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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year fellow landscape architects and colleagues!

I hope the year has gotten off to a great start for you and your families, and you're ready to tackle 2019! On behalf of Michigan ASLA, the 2019 executive committee (Excom) is ready to make this year another great success for our chapter and is already rockin' and rollin' to make that happen.

I'd like to take this moment to formally thank our outgoing Excom members and welcome our new Excom members to the team. Our outgoing Excom members have dedicated their free time and have worked tirelessly on behalf of our members. Outgoing members include:

Clare Jagenow (Immediate Past President) – Clare has been part of MiASLA's Excom for over 12 years! As a former president, Clare has impacted and elevated every part of our chapter's operations and initiatives, and recently has been focusing on helping elevate potential Fellow's from MiASLA's ranks.

Monique Bassey (Secretary) – Monique has been an inspirational and driven member of the Excom for the past two years, serving as our chapter's Secretary. In addition to her formal duties of recording minutes and coordinating elections, Monique served on multiple chapter committees as well as two national committees.

Robert Ford (Trustee) – Bob has been a leader for MiASLA for decades and recently served as the chapter's Trustee. As Trustee, Bob represented our chapter to National ASLA and helped to ensure our voice was being heard in

Washington, DC. Bob also created and promoted a new way to tour and engage with landscape architecture projects called the 'LA Ride'.

Alicia Adams (Associate Member-at-Large) – Alicia was our chapter's social chair for the past two years and coordinated social events across the state. Alicia also served on multiple chapter committees and helped promote and host important events, such as the 2018 LARE Study Session.

Scott Black (Member-at-Large) – Scott has been a faithful supporter of, trusted advocate of, and resource for our chapter. During Scott's time with MiASLA, he served on multiple chapter committees, including the annual meeting committee and the golf outing committee, where he twice served as committee co-chair.

Our incoming members have shown incredible passion and leadership right out of the gates, and I'm greatly looking forward to working with them this year. In a few years we'll be able to acknowledge their accomplishments, but for now I'll just list their names: Joane Slusky (President Elect), Maleah Beatty (Secretary), Chester Hill (Trustee), Curtis Schaldach (Associate Member-at-Large), and Kyle Verseman (Member-at-Large).

And of course – thank you to our existing and ongoing Excom members! And last, but not least, thank you to Meghan Diecchio, MiSITES Editor, who is getting us back on track! Enjoy this great issue of MiSITES!

Wes Landon, ASLA

Immediate Past President, Michigan Chapter of ASLA

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ON THE COVER:

A Piet Oudolf garden in fall showcases seedheads and senescence. (image credit: Piet Oudolf)



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Piet Oudolf at a press event held on Belle Isle in October 2018. (image credit: Heather Sanders)

OUDOLF GARDEN DETROIT

Susan Noblet, InSite Design Studio

It began as a love letter from Detroit.

Garden Club of Michigan members had one objective: convince renowned Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf to come to Detroit to design a public garden. They wrote of Detroit's cultural history, creative legacy and the vibrant energy centering on urban renewal and revitalization. Their appeal worked and Oudolf visited the Motor City in the early spring of 2017 to search for the perfect site for this future garden. Piet Oudolf's best known works in the U.S. include the High Line in New York City (with James Corner/Field Operations) and the Lurie Garden in Chicago (with Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichols). He began his career as a nurseryman in Hummelo, Netherlands and began to propagate plant species and cultivars that were not widely available in the industry. His first book, Gardening with Grasses, (1998) is indicative of his interest and propensity to use grasses as ornamental plants in landscape design — a trend common today but unusual at the time.

An experienced plantsman, Oudolf is known for his immersive designs and striking plant combinations that express color, texture, and seasonality. During his extensive projects in the U.S., Oudolf began to incorporate North American prairie species in his plant palettes and discovered one of his favorite grasses, Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*). In his most recent visit to Detroit, Oudolf described his planting designs as a means of connecting emotionally with visitors; his gardens instill a sense of joy and wonder, regardless of the season. Even in late fall, his design composition is evident in the bold textures of seedheads and senescence that are given attention equal to colorful blooms earlier in the season. (See photo on cover of this issue.)

Despite the cold gray weather, Oudolf found a site on Belle Isle he described as "the most natural location for one of my gardens." The Oudolf garden will be located on the south shore of Belle Isle at the site of the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon. It is fitting that this future public garden will honor the site's history as a gathering place, as thousands of people assembled here for sunrise services and concerts in the 1930's and 1940's. The limestone carillon functions as a focal point on this part of the island and will guide visitors to the site. The site is also positioned to knit together adjacent programmatic layers: to the east lie the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory and the Belle Isle Aquarium, both designed by Detroit architect Albert Kahn. The Conservatory's outdoor perennial garden and gates provide a clear axial connection to the future Oudolf Garden. Lake Tahoma and the Iron Belle Trail to the south provide nearby greenway/blueway connections, while the Remick Bandshell to the west rounds out the nearby cultural amenities and provides adjacent accessible parking.

Belle Isle is now operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, through a 30-year lease with the City of Detroit. The island is also home to the Detroit Grand Prix, a unique use for a public park that requires careful communication and coordination of existing programming and amenities. It is the hope that the Oudolf Garden and other cultural events and attractions on the island will help to catalyze funding for necessary infrastructure improvements throughout Belle Isle. The Carillon is in need of renovation and the Oudolf Garden must allow for access in the future, while many hope the Remick Bandshell will be restored to once again provide outdoor summer concerts. The natural features of the site also pose some challenges; a



Oudolf explains his preliminary design for the garden on Belle Isle during a recent visit to Detroit.
(image credit: Heather Sanders)



The diverse plants in an Oudolf garden include many North American natives.
(image credit: Piet Oudolf)

close contact with bold perennial plantings without threatening the health of the plants. The sinuous pathways will afford visitors varying sensory experiences of the plantings and shifting views of the monuments and water beyond. The existing wetland on the site will be restored with a new plant palette that will provide increased habitat and pollinator benefits. Pathway materials will be pervious and may include a deeper profile of base material to allow for increased stormwater storage.

Landscape architectural services for the project will be provided by Shannan

Gibb-Randall, PLA, and her team at InSite Design Studio, Inc. of Ann Arbor. They will be coordinating with regulatory agencies for permitting, providing construction documents, assisting Oudolf with local support, and taking the project through bidding and construction administration.

Programmatically, Oudolf's planting design will function as a centerpiece, grounding the visual impact of the Carillon and providing accessible connections to adjoining cultural amenities. The lawn areas will offer space for gathering and picnicking, facilitating activities for a diverse audience. Larger areas of pathway will include site furniture for seating and people-watching. The planting bed adjacent to the existing parking lot will be planted with trees and shrubs to provide a visual barrier and pursuant to potential grant funding, may operate as a bio-retention planting that will treat stormwater runoff from a portion of the street. The planned bed would include three sections into which water will flow, exhibiting a variety of plant species that thrive in these discrete hydrological conditions. The intent is to showcase a beautiful and functional stormwater planting that can be replicated on a smaller scale by visitors.

Oudolf's gardens are known for both their diversity and quantity of plant species. The Detroit garden will use an estimated 70,000 plants that will be installed in stages with waves of volunteer labor. The plantings and plant acquisitions will be coordinated by members of Oudolf Garden Detroit, with hopes of sourcing the majority of plants from within the state of Michigan. They have been reaching out to folks at other Oudolf gardens—including nurseryman Roy Diblik, Chicago's Lurie Garden and the Delaware Botanic Garden — to get a sense of what is needed to coordinate such a large scale planting effort that relies primarily on volunteer labor. This is no small task, but one thing is clear: Oudolf gardens have loyal followers that travel from all over the world to participate in the thrilling experience of installing an Oudolf masterpiece. •

To discover how you can be part of this project, visit oudolfgardendetroit.org.



“ This new Oudolf garden project is particularly exciting for Detroit — this is Piet’s first public project in North America where he is designing both the master plan and the planting plans.

Oudolf and Shannan Gibb-Randall of InSite Design Studio review the site survey.
(image credit: Meredith Simpson)



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image credit: Matt Solak

Q & A WITH MATT SOLAK OF KDA

Robert Ford, LAP Inc. and MiASLA Trustee

Most of us know that the MiASLA has retained a lobbyist to represent the membership for some time now, but do we know who they are or what they do for the organization?

As Trustee for the MiASLA, I suggested that the board allow me the opportunity to gain insight into this issue by interviewing Matt Solak, Executive Director of KDA, MiASLA's lobbyist in Lansing, Michigan, to provide each member with a better understanding of the value that this organization receives and how KDA's service is helping MiASLA remain pro-active relative to opportunities and threats that relate to licensure and other important state legislative developments.

Who is KDA and generally what do you do?

Kindsvatter, Dalling & Associates, Inc. (KDA) is a strategic initiative governmental relations and full service association management company with a seasoned professional staff whose primary goal is providing clients with business management services and legislative representation at the state and national level. The primary goal of staff of 10 is to provide clients with association management services to help the association meet its goals. The association management company model allows associations such as Michigan ASLA to have a knowledgeable, professional, association staff at a substantially lower cost than hiring full-time in-house association staff.

What does that mean for Michigan ASLA?

That basically means that KDA helps run the day-to-day business operations for Michigan ASLA from A-Z. KDA will reserve for the association the use of the facilities, storage area, workroom, file space as needed, archives storage, and cataloging. KDA headquarters' office serves as the association's main office with a receptionist and needed administrative services to handle association business operations, including the answering of a dedicated telephone line(s), use of KDA's fax, email address and email distribution system through the KDA computer network and Internet system.

KDA staff provides support in preparing mailings; sending notices; taking minutes; arranging meetings, educational conferences and convention locations; and staff all association board, executive, foundation and other required committee and membership meetings.

Additionally, KDA assists the association in financial record keeping and provides numerous financial services including, but not limited to, preparing all checks for expenses on a bi-monthly schedule for the association, providing a monthly presentation of balance sheet and Profit/Loss statements and assisting in the annual budget planning.

Tell me a bit about yourself and your role at KDA.

I was born in Indiana, raised in Saint Joseph, Michigan, and currently reside here in Lansing.

I serve as the Vice President of KDA. I joined the firm in 2013 after years of service as a staff member in the Michigan Legislature and working for a trade association in Washington, D.C. In addition to Michigan ASLA, I serve in the Executive Director capacity for four other state associations — including the Pacific Propane Gas Association, the Indiana Propane Gas Association, the Indiana Podiatric Medical Association and the Michigan Association of

Orthodontists. Additionally, I serve in as a lobbyist for half a dozen Michigan-based clients including Michigan ASLA.

I began my career working as a Field Organizer for the Mark Schauer for Congress Campaign. After helping to get now former Congressman Schauer elected to Congress, I earned a position as Legislative Aide with, then, State Representative Barb Byrum. I was responsible for handling Representative Byrum's legislative agenda and primarily focused on insurance related issues when Representative Byrum was Chair of the House Insurance Committee.

After helping get Representative Byrum elected to her third and final term in the State House in 2010, I took a position on the government relations team of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors in Washington, D.C. I worked on state legislative and regulatory issues with an emphasis on protecting the role of professional agents and advisors in the implementation of state-based health insurance exchanges and other aspects of the Affordable Care Act.

How long has MiASLA been associated with KDA and how well do you know us and what we do?

Michigan ASLA has been associated with KDA for a long time. The relationship has predated my time with KDA by over 10 years. In fact, Michigan ASLA came to the firm when it wasn't even KDA! Michigan ASLA is one of our longest tenured clients, and we have always appreciated that long-term commitment from the association. This, obviously, has given us a very thorough knowledge of who landscape architects are and the services they provide throughout Michigan's communities.

What started our relationship?

Michigan ASLA came to KDA back in 2002 when KDA bought the management company that was previously working with the Chapter. Then in 2006 the



Exterior view of KDA's office location in Lansing, Michigan. (image credit: Matt Solak)



Chapter began discussing the idea about passing legislation to upgrade the current chapter title act to a practice act. At that point, KDA began serving in a lobbying capacity for the Chapter as well.

You discussed what KDA does on the association side for the Chapter. Can you provide some more information on what exactly a lobbyist does and how do they work on our behalf?

In addition to managing the day-to-day business operations of the association KDA also serves in a lobbyist capacity. A lobbyist is basically a professional who is hired to advocate for the public policies that are supported by a profession or industry—in this case landscape architects and landscape architecture. Lobbying is done by nearly all types of associations, corporations, and labor unions here in Lansing. Most of these organizations hire professional lobbyists in order to maintain an active presence at the Capitol while they focus on the primary mission of the association or business.

Can you provide a couple examples of the benefit of lobbying?

Absolutely. First and foremost, a major success is why the Chapter hired us in the first place. Prior to 2009, the landscape architects operated under what is known as a title act here in Michigan. ‘Practice acts’ require individuals to have a license to practice landscape architecture. ‘Title acts’ allow anyone to practice landscape architecture, regardless of their qualifications, but only individuals with a license may use the title “landscape architect” or advertise for “landscape architectural” services.

In 2007, the Chapter introduced legislation to move the provision from a title act to a practice act. Through the lobbying of KDA and the Chapter members this legislation was signed by Governor Granholm in December 2008 before the expiration of the legislative session.

Another example is the battle over the attempt to deregulate landscape architecture. In 2010, the Office of Regulatory Reform released a report

outlining certain professions in Michigan that should be deregulated. Landscape architecture was one of the professions on the list. The Chapter obviously opposed this measure and worked to defeat the plan. To date, the legislation to deregulate the profession has been defeated but the threat remains.

Just in 2017, legislation was introduced to eliminate licensing requirements for Landscape Architects. KDA lobbyists and Chapter volunteers have “killed” this legislation, although it technically remains “alive” until this legislative session expires at the end of 2018.

What do you see happening in the near future relative to our profession legislatively? Do you think that there will be more emphasis on deregulation or is that behind us now?

Obviously, we just had a recent election. In Michigan we saw a pretty large shift in the control of state government. Prior to the election all three statewide offices were controlled by Republicans. These offices will now all be controlled by Democrats for the next four years. Additionally, Democrats made inroads in both legislative chambers. Although Republicans maintained their control of each chamber the margins were diminished. The Senate was a 27-11 Republican control and is now at 22-16. The House was a 63-47 Republican control and is now at 58-52.

With smaller majorities and a new Democratic Governor, there is a lot of wait-and-see right now in Lansing. I definitely do not believe there will be more emphasis on deregulation, but I wouldn’t say it’s behind us. The reality is when this type of legislation is introduced, it rarely goes away in future years. This is why, eight years later, we are still dealing with the legislation despite it never having any real traction in the legislature.

For example, all three state representatives who introduced the three-bill package to de-license landscape architects are returning for the 2019-2020 session. It would be a significant blunder for members to be complacent

moving into 2019. Additionally, there will be legislators and outside policy groups that think overall deregulation is better public policy. And that is not going away.

What do we need to be doing to better prepare for these future challenges?

I think members need to be aware that, although they may not like politics or public policy, it impacts their profession. To think it doesn't is putting your head in the sand. Members don't need to be in Lansing every day lobbying for landscape architecture, but they need to ask themselves "how can I be an advocate for my profession within my daily job?" Just by doing that it will make a world of difference.

To better prepare for future challenges members can do three easy things:

1. Contribute \$100 to the Miasla Political Action Committee (PAC), a non-partisan political action tool of the Chapter. The PAC's purpose it to provide financial support to legislators who support our industry and the services we provide. Contact our office in Lansing to make a contribution over the phone or mail a check including your home address and employment information, so it can be reported actuarially. (See page 23 for our contact info.)
2. Attend the Miasla Lobby Day in Lansing on April 17, 2019. Check your email for the monthly Miasla newsletter to learn how to participate.
3. Invite your local State Representative and State Senator on a site visit to show them what Landscape Architects do and why your work is important. If you need help organizing a site visit, contact our office—we will be happy to help.

The truth of the matter is if as a landscape architect you don't do these things to advocate for your profession, why should any public policymakers be interested in what our group has to say? •

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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT GIBBS: TREES CAUSE YOU TO SPEND MORE

Jared Green, ASLA's THE DIRT Editor

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*Robert Gibbs, ASLA, is president of the Gibbs Planning Group, which has advised and planned commercial areas in some 500 town centers and historic cities in the U.S. and abroad. Gibbs is a charter member of the Congress for New Urbanism, a lecturer at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, author of *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*, and co-author of eight books.*

In 2017, retail e-commerce grew 16 percent to \$453 billion, and it now accounts for 9 percent of all sales. Furthermore, 2/3 of millennials prefer online shopping to brick and mortar stores. What does this mean for the future of America's retail streets, districts, and malls – for all those physical stores?

There's going to be hundreds of stores closing. In 2018 already more stores have closed than in 2017. What this means for the industry: a lot of retailers are moving stores into downtowns.

Research shows millennials and other shoppers want the experience of being

in an urban environment rather than just buying a pair of pants online. So mall closures are good for cities. You're going to see retailers moving back into cities, and many Internet-based companies opening brick and mortar stores.

Warby Parker, an online eyeglass company, is opening physical stores, and Amazon's opening two hundred bookstores in cities. Internet-based companies have found when they open a brick-and-mortar store, their online sales go up 10-15 percent.

One prediction is a quarter of existing malls will close in the next 5 years (some 300 out of the 1,100). Anchor stores – the big department stores – are closing hundreds of branches, while some 35 major retailers filed for bankruptcy in 2017 alone. As many malls die off, what characteristics do the malls that are surviving, and even thriving, share?

About a fourth-to-a-half of malls will close in the next five to ten years. The malls that are going to be sustainable — after what I call post-mall period — will be ones well-positioned, with really strong demographics — either high-end demographics or strong middle-class demographics. They'll have good locations with access to regional transportation.

Only malls that keep their department stores will survive. A mall cannot function without department stores. So when they lose all but one or all of their department stores, they have to close. The other factor for successful malls is to be mixed use and incorporating residential, office, and civic space into their properties. Just being a retail destination alone is not sustainable right now.

Transitioning to mixed use is not that hard to do because malls were built with more than twice the parking that is necessary by today's standards. So, about half of the parking lots can be converted into other land uses.

The Grove in Los Angeles and 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica offer

highly-stylized versions of urban forms – in the case of the Grove, an old European urban downtown, and 3rd Street Promenade, the American main street. Are successful contemporary shopping districts about re-using familiar urban forms in new ways?

Oh, very much so. The traditional grid or traditional straight main street is the best format for the new town centers being developed. There has been a lot of experimentation with curvilinear forms with parallel streets, and those haven't worked too well. It has to be a simple main street.

We find the best shopping districts are only about a quarter of a mile long, about 1,200 feet. If you have a longer corridor, then we break it into sections. Where they come together, we anchor it with some form of civic or retail space. So, just the old fashioned street works the best, or with the very-slight deflection.

Some background on promenades like the one on 3rd Street in Santa Monica: In the 1960s and 70s, many downtowns declined and lost significant market share to large suburban shopping malls. In a well-intended response, over 250 downtowns imitated shopping centers and closed their main streets to vehicles in order to create outdoor pedestrian malls. Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Fresno, California, were pioneers in this experiment.

Unfortunately, all but ten of the pedestrian malls were a failure (the ones that survived are mostly in college towns). Most of the downtowns declined even further and remained almost entirely-vacant for decades. Even Santa Monica's Third Street promenade and Miami Beach's Lincoln Road were initially overwhelming failures. Without department stores, the pedestrian malls lacked the necessary critical mass of shopping to justify the inconvenience of parking in remote decks. Small retailers cannot afford much advertising and rely on drive-by impulse traffic for sales.

We have been advising several downtowns, including Fresno, to re-open their



Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California. (image credit: Wikipedia)

streets to cars with generous parallel parking. The key is to implement modern traffic-calming measures, an attractive public realm, and realistic codes to enable walkability and cross-shopping.

What are the core components of a successful retail district layout? How do you get density, inter-connectivity, and scale right? On the one hand, there is the model of Soho in NYC, with its grid layout, but you also have the standard outlet mall, defined by an arterial form.

A fairly straight or simple, deflected street works the best. It's essential a retail district have multiple uses. All four land uses are best: commercial, office, civic, and residential. It's also essential to have a good public realm in these centers and appropriate sidewalks for the type of transect that it is, whether it be a town or a city or hamlet. There has to be a good public space, such as a square or a plaza.

Retailers have higher sales and are willing to pay higher rents when they're located on a square. We have found retailers who will give up exposure on the end caps of a street in exchange for being on the square, because that is where more people are and where they will achieve higher sales.

It's really important for landscape architects to embrace the public realm, to be strong advocates for parks and plazas, a nice streetscape.

Retail has been described as a tool for revitalizing small town main streets and the downtowns of major cities. What else needs to come with retail to make the revitalization effort work?

Retail alone can't revitalize a downtown. One of the most important elements is transportation. Streets have to be calmed from highways into real, walkable streets. Many downtowns are suffering just for lack of on-street parking or because the streets are too wide and traffic is too fast. In addition, it is important to have a strong civic component: the library, city hall, courthouses

should be in the downtown, not in the suburbs. For example, we find a good library can bring an average of 1,200 people per day – that's as many as a good department store.

High density residential and office space are important as well. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) recently did a study that found every office worker directly supports twenty-five square feet of retail and restaurant space. If we can get office workers downtown, you can share parking with the office, because of off-peak times with retail.

So downtowns have to return to being real mixed-use, urban, walkable centers.

What is the role of landscape architecture in successful retail environments?

The leaders of many shopping center developers we work with are landscape architects. Many of our clients are former landscape architects or practicing landscape architects.

More than the engineers, architects or the MBA types, we find landscape architects have a holistic approach, and we enjoy working with them. They understand the physical realm and design, but also politics, the environment, and a little bit of engineering and economics.

More broadly, the landscape architect working on a retail environment has to advocate for good place-making: a nice public realm — public squares of plazas; traffic calming; and the right height-to-width ratios on the streets so streets aren't too wide.

Rendering of Troy, Michigan town center.
(image credit: Gibbs Planning Group)



Do trees and other green features increase sales?

Trees are really essential for a competitive shopping district. There was a study by Kathleen Wolfe that indicated trees increase price elasticity by 9-12 percent. In other words, people feel comfortable paying up to twelve percent more for the same product if they purchase in a well-landscaped place with nice streets. Also, when properly located, street trees keep people in the downtown district longer. They feel more relaxed and are more likely to spend more money.

We're working in Palm Desert, California, and found the shady side of the street has significantly higher sales and rents than the sunny side of the street. We're redesigning the street to be asymmetrical, so that the sunny side will have a wider sidewalk so that we can put in a triple bosque of trees for shade. In this case, the shade is directly responsible for higher sales in retail. Research indicates that, too.

The one pet peeve I have is that many landscape architects — including myself (as I've done this) — tend to put street trees on an arbitrary grid, 22 feet or 28 feet on center, whatever. Very often the trees end up blocking a merchant's storefront, sign, or window display. We believe developers and communities should put in a lot of street trees but use common sense when locating them. Street trees should be on the property lines of commercial buildings rather than in middle and in front of buildings.

Street trees are very important for retail sales, and that's been proven. Also, for residential values, there are studies that indicate home values are much higher on shady streets than streets without trees.

Urban stores of retailers like Bonobo, Apple, and others are essentially showrooms, where you try out goods and then purchase online and receive products by mail. What other technology-enabled retail innovations do you see coming to the built environment?

Technology has been good and bad. One negative is many online manufacturers are selling directly to the customers, and they are not sending merchandise to small retailers. They're cutting the retailer out of the better merchandise, which is hurting their sales. A positive is many stores are getting rid of cash registers so you can walk in and out.

Another positive: Stores are becoming warehouse and distribution centers. Department stores are now places where you can do a same-day pick-up of an order you made online. Physical stores are becoming return centers for Amazon and other online sites. For example, Kohl's is partnering with Amazon to be a return center. This helps bring people to that shopping district who ordinarily wouldn't go there. They're going to make a return and then while they are making their return, they will go to restaurants or other shops. •



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Want to get involved? MiASLA is always looking for chapter members to participate at a greater level. Please feel free to reach out to the Executive Committee or staff members: manager@michiganasla.org.

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