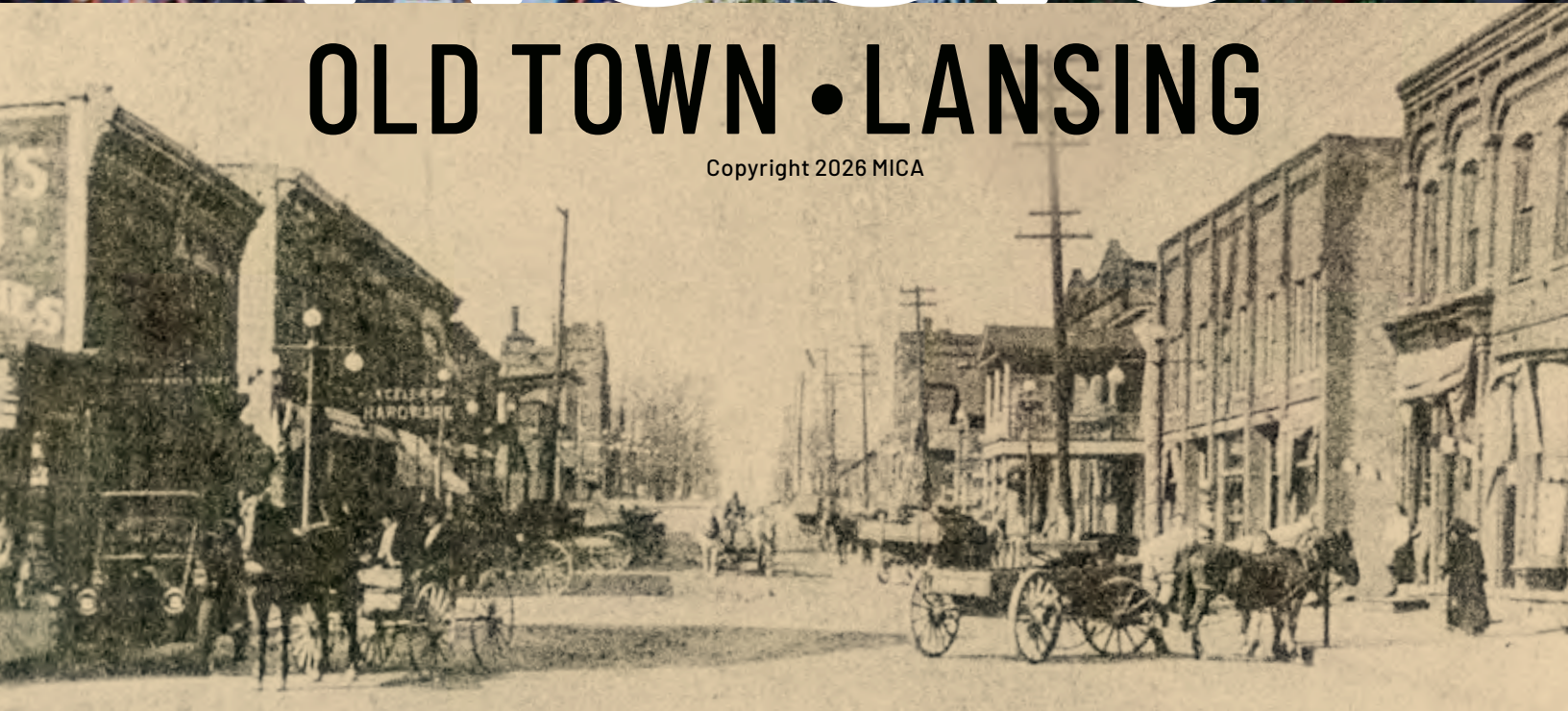




A PLACE MADE BY MUSIC

OLD TOWN • LANSING

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MICA

MICHIGAN INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART



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History

The area known as Old Town is located on a Native American trail along the Grand River in what is now Lansing, Michigan, which was charted and plotted by U.S. surveyors in 1825. The land was purchased in 1835 and 1836 by several investors, including the New York land speculators James Seymour and Jacob Cooley.

The land was sold in 1845 to pioneers who built a sawmill and held religious services in a cabin. After the Michigan legislature in 1947 decided to move the state capitol from Detroit to Lansing the area grew rapidly. For another 100 years, the area flourished enriched with the addition with the hispanic community. But, like many American cities in the 1960's and 1970's, the neighborhood began losing residents, businesses, and customers as more people moved to the suburbs. The area languished as many storefronts, businesses, homes and buildings became vacant and were abandoned and boarded up.

Between 1978 and 1990, artists and young entrepreneurs started restoring many of the district's historic buildings.

old town



business & art
development association

During the early 1980s young artists discovered a neighborhood in Lansing that had the city's highest concentration of historic buildings, but had been mostly abandoned.

They began renting and buying properties for studios, art galleries and performance space. In 1984, a group of these artists formed the **North Lansing Art Association** (NLAA) which was renamed the **Old Town Business & Art Association** (OTBADA) to then become the **Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art** (MICA) continuing its mission to catalyze community transformation through the arts.

In the early 1990's, visioning sessions were held to frame the values, identify key assets and develop a vision for the district.

During the visioning process, they named the neighborhood **Old Town**, acknowledging its historical significance to the region and focused on developing the art, retail and creative services sectors with an emphasis on enhancing an arts-centric community.

The organization also partnered with Michigan State University's Center for Community Economic Development to conduct their first Community Income and Expenditure Model Study (CIEM) to gain insight into the district's income and expenditure 'leakages' and begin to identify ways to grow and retain income.



OtherWise Art Gallery was opened in 1992 as the organization's headquarters. OtherWise showcased the works of artists from around the world. It hosted poetry events and for seven years was a venue for live concerts, featuring the first public performances by many startup, basement and garage bands.



In 1994 MICA produced its first big music festival, the **Art & OctoberFest** and in 1995 its first Lansing JazzFest and years later started Michigan BluesFest.

MICA's vision – to create open spaces where people can come together, meet old friends, make new friends, in the context of the art, and be motivated to take action to bring about positive community transformation.

"It comes down to a few precious individuals who have something very different, in some kind of pioneer spirit, to be honest, and an enormous amount of risk taking. They believe in something deeper than the rest of us could have."

Bob Trezise
President / CEO, LEAP

Early Visioning

Between 1990–1993, visioning 'charrettes', led by Terry Terry of **MessageMakers** and Susan Christian of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, were held to frame the values, identify key assets and develop a vision for the district. A special effort was made to engage a wide array of stakeholders from the neighborhood, including artists, property owners, business owners, and residents, as well as local and regional governments, the universities, historians, architects and other talents and resources from around the state and country.

These sessions provided the foundation and vision for MICA's efforts, stimulated positive participation and partnerships, and launched a wave of new businesses and building renovations that reached a critical mass that put Old Town on the map as it became a model for the State of Michigan's **Main Street** program.



In 1995, MICA wrote a grant and obtained funding from the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to enable Old Town to be among the first six urban Main Street communities in the United States. To manage the Mainstreet program, MICA helped start the **Old Town Commercial Association** (OTCA) in 1996 and worked to obtain funding from the City of Lansing and the Principal Shopping District to support the startup phase of the Main Street program.



In addition, working with Liz Harrow and the **American Institute of Architects** (AIA) and the Old Town Commercial Association, Design Guidelines were created to assist property owners with their historic preservation efforts.

During that same time and on the urging of then Mayor David Hollister, MICA restored a set of three buildings, which included low and moderate income loft apartments, and a business incubator. These buildings now include MICA's offices and art gallery.



MICA is recognized for innovative programming and is a recipient of numerous awards including the Governor's ArtServe Award, Festival & Events Association awards, Addy awards, the Creative Community Award and many more.

A 501(c)3 federally tax-exempt nonprofit organization, it has a robust volunteer base, maintains stable volunteer leadership and provides programs for the benefit of the entire community. It is funded through the support of sponsors, donations and grants.

For more than three decades, MICA has been producing music festivals, helping preserve and restore historic buildings, leading community revitalization efforts, exhibiting visual artists, coordinating poetry, dance and other performances that engage, inspire, catalyze and demonstrate the vitality and value of the arts community and the vibrancy of the urban centers as a great places to play, work and live.

"All the work that I've done – whether MessageMakers, MICA, or UrbanBeat – involves creating spaces where people can come together, make new friends and meet old friends, to explore how we can make our community better."

Terry Terry • President, MICA
Community Activist



JazzFest MICHIGAN



On a warm summer weekend, JazzFest Michigan is the place to make new friends and enjoy the winding melodies and complex polyrhythms of original American music!

Since 1995, during the first weekend of August, JazzFest Michigan turns Turner Street in Lansing's Old Town into a stage and auditorium for one of the largest, most diverse, and longest-running jazz festivals in Michigan. As jazz has a diverse range of styles and sub-genres, touching nearly every culture for over 100 years, the festival continues to draw the most diverse audience of any Michigan festival.

JazzFeat Michigan features multiple stages on Turner street and in various indoor locations, including local nightclubs and other Old Town venues. Performances are recorded and streamed. Attendance at times has reached around 7,000.

Notable performers have included: Mose Allison, Nicole Mitchell, Eric Reed, Stanley Jordan, Marcus Belgrave, Straight Ahead, Planet D Nonet, MSU Professors of Jazz, Terrell Stafford, Jeff Haas, Tumbao Bravo, Johnny O'Neal, Orquesta Ritmo, Ramona Collins, Tim Cunningham, Betty Joplin, Michael Kaeshammer, Los Gatos, Pickle Mafia, Lansing Concert Band – Big Band, Organissimo, Dave Sharp Worlds Quartet, Francisco Mora, Fareed Haque, Aguanko, Paul Keller Orchestra, Tony Monaco, Arlene McDaniel, Mighty Funhouse, Etienne Charles, Elder Kelly, Sunny Wilkenson, Ron Newman, David Rosin, Sarah D'Angelo, Ray Kamalay, the OtherBand, Montez Coleman, Grupo Aye, T.S. Monk, Mardra & Reggie Thomas, Wes Anderson, Bill Heid, Wycliffe Gordon, Tenth World, Walter Blanding, and many others.

Around 2010, MICA began a partnership with the **Jazz Alliance of Mid-Michigan** (JAMM), and features their annual award-winners at the festival.

Families bring their children to the **KidzBeat** area to explore the Instrument Petting Zoo and are given lessons from musician performers. In addition music workshops for adults are conducted by guest performers.

JazzFest Michigan diverse lineup and welcoming atmosphere have helped establish Old Town as a destination for live music and creative expression.

"We make beauty out of whatever is available to us, and it's kind of the definition of this neighborhood — and how it's grown and how we have come together to make it work.."

Rina "RiRi" Risper • Artist / community member



At Michigan BluesFest one can groove and dance to the soulful sounds of heartfelt blues and even fall in love!



Each September in Michigan's Capital City, Turner Street becomes stage to one of Michigan's biggest and longest running outdoor blues music festivals – the Michigan BluesFest, featuring such artists such as Reverend Raven, Larry McCray, David 'Honey Boy' Edwards, Eric Culberson, Jimmie Stagger, Stan Budzynski & 3rd Degree, Lady Champagne, Root Doctor, Chris Canas, Sugar Ray and the Bluetones, Jamiah Rogers, Sun Seals, Jackie Scott & the Housewreckers, Kenny Neal, Liz Mandville, Alberta Adams, Toronzo Cannon, James Harman, Frog & the Beeftones, Thornetta Davis, W.C. Clark, Junior Watson, Carl Weathersby,



Johnnie Bassett & the Blues Insurgents, Big Willy, Kathleen & the Bridge Street Band, Grove Council, Cee Cee Collins and many, many more. Multiple outdoor and indoor stages, the festival is also recorded and streamed.

Michigan BluesFest is produced with the support of the **Capitol Area Blues Society** (CABS) and offers multiple stages on the street, the Fish Ladder stage along the river, and in various indoor locations, including UrbanBeat.



"Every gender, every race, every age just fit in here. It's a really good feeling down here for everybody. All people."

Twyla Birdsong
Singer



MICHIGAN FunkFest

Michigan FunkFest brings the groove and energy of funk music to Old Town Lansing each summer with live music, dancing, food, and community celebration. Produced by MICA, the festival takes place behind UrbanBeat along the Grand River and inside UrbanBeat, creating a unique riverside atmosphere that blends music, art,

and community. Showcasing artists rooted in funk, soul, jazz, and R&B, FunkFest has become a staple of Lansing's summer music scene and a reflection of Old Town's creative spirit.



"When people find joy in a place, then they think differently about that place. And they're more likely to do other things that are connected to that place — even beyond the events and festivals."

Kwesi Brookins • Vice Provost,
Community Outreach
& Engagement / MSU



"If these beautiful buildings in Old Town now are the brick — and they are — you got to have mortar though that holds up buildings. And I would argue that the mortar is actually people in place. And within that framework is art as well - the glue that keeps it all together."

Bob Trezise
President / CEO, LEAP



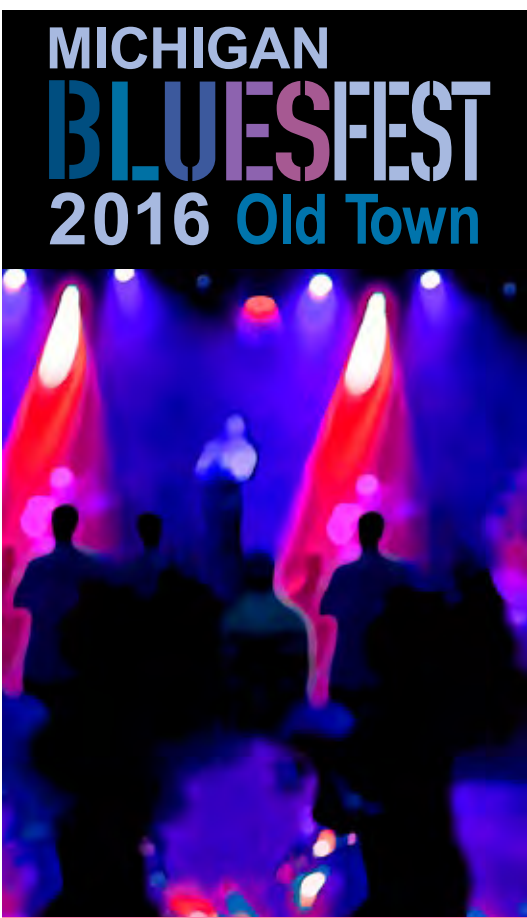
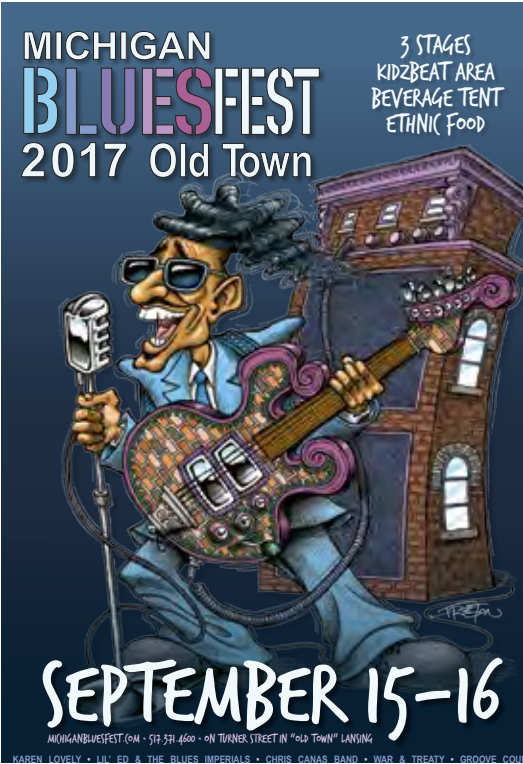
BackStage Pass is a TV program featuring live performances by festival musicians and began in 2008. It is produced and broadcast by public television station WKAR-TV, in coordination with MICA, and through the support of MessageMakers. It includes interviews where artists reveal the inspiration behind their music and has been both live-streamed and broadcast in 100 public television markets across the United States. Michigan JazzFest and Michigan BluesFest BackStage Pass programs have featured The

Verve Pipe, Organissimo, Larry McCray, Phil Denny, Rodney Whitaker Quartet, Planet D Nonet, Joe Hertler & The Rainbow Seekers, The Chenille Sisters, The Lash, George Delancy, Root Doctor, Lowdown Brass Band, Nicky T & the Snake Charmers, Frog and the Beeftones, Thornetta Davis, Tosha Owens, Jamiah Rogers, Kathleen Murray & the Groove Council, Grady Hall & the Disciples of Funk, Southern Avenue, Kathleen & the Bridge Street Band, and many others.



Award Winning Posters

If there's anything anticipated as music as the music, it's the festival posters. They are works of fine art, capturing the energy, excitement and emotion of the music. They've become collector items, have won many awards and are framed and on display in homes, offices and businesses.



Poetry, Theater, & Dance

MICA collaborates with other arts organizations providing meeting and performance space for poetry, theatre, dance and film.

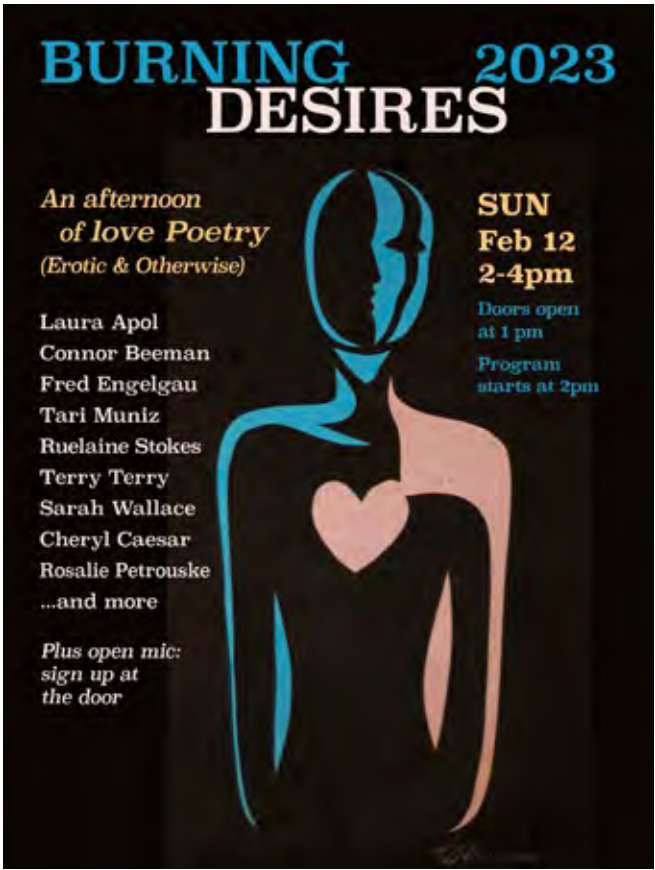
The Lansing Poetry Club, brings writers, poets and literature lovers together by presenting poetry performances, workshops, and literacy events at MICA Art Gallery. The Poetry Club partners with other literary and civic organizations to engage the community with poetry, including the **Lansing Poet Laureate Project** and the **Lansing Sidewalk Poetry Project**.

For nearly 20 years, MICA has produced the annual **Burning Desires: An Afternoon of Love Poetry**. Held on the weekend before Valentine’s Day, this event features poetry, music and theatrical arts.



"Old Town is what it is because of the people that live here and work here — the people that volunteer their extra hours and their time here. It's a community that's built with heart, and not so much money driven. I think it's really heart and soul of the people that are here, more than anything, really."

Lori Lanspeary
Choose Lansing, Manager
Marketing & Community
Engagment



The annual **Renegade Theatre Festival** brings theatre troupes together to present a free festival of new and original plays during the summer. The Renegade Theatre Festival conducts performances at MICA Art Gallery and other venues in Old Town and the Lansing area.



DANCE Lansing: A Community Dance Project regularly performs a showcase of modern and contemporary dance at MICA Gallery each fall and holds special performances during the Michigan BluesFest and JazzFest Michigan. Performances include discussions with the dancers and choreographers.

Capital Ballet Theatre (formerly Children's Ballet Theatre), where young dancers make their first public performance, is often held at MICA Gallery as well as at MICA's music festivals.

"Art gives spirit to a city"

Sophia Cheng
PhD, JD, Business
& Property Owner

MICA is known as an arts, performance and music event organizer, a business incubator, and a community builder, but it has more humble beginnings as a simple art gallery in a rundown urban neighborhood.

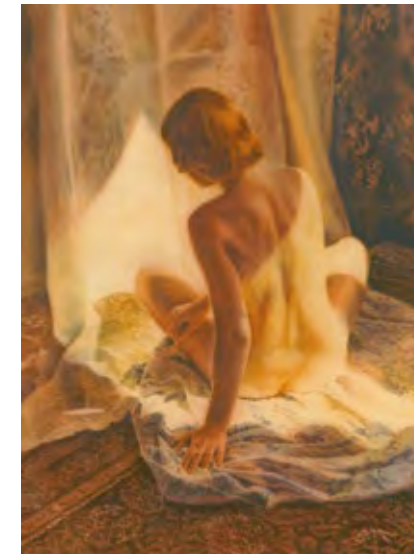
In the 1970s and 1980s, local artists were attracted to the neighborhood by its historic structures as well as its affordability and several renovated buildings to create studio spaces and art galleries, establishing pockets of renewal in the neighborhood.

In 1992 the gallery was originally established as **OtherWise Art Gallery** by Barbara Morris (a co-founder with Robert Busby of **Two Doors Down Gallery**) and Terry Terry. In the early 2000's it moved across the street and changed its name to Banyan Art Gallery and now is known as MICA Gallery.

Since 1984, MICA's art galleries have been a hub for community gatherings and creative experiences.

At MICA Gallery, monthly exhibitions feature emerging and established fine artists with an emphasis on Michigan artists who work in a wide range of mediums and whose work is often experimental and include social commentary.

MICA Gallery is home to the Lansing Poetry Club and provides a stage for Renegade Theatre, Dance Lansing, and Capital Ballet Theatre performances and is a regular meeting and



have served as a training space for the Arts Council of Greater Lansing. During the annual 'Chalk of the Town', the gallery is host to children's art activities.

The gallery is also available to rent for special gatherings such as receptions, fundraisers, graduation parties, bridal showers, meetings and more.

The gallery's exhibitions and programs in the visual arts, music, performances, film and poetry serve to educate, entertain, and inspire.

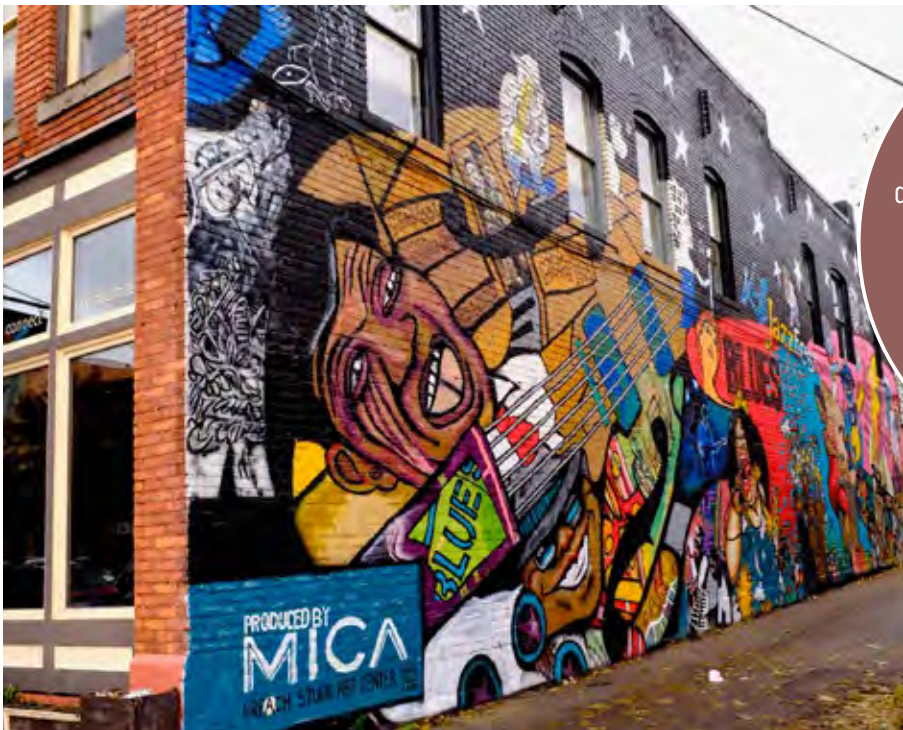


Turner Park Place

Turner Park Place stands as one of the most important redevelopment projects in the history of Old Town Lansing. In the mid-1990s, three abandoned and boarded-up buildings on Turner Street were restored through an initiative by former mayor David Hollister involving **MICA**, historic tax credits, **LISC**, the **City of Lansing**, **MSHDA**, and several community development organizations. The project created affordable loft apartments, nonprofit offices, and business incubator spaces (startups Arialink and CityPulse) that helped attract new energy and investment into the district. Today, Turner Park Place remains home to arts organizations, startups, creative businesses, residential lofts, and a community space that continues to support Old Town’s growth and revitalization.



Robert Busby, Dennis Sykes, Mayor David Hollister



"I love living in repurposed historic buildings. Once a building is destroyed, its history is gone. But here, that legacy lives on by connecting younger generations with those who actually experienced it."

Daphne Whitfield
Old Town supporter

This mural on the side of the building using music Festivals Posters motifs created by MessageMakers and painted by students from Reach Art Studio & Habittats for Humanities

Since the early 1980s, Old Town has transformed from a neglected historic district into one of Lansing’s most vibrant cultural destinations through the vision of the Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art and local artists. Through decades of live music, festivals, public art, galleries, and community events, MICA helped create a neighborhood where creativity and culture drive both community connection and economic revitalization. Today, Old Town stands as a lasting example of how art and music can shape the identity and energy of a city.



BEFORE
Turner Park
building, 1990



AFTER
Turner Park
building, 2026



A PLACE MADE BY MUSIC project supported by



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