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The Michigan Green Enterprise Zone

Executive Summary

An Initiative of The Engineering Society of Detroit®

Prepared by Christopher J. Webb, Edward F. Hartfield & David A. Skiven

Mission

The Michigan Green Enterprise Zone (Green Zone) is intended to complement many fine efforts that are currently in the development stages or are already occurring in Michigan. Our mission is to attract new capital and industries to our state while enhancing existing sources of wealth creation and employment. The Zone would not use public funds as the primary driver and would concentrate on green technologies. The Green Zone would be formed through enabling legislation in collaboration with Federal, State and local governments and other authorities. Modeling may draw from other examples that enjoy innovative features such as those found in Federal Indian Law.

The Five Innovations

The distinguishing feature of the Green Zone is its “Five Innovations” that have not been previously combined in Michigan, the United States or any other countries. The Five Innovations consist of (1) Legal Risk Mitigation, (2) Technology & Invention, (3) Labor/Management Relations, (4) Quality of Life and (5) Governmental Structure & Regulation.

Geographical Reach

The geographical reach of the Green Zone initially contemplates a continuous corridor or stand-alone areas running from Saginaw through Flint, Pontiac, Troy, Detroit, Windsor, Romulus, Ann Arbor utilizing the synergies of the Detroit Region Aerotropolis and NAFTA with Ontario.

Legal Risk Mitigation

Panels of Neutrals would be created offering early alternative dispute resolution (ADR) intervention to mitigate legal risk and adverse collateral effects (such as insurance availability and affordability) arising from conflict traditionally resolved through litigation. Subject matter areas would range from Creditor/Debtor Rights, Commercial/Transactions, Construction, Corporate Governance/Compliance, Eminent Domain/Condemnation to Environmental, Franchise, Immigration, Intellectual Property, Insurance/Bonding, Land Use & Zoning, Personal Injury, Product Liability, and Workers Compensation to name only a few. Legal services within the Zone would emphasize “problem solving” instead of “fault finding” as a core objective.



Technology & Invention

The Engineering Society of Detroit is currently undertaking an examination to identify the root causes that foster or hinder the development of technological inventions and improvements. The Zone would be designed to cultivate an environment in which technical and business creativity could thrive through a unique collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Labor/Management Relations

The Green Zone intends to capitalize on the current historical environment of candor and openness between management and unionized labor. The difficult economic times have dissolved traditional differences permitting an extraordinary opportunity for creative problem solving to attract capital and investment to Michigan. Features such as no-strike clauses, streamlined grievance procedures, reduction in classification and the like in a collective bargaining setting are only a beginning to the potential results.

Quality of Life

The Green Zone would enjoy the application of new thinking regarding human quality of life. The Zone would be linked by affordable transportation that would be largely pollution free utilizing light rail within our existing expressways. Health care providers within the Zone would collaborate to provide health services to those living and working in the Zone. Affordable health insurance would be a function of the Zone administration with catastrophic health care being provided by the public sector. Community education through training facilities emphasizing practical and employable skill building would be a priority within the Zone to re-train existing labor and attract new talent. Affordable housing would be an important element in the design of the Zone to maximize the conditions necessary to achieve the highest possible quality of life.

Governmental

Many have tried to streamline government but few have accomplished this purpose. In part, government modeling is based upon territorial silos that create inefficiencies and conflicting priorities and requirements. The Green Zone would be administered by one governmental body that would consist of an Executive Council made up of the Governor of Michigan and the County Executives of those counties benefiting from the Green Zone. Regulations and rules would be exclusively applied to the activities within the Zone. Collaborative public services relating to police, fire, water, sewer and other services would be administered through the Green Zone Executive Council with revenue sharing to existing governmental units as specified in the Green Zone enabling legislation.

Conclusion

This Initiative is intended as a starting point in our efforts to provide a comprehensive answer to address the current technical, economic and social decline in Michigan. Simply put, the challenging times we currently face represent an opportunity to combine proven methods in a unique and innovative way to attract capital and investment to Michigan and serve all of us without the use of public funds or abatements as a primary driver for future investment.