



# **The State of The Township, 2009**

**By**

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**Saginaw Charter Township**

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# STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP, 2009

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Saginaw Charter Township

(Presented to our local businesses and community leaders at the Saginaw Township Business Association meeting on March 12, 2009.)

## Saginaw Township is ready!

Fellow residents, it is truly an honor for me to serve as your Supervisor and stand before you today to share the State of our great Township.

We all know the state of things. The economy is weakened - here in Saginaw County, Michigan, and across the country. Now is not the time to pretend otherwise. I'm not going to stand here and tell you the current economic realities are not affecting us. They are - all of us. Every person in this room, every family in every home, and every business in our Township is feeling the effects of this stalled economy.

All of us are facing financial uncertainties we have never faced before, but now is not the time to give up. It is the time to move forward, and as I look around this room I am inspired and hopeful. I see some of the best and brightest, representing the strength and diversity of our business community. Despite facing extremely difficult economic times, you, our entrepreneurs, continue to take risks and charge forward. You work hard and remain determined, because you believe as I do that Saginaw Township has a bright future.

Our core values unite us, and together we share a common vision for Saginaw Township. It is reflected on the faces of our people and in the commitments we make together. We will not stop moving forward. If we stop now, if we don't push forward, if we don't keep making progress, we won't be ready for the opportunities that will come when things do turn around. We are ready to make sure our community continues to move forward, and we are ready to do this together - with you our residents and businesses.

**Keeping Saginaw Township safe is our top priority, and we are ready.** There is no more important indicator for a community's livability and ability to attract economic growth, than safety. We can't expect someone to raise a family here if they don't feel safe. We can't expect someone to grow their business here if they don't feel safe. We can't attract new businesses to Saginaw Township if they don't feel safe. We can't expect thousands of athletes to play soccer here, stay in our hotels, and shop in our stores if they don't feel safe. Saginaw Charter Township has long had a reputation as a safe community - a community with a hard working, dedicated public safety team. This is a testament to our unprecedented investment in public safety - the most important of which is manpower, and our fire and police departments are both stronger than ever.

The Saginaw Township Fire Department is one of the best trained and equipped on-call fire departments in the state. We are fortunate to have 90 talented and hard working fire fighters willing to dedicate themselves to protecting us. They are required to complete 300 hours of training to become state certified. After becoming fully certified, we require them to participate in ongoing, monthly education and training. Even with all these requirements, there is currently a waiting list of young men and women eager to join the department.

The 47 sworn officers of our Police Department are committed to keeping Saginaw Township a safe community. This is not only our top priority and #1 core value, it is our mission.

Our police officers are better trained and better equipped than at any other time in our history. With the addition of four police officers two years ago, we have been able to increase the number of patrol officers on the road. They patrol and watch for those who would do wrong in our community and respond to help you in times of emergency. Our detectives actively investigate reported criminal activity in an effort to hold those responsible who have committed crimes. - You can help our police officers fight crime by keeping a vigilant watch in your neighborhoods. Report suspicious activity to us, and working together we will continue to enjoy our great quality of life.

I firmly believe that one of the reasons Saginaw Township is a safe community is because we actively seek to prevent crime. Our three District Resource Officers are active throughout the community, and they have implemented numerous crime prevention programs that are preventing criminal activity and keeping our neighborhoods and businesses safe.

We have never lost sight in the wisdom found in “an ounce of prevention”. Thirty-four years ago, Saginaw Township’s Police Department launched a Police Explorer program. By helping our young people get involved in activities that benefit the community as a whole, we have given them alternatives, shown them their worth, and possibly recruited the next generation of Saginaw Township’s finest.

The Explorers are completely self-funded - raising money for uniforms and equipment through donations and fundraising; yet since 1975, the program has served dozens of young people. These Explorers not only learn about law enforcement, they learn about giving back. They donate their time to the Saginaw Emergency Services Team and to our Police Department by serving as role players during training exercises. This group of young people is another fine example of how we ensure that Saginaw Township is ready.

**We are ready to keep Saginaw Township strong.** We have been working for the past several years on ways to make our community more recession proof. That means identifying and seeking jobs that are always needed - jobs that are healthcare related, jobs that are “green” such as those in the newly emerging solar industry, and jobs that are not dependent on one sector of the economy.

In order to attract these new jobs and diversify employment, my fellow Township Board members have joined with me in recognizing that we must engage in forward thinking. Our mission is simple. We need to be creative, thoughtful, and strategic about what our Township will look like in years to come. We must all be visionaries, planning not just for ourselves, but also for future generations who will call Saginaw Township home.

Today, as I speak, contractors are finishing the installation of a 1.4 million dollar sanitary sewer line in our Campus Business District. The 500 acre site is located south of Tittabawassee Road between Mackinaw and Lawndale. This infrastructure investment is designed to make the area “shovel ready” for locating businesses that will bring these new, advanced manufacturing jobs.

But it’s not just about big business. Earlier this year our staff gave a presentation with John Mayleben, Vice President - Technology and Product Development, of the Michigan Retailers Association. During the course of the luncheon, we talked about how to begin the process of opening a business in Saginaw Township. Our response was - call us - we are here to help. Mr. Mayleben said that in working for the MRA and traveling the state for twenty-two years, he had never heard a community offer this type of assistance. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how Saginaw Township operates. We are ready to help you. We are ready to help your businesses.

**We are ready to work for you.** As many of our neighbors struggle to meet mortgage payments and face the possibility of foreclosure, we are offering the resources we have available to help them through their challenges. For example, our Assessors have been helping some of our low income senior residents, citizens on disability income, and working families with low incomes by making them aware of the Michigan property tax credit that is available by filing MI-1040CR. Some of these residents may qualify to receive a tax credit of up to \$1,200 on their property taxes. The Saginaw County Commission on Aging is also assisting residents by helping them fill out the forms.

We will ask state agencies to partner with us and host workshops throughout the year, and we will be posting resources on our web-site to help residents stay in their homes. This process, as a part of this economy, is new to us just as it is to you; but we are ready to face it with you - to do it together.

Saginaw Township must continue to make strengthening and empowering individual neighborhoods a priority. We cannot give up and stand still. We must move forward, look to the future with hope - to the opportunities ahead of us. We are ready to be a better community, a community you want to live in and thrive in, but we can only do it with your help. Call us - we are ready to help, and we are asking you to be there to help your neighbor.

We are continuing to look for ways in which our local government can work better for you. Just as you have had to change with the economy, your government is changing. We know we can run government better, leaner, and more efficiently to better serve you, our customers. We will be taking a long, hard look at our structure and operations to cut through the red tape that too often stifles creativity and positive change. For example, this past year our staff made a number of important changes to streamline our approval processes for businesses, making it easy for them to bring high quality jobs into our community.

We have also worked on your behalf to keep our budgets balanced. By remaining fiscally responsible during the past five years, we were able to add \$550,000 to the fund balance of our General Fund. This will allow us to make badly needed maintenance repairs to the foundation, roof, and windows at the Township Hall. We must also replace the exterior brick on the Public Safety Building this year. By being conservative and managing our budgets well, we have positioned ourselves to be able to make these repairs even during this uncertain economy.

**We are ready for the future.** In the next several weeks you will be hearing about new initiatives underway in the Township. Our staff has been working on new and exciting ways to preserve and protect our neighborhoods so that our residents are ready; as well as creating programs that will ensure our business districts are successful now and ready for a bright future.

While we have challenges ahead, I am confident that together, we will demonstrate the unity, resilience, and strength that have always been Saginaw Township. Everywhere you look there is evidence that promises tremendous hope and opportunity - from the merchants working to reclaim Green Acres Plaza's status as one of the premier shopping centers in the region, to expanding businesses like Miller Mold and Mistequay, and to a local business like Bell Landscaping that has stepped up to partner with the Township to ensure our neighborhoods are maintained. - Our optimism grows as we move forward, knowing that all across our community we are laying the foundation for a prosperous future.

I want you to leave knowing this: We are safe. We have strong neighborhoods. We have successful businesses. We know how to work together.

We are ready!

