



News from Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc.

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Planning Communities & Transportation Systems

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Green Planning Tip

Many communities are considering demolition ordinances to encourage recycling of old building materials.

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NEXTSTEPS for Downtown™

In today's economic climate, everyone is struggling to identify the best strategies for moving forward. Business owners are trying to make wise investments that will not only keep their business afloat, but grow it for the future. Downtown leaders are in the same boat: evaluating what investments should be made to keep the downtown viable and position it for success.

Instead of reactionary approaches to spending, wise leaders know they must be proactive, investing in foundation-building projects and programs. This means studying how the downtown works and identifying what needs to be in place to leverage private investments, now and in the future.

At Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc., we have developed a program that aims to help community leaders understand what they can do--today and in the future--to improve their downtowns and build a solid foundation for residents and businesses.

The **NEXTSTEPS for Downtown™** program is an intensive objective assessment that includes a walking tour of downtown and informal meetings with merchants, residents, staff and officials. The results of the NEXTSTEPS process is a report highlighting 1) downtown strengths and opportunities, 2) short- and mid-term action items - next steps - to enhance downtown, and 3) best practices - a guide to what is working in other successful downtowns in Michigan and across the country.

The entire process is designed to take place over a 30-day period from initial authorization to delivery of the final report. If your community is looking to kick-start its downtown planning or revitalization program, NEXTSTEPS is the place to start.

Sex, Drugs and Rock n Roll

Now that we have your attention, it's time to have "the talk." Yes, the talk about...adult-oriented businesses and medical marijuana in your community. Recent court challenges and changes in legislation suggest that communities consider how to best address regulations for these uses within their zoning ordinance.

Adult-oriented businesses can be regulated. However, because of free speech issues, communities need to carefully review their regulations to ensure they are not leaving themselves open to unintended outcomes. The best approach is a periodic review by an experienced team with planning

and legal expertise in this area.

Medical marijuana is something new for communities to consider. Qualified Patients who are registered with the Michigan Department of Community Health are permitted to possess 2.5 ounces of useable marijuana and to grow up to 12 marijuana plants in their homes for their own use. The new law also permits those registered as Primary Caregivers to grow marijuana plants for up to five patients. Further, a consortium of caregivers could join forces to create a large marijuana cultivation and dispensary business.

In order to prepare for these new types of businesses communities should begin by reviewing their local ordinances. Developing local standards will help guide marijuana dispensary operations to suitable zoning districts. Specific use standards should then be developed to accommodate these marijuana cultivation and dispensary businesses in appropriate zoning districts.

The rock n roll? That is simply a shameless promo for David Birchler's band, [The Paisley Fogg](#), playing this summer at an outdoor venue near you.

We'd love to hear from you! If you would like more information on the above articles, or if you have any other planning or traffic-related questions, please feel free to contact us. Our email addresses are our **first initial and last name**, followed by @birchlerarroyo.com. Our main phone number is 248.423.1776. Extensions are noted below:

Rod Arroyo x 11 | Jill Bahm x 16 | Rebecca Bessey x 15 | David Birchler x 12 |
David Campbell x 13 | Michele Cison x 24 | Stacey Dogonski x 10 | Sheila Starks x 21 |
Bill Stimpson x 22 | Kathy Wyrosdick x 14

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