



# *Anna Sangster*

RESIDENT AND  
COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT FELLOW  
SEES ENDLESS  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
CHEBOYGAN

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Photos and Story by Phil Eich,  
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Michigan Main Street Story  
Series

Other than going away to college, I've lived in Cheboygan my whole life. I've always lived in the downtown area, so growing up, I could walk to different parks, go get ice cream, go over to the baseball fields, and ride my bike everywhere.

My dad was a city council member and the mayor of the City of Cheboygan at one point. Now, he works at the county level. He always encouraged me to get involved in my community. For example, we have a footbridge here in Cheboygan, and people have a lot of feelings about it. I remember being out to dinner with my dad, and we overheard someone complaining about the footbridge. My dad said, 'He's upset about this development, but he's not doing anything about it.'

He's not providing any productive feedback. You're not going to be like that.'

That stuck with me. I want to be involved. I want to have opinions—but I also want to be knowledgeable and show up, and that's a big part of why I wanted to get into this line of work. The Community Economic Development Association of Michigan has a fellowship program in Michigan funded through the MEDC. I found out about this job through a board member, and this was the first job I applied for after college. Cheboygan got a Fellow, I was done with college, and it all worked out. I feel like the luckiest person in the world.

Placemaking can mean different things in different places. It can be adding

flowers, art, seasonal decor, statues, or other things that add to the community. For example, we do a Scarecrow Stroll in the fall, and we have Christmas trees during the holiday season.

It's important to activate spaces. If spaces are blank, people aren't going there, and they're not engaged—they're just going to look away. If there are flowers there, if it's walkable, if there's art ... then people will actually engage because those are the things that make communities unique.

Cheboygan is a special place. The river is one of our biggest assets and our Main Street is incredible. I've just always loved Cheboygan and its people. One of my friends from college said, 'Anyone who meets Anna knows she's from Cheboygan because she always brings it up,' and I would always invite friends here on the weekends. I'm glad to have the opportunity to come back and bring with me what I learned at university and from my internship.

One of the good things people say came out of the pandemic is many of us learned we could work from anywhere.

I hope that shift will create more opportunities and viable options for people my age to move back here.

Without Michigan Main Street, Cheboygan would be missing out on a lot—the resources, the funding, and the insight into the placemaking it provides. I think of the brewery that just got a Match on Main grant for outdoor seating. That's the benefit of working with Michigan Main Street and placemaking in general—you get these little things that, when added together, make a huge difference. It's about really listening to the people within the community to find out what they want to see happen.

In the future, I see Cheboygan growing in a good way and expanding its resources.

And I think our community is on the same page about moving forward in a way that it wasn't before.

—Anna Claire Sangster, lifelong Cheboygan resident and Community Development Fellow

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# Michigan Main Street Story Series



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