



**OFFICE OF MAYOR VIRG BERNERO**  
124 W. MICHIGAN AVENUE – NINTH FLOOR  
LANSING, MI 48933

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CONTACT: Randy Hannan  
517/ 256-7633

## Community Leaders Break Ground on City's Long-Awaited New Southside Community Center

(LANSING) – Mayor Virg Bernero and Board President Hugh Clarke of the Lansing School District joined with members of Lansing's Parks Board and the Southside Community Center Citizen Action Team to celebrate the groundbreaking for the long-awaited Southside Community Center.

“This is an historic day for Lansing,” said Mayor Bernero. “South Lansing residents have been seeking their own community center for more than two decades, and now we are making it happen. Our thanks go to the Lansing School District for their tremendous partnership with the City and also to the many citizens throughout the years who have refused to give up on the vision of creating this wonderful facility.”

The \$2.3 million project will transform the Lansing School District's Hill Center into a joint use facility that will become the hub of a wide variety of community activities and recreational programs sponsored by the City of Lansing's Parks and Recreation Department. More than 37,000 square feet of space at the Hill Center will be shared between the community center and existing school district activities, including the auditorium, gymnasium and swimming pool.

Construction begins today on a new addition to the building, which will add over 5,600 square feet to the space used by the City for community center programs and activities. The project is expected to be completed in October. Extensive renovations to the shared facilities have already been finished, including refurbished seating in the auditorium, handicap accessibility improvements to the locker rooms, and a new divider for the gymnasium. The funds for the interior renovations and new addition were derived from the sale of the \$2.3 million Triangle Property to Lansing developer Joel Ferguson in 2006.

“The Southside Community Center is the first new community center we've opened in more than 30 years,” said Lansing Parks and Recreation Director Murdock Jemerson. “We are delighted to be able to offer comprehensive recreational programs at a location that is convenient for the citizens of South Lansing.”

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The creation of the Southside Community Center is the culmination of 20 years of effort by citizens and community leaders to provide a full-service recreational facility in South Lansing. After several years of informal discussion about the need for such a facility, the Lansing City Council in 1991 dedicated \$900,000 from the proceeds of the sale of the Lansing Civic Center to the construction or purchase of a new community center in South Lansing.

Three years later the Council created an Ad-Hoc Committee to review possible locations for the new community center. No action was taken on the committee's recommendations. Ten years later the Council established another Ad-Hoc Committee for the purpose of examining again the possibilities for creating the community center. Again, no action was taken to move forward on the recommendations of the Committee.

In July 2006 newly-elected Mayor Virg Bernero established the South Side Community Center Citizen Action Team to take the next steps toward the actual creation of the facility. Led by chairperson Frank Lain, the Citizen Action Team identified the school district's Hill Center as the best choice for the location of the Southside Community Center based on its existing recreational facilities and the cost of renovating and expanding the building compared to the costs of new construction. Mayor Bernero accepted the group's recommendations and commenced negotiations with the school district to bring the project to fruition.

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