

City of St. Louis

St. Louis was founded in 1853 when Joseph Clapp began the first settlement along the banks of the Pine River. St. Louis has grown into a city with a population of over 5,000 and the picturesque town is known as “The Middle of the Mitten” as the geographic center of the Lower Peninsula. St. Louis operates with a Council-Manager form of government.

St. Louis has a unique history that has included tremendous prosperity as well as serious economic setbacks. Early activity was based on logging and lumber mills as well as agriculture and tourism was later fostered with the building of the railroad and the draw of the famous Magnetic Mineral Springs. The economy boomed in the era of the Michigan Chemical and then Velsicol Corporation but the closing of the plant and the resulting environmental impact hit St. Louis hard in the late 1970's. A \$100 M cleanup of the Pine River took place in the last decade and the City and its local Community Advisory Group have partnered to push for a total cleanup of the former plant site. In recent years St. Louis has improved its economic situation, overseeing over \$2M in improvement projects in and around its downtown area including two streetscape projects and the repaving of all downtown parking lots and alleyways.

While much of the area economy still revolves around agriculture, a diversity of economic activity takes place in St. Louis including retail, service and industrial businesses. The Central Business District is three blocks long and contains many historic buildings that still serve as commercial storefronts while the Woodside Industrial Centre is a Michigan Certified Business Park and is home to many small to mid-size industrial businesses. The State of Michigan Correctional Facilities are the largest employer in the area and are a tremendous economic benefit to the City. A wide variety of housing options are available for all income levels and also for senior citizens and St. Louis is physically laid out in a pattern of traditional neighborhoods.

St. Louis offers a full range of services to its citizens including police, fire, streets, water, sewer, library, park system, cemetery, municipal swimming pool, code enforcement and low-income housing. It also contracts with the City of Alma to provide Dial-A-Ride (bus) services. In addition, St. Louis has had its own municipal Electric Utility for over 100 years which serves its customers with prompt, reliable service, maintenance and competitive rates. St. Louis has also partnered with the non-profit St. Louis Area Historical Society to expand, improve and maintain a museum and historic area in and around the Pere Marquette Train Depot area.

The St. Louis Public Schools provide quality K-12 education in five well maintained buildings all located in close proximity within the City limits. Recent St. Louis bond issues passed have assured the school system of having first class educational and athletic facilities for the children of our community. St. Louis is also only minutes away from Alma College, a highly regarded four year liberal arts institution, Davenport University and the GTEC technical training center. Central Michigan University, a large public university, is only 20 minutes away in Mt. Pleasant.

In addition to the Velsicol Site Cleanup, Capital Improvement projects being planned include the replacement of the City's water system, general street improvements, street light replacement in the downtown, connecting to the City of Alma's Riverwalk and Electric Department improvements. A shoreline protection project is planned for 2011 which includes a pedestrian walkway, a put-in location for canoe portage, parking lot paving and the reconstruction of North Main Street to include curb and gutter, drainage improvements and underground utility upgrades.

The St. Louis community puts on a variety of community events throughout the year for the benefit of its citizens and also to attract visitors from throughout Michigan. St. Louis' 4th of July Celebration includes the St.

Louis Blues Festival which continues to grow each year. The St. Louis Fishing Derby annually draws hundreds of people to the banks of the Pine River in June and St. Louis continues to be part of the Old US-27 Motor Tour which stops in Downtown St. Louis in August. In addition, St. Louis has events held on traditional holidays including Easter, Memorial Day, High School Homecoming, Halloween, Veterans Day and Christmas.

St. Louis continues to be proactive, forward thinking and willing to collaborate on projects and planning with the other governmental units in Gratiot County.

