

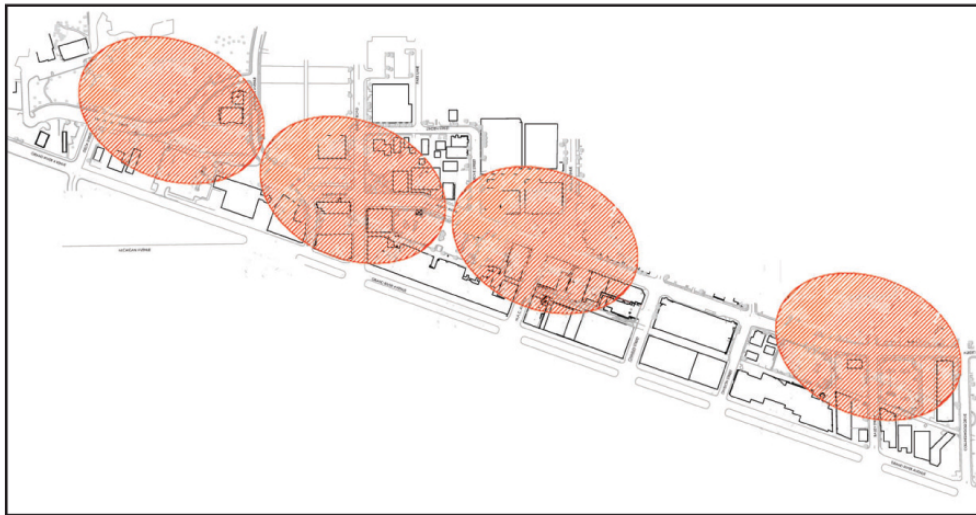
# East Lansing named 'Cool City'

By **CHUCK WILLIAMS**  
Staff Writer

**EAST LANSING** – Hot-spots and Cool Cities. With the selection of East Lansing as a Cool City, including the award of a \$100,000 grant to make improvements in three key downtown areas, downtown East Lansing is set to be the center of cool, according to Deputy City Manager Jean Golden.

New grant recipients were announced on June 27 in Detroit, Traverse City and Grand Rapids. East Lansing officials attending the Grand Rapids announcement, presented by Labor and Economic Growth Director David Hollister, included East Lansing City Councilmember Bill Sharp, City Planning Director Jim van Ravensway and Senior Project Manager Lori Mullins.

Cool Cities is a State of Michigan initiative to grow, revitalize and promote momentum in communities. With the 13 newly announced projects in this, its second year, there are now 29 designated Cool City projects across the state. The program is part of Governor Jennifer Granholm's



Graphic by Chuck Williams and East Lansing

**HOTSPOT** — This fall the city unveils three more Internet hotspots across downtown.

economic plan to revitalize cities by keeping and attracting people critical to emerging economies.

East Lansing's grant money will go towards developments in outdoor mini-plazas and free Internet wireless access. It follows the city's Urban Design Plan. Expect the outdoor work to be completed some time next spring and the wireless Internet access this fall.

Words like "exciting" and

"full of energy" were used by Mullins to describe the afternoon event in Grand Rapids.

The 13 new projects are located in Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Detroit with four projects, East Lansing, Grand Rapids with two projects, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lansing, and Traverse City.

**Governor "Cool Cities" Granholm**

"Building vibrant, energetic cities that attract jobs, people and opportunity to

our state is a key component of our economic vision for Michigan," Granholm is quoted as saying. "The first year of Cool Cities exceeded our expectations, so I am pleased to announce that the program has been expanded and incorporates 29 projects across the state. All of these programs announced today will strengthen our neighborhoods and downtowns and attract jobs and people

# Cool

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to our state.”

Karen Gagnon, the state's Cool Cities coordinator, said, “The most important thing we've learned from the 2005 program, and evaluation in general from last year, is that the key is actually getting the award designation. The Cool City designation itself has had great appeal in terms of marketing and branding.”

Gagnon said East Lansing, through the Cool Cities program, will be assigned a state government liaison to assist in bringing the project to success.

“Think of it as an extreme makeover where a team of people come in and help city officials and neighbors discuss the project and learn how to make the most impact using the state's resource toolbox: loans, grants, tax credits and services,” Gagnon said. “We're looking for a major impact. We want to design things for sustainability.”

First year participants in the program say the designation helped create

400 new jobs and retain 500 existing jobs. The 19 original projects had access to more than \$100 million in grants, loans and other resources.

## Hotspot

Wireless, also known as Wi-Fi and hotspot, is technology that connects laptop computers to the Internet without cables or wires. Some hotspots are free; some aren't.

Mullins said East Lansing currently has a number of hotspots and all but one were built by private concerns. That will change this fall when three more city hotspots come online linking nearly the entire span of downtown Grand River Avenue from Bailey Street to Valley Court.

The hotspots each extend about 300 feet in all directions from a small antennae which sits atop lightpoles or extends from existing buildings. The exact configuration for the three new hotspots has yet to be decided.

The city's first – and original – hotspot sits today above MAC Avenue and Albert Avenue. “Right now we have one in the clock-

tower downtown and it can be accessed from the 7-11 (store on Abbott Street). That may give a sense of the distance it covers,” Mullins said.

“When you enter a hotspot, if you have the wireless card in your laptop, an icon will come up on your screen that says you're in a wireless zone. If you click on that icon, the front page comes up and it links you right to the East Lansing Web page. From there you can go anywhere on the Web,” she said.

At issue is public knowledge of the new hotspots. “We're looking at signage to let people know about the Internet access,” Mullins said. “With the new residents that come and go we need to continue to promote it,” she said. “We need a sign there that actually says, ‘This is a hotspot.’”

Three new free city hotspots will come online this fall.

One will be at Valley Court in conjunction with the West Village project in an area generally west of Abbott Road and north of Grand River Avenue.

The second will be at the corner of Abbott Road and Albert Road. This is “sorta” the City Center II project, Mullins said, but is also the site of an improved greenspace. “We're going to be installing a fountain as part of the ‘Envision East Lansing’ program.”

The third spot will be at the corner of Bailey Street and Albert Avenue and adjacent to the Stonehouse Village project slated for construction in August, 2005.

Other hotspots in East Lansing exist as well.

Michigan State University provides many hotspots around campus but all their Internet access comes with certain restrictions.

Several free wireless Internet access points around town exist:

- Beaners Coffee
- Buffalo Wild Wings
- Suburban Ice Arena

Also expect free wireless Internet access at Starbucks soon. Currently, Starbucks customers pay for Wi-Fi via T-Mobile. Barnes and Noble also charges for wireless access.

For the City of East



Lori Mullins

Lansing's part, there will be no log on requirements, fees or registration, Mullins said.

Wi-Fi cards come standard in several new-model laptops. “With other computers you can add a Wi-Fi card quite easily,” she said.

“It supplements a lot of

existing programs,” Mullins said. “We've got our Urban Design Plan where we've been revitalizing the downtown and it adds to that. It gives it a boost. We're very excited about the privately-funded redevelopment projects too. So it all works together.”