

At Your Service

A Newsletter for the Citizens of Midland, Michigan

September 2008



City Budget Changes on the Way

Dear Citizens,

In addition to current economic conditions in Michigan that have limited our economic growth and increased our costs, recent settlement of major tax appeals has reduced the City's tax base by more than \$400 million. This reduction in tax base has produced a 17% loss in property tax revenue needed to provide City services.

We overcame a \$5.7 million gap in funding this year and currently project a \$3.8 million shortfall next year. City employees reduced spending by \$1.4 million this year, and continue to search for improved efficiencies and cost reductions; however, making up for lost revenue will be no easy task.

Things will Change in the Upcoming Budget:

Change may come in the form of a reduction or elimination of services, increased fees and taxes, or a combination of both. The implications of these changes warrant more public input in the budget process than in the past, and the City Council is very interested in your view on what City services should be offered and at what level.

Budget Roundtable discussions scheduled for October will be your best opportunity to discuss the value of City services with other residents (*see Roundtable dates, times, & locations at right*). The results of each Roundtable discussion will be consolidated into a report to the City Council in December. The report recommendations will then be considered by the City Council, which will provide direction to the City Manager in preparing a proposed 2009-10 City of Midland budget that provides efficient and streamlined services that are community priorities.

You play a vital role in this effort, and the City Council looks forward to your involvement. A registration form for the Roundtables is on Page 2 of this newsletter; sign up today!

Sincerely,
Jon Lynch, City Manager



Roundtable Sessions

- *Tuesday, October 7 • 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.*
(lunch served)
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
- *Tuesday, October 7 • 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.*
Midland Law Enforcement Center
- *Wednesday, October 8 • 7 - 10 a.m.*
(*Business/Industry Roundtable**)
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
**this session will be geared toward those who own or operate businesses within the city of Midland*
- *Wednesday, October 8 • 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.*
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
- *Thursday, October 9 • 2 - 5 p.m.*
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
- *Thursday, October 9 • 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.*
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
- *Friday, October 10 • 9 a.m. until Noon*
Midland Law Enforcement Center

Budget Roundtables

Many Avenues: Input from many different sources will provide City administration and the City Council the best possible information for the decision-making process ahead:

- **Employee Budget Roundtables** – Nearly 300 City of Midland employees participated in employee Roundtables in August. The sessions challenged employees to identify more opportunities for improved efficiencies and cost reductions. City employees have contributed numerous ideas to cut costs and improve efficiency.
- **City Telephone Survey** – 400 city households completed a random-sample telephone survey in late August. This survey will provide statistically valid feedback on the importance of various City service issues as expressed by city residents.
- **Community Budget Roundtables** – the Roundtables allow residents the opportunity to learn more about City services and their costs. Then residents will discuss amongst themselves their City service priorities.

At its January 2009 goal-setting session, Council will weigh ideas and input provided through the above sources. Council will also receive summary and verbatim reports from each of the input opportunities. Then Council will establish budget priorities, which provide direction to the City Manager as a proposed budget is prepared for presentation to Council on April 13, 2009.

Sign Up Today: Many residents want to get involved in local government, but can't make a significant time commitment. The Budget Roundtables are a great chance to make a one-time, three-hour commitment that will have a significant impact on City government and our community.

Dates, times, and locations of the Budget Roundtables are listed on the front of this newsletter and on the form below. City residents interested in participating may submit the form below, sign up online at www.midland-mi.org, or call City Hall at 837-3301. **Please be prepared with a first and second meeting choice. Registration deadline is Oct. 1.**

Once your registration is confirmed, you will receive a packet of materials regarding the City's budget to review prior to your Roundtable session. Additional information will also be available on the City's website for your review and research.

Each Roundtable will last approximately three hours and consist of 15-30 city residents. Sessions will include a brief presentation by the City Manager about City services and various budget issues. A facilitator will then lead participants in a discussion designed to explore your ideas on budget priorities and long- and short-term budget-related topics.

To learn more about the Roundtables and budget challenges facing the City of Midland, visit www.midland-mi.org.



Apply Today for a Budget Roundtable! Completely fill out this form, clip it out, and mail it in a stamped envelope **by Wed., Oct. 1** to: *City Manager's Office, 333 W. Ellsworth, Midland, MI 48640*. You may also fax the form to 837-5707. If you prefer to fill out an online form, visit www.midland-mi.org; look for the Budget Roundtables link.

Name: _____ City Ward in Which You Live: _____ (Ward map online, www.midland-mi.org)

Street Address, City, State, Zip: _____

Phone No.: _____ E-mail Address (if applicable): _____

Business/Industry You Represent (for Business Roundtable participants): _____

Please indicate to the left of the Roundtable dates below which session is your first choice, and which is your second choice. Every attempt will be made to accommodate your first choice:

1st & 2nd Choice	Location
_____ Tuesday, October 7 • 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. (lunch served)	Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
_____ Tuesday, October 7 • 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.	Midland Law Enforcement Center
_____ Wednesday, October 8 • 7 a.m. – 10 a.m. (Business/Industry Roundtable*)	Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
<i>*This session will be geared toward those who own or operate a business within the city of Midland</i>	
_____ Wednesday, October 8 • 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.	Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
_____ Thursday, October 9 • 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.	Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
_____ Thursday, October 9 • 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.	Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Lounge
_____ Friday, October 10 • 9 a.m. – Noon	Midland Law Enforcement Center

Adding a New Layer of Depth to Information-Sharing

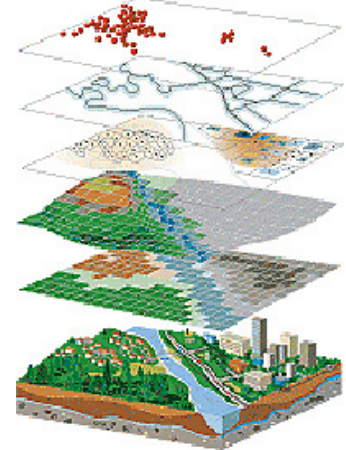
Imagine having a comprehensive, online view of your Midland home. Now imagine being able to find out with a few clicks of a mouse if your property is in a floodplain, which Midland City Council member serves your particular neighborhood, or if your residence is near a particular school.

Imagine no more! Citizens now have quick access to all of this information – and more – using the City of Midland’s new Geographic Information System (GIS) Interactive Map, accessible at www.midland-mi.org/GIS.

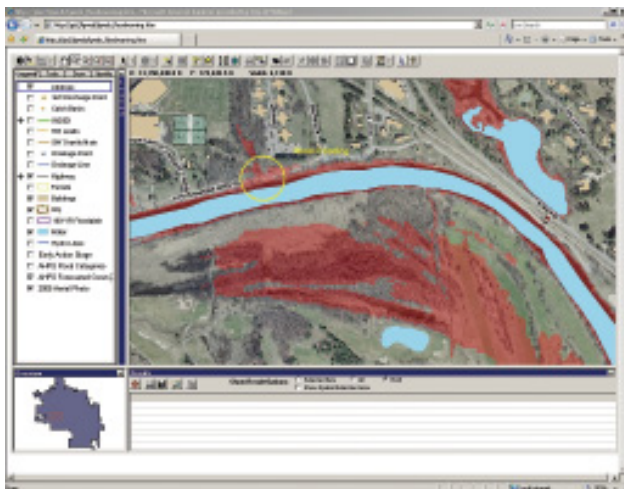
GIS takes information – such as the locations of Midland’s 70+ parks – and shows it in a graphical format on your Internet-connected computer. Aerial photos taken in late April 2008 show the entire city, and data is used to generate layers of information that can be placed on top of those photos (*see visual at right*).

Here’s an example of how it works: when considering purchasing property for a potential new development, a developer could easily access a photo of the area in question. Taking a few simple steps, the developer could view layers of information over the picture that would show property boundaries and dimensions, the distance to the nearest fire station, the property’s taxable value, and more.

Much of the data used in GIS has been available in written form on the City’s website for the last few years, but with the new Interactive Map, web users can now see their property and other valuable community data in a visual format.



Quick Information Gathering: With GIS, finding information takes less time and is easier to do. Because data is available in a digital form that can be mapped and analyzed quickly, citizens and City staff can complete in minutes what may have taken hours to do in the past. For example, in spring 2008, as the Tittabawassee River rose to flood stage, City staff used GIS to quickly identify flooded areas, inform citizens, and coordinate departmental responses to the rising water (*flooded areas in red, below left*). With GIS, City employees can visualize the same data at the same time, and in ways that we’re previously impossible or impractical.



Improved Decision-Making: GIS also helps improve decision-making. For instance, the City’s first GIS project involved developing a comprehensive geographic inventory of Midland’s sanitary sewer system. Data on every sanitary sewer manhole (more than 4,000 in Midland!), gravity main, and pump station was collected and input into the system, and then fed into a complex sewer modeling program.

With this inventory, City engineers are able to find out the size of a manhole, the material it’s made of, its condition, and the types of underground pipes that are connected to it – all within seconds. Staff can visualize and replicate connectivity and flow throughout the entire sewer system,

and can model “what if” scenarios – such as major rain events – to determine if the sewer system can handle a certain amount of precipitation over a given amount of time.

This high-level approach to modeling is unsurpassed by any other municipality of our size in the region.

Benefit to Citizens: Here are just some of the ways Midlanders could use and benefit from GIS:

- **Example:** If you wanted to know if your home was located in a flood plain, you could conduct a search for your property by address, then peruse your property’s Neighborhood Report for that information.
- **Example:** Residents could use the system’s “Search by Park” feature to locate Midland’s parks and find out amenities at each park, such as the availability of picnic shelters or specific recreational facilities.

(cont. on back page)

GIS System *(cont. from Page 3)*

When you first visit the GIS website, check out our online User Guide plus a GIS dictionary, both of which will help you delve into the system with confidence.

Coming Soon to a Computer Near You:

Information is added to the valuable online resource almost daily. Keep watching the GIS site for the following:

- More maps and key community information
- Additional search functionality
- Planning data (floodplain, land use, zoning)
- More custom reports:
 - Industrial and commercial property availability
- Integration with existing City web resources:
 - Tax assessment website
 - Enhanced park amenities search
 - ...and more

For more details about this innovative system, contact the Information Services Department at 837-3364.

2008 Presidential Election Draws Near

The November 4 General Election is just a few months away, and the Midland City Clerk's Office is busy with preparations to ensure a smooth-flowing voting process for Midland voters. A few reminders about the Election:

Where Do I Go to Vote?

Visit the Clerk's portion of the City's website (www.midland-mi.org) to find your polling location, and to confirm that you're registered to vote. Or, call the Midland City Clerk's Office at 837-3310.

Absentee Voting Process

Absentee ballots allow voters to cast their ballot when they are unable to attend the polls on Election Day. If you are registered to vote in Midland and meet at least one of the following criteria, you may vote absentee:

- age 60 years old or older
- unable to attend the polls due to religious reasons
- physically unable to attend the polls without the assistance of another
- appointed to work as an election inspector in a precinct other than the precinct in which you reside on Election Day
- expecting to be out of town the entire time the polls are open
- in jail awaiting arraignment or trial

The absentee ballot process begins with the voter completing a request for an absentee ballot form, which can be requested from the City Clerk's Office. The form must be completed and signed by the voter. Once the completed form is returned to the City Clerk's Office, an absentee ballot will be sent to the voter's registered address or another address indicated by the voter on the request form. If you plan to vote absentee by mail, please begin the process as early as possible to ensure plenty of time for mail deliveries. The City Clerk's Office recommends that two first class stamps be used when returning a voted ballot by mail.

Call the City Clerk's Office (837-3310) to find out more about absentee ballots, or visit the City Clerk's website at www.midland-mi.org.



Dates to Keep in Mind

- Mon., October 6 – Voter registration deadline for November Election, 5 p.m. Midland City Clerk's Office
- Sat., November 1 – Deadline for absentee voting by mail, 2 p.m. (*City Clerk's Office open for absentee voting 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.*)
- Mon., November 3 – Deadline for absentee voting in person, 4 p.m. Midland City Clerk's Office
- Tues., November 4 – General Election Day. **Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m.**



At Your Service

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Bruce Johnson, Ward 4/Mayor
Joe Rokosz, Ward 5

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