visit the facebook page at www.facebook.com/MeridianSeniorCenter. ●



Snowplows Need Room to Groom

By: Lia Davis

To help ensure everyone gets where they're going safely, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the County Road Association of Michigan remind motorists that, "Snowplows need room to groom!" MDOT and the County Road Association offer the following reminders for motorists:

- Snowplows have limited visibility and drivers cannot see directly behind their trucks. Snowplows often throw up clouds of snow behind them, reducing visibility on all sides of the truck.
- Motorists should never attempt to pass a moving snowplow on the right. With new wing plow and tow plow technology; the blade can clear the shoulder and the lane of travel simultaneously. Motorists attempting an illegal pass through a snow cloud on the right and/or shoulder of the road most likely won't see the plow blade and run the risk of a serious crash.
- Distracted driving is dangerous driving. Motorists should not text or talk on cell phones while they are behind the wheel, especially in winter conditions. In fact, texting while driving is illegal in Michigan.
- Always wear your safety belt and allow extra time to reach your destinations this winter.
- More road salt is not always the cure for slippery roads. When temperatures fall below 20 degrees, the action of the salt takes longer to work. Continuing to apply salt at these very low temperatures will actually cause more problems than it solves.

Decreases in funding and increasing costs have forced changes in winter maintenance practices, but plows always need plenty of room to perform their job properly. Winter maintenance by the County road agencies are only funded through fuel tax revenue. According to Managing Director Bill Conklin of the Ingham County Road Department with a 12% decline in fuel tax revenue and most material costs including salt and diesel fuel for trucks doubling in the last 6-8 years, county road agencies lack sufficient funding to plow subdivisions on overtime unless the streets are reasonably judged to be impassable or hazardous. ●

DID YOU KNOW?

SNOW REMOVAL

REMINDER: Residents are to clear the snow and ice from sidewalks along their property within 24 hours following a snowfall. Residents who will be out of town are expected to make arrangements for snow removal.



MERIDIAN WINTER FARMERS' MARKET

SATURDAYS
DECEMBER 7 & 21
JANUARY 4 & 18
FEBRUARY 1 & 15
MARCH 1 & 15
APRIL 5 & 19

10 AM TO 2 PM

For more information, call Meridian Township Parks & Recreation 517-853-4600

LOCATION: JCPENNEY CORRIDOR (INDOORS)
MERIDIAN MALL

Free Christmas Tree Recycling in Meridian

For more than a decade, Meridian Township has been offering residents the option to recycle their holiday Christmas trees. Beginning at the end of December and continuing through January, residents can drop off trees at two locations in the Township for free: **Wonch Park, 4555 Okemos Road** and **Nancy Moore Park, 2100 Gaylord C. Smith Court**. Trees should be **FREE** of wire, metal bracing or nails and **MUST NOT** be in a plastic bag. ●

Watch the Video Versions of the Monitor Online

HOMTV Government Access Channel student interns gain invaluable multi-media journalism experience by interning in the Communications Department and jointly working on collecting research data, writing articles, and producing accompanying videos to this newsletter. Read more about the internship program at www.homtv.net. Watch the videos by scanning the QR Code or online at www.meridian.mi.us by clicking "Township Publications" under the "Media Room" tab. ●

Haslett Library Settling in at New Location

By: Aidan Clark

Renovations to the Haslett Library completed in September 2011 improved the Capital Area District Library's sense of community. The Haslett Library's new renovation project will be an upgrade to the Kiwanis Community Room. Planned enhancements include new shelving, wall paneling, ceiling mounted audio/visual equipment, and painted surfaces.

Public attendance at the library has jumped 18% since the renovations and Head Librarian Ann Chapman believes this is due to the fact the building now has space dedicated for patron use and community events. "We really feel the Haslett Library is a community center; people use the library that way," says Chapman, who has been the library's Head Librarian for the past eight years. "We average about five hundred visitors per day." Chapman proudly proclaims the library has the fifth highest rate of circulation of all the libraries in the Capital Area.

The updates to the building are new, but some things have not changed about the library which continues to offer literary programs and citizen meetings as well, which are free with a library card.

The Haslett Library is located at 1590 Franklin Street in Haslett and is open from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday-Friday and until 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. Sunday's

hours are between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. except on Sundays between Memorial Day and Labor Day when the library is closed. For more information call 517.339.2324 or visit www.cadl.org. ●



New Year Brings New Renovations for Hope Borbas Okemos Library

By: Sara Fideler

After a successful fundraising campaign earlier this year, which raised more than \$125,000 in public donations and a match of \$200,000 from Meridian Township, the Hope Borbas Okemos Library went under construction.

Major donors including the Friends of the Okemos Library, Capital Area District Library, Delta Dental, Haslett and Okemos Rotary as well as other private donors in honor of family and loved ones made the renovations possible. "We extend our thanks to the Friends of the Library and other library lovers who stepped up to the plate to make our library renovation fundraising such a success. Without their help this improved library would not have been possible," said Cecelia Kramer, President of the Friends of the Okemos Library. "Our library is now ready to 'star' as the community center that our residents desire."

The renovation will be a dramatic adjustment to the interior, starting with a new main entrance on the west side of the library, re-purposed space to better utilize and increase the patron area, improved parking and traffic flow, and upgraded wiring and technology. An all-new international languages area will accommodate the large number of patrons who have English as their second language. A new quiet reading room has been added. The more open concept area through the center of the library and lower bookshelves will accent a feeling of more space for the patrons. Construction began in mid-September and the newly renovated library will open to the public January 2, 2014.

A grand opening ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on Saturday, January 25th. Press, donors, dignitaries and patrons will be in attendance at the event, and punch and cookies will be served. The library is located at 4321 Okemos Rd in Okemos. Call 517.349.0250 or visit www.cadl.org for more information. ●





Meridian Township
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
(517) 853-4600

ECRWSS
CAR-SORT POSTAL CUSTOMER

PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANSING, MI
PERMIT NO. 689



Meridian Perspective with Township Manager Frank Walsh

“As the new Manager to the township I want to thank everyone for the warm welcome I’ve experienced. In an effort to engage with the residents of Meridian Township, I am starting a Township Manager’s Blog called ‘Managers Perspective’. My hope is to build connections with the people and businesses, expanding upon all the great things happening in Meridian.” ~ Frank Walsh

“I invite you to connect with me at managersperspective.wordpress.com.”

Happy New Year!



Options to Pay Winter Tax Bills

By: Staff

Residents can avoid the last day rush of paying taxes by enrolling in the Township’s automatic ACH payment plan or online through official payments. Automatic bill payment allows the customer to enroll in the program and have their tax payment automatically deducted from their account on the due date (February 14, 2014).

To enroll, residents must fill out the Automatic Bill Payment Enrollment Form located on the Meridian Township website www.meridian.mi.us by January 31, 2014. When enrolled, Meridian Township will initiate an ACH withdrawal from the taxpayer’s account.

Payments may also be made in person or dropped off in the white drop box in front of the Meridian Township Municipal Building 24 hours a day or mailed to 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864. When paying in person, residents are encouraged to bring the entire bill with them to expedite the payment process. If using the drop box or mail, residents must include their stub with payment.

Payments must be received in the office by the due date or a 1% late fee will be charged. Post-marks are not accepted. The last day to make a year-end payment in 2013 is Tuesday, December 31. Winter taxes are due on Friday, February 14, 2014. ●