

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



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The official bi-annual newsletter of the CCED



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consider GIVING

Strong communities are built when local ideas, talent, and partnerships come together to solve real challenges. Through Michigan State University’s Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED), students, faculty, and community leaders collaborate to help communities strengthen their economies, plan for the future and move innovative ideas into action. The Center for Community and Economic Development is committed to creating, applying and disseminating valued knowledge through responsive engagement, strategic partnerships and collaborative learning. We are dedicated to co-creating sustainable prosperity and equitable economies with communities.

Through these partnerships, communities and organizations work alongside MSU students and/or faculty on projects identified by communities themselves. These efforts may include redevelopment strategies, community investment initiatives, policy research and planning efforts that support economic resilience.

Communities gain access to technical assistance and research support while students gain hands-on experience applying their knowledge to real-world challenges.

Give to the MSU Community Partnership and Innovation Fund to support community innovation, expand student-community partnerships and help Michigan communities turn ideas into action.



Make a gift at: <https://givingto.msu.edu/causes-to-support/crowdpower/msucommunitypartnershipandinnovationfund>

A Legacy of Leadership & Community Engagement: Rex LaMore Retires from Michigan State University

WRITTEN BY: EMILY SPRINGER, UNIVERSITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



Dr. Rex LaMore
Director, CCED

“If you love your job, you’ll never work a day in your life.”

These words ring true for Rex LaMore, Ph.D., who has dedicated 50 years to a distinguished career at Michigan State University focused on addressing innovative community-based solutions to local problems.

LaMore serves as director of the Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED), housed within the Office of

University Outreach and Engagement (UOE), and holds an affiliated faculty appointment in the Urban and Regional Planning Program in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR).

An architect of the 1992 Outreach Partnership Act with U.S. Senator Don Riegle of Michigan, LaMore's work has shaped the nature of university-community partnerships nationwide. Closer to home, he served as president of the Michigan Association of Planning 2016–17 and as a commissioner on the Williamstown Township Planning Commission for over 15 years.

Throughout his career, LaMore has been a dedicated leader in advancing equitable and sustainable development, with a particular focus on revitalizing distressed communities. His work has had a lasting impact across Michigan, helping to shape a model for community-engaged economic development that positions communities as active partners in defining and

co-creating solutions alongside higher education. Grounded in equity and trust, his approach consistently centers community knowledge, priorities, and lived experience, while contributing to innovative, community-based strategies that continue to influence the field. He has also helped develop enduring infrastructure that strengthens collaboration between communities and institutions, creating systems that extend well beyond any single project or funding cycle.

More career highlights include being the founding director of the MSU Regional Economic Innovation (REI) partnership, a collaborative initiative that advances new tools, models, and practices in community and economic development. In addition, he founded the “Science of Domicology,” a framework and field of study that redefines the built environment through the lens of circular life cycles.

Through more than two decades of teaching, LaMore has inspired generations of students in environmental planning, community economic development, urban policy, and ethics. Through the field-based planning practicum, his students partnered directly with communities on real-world projects. Most recently, in fall 2024, he co-taught the university’s first Honors College course on the circular economy.

“Several years ago, as we were exploring models for how universities can partner with communities to drive meaningful and equitable change, I came to visit CCED because of its national reputation in this work,” said Kwesi Brookins, vice provost for UOE. “It became immediately clear to me that Dr. LaMore’s impact on MSU and the communities it serves is truly immeasurable. In fact, CCED’s leadership in this arena was one of the top reasons I was excited to return to lead MSU’s outreach and engagement office. Through his leadership and his ability to connect people, ideas, and opportunities, Rex has strengthened our work across the state that will continue to shape our efforts in the years to come.”

This sentiment is shared by colleagues who have worked closely with LaMore, including Zenia Kotval, professor and program director for Urban and Regional Planning in CANR’s School of Planning, Design, and Construction.

“Rex’s reputation for running one of the premier EDA university centers in the Midwest preceded my arrival at MSU—and in every way, he exceeded it. He has a remarkable ability to build meaningful connections with communities and truly understand their needs, and his expertise in helping communities build capacity for economic and community development is unmatched in Michigan. I had the pleasure of teaching the urban planning practicum course with Rex for nearly a decade, and the practical experience he brings into the classroom is

phenomenal.”

Notably, LaMore has been recognized for his many contributions throughout his career. He is a national recipient of the Community Development Society's Distinguished Service Award (1995) and the prestigious Educator of the Year Award of the Michigan Economic Developers Association (2008). He has also been recognized by his peers at MSU with the University Distinguished Academic Specialist Award (2011), the Excellence Award in Interdisciplinary Scholarship from the MSU Chapter of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi (2013), and, notably, as an inaugural recipient of the Simmons Chivukula Award for Academic Leadership (2018), an honor presented by MSU’s Office of the Provost.

Reflecting on both her time as a student and her continued work as a colleague, Jenan Jondy shared, “He changes people, and in doing so, he has changed communities for the better.”

LaMore earned a B.S. and M.S. in Resource Development from Michigan State University and a Ph.D. in Education and Community Development from the University of Michigan.

As he prepares to retire in June 2026, he will be honored with emeritus status in recognition of his years of service. His legacy at MSU is defined by a deep commitment to community engagement, innovation, and student mentorship, as well as the lasting impact of the students, colleagues, and community members who will carry this work forward.

Following his retirement, Rex will remain affiliated with CCED in a part-time role as a senior advisor/director emeritus. In this role, he will continue to provide high-level strategic leadership, coordination, and guidance across several significant initiatives.



Advancing Impact, Partnership, & Purpose: Reflections from Compact26

This spring Michigan State University was well represented at Campus Compact's national conference, Compact26, where colleagues from the Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL), Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED), the Detroit Center, and University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) contributed to, and learned from, a wide range of sessions, presentations, and national conversations.

Spanning topics from student impact and assessment to community partnerships and economic innovation, MSU's presence reflected both the depth and breadth of its commitment to community engaged learning. Across sessions, a clear throughline emerged: meaningful impact is achieved when institutions listen intentionally, measure thoughtfully, and partner authentically.

Showcasing Student Impact and Learning

Several MSU-led sessions focused on understanding and communicating the impact of community engagement on students. In a featured session, K.C. Keyton, CCEL

Assistant Director, shared insights from MSU's Spartan Days of Service, highlighting how intentional design through reflection and assessment can transform even a single day of service into a meaningful learning experience.

Student survey data revealed consistent outcomes: increased awareness of community issues, stronger connection to community, and a deeper sense of purpose. These findings reinforce that short term engagement, when structured thoughtfully, can lead to lasting personal and civic growth.

Building on this work, a roundtable led by Michelle Snitgen, Stephanie Brewer, and Tina Houghton, Assistant Directors in CCEL, expanded the conversation to include career readiness. The presenters explored how community engaged learning helps students develop transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem solving. This evolving



Renee Miller Zientek,

Executive Director, Center for
Community Engaged Learning

*GUEST AUTHOR & MEMBER OF
CCED'S FACULTY BOARD OF
ADVISORS*

assessment approach positions community engagement not only as civic learning, but also as a critical pathway to professional development.

Strengthening and Studying Partnerships

A strong emphasis throughout the conference was placed on the importance of authentic, reciprocal partnerships. In sessions led by CCEL staff, presenters shared strategies for building and sustaining these relationships, including intentional onboarding processes, clear communication, and ongoing feedback mechanisms.

Tools such as the SpartansVolunteer platform and engagement aligned with global frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are helping to create more coordinated and inclusive opportunities for collaboration.

At the same time, national conversations, particularly through CCEL Executive Director, Renee Miller Zientek's involvement with the TRUCEN network, focused on improving how institutions assess community partner experiences. Participants explored emerging frameworks to better capture partner perspectives and ensure that engagement efforts are not only effective, but also ethical, reciprocal, and sustainable.

Expanding Innovation and Community Impact

MSU's contributions also extended beyond student learning into broader community and economic development. In a session led by Geoffrey Gracia, CCED AmeriCorps Member in the Center for Community and Economic Development, participants explored the concept of circular economies and the shift from traditional "take-make-waste" systems toward regenerative models.

This work highlights how universities can partner with communities to create sustainable economic opportunities while reducing environmental impact, demonstrating the broader potential of community engagement to drive systems level change.

Deepening Practice Through Mindfulness

Another emerging area of focus shared at the conference was the integration of mindfulness into community engaged learning. Renee Miller Zientek and Stephanie Brewer presented on practices being incorporated into MSU's Community Engagement Scholars Program, including reflection, intentional listening, and presence.

These approaches support more ethical and empathetic engagement by helping students better understand their own perspectives and responsibilities within community-based work. Looking ahead, they are exploring how mindfulness practices can also be extended to community partners to strengthen relationships and support more sustainable collaboration.

National Recognition of Leadership and Impact

Compact26 also provided an opportunity to celebrate national recognition of MSU’s leadership community engagement.

Renee Miller Zientek, Executive Director of CCEL, received the Nadinne Cruz Community Engagement Professional Award from Campus Compact. This national honor recognizes sustained leadership and a deep commitment to advancing equitable, reciprocal community engaged work.

In addition, MSU student Roberto Garcia was recognized with a national Student Leadership Award, reflecting the powerful role students play in advancing community impact through service, partnership, and civic engagement.

Together, these recognitions highlight the collective efforts of students, community partners, faculty, and staff who contribute to this work every day.

Moving Forward

As MSU colleagues return from Compact26, they do so with renewed clarity and momentum. Key priorities moving forward include:

- Strengthening assessment practices to better capture meaningful impact
- Centering community partner’s voices in all aspects of engagement
- Connecting civic learning with career readiness and life outcomes
- Deepening partnerships grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared purpose

At its core, community engaged learning is about relationships—*relationships* that support student growth, strengthen communities, and advance the public mission of higher education.





Viewpoint: The Future of Democracy

Robert Brown

Associate Director, CCED

Harvard Kennedy School Professor Erica Chenoweth and Harvard Professor Steven Levitsky, in a recent article (<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/democracy-governance/democracy-2025-harvard-professors-rising>) point to the top signs of democratic backsliding in 2025. They posit that “the United States has entered a phase of competitive

authoritarianism, in which a leader who is democratically elected acts undemocratically once in office—they might punish critics, remove civil servants, and abuse power to shift the electoral field in their favor. It’s neither full democracy nor full authoritarianism.”

Experts and recent assessments highlight several critical trends captured with the help of AI. Here is what AI told me beginning with information describing the source and its summarized findings:

Significant Democratic Decline

The Century Foundation is a progressive, independent think tank that conducts research, develops solutions, and drives policy change to make people’s lives better. They pursue economic, racial, gender, and disability equity in education, health care, and work, and promote U.S. foreign policy that fosters international cooperation, peace, and security. To do so, they recently developed the United States Democracy Meter.

The first report on the new tool compares U.S. democracy in 2024 and 2025, and finds that a democratic collapse has already occurred, with an overall score dropping nearly 28 percent in just one year—well into authoritarianism. It further indicates that consolidation of executive power is the biggest problem facing U.S. democracy. Nonstate sectors like the media and civil society remain relatively resilient, though they are under pressure. But rights, particularly of immigrants and outspoken opponents of the government, are being threatened by the federal government.

Emerging Threats to Institutions

The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization that equips decision makers with

nonpartisan research and policy strategies to create a more prosperous and secure country and world. They have identified several emerging threats to U.S. institutional stability stemming from the current administration's policies and restructuring efforts. These include erosion of civil service independence, retaliation against law firms, weaponization of the DOJ, immigration court pressure, weakening of oversight and checks, and tariff uncertainty.

A Response: My Viewpoint

In 2026, the future of U.S. democracy faces a critical, high-stakes moment, characterized by intense partisan battles, structural shifts toward expanded executive power, and significant concerns over the health of democratic norms. The midterm elections are seen as a defining moment for congressional checks on power, with analysts predicting a volatile, highly polarized environment that could determine if the U.S. continues to function as a representative democracy.

In these turbulent and uncertain times, it is imperative to have community conversations about the eroding foundations of a just, equitable, and inclusive country, state, city, and neighborhood. Key questions should include:

- Individually and collectively, what can we do to maintain the integrity of the 2026 elections?
- How do we continue to manage or approach our daily work within this context of our threatened democracy?
- What is the role of trusted, reliable local news in a healthy democracy?

These discussions will help pave avenues of hope, facilitate opportunities for learning, and spur civic action to preserve our democracy.



After 28 yrs at MSU, the last 13 at CCED, I am retiring as of July 1, 2026. It has been, especially my time at the Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED), a transformational journey. My time at MSU and CCED allowed me to dive deeply into Asset-Based Community Development, which has become foundational in all my efforts. My community building follows me into retirement. I will never give up on the great people and city of Flint. You have all inspired me. I am eternally grateful.

~ **Robert Brown**
Associate Director, CCED



New Chapters

John Melcher

Associate Director, CCED

I am writing to congratulate and thank two of my friends and co-workers who are retiring this month. I have had the pleasure of working with Bob Brown and Rex LaMore for many years and would like to extend congratulations for their remarkable careers and thank them on behalf of the many communities who they have faithfully served for decades. Their commitment to define and fulfill the mission of the Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) serves as a testament to their talent, passion and dedication to the co-creation of research and programs that have empowered communities across our state for years.

I have known and worked with Bob since he joined MSU Outreach and Engagement and then worked more closely with him when he joined the CCED team thirteen years ago. We have a shared interest in asset-based community development and have worked to assist communities to identify and discover assets that they can mobilize to address agreed upon community issues and concerns. It has been a pleasure to work with someone who values community processes that give voice to individuals and build capacity for communities to more actively guide the destiny of their communities. Dedication, passion and commitment are words I will always associate with Bob.

My relationship with Rex goes back to the mid-1970s when we met in graduate school studying community and economic development. I was one of his first students when I enrolled in a community development course he had designed and convinced his major professor to allow him to teach. Little did I know at the time that he would go on to teach many courses to hundreds of students in his career at MSU. And little did I realize that I would work with him for over forty years and co-teach community development courses, be co-principal investigators on numerous proposals and share administrative responsibilities as part of the Center for Urban Affairs that later was renamed the Center for Community and Economic Development.

I have many stories and fond memories of our work together which I am happy to share but most of all I value his commitment to community and his unrelenting determination to help MSU

share its resources and capacity with poor and underserved communities not only in our state but across the country and the globe. Over the years his voice has been consistent and clear and will be missed but not forgotten. It will live on through others who have worked with him over these many years and through his students and research assistants who have been transformed because of his guidance and mentorship.

Finally, I want to thank both Rex and Bob for the positive effect they have had on me and my career. None of this work can be done by one individual but rather by a team of dedicated individuals and I thank them for helping to build a team which shares their passions for the work, the communities they serve and most importantly to each other. They are now moving on to new chapters in their lives, but they leave a legacy at CCED that is expressed by the stated mission of the CCED and guided by the community development principles of good practice.

I will miss working with these skilled professionals but will take to heart that we will be friends forever. I wish them both the best and look forward to their new chapters in their lives.



Introducing CCED's New Podcast:

“TRANSFORMING TOMORROW TOGETHER... TODAY”

Transforming Tomorrow Together...Today, or T⁴, is a new podcast produced by the Center for Community and Economic Development at Michigan State University. As Assistant Director, I have the privilege of exploring the people, ideas, and initiatives shaping stronger, more equitable communities within Michigan and beyond. Each monthly episode dives into timely topics related to community and economic development, innovation, and service, and how these efforts contribute to positive change at the local and national level.

The MSU Center for Community and Economic Development is excited to welcome a variety of guests, including students, professionals, community partners, thought leaders, change-makers and researchers who are working on projects that support communities in meaningful ways. Our guests share insights from their experiences, discuss challenges and successes in their work, and reflect on how their efforts contribute to broader social and economic impact for the development of our shared great spaces in which we live, learn, work and play!

The CCED kicks off T⁴ with an introductory episode to our newest team member, Dr. Kevin Brooks, to learn a little more about what he does in his role as the CCED Community Engagement Specialist. This and future episodes can be accessed on the Center's Podcast page at <https://ced.msu.edu/media/podcasts> and also on YouTube and Apple Podcasts as well as Spotify beginning in February. We'd also like to extend special appreciation to student research assistant, Alayla Milow, the Center's new podcast assistant also supporting the Urban Community Engagement Fellows and a senior majoring in Mediated Communication. She specializes in communication strategy, media analysis and digital storytelling. Ms. Milow is passionate about using media as a tool to build authentic connections, elevate diverse voices and engage communities in meaningful ways.

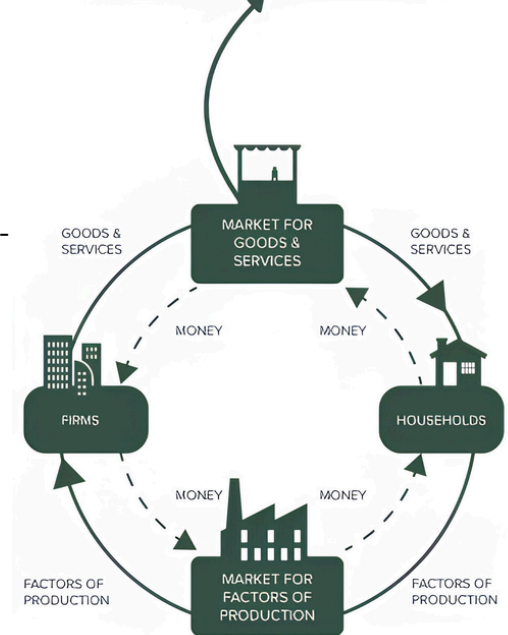


Mary ZumBrunnen
Assistant Director, CCED

In March’s episode, T4 explored how communities can transition from a traditional “take-make-waste” economy to a more sustainable circular economy by keeping materials in use rather than discarding them. Featuring Michigan State University researcher and co-author Abigail Carrigan, the conversation focuses on a newly developed toolkit designed to help recyclers, governments, and businesses identify and connect with “reuse markets” - the companies that can turn recycled materials into valuable inputs. The episode, also available at <https://ced.msu.edu/media/podcasts> breaks down key challenges like lack of transparency, weak demand for recycled goods, and system inefficiencies, while highlighting practical strategies and tools to strengthen these connections.

With a wealth of topics, the Center kicked off April with a three-parter featuring the CityCraft Foundation founder and board chair, John Knott, Jr., regenerative system scale and operations strategist, Melissa Hall, who is also the founding director of the Lansing Growth Fund, and CityCraft board member and developer, Brent Forsberg. The team focused on their work discussing the Southwest Lansing Regenerative Roadmap Initiative, Lansing Growth Fund and the vision CityCraft brings to the triple bottom line to address the long term environmental, economic and social challenges within communities across the nation. Based on a balance of people, planet and prosperity, CityCraft embodies the belief that sustainable cities must be equally responsive to social needs, environmental responsibility and economic vitality.

Reuse markets ensure that recycled, reused, or recovered materials are turned into new products, keeping value in circulation. Without reuse markets, materials collected for recycling have nowhere to go, stalling the system and increasing disposal to landfills.



Catch T4's next episode where Dr. Rex LaMore, director of the Center and soon retiree, will talk us through his journey of five decades. From AmeriCorps*Volunteer in Service to America to becoming the Center for Community & Economic Development’s director, we’ll learn about what’s next for Rex and also what the future may hold for the Center. Until then...

Celebrating Partnership & Looking Ahead:

REI RECEIVES 2026 DISTINGUISHED PARTNERSHIP AWARD

We're excited to share that the Regional Economic Innovation (REI) initiative and its statewide Consultative Panel have been selected for the 2026

Distinguished Partnership Award for Community Engaged Service. This recognition reflects the strength of our statewide partnerships and a shared commitment to advancing community-driven economic development across Michigan.

Over the past decade, REI has partnered with communities, practitioners, and institutions to co-create innovative economic development tools, models, programs, and practices that support local innovation and resilience. Through applied research, technical assistance, capacity building, and cross-sector collaboration, REI's impact has always been rooted in partnership. This award recognizes not only the program, but the collective work of the many partners who have helped shape and sustain it. REI's work has consistently focused on translating partnerships into innovative tools and strategies that support locally driven economic development.



Jenan Jondy
REI Project
Coordinator,
CCED



This recognition comes during a period of transition following the nationwide end of the EDA University Center Program. Continued support from Michigan State University and match funders has allowed REI to sustain its work and remain responsive to evolving community needs while continuing to explore new approaches.



Thank you!
REI CONSULTATIVE PANEL



Charles A. Hasemann
Ass. VP for MSU Innovation & Economic Development



John Egelhaaf
Executive Director, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission



Chris Miller
CEO, National Coalition for Community Capital (NC3)



Meghan Swain
Executive Director for the Michigan Economic Developers Association



Terence O'Neill
Entrepreneurship Librarian, Michigan State University



Naheed Huq
Manager of Talent and Economic Development, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)



Sriram Narayanan
Full-time Professor and the Eli Broad Endowed Professor of Supply Chain Management at the Broad College of Business, MSU, Supply Chain Management Department



Ken Szymusiak
Managing Director, Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (Burgess IEI)



Grace Carey
Program Officer at the Michigan Municipal League Foundation



Ritchie H. Harrison
Independent Consultant, The Everyday Sacred



Laurel Ofstein
Faculty Director, Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at MSU & Associate Professor-Fixed Term, Department of Management of the Broad College of Business



Kara Wood
Executive Director, Grand Action 2.0



Dave Ivan
Community, Food & Environment Institute Director, MSU Extension



Mohamed Ayoub
City of Westland Planning Director



Richard Wooten
District 11 Director, Michigan State University Extension



Bill Ernat
Program Manager for Economic & Community Development, EMCOG



Erin Kuhn
Executive Director, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission



Jamie Rye
Director, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission



Francisco Villarruel
University Outreach and Engagement Senior Fellow & Professor



Rita Fields
Dual CEO of 313 Industries, Inc. and Copper Phoenix Consulting, LLC; Chief Talent & Strategy Officer for Lighthouse Michigan; Professor in the School of Management at UM-Flint



Jonathan Leinonen
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Eric Shannon
Performance & Management Reporting Specialist, City of Grand Rapids



Arnold Weinfeld
Rural Partners for Michigan



Eric Frederick
State Program Manager, Connect Michigan



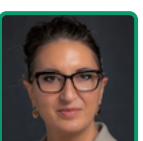
Pablo Majano
MEDC Senior Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) Planner



Thomas M. Smith
Retired MSU Extension Specialist in Agriculture and Agribusiness



Tony Willis
Chief Equity Development Officer, Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP)



Dr. Sarah Gretter
Director, Apple Developer Academy and launch lead of the Apple Manufacturing Academy



Cassi Meitl
Senior Planner, Spalding DeDecker



Bill Stough
Independent Consultant, Bill Stough LLC



Beth Hammond
Managing Director for the Center for Ethical and Socially Responsible Leadership at the Broad College of Business at MSU



Keith Morgan
Vice President and Chief Programs Officer at the Urban League of West MI



David Struck
Lead economic development planner SEMCOG



Mark Wilson
Professor, Urban & Regional Planning, MSU

2026 REI Projects & July 9th Event



In 2026, REI’s projects reflect implementation-focused research, technical assistance, and practitioner-led innovation across Michigan.

This year’s Innovation Fellowship supports the development of an Industry-Led Circular Economy Council for Michigan led by 2026 REI Innovation Fellow, Chelsea Jensen of Llink Technologies. The project will produce a feasibility study and implementation roadmap for a statewide, industry-driven council designed to help manufacturers adopt more circular production systems. The work will assess industry readiness, governance models, and operational needs while identifying priority industries and material streams where circular strategies can deliver the greatest impact.

REI’s Student-Led, Faculty-Guided (SLFG) projects continue to provide hands-on technical assistance to communities. Three projects led by MSU’s Dr. Jesus J. Lara focused on planning, climate adaptation, and neighborhood revitalization. In East Lansing, a practicum team supported community engagement and planning concepts for the East Village district. In Grand Rapids, students conducted a citywide inventory of bus stop shade coverage to support equitable climate adaptation and transit planning. In Flint, a Martin Park neighborhood planning effort developed a revitalization roadmap centered on housing repair, infrastructure improvements, and expanded economic opportunity.

Two additional SLFG projects from MSU’s College of Engineering highlight the role of data and technology in community development. In Luce County, students are digitizing and analyzing historical timber lease records to support long-term planning tied to a unique forest management revenue model. In Southwest Lansing, a student team is building a prototype open-source data tool to make information on food access, housing, and economic opportunity more accessible to residents and local organizations.

REI’s 2026 Co-Learning Plan projects explore emerging economic development models across the

state. One project evaluates low-power communication networks for rural Michigan, with potential applications for remote care delivery and workforce access. A second project in Ecorse explores ecosystem-based economic development approaches centered on shared ownership and democratic finance. A third examines how Community Benefit Agreements and ordinances can be adapted for rural communities like Kalkaska facing large-scale development pressures.

Beyond project-based work, REI continues its long-standing partnership with the Michigan Inventors Coalition, supporting the annual Michigan Inventors Expo. Now in its 14th year, the event brings together inventors, entrepreneurs, and economic development professionals for panels, networking, exhibitions, and pitch competitions that support Michigan's startup innovation ecosystem.

To share this work and look ahead, REI will host a statewide gathering on July 9 - similar in style in to past summits, but with additional focus on REI's next phase. The event will highlight outcomes from the 2026 projects while inviting partners into a broader conversation about where REI goes next. We welcome your feedback on what you would most like to see included in this convening.

Learn more about the [2026 Projects, here](#).

Learn more about the [July 9th REI Summit, here](#).

LOOKING AHEAD:

Recent conversations with partners have surfaced important reflections that will help shape REI's future. One consistent theme is that REI's strength lies in its focus of place based economic development innovation understood through communities lived experience. REI has focused on translating research into accessible language and practical tools communities can use. Partners have also encouraged REI to share insights more directly and expand implementation-focused work across the state.

As REI evolves, we remain deeply grateful to all of you as our partners who make this work possible—*thank you for your continued dedication to community.* We want to hear from you... Share your insights and join us on July 9th!

Viewpoint: When institutions shape neighborhoods, collaboration must shape policy

**Fatemeh
Saeidi-Rizi,**
PhD

Deyanira Nevárez Martínez, PhD
MEMBER OF CCED'S
FACULTY BOARD OF ADVISORS

**Christopher
Thompson,**
PhD

**Copied from Lansing State
Journal, Feb. 26, 2026.**

Across Lansing, residents are told revitalization will come through big plans and bold visions. Yet in the Eastfield Neighborhood, just east of Michigan Avenue, vacant parcels and surface parking lots tell a different story.



This op-ed draws on a Michigan State University Michigan Applied Public Policy Research report developed after residents asked us to document their experiences and reimagine equitable reinvestment in their neighborhood.

Our research shows this is not a failure of community vision or city effort. Instead, it reflects a deeper structural challenge in Michigan cities: when large institutions own significant land, they often shape neighborhood outcomes more than zoning codes or city plans.

In Eastfield, Sparrow Hospital's extensive landholdings have become a major force shaping neighborhood change. This dynamic is not unique to Lansing. Across the state, hospitals, universities, and other large employers acquire property for future growth or expansion. Yet Michigan property law offers cities limited tools to compel timely reinvestment. Zoning and code enforcement can address use and safety, but they cannot prevent prolonged vacancy.

The result is a mismatch between who holds power and who bears the consequences. Residents live with empty lots and stalled plans, while municipal leaders have few regulatory levers. Under these constraints, institutional decision-making can exert disproportionate influence over neighborhood futures.

This research unfolded during a period of change. When Eastfield residents reached out in 2024, they had long sought answers about vacant properties. New ownership, improved communication, and the rebuilding of several homes that were sold to families signaled progress. With the

University of Michigan Board of Regents approving additional funding for Sparrow projects, ensuring community voices remain central to planning through collaborative partnerships is more important than ever.

We do not suggest institutions act in bad faith; instead, the policy framework is incomplete. When cities cannot compel action, stronger partnerships are needed to align institutional growth with community benefit. In Eastfield, this means moving beyond informal conversations toward community benefit agreements that establish timelines, maintenance expectations, public amenities and engagement.

Our research also highlights an opportunity Lansing is well positioned to seize: deeper collaboration with MSU. Stakeholders emphasized the value of partnerships with MSU to support corridor activation, mobility improvements, and small-scale site interventions. As a land-grant university, MSU can complement city efforts through design support, data analysis and community-engaged projects.

These partnerships matter because Eastfield residents are not asking for monumental developments. Instead, they consistently prioritized small businesses, safe walking and biking paths, neighborhood parks, shaded seating and markets. These everyday amenities shape how people experience their neighborhood and foster social interaction, health, and belonging.

Neighborhood satisfaction is closely tied to sense of community and access to green space, both undermined by vacant land. But modest investments such as pocket parks, protected bike lanes, pop-up markets and traffic calming can quickly change how a neighborhood feels and functions.

This insight carries important policy implications. Too often, redevelopment strategies prioritize scale over impact. Eastfield shows that success requires not only anchor projects, but also smaller improvements shaped by resident priorities. An example is the informal dirt trail connecting a dead-end street to the Eastside Connector bike path through green space north of the hospital. With modest investments in surfacing, lighting, and signage, this well-worn path could become a safe, intentional link with meaningful daily impact.

Eastfield is not an outlier. It illustrates how institutional land ownership, limited municipal authority, and community aspirations collide in mid-sized cities across Michigan. The lesson is not that revitalization is impossible, but that it requires rethinking power, partnership and progress.

If institutions shape neighborhoods through landownership, collaboration must shape policy. And if residents tell us they want walkable streets, green spaces, and places to gather, not only grand gestures, we should take them at their word. Lansing's future will be built not just through big plans, but through everyday investments that make neighborhoods work.



Dr. Fatemeh Saeidi-Rizi

is an assistant professor of landscape architecture at MSU whose research bridges landscape architecture, urban design, and environmental psychology.



Dr. Deyanira Nevárez Martínez

is an assistant professor of urban and regional planning at MSU whose research focuses on housing justice, homelessness, and the criminalization of poverty. She is a member of the Lansing City Council representing Ward 2.



Dr. Christopher Thompson

is an Eastfield resident, pediatrician, and neighborhood leader whose firsthand experience with local challenges prompted him to bring Dr. Saeidi-Rizi and Dr. Nevárez Martínez together to launch this collaborative research effort.

Expressive Liberation: My Experience at the National Council for Black Studies Conference

Alayla Milow

Research Assistant,
Urban Community Engagement Fellows

For 50 years the National Council for Black Studies has organized conferences for scholars from across the world to examine various aspects of the Black experience. When Dr. Kevin L. Brooks invited me to present my research on stewarding spaces of belonging for Black students on campus, I was excited to accept the opportunity to join many of the leading researchers in this discipline together in Baltimore, MD. However, as my departure date and presentation approached, I grew increasingly nervous about presenting alongside scholars and changemakers within my community.



Due to a long and challenging journey to the conference, my uneasiness deepened when flight delays

caused me to miss my scheduled presentation time. Fortunately, Dr. Brooks allowed me to present on a panel in his place later that day. As I faced a new panel of highly accomplished and more experienced presenters, what little confidence I had left began to fade, and my nerves intensified.

However, as each panelist presented, I realized that my research aligned naturally with the panel's purpose and strengthened the collective conversation. Aaliyah Buell and Cameo King of Grit Glam and Guts, a Southwest Lansing-based teen empowerment organization for girls, opened the panel by discussing the importance of experiencing joy beyond the performance of happiness. They introduced the concept of "grace spaces," environments where girls and young women are encouraged to express their authentic experiences without pressure or judgment. Dr. Rondee J. Gaines, assistant professor of communication at Jackson State University, articulated the practical application of womanist methodologies as a transformative power of passion within education. Dr. Alishay Pringle of Boundless Avenues, a women's empowerment organization, spoke about Black foundational beliefs and how they serve as sources of courage and resilience against societal harm.

With the support of Dr. Brooks, who served as panel chair, and the encouragement of my fellow panelists, I pushed through my anxiety and presented on the Urban Community Engagement Fellows program and African American and African Studies department at MSU. My research focused on the importance of counter spaces within academic institutions, spaces that support both the productivity and mental health of Black students, as well as students and educators more broadly. My findings include transforming spaces using the Ubuntu philosophy of interconnection, which values lived experience and wellbeing as knowledge, aligns personal success with community success, and envisions and sustains collaboration through community-identified projects and reciprocal engagement.

Together, our presentations centered intentionality within communities and the need to foster youth passion in education. Although each speaker approached the topic from a different perspective, we collectively challenged institutional norms and reimagined what affirming, inclusive, and human-centered educational spaces can be.

As I reflect on my first experience presenting at a conference, I realize that the presentation was never about perfection, but about sharing knowledge with people who genuinely value my work and care about learning with me. Once the stress of presenting passed, I fully enjoyed my time. My favorite moments were meeting and learning from so many incredible individuals. I entered the conference feeling uncertain and questioning whether I truly belonged, but I left feeling connected to a larger scholarly movement rooted in passion, purpose, and community.

This experience taught me that although great spaces can be intimidating, discomfort should never prevent growth. Self-awareness and personal authenticity function as tools and strategies for countering spaces that limit potential and fulfillment, and work as foundations for cultivating expressive liberation.



Presenting Circular Economy Research at Compact26

Geoff Gracia

Circular Economy Specialist, Americorps
VISTA with Campus Compact

This past fall, we were approved to present a poster for the AmeriCorps*VISTA Campus Compact's Compact26 conference in Chicago on March 17th. The goal was to find a communicable way to present what researching a circular economy and its practices

look like, why it might be useful, and what it means. To accomplish this, I was able to create a poster that outlined the definition and goals of circular economy conversion in Michigan. For my service term, I also delivered a comprehensive and digestible timeline of service experiences as a circular economy specialist, accompanied with accessible resources for attendees.

During the conference, I was able to engage attendees with a friendly approach and make the information as relatable as possible, thereby reducing the struggle that communicating circular economy initiatives can bring. I would start by asking their name, if they were familiar with any of the terminology or related ideas presented, and ask if they might be interested in learning more. Then, I proceeded to walk them through a condensed definition of what circular economy means via the Ellen MacArthur Foundation; directed them to and explained our diagrams showing linearity vs circularity models and gave examples of proven and beneficial transition models and what they could look like in the future. Lastly, I provided attendees with a list of my service objectives and described positive outcomes as well as what might come in the future springboarding off my term.

One of the resources I provided was a map for attendees to view through a QR code using data from EGLE (Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) on landfill use and capacity for the fiscal year of 2024, mainly because the public version was not generally accessible. I found very eye-opening data in the report that shows how little or how much space our landfills have left to fill. It shows the importance of diverting waste at the source and designing it out from inception; scaling up our landfill systems or recycling doesn't truly solve the problem of fixing what is being created. It is something that is instantly grounding for someone who views the website and is as eye-opening for them as it was for me, using visual understanding. I got very positive, interactive, and inquisitive

responses and was proud of the work I put into it. I am now working on implementing the next iteration focused on user-friendly editing and maintenance capabilities to account for prolonged use at the CCED, anticipating that the data will need to be updated with each annual report produced by EGLE.

In all, the conference had the largest turnout that they had seen in the history of the program (300 over expected capacity). I was able to attend great trainings and side room showcases of impactful research that Campus Compact members were working on, and gather ideas and strategies for community engagement, partnerships, and outreach.

MAP RESOURCE

If you would like to explore the map resource I created, please visit this link

<https://grggit.github.io/TestforAVCC/> or scan the QR code on any attached view of my poster. IF you might have any additional questions, feel free to reach out at grg7576@rit.edu

Domicology Traveling Display

AVAILABLE TO HOST AT NO COST FOR PERIODS OF 2–6 WEEKS.

The MSU Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) has developed a traveling educational display exploring the challenges and opportunities related to structural abandonment and the transition toward a more sustainable, circular built environment.

Originally created as part of a Domicology exhibit at the MSU Museum, the display consists of seven roll-down, collapsible banner panels. Each banner stands approximately 82 inches tall, with a base measuring 37.25 inches wide by 7.5 inches deep.

The panels are designed to engage public audiences in understanding:

- The lifecycle of buildings and materials
- The social, economic, and environmental impacts of structural abandonment
- Policy and practice approaches for creating more just and sustainable communities

CCED is currently seeking additional host locations interested in providing educational programming or public engagement opportunities around sustainability, community development, or the built environment.

For additional background materials, please visit: <https://linktr.ee/domicology> or email ced@msu.edu

See photos of the Domicology Traveling Display panels:

WHAT IS DOMICOLOGY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

Domicology is the study of the life cycle of our built environment, including our homes, shopping centers, hospitals, schools, manufacturing facilities, roads, and all other structures we have built. Taken together, the weight of our built environment now exceeds the total weight of all living things on the planet.

Currently, we take materials from the earth, process them, construct buildings, use them, and eventually demolish them. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that more than 75% of all construction and demolition waste ends up in landfills, and studies estimate that construction and demolition waste is expected to reach 2.2 billion tons generated globally each year by 2025.

There is an alternative model for our built environment. Structures have an "end of life." We should plan, design, build, repair, and deconstruct our built environment to maximize the salvage of valuable limited materials, stop structural abandonment, and create a more sustainable and just society.

This 21st century approach to building creates a new economic ecosystem of jobs and industries dedicated to material salvage, reuse, and repurposing and seeks to end structural abandonment, and, it reimagines how we build our future communities.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF STRUCTURAL ABANDONMENT AND THE LINEAR BUILT ENVIRONMENT MODEL

Property values go down because of surrounding vacant structures, meaning people have a harder time selling their homes or getting home improvements loans. At the same time, insurance prices often rise for nearby properties.

Additionally, studies conducted in the urban center of Austin, Texas, show that crime rates on blocks with open abandoned buildings have been twice as high as those on blocks without them.

DEMOLITION ALSO PRODUCES LARGE AMOUNTS OF DUST THAT MAY CONTAIN LEAD AND OTHER METALS.

Demolishing an average single-family home generates six times the EPA regulation limit of lead dust. Yes, it is less only ingesting the equivalent of three granules of lead dust to cause permanent damage to a child, including major behavioral and learning problems, slowed growth, anemia, and in some cases, seizures, coma, and even death.

Demolition also creates perpetual harm to the environment by putting loads of materials in landfills and requiring manufacturing of new construction materials.

The EPA estimates that U.S. companies generate 156 million tons of landfill-related construction and demolition waste every year. Of that amount, 92% is generated by renovation and demolition.

Additionally, the construction and building sector accounts for around 3% of global carbon emissions, including all aspects of building a structure and considering the embodied carbon within a built structure.

DEMOLISHED MATERIALS ENDING UP IN LANDFILLS EMIT LARGE AMOUNTS OF CARBON.

When a house is demolished and its materials are buried in a landfill, the carbon emitted amounts to over 41 equivalent tons of energy per average single-family house.

That means that demolishing 1 single house emits the same amount of carbon as if you were to drive your car 93,000 miles. That would be like driving around the world 4 times.

Manufacturing new construction materials has the largest carbon impact in the entire construction and building sector and accounts for a total of 11% of all global carbon emissions.

THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL MATERIAL WASTE ON CLIMATE

To break the cycle of cumulative waste generation and carbon emissions, we need an effective alternative to demolition, which perpetuates it.

A solution to transforming the built environment to benefit communities and the Earth considers structures' life cycles and rethinks their end of life. It aims to capture the full value of a structure through a circular model, rather than thinking of "end of life" as "end of use." This means "deconstructing" a structure at its "end-of-life," then salvaging and reusing its materials.

Much material in our landfills comes from buildings, emitting carbon while taking up space. Much of this material is salvagable.

THE DOMICOLOGY SUPPLY CHAIN: FROM COLLECTION TO REUSE/RESALE

Large-scale projects and real communities showcase designing for deconstruction and nurturing a circular building model through deconstruction and material re-use.

In these examples, you will see successes and understand the potential of the deconstruction approach in building and managing the built environment.

The STEM building on Michigan State University's campus, which is a hub for teaching and innovation built in 2021, is an excellent example of "mass timber construction." This is a method of designing for deconstruction by using large pre-manufactured, multi-layered, solid wood panels.

The STEM building is also an example of preservation and reuse. Structural components of the historic MSU Shaw Lane Power Plant were used in its construction.

The STEM building is the first and largest of its kind in the State of Michigan. Other mass timber projects, like the "Ascend" residential building in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, have seen construction of buildings up to 21 stories tall!

In many places, community partners have taken advantage of new re-use markets created by salvaging and reusing construction materials. People have created storefronts and organizations, usually non-profit, that inspire community engagement and promote community development.

The Chicago Rebuild Exchange is an example of a re-use organization whose work promotes building material reuse and construction waste reduction, while also investing in its community. It offers 100 training classes a year, ranging from woodworking, to repair and reuse methods. 89% of its students were placed into building trades jobs earning an average wage of \$18 per hour upon graduation.

NEARLY 100 TONS OF WASTE PER HOUSEHOLD COULD BE DIVERTED IF THE SALVAGEABLE MATERIALS ARE KEPT.

This would also prevent nearly 8.0 metric tons of carbon dioxide (MTCO2E) from being emitted from landfills.

The amount of potential for diversion is reflected in the large amounts of salvageable materials existing in an average single family home. For example, framing lumber alone, makes up 6,300 kg of a house's total mass, with over 9,000 ft of boards per house, and if salvaged would prevent 6.5 MTCO2E of emissions. Some other quantities that are shockingly large and completely salvageable, if a house were be deconstructed rather than demolished include:

STANDARD BRICK 10,000 kg & 5,000 bricks per house 0.22 MTCO2E emitted if landfilled	ASPHALT SHINGLES 600 kg & 600 sq ft per house 0.02 MTCO2E emitted if landfilled
FLOORING 1,200 kg & 135 sq ft per house 0.02 MTCO2E emitted if landfilled	CONCRETE 34,000 kg & 37 cubic yards per house 0.76 MTCO2E emitted if landfilled
DRYWALL 1,100 kg & 1,445 sq ft 0.07 MTCO2E emitted if landfilled	ROOFING 15,000 kg & 1,620 sq ft 0.35 MTCO2E emitted if landfilled

THERE IS NOT JUST ONE SOLUTION TO THESE PROBLEMS.

We have other ways to fight and manage abandonment, including preserving historic structures. These buildings can be reused for their original purposes or for new ones through adaptive reuse.

PRESERVATION

Preserving historic buildings can be a great way to maintain a community's character and history.

Adaptive Reuse

"The greenest building is one that is already built."

Adaptive reuse of existing buildings can be a cost-effective and sustainable way to address housing and commercial needs.

BENEFITS OF STRUCTURAL MATERIAL SALVAGE AND REUSE

Wide-scale benefits from salvaging and reusing materials will transform the built environment to develop more sustainably over time.

Each material in a residential structure has its own potential when salvaged.

For example, lumber salvaged from older homes has several properties that make it more attractive for reuse

- It is more dense, which means it is stronger.
- It has more heart wood than sap wood. Heart wood is more rot resistant. This is because the wood grows more slowly, over longer periods of time.
- As you can see in the image, wood that was harvested and milled into lumber in 1918 had 20-25 growth rings per inch and is all heart wood; that same piece of lumber 100 years later only had 7 growth rings per inch and is mostly sap wood. This current condition results from the use of faster-growing species that are harvested at younger ages.

In addition to preventing the harms of demolition, deconstruction also inspires community revitalization by producing revenue and creating market opportunities.

For deconstruction to be economically beneficial and competitive with demolition, the savings from not needing to pay for disposal and revenue from material resale must be more than the higher labor costs.

Despite its higher labor and overall initial costs, deconstruction can be cost-effective and generate revenues compared to demolition, thanks to the resale value of the salvaged materials.

With just a **50% salvage rate**, deconstruction comes out on top when calculating costs with resale considered,

costing an average of **\$4.83** per square foot **VERSUS** **\$5.36** for demolition

TIPS ON DECONSTRUCTION

Optimizing the benefits of deconstruction means salvaging the greatest amount of material and making the process of disassembly easier, more cost effective, and energy efficient.

Domicology recognizes that we must consider the end of building life when we are designing and constructing it and design with deconstruction in mind.

TECHNIQUES

Various techniques have been developed to help to design for deconstruction. All of them emphasize simplifying building constructions. If a building can be constructed simply, it probably can be deconstructed simply.

METHODS

Designing prefabricated units for construction makes buildings easier to deconstruct at the end of their lives. For example, pre-cast concrete floor panels can be disassembled easily in large sections. This makes them more useful once salvaged and easier to deconstruct.

PREFABRICATED CONCRETE PANELS

POURED CONCRETE SLABS

Transporting larger, pre assembled units can reduce construction costs and minimize the environmental effects of transportation by moving fewer pieces to the worksite.

Wood flooring, steel members, brick, concrete blocks, and carpet tile can be easily and directly reused, refurbished or recycled.

When designing structures, plan for future renovations and adaptations in order to reduce construction waste in the future. Innovate and create adaptable structures.



To make things easier to take apart and reuse, use fasteners like screws, bolts, and connectors rather than glues, caulks, and foams. This requires more time in construction but causes less environmental impact and cost later.

Circular Economy in Action: Ann Arbor’s Path to a Carbon-Neutral Future

On Friday, March 13th (2–3 PM), the CCED was pleased to host a webinar that spotlighted the Ann Arbor Circular Economy Action Plan and how the city is advancing a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030.

Participants learned how Ann Arbor is putting circular economy principles into practice by rethinking how materials are used, reused, and recovered, while strengthening sustainable food systems and community resilience as part of the city’s A2Zero plan to achieve community-wide carbon neutrality. Featuring leaders from the Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations, the webinar offered a conversation on how communities can translate circular economy ideas into real-world programs and partnerships.

Click the link here to listen to a recording of the event: <https://youtu.be/C11P9POm-Vk?si=ijSB9u7O5E3sgdHa>

Ann Arbor Circular Economy Action Plan Webinar

See Circular Economy in Action!


The A²ZERO Carbon Neutrality Plan outlines the City of Ann Arbor’s bold vision to achieve a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030. Led by the Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI), the plan defines six core strategies designed not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also to deliver meaningful co-benefits such as strengthening the local economy, lowering energy bills through efficiency, improving air quality, and enhancing community resilience.

This session will spotlight the leadership of OSI’s Circularity and Resilience teams in advancing Strategy Five: Change the Way We Use, Reuse, and Dispose of Materials and Strategy Six: Enhance the Resilience of Our People and Our Place.


Participants will explore innovative projects and programs that promote community resilience, strengthen sustainable food systems, advance sustainable material pathways, and protect natural features. The session will also introduce OSI’s Circular Economy Action Plan, currently being co-created with circular economy experts and the Ann Arbor community. This action plan establishes clear, actionable steps to accelerate a thriving local circular economy and maximize the impact of Ann Arbor’s sustainability efforts.

Friday, March 13th
2 – 3 PM


[Register Here!](#)



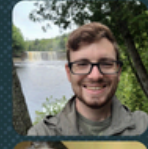
A²ZERO SPEAKERS




Bryce Frohlich, Community Resilience Specialist
 Bryce (he/him) focuses on resilience-building initiatives and programs within the Office of Sustainability and Innovations. A graduate of the University of Michigan’s School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS), he is passionate about co-development when it comes to implementing solutions for how our communities address climate impacts. As the Community Resilience Specialist for the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI), Bryce facilitates a myriad of different resilience initiatives, including the A²ZERO Ambassador Program and Resilience Hub partnerships.




Azella Markgraf, Sustainability Coordinator – Food
 Azella’s work focuses on programs and initiatives that advance a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable community food system in Ann Arbor. A native of Central Ohio, Azella has a professional background in regenerative agriculture, farmers market and nonprofit management, and food justice advocacy. She received a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Studies and Anthropology from Davidson College. Azella describes herself as a passionate lover of all things fresh and delicious and sees the growing and sharing of food as an opportunity to foster meaningful connections between people, food, and land.



Sean Reynolds, Senior Analyst
 Sean oversees work on various environmental and community resilience programs and initiatives, including air quality monitoring, the Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program, and the 10,000 Trees Initiative – a program aimed at getting trees planted on private property. He has prior urban forestry experience through Casey Trees, a non-profit in Washington, D.C., and has an M.S. degree in Forestry from Auburn University. In his spare time, he enjoys hiking, reading, cooking, and spending time with his husband and their two cats, Glacier and River.



Genevieve Rattray, Sustainability and Innovations Manager
 Genevieve is passionate about circular economy practices and policies and in her role focuses on strategy 4 and 5 of the city’s A2ZERO Plan. Prior to joining the OSI team, Genevieve focused on reducing the impact of single use plastic through coalition building and community collaboration. She designed and directed environmental conservation programs for the Belle Isle Conservancy, the nonprofit organization supporting Detroit’s 982-acre island park on the Detroit River, an international waterway shared by the US and Canada. Genevieve has her Master of Social Work degree with a macro concentration in Innovation in Community, Policy and Leadership (I-CPL) and her Bachelor of Fine Art.



Claire DeBlanc, Sustainability Coordinator – Circular Economy
 Claire’s work focuses on advancing initiatives and programs centered around advancing an equitable, sustainable, and resilient circular economy in Ann Arbor. Programs that Claire works on includes clothing swaps, electronics recycling/refurbishing collections, refrigerant management, and circular economy action planning. She is passionate about making sustainable practices accessible so everyone can be involved. Claire is a graduate of Central Michigan University where she studied environment science, political science, and environmental studies and also worked in the university’s office of sustainability.

Goodbye and Well Wishes



Abby Carrigan

Research Assistant, CCED

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Thank You, Abby Carrigan

Hi all,

I will be concluding my time as a Research Assistant at the Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) this spring. As I make my transition, I want to extend my sincerest gratitude for the great opportunities, connections, and knowledge I have gained since beginning my time at the CCED.

With a long-standing passion for sustainability and community engagement, I have found that the Center was the perfect place to grow my skills in both research and outreach. I've been fortunate to contribute to several amazing projects, such as conducting outreach to local recyclers, planning events, and co-creating the "Toolkit for Identifying Reuse Markets for Recycled Material in

Michigan." Across all of this work, I have been consistently reminded of circularity's potential to remediate many of the world's most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. There is still so much more good work to be done!

This period has also been an especially meaningful chapter in my life. Alongside my work at the Center, I've had the opportunity to reach several personal and academic milestones, including graduating from MSU with High Honor, being accepted to multiple master's programs with scholarships, and receiving awards from the Michigan Association of Planning and the American Planning Association for my work in Livingston County. I will always look back on this time fondly, as so many meaningful accomplishments and experiences were shaped by my time at the CCED!

As for what's next, I'm excited to share that I will be pursuing a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Michigan this fall. As I take this next step, I absolutely plan to bring with me the CCED's core values of resiliency, equity, and circularity into future community-oriented work.

Before my time comes to a close, I want to extend a special thank you to everyone on the

Circular Economy Research Team—Dr. LaMore, Mary ZumBrunnen, Jenan Jondy, Henry Jerred, and Geoff Gracia—for being such a supportive and inspiring group of people to work with; I will miss each of them dearly!

As I transition into life as a Wolverine (weird!), I will always look back on my time at MSU and the CCED with pride. I do hope to stay connected with everyone and the amazing work being done at the Center, so please feel free to email me at abigailkcarrigan@gmail.com anytime.

Thank you, and I wish you all a fantastic summer!

