

# Working our way to Success

The Michigan's Great Southwest community is working our way to many successes. The communities that comprise Michigan's Great Southwest do an excellent job of working together to improve the quality of life for all residents throughout the entire community. Some of those collaborative successes include the following:

- A **growing housing market** throughout the entire region thanks to many new residential developments
- Projects such as **HOPE VI and Harbor Town** to improve the housing stock available in the city of Benton Harbor. Over **300 new homes** will be constructed thanks to these projects.
- **Continued revitalization of downtown Benton Harbor**, thanks to the Benton Harbor Arts District and other projects.
- Many **new businesses** are choosing to locate in the community, particularly retail operations like Kohl's and PetSmart!



- The communities played host to the **2005 Jimmy Carter Work Project for Habitat for Humanity International**. It was a very successful build resulting in the construction of 25 new homes in the city of Benton Harbor.
- Successful past projects including the **Edgewater Redevelopment** project have paved the way for future growth in the community.
- **Award winning schools** are preparing area students for the future.
- A **strong sense of Southwest Michigan volunteerism** exists and supports area non-profit organizations such as United Way of Southwest Michigan, Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Harbor Habitat, 4-H and many others.
- Improved **accessibility** to the community thanks to the completion of US 31.

And much more.....



## To learn more regarding our community successes.....



Check out the following:

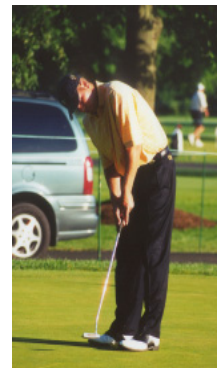
- [www.heraldpalladium.com](http://www.heraldpalladium.com)—The local daily newspaper focusing on the Michigan's Great Southwest community.
- Check out the weekly *Moody on the Market* column featured in *MailMax*, mailed to homes on Saturday's.
- Websites for other local media venues include: [www.wsjm.com](http://www.wsjm.com), [www.wndu.com](http://www.wndu.com), and [www.wsbt.com](http://www.wsbt.com).



## We are a Community on the Rise

Michigan's Great Southwest has been making it onto some pretty impressive lists lately...

- Money Magazine's Top 10 list for communities with the shortest commute (our average is just 13 minutes!).
- Money Magazine's rated St. Joseph as one of the best communities to retire to,
- Parent's Magazine's Top 10 list for best family beaches (Silver Beach).
- Detroit Free Press names St. Joseph most romantic city in Michigan.
- Inc. Magazine ranked us as one of the top 270 Communities to Do Business (a business friendly environment awaits you).
- Golf Digest ranked the Benton Harbor MSA #18 (out of 330) to live and golf on its "Best in America" list (celebrating one of the area's most beautiful natural and recreational amenities, our many golf courses!).
- Fine Living Channel voted St. Joseph as one of the top ten perfect summer getaways.



**Join us now...so you can be a part of the  
exciting future in Michigan's Great Southwest.**

# Key Projects....

that have had a significant impact on the community.



Located in Benton Charter Township, once underutilized land the **Elisha Gray Enterprise Park** is now home to several businesses and a very diverse housing subdivision.

**A Before  
and After  
Look**



*Before*



*After*



*The Edgewater Development site is a 422-acre area. The Edgewater Development Plan site is a cooperative project between the City of St. Joseph, the City of Benton Harbor, Whirlpool Corporation, and Cornerstone Alliance. The area has been redeveloped to include business and housing.*



**A Before  
and After  
Look**



Significant work was done to acquire deteriorated properties, remove them, and construct a new location for **Atlantic Automotive Components**. Ox Creek was even rerouted as a part of the project all in a 6-month timeframe.



Abandoned buildings were demolished in the **City Center** area of downtown Benton Harbor to make way for future development. The land has been turned into a park area. A free annual outdoor concert is held in the space each year. Today, the park is named in honor of former City Manager Dwight P. Mitchell. The official name is the Dwight P. Mitchell City Center Park.



Many improvements have taken place along **Main Street Benton Harbor** including the location of Whirlpool Corporation, the creation of a professional corner, rehabilitation of older facilities, and much more.

## Public Art Display Project



The display of 53 carousel horses on the streets of St. Joseph during the summer of 2004 was very successful and popular with visitors and residents alike. After wintering inside city stores and businesses, the horses reappeared in the summer of 2005 on city streets where visitors of all ages continued to enjoy them. These painted horses were reminiscent of the carousel horses which were part of the Silver Beach Amusement Park from 1910 until it closed in 1971. Since then, Beach Bears, Hot Cars, Snowmen and Boats have been displayed.

Stop into the Welcome Center in downtown St. Joseph to learn more about the project. **St. Joseph Today** is an organization dedicated to enhancing the image and recognition of the area. They work to encourage and assist business and tourism development in the City of St. Joseph. They are dedicated to businesses, residents and interested friends of the area. They operate a year-round Welcome Center that provides guests of the community a central location to learn more of the activities taking place, bike rental, public restrooms and much more.

## Events Held Throughout the Year to Draw Thousands to the Area

St. Joseph Today partners with area merchants and businesses several times throughout the year to bring special events to the downtown. Some of those events include: Ice Festival, Easter Egg Hunt, Chalk the Block, Antiques on the Bluff, Farmers Market, Brown Bag Concerts at the Band Shell, Harvest Festival, Luminary Festival, Reindog Parade, Memorial Day Parade, Tri-State Regetta Party as well as others. To learn more log onto [www.sjtoday.org](http://www.sjtoday.org).



## The Benton Harbor Arts District

It began with a dream... then another dream. Several area residents have collected together to jumpstart downtown development in Benton Harbor and have created a wonderful art experience. From galleries to restaurants to shops - you won't want to pass through this area without taking a look.

The area is home to Galleria del Corazon, Citadel Dance Center, studio of renown sculptor Richard Hunt and the Water Street Glassworks, whose lead instructor, Jerry Catania, learned glassblowing under Dale Chihuly.

The Benton Harbor Arts District provides exciting Gallery Openings, Festivals, Music, Poetry, and Art Hop & Shops. There's a simple and comprehensive way to find out what's going on...log unto [www.newterritoryarts.org](http://www.newterritoryarts.org).





Alumni Association

January 2006 Feature



## CONTRIBUTING TO BENTON HARBOR'S FUTURE

by Laura Ford

Leslie Pickell has been a consultant for more than 20 years. Living and working both in the United States and United Kingdom, she never intended to co-own a microbrewery in Benton Harbor, Michigan. However, when the opportunity arose she couldn't turn it down. "I love living here. There's just a good energy," says Pickell. "I wanted to contribute somewhere and there are a lot of people here trying to do good things."

Benton Harbor has become not only a home for Pickell, but also for a number of other Ball State alumni. Tim Flynn and Dixie Inocencio, who introduced Pickell to the city, have been utilizing their talents through their business, Inocencio-Flynn Design, Inc., and volunteering with the New Territory Arts Association. Bret Witkowski is serving as the newly appointed county treasurer of Berrien County, a position he gained without any political opposition, and Jeff Saylor is using his 27 years of architectural experience as the vice president and head of the architectural department in Benton Harbor with the architecture firm Abonmarche, Inc.

Flynn, an architect and general contractor, and his wife, Inocencio, also an architect, were responsible for the design and renovation of Pickell's microbrewery, The Livery. Within the three-story, 100-year-old structure that once served as a horse stable, they created space to accommodate a microbrewery and winery, a cafe, a stage for live music, and a gallery. Pickell,



Flynn, Inocencio, and friend Mike Gardner purchased the building in 2003.

"The idea of a microbrewery and entertainment venue was born out of our thinking that it would make our lives richer here," says Pickell. "It has already provided a great way to meet people in the community."

Initially, the plan was to make the building into lofts, condos, and retail space. When they came across Steve Berthel, a former brew master at Kraftbrau in Kalamazoo, Michigan, they all agreed that a microbrewery with live entertainment is not only that they wanted, but also something that Benton Harbor needed. The Livery opened in August of 2005 and already has proven to be a reason to visit the town. It is a popular place to relax and enjoy a variety of original and cover music, as well as local art.

"Our business itself is a tribute to the talent that's here," says Pickell, suggesting that it is a place that allows people to see more clearly the kind of city that Benton Harbor is becoming. "When you go downtown in Benton Harbor, it's literally night and day compared to how it used to be," adds Witkowski, a native of Benton Harbor.

As an adolescent growing up in Benton Harbor, Witkowski says, "All I heard was about how it was and how it used to be." For more than 40 years, Benton Harbor was on a continual economic decline due to businesses and industries leaving and problems that were similar to those being experienced nationwide within inner cities.



The city had prospered in the early 1900s because of non-citrus fruit production and sales, and it boomed in the 1920s. By the 1960s Benton Harbor began to lose industries, businesses, and residents. Today, due to the neglect of several structures, the city is responsible for 95 percent of the demolition rate of Berrien County, with the population of Benton Harbor only accounting for seven percent of the county. Some of the buildings that have not been demolished have become part of the arts district in the downtown. Cornerstone Alliance, an organization created to further economic development, has taken steps to help in the restoration and preservation of the buildings within the district.

The organization has played a key role in the development and emergence of the city, a movement that began in the late 1980s. Wendy Dant Chesser, wife of 1987 Ball State graduate Mike Chesser, serves as the executive vice president of the organization. According to Chesser, the main focus of Cornerstone Alliance is job creation, physical development, small business services, the chamber of commerce, and talent recruitment. A project that has resulted is Community Renewal Through the Arts, which has been in place for nearly six years, bringing in talented artists and utilizing the work of local businesses to create the studios, galleries, and shops within the arts district.

Inocencio-Flynn Design, Inc. is responsible for the architectural design and general construction of the renovation and restoration of the Hinkley building, which currently houses The Water Street Glassworks, the State Theater, and a job placement center for Michigan Works. Flynn and Inocencio have also designed and constructed a new gallery at The Richard Hunt Studio Center, and they designed and renovated the 210 Water Street building.

Along with Flynn and Inocencio, Saylor with Abonmarche, Inc. also works with Cornerstone Alliance and has brought about positive change through physical development within the arts district and throughout the community.



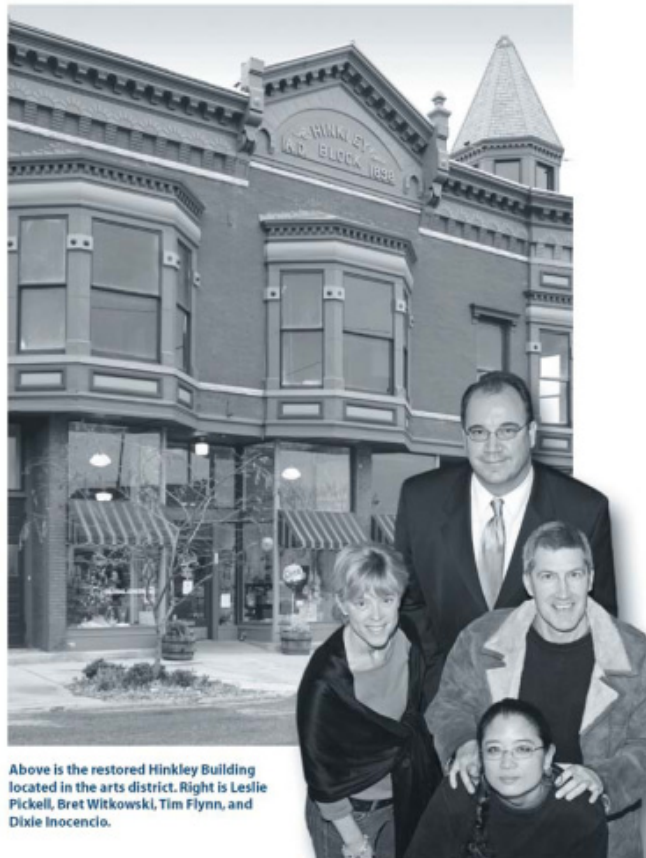
"The opportunity to design, or help create built environments that contribute to a positive or improved quality of life is certainly exciting," says Saylor.

Saylor has worked on the renovation of the relocated City Hall and the new band shell in Jean Klock Park. He is currently implementing an inner-city residential development called Harbor Town. Many of the employees at Abonmarche, Inc. have dedicated their time and talents to local efforts, such as the Jimmy Carter Work Project through Habitat for Humanity.

According to Pickell, Benton Harbor "is one of the only towns left on the lakeshore that's not developed." However, it won't be surprising if that quickly changes. The city is becoming an attraction once again, with The Livery and local artists within the arts district, its location near Lake Michigan, and residents who are committed to a future that's bright and reflective of the ambition of those working so hard today.

Without a doubt these Ball State graduates are committed to making the quality of life the best it can be, not only for those who can experience it today, but also for the next generation.

*Photos in this feature provided by Deborah Armstrong of Armstrong Creative Images, Leslie Pickell, and Jeff Saylor.*



Above is the restored Hinkley Building located in the arts district. Right is Leslie Pickell, Bret Witkowski, Tim Flynn, and Dixie Inocencio.

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