

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

## **PAL develops, seeks backers for 'pillars of prosperity' to help state**

By Sherri Begin Welch

People and Land, a coalition working to spur Michigan's prosperity, is attempting to forge regional support and action on a number of initiatives it believes will better position the state for the future.

The group has begun meeting with lawmakers, media, chambers of commerce and the broad range of PAL's coalition members to promote six areas the group has identified as pivotal for the state's future.

PAL, founded in 2000 and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is seeking both legislative and non-legislative actions, said co-director William Rustem, president and CEO of Public Sector Consultants in Lansing.

"A lot of Michigan's (current) challenges are because we haven't been ready for the future," he said.

"The Michigan Economic Development Corp. has traditionally been chasing factories, now they're focusing on talent."

The other co-director of the effort is Soji Adelaja, John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor in Land Policy at Michigan State University's Land Policy Institute.

PAL is also trying to get Michigan residents to focus on how the state's natural and cultural assets figure into our economic development strategy, said Julie Bennett, program manager of PAL for Public Sector Consultants.

"We need to act regionally, to get more bang for our buck from federal dollars that are expected to come into Michigan, rather than acting as individual government units," said Brad Garmon, land programs director at the Michigan Environmental Council and a member of PAL's leadership council.

In the run-up to the 2010 elections, PAL hopes to push a number of issues it feels are important. It has developed what it calls "Six Pillars for Prosperity."

They include:

- Rebuilding attractive cities and neighborhoods to attract and retain young talent.

- Supporting highly competitive schools and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Shifting attention to knowledge-based technologies for Michigan's future.
- Strategically planning for a thriving agriculture industry to spur Michigan's economy.
- Enhancing and promoting natural resources for recreation and job creation.
- Creating an inclusive and entrepreneurial culture.

“In the last election, nobody was talking about those things,” Bennett said. PAL wants the candidates to talk about issues it has identified as paramount.

Over the past nine years, PAL has made grants to groups working on land-use issues in Michigan, such as farmland preservation and forestry initiatives.

Last fall, it shifted those grants to groups working regionally on the pillars, awarding \$1.3 million total to nine collaborations.

Among them was a grant of \$75,000 to the Tourism and Economic Development Council of the Metro Detroit Convention & Visitors Bureau for “Developing the D,” a project to organize communities in the region as destination districts for residents, visitors and investors.

In addition, the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, which also received a PAL grant of \$75,000 last fall, will use its funds to support its Millennial Mayor's Congress project aimed at engaging city leaders with the millennial generation.

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