



Lapeer Downtown Development Authority

CATHERINE BOSTICK
REFLECTS ON HER ROLE
WITH THE LAPEER DDA
IN RESHAPING A
DOWNTOWN

Photos and Story by Phil Eich,
Storyville Social, as part of the
Michigan Main Street Story
Series

At the time we were pursuing Michigan Main Street designation, I was a city commissioner involved with the Michigan Municipal League. I became a city commissioner because I care about my community and I think that downtown should be the vibrant core of the city. After I joined the DDA board, the former executive director approached me with the idea of becoming part of Michigan Main Street.

There was an energy in our DDA—we really wanted to see something great happen in downtown Lapeer—and joining the Main Street program seemed like a way to accomplish that. Years ago, we did this thing called a human chain. We got a ton of volunteers together and created this chain of people lined up from Mason Street all the way to up to Pine. We used a drone to take a picture of the whole chain of people from up above as a way to show how we were all connected.

The weather was foggy that morning and it made it look like the chain extended on forever. It was a powerful photo, and it became part of our presentation in Lansing to join Michigan Main Street.

Lapeer is close to a metropolitan area, but is a place where people can still live in a community that is quiet and friendly, where everybody knows everybody. It has the small-town vibe, but people can still be connected to a bigger community if they want as well.

I grew up in Lapeer. This is where I'm from, and those are all reasons why I stayed. In fact, I told my husband, who's from downriver, that I wouldn't marry him if he didn't move here—I wasn't moving to the city. In Lapeer,

I can get that hometown feel while still being close to all the culture, arts and entertainment that exists in the region.

The really nice thing about Lapeer is that we have many things that other small communities don't have. We have a lot of culture and arts here, good food venues, and parks. We have a lot of nice things here that exist in larger communities on a bigger scale. We're really fortunate to have assets that you'll find in bigger metropolitan areas while still close enough to access things we don't have in places like Detroit.

It hasn't always been that way, though. Looking back, I think about how this downtown used to be a ghost town. Growing up here, there was so much that was gone, so many vacancies in our buildings. I remember when we first started the process of becoming a Main Street community, we created reports with these huge numbers of empty storefronts and it was disheartening to see what we were up against.

But today, the change has been astounding.

You'd have to have been here before Main Street to really appreciate the difference in downtown and the energy that it has now. We've got so many different stores now and we're running at about 95% occupancy in our buildings. There is room to improve and we're still lacking retail down here, but it's amazing to see how far we've come.

If you would have told me 10 years ago that we were going to have two new buildings downtown, I wouldn't have believed you. I just couldn't have imagined that years ago. It's the ingenuity and the creativity of this community and the fact that people are always willing to try, to be creative. There's an ingenuity here combined with a determination that we aren't going to give up, and I think that makes this community special.

I'm really proud of Lapeer and I'm encouraged about where we are heading. I think that even in just these last few months, we've had so much growth...and there is still so much that we want to do!"

—Catherine Bostick, Lapeer DDA board member



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