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NEWS

\$3.4M state funds go to 3 Northern Michigan cities to develop vacant properties into housing

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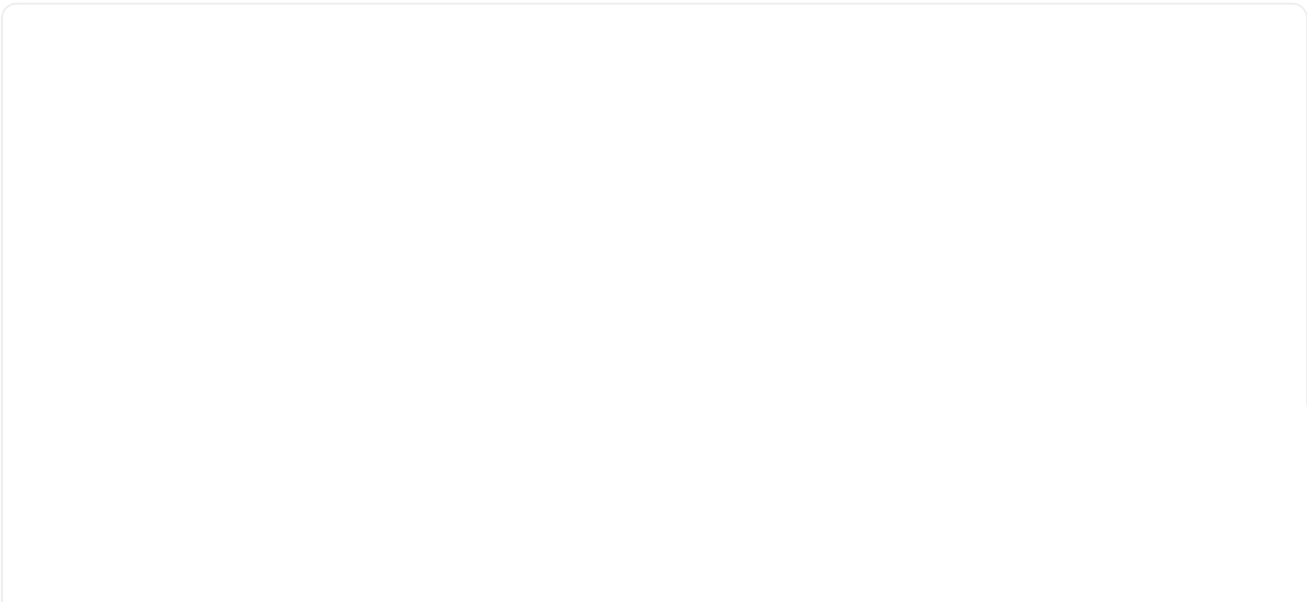
Marquette received state funds to redevelop a vacant, 8,000-square-foot building located at 401 W. Washington St. to create a four-story, mixed-use development, adding 11 residential units, two commercial spaces, and lower-level indoor parking to downtown. In this MLive File Photo crews prep for the UP200 dog sled races along Washington Street in downtown Marquette, Mich. on Friday, February 14, 2025. Joel Bissell | MLive.com



By [Lindsay Moore](#) | lmoore@mlive.com

Three Up North downtowns are getting a boost from state redevelopment funds to turn vacant properties into housing and commercial space.

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Cadillac, Escanaba and Marquette received state funding through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Revitalization and Placemaking program.

In total, the state expects these projects to add 60 housing units across the three cities and generate a total capital investment of over \$16.5 million in the state, with the goal of attracting residents to the downtown communities.

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“Support for these projects in Northern Michigan underscores our commitment to our ‘Make It in Michigan’ economic development strategy’s focus on the people, places, and projects that are integral to growing Michigan’s economy,” Governor Gretchen Whitmer said.

The Revitalization and Placemaking program has distributed funds to 249 total projects in communities across the state since its launch in 2022.

The program goal is to “create vibrant places that attract and retain talent, add new housing options, enable business creation and attraction, and provide resources for our Michigan communities,” according to the Governor’s office.

Here’s a breakdown of where those funds are going in Northern Michigan.

Cadillac - \$1.4 million

The North Lake Street Flats will be a redevelopment of vacant property. Two new residential buildings will be constructed, adding 48 housing units and parking downtown.

The buildings will be located within a vibrant, walkable district with access to Cadillac’s downtown, Cadillac Lakefront Park, the White Pine Trail, and the Rotary Performing Arts Pavilion, according to the MEDC.

“This new development is more than just new buildings; it is a critical investment in our City,” said Cadillac City Manager Marcus Peccia.

“These modern buildings are located near our core downtown and will help our City by chipping away at our housing gap, while also redeveloping a currently vacant lot in a beautiful place for people to live. Attracting talent and having a high-quality place to live is important for Cadillac, and Lake Street Flats is a transformational development that will be beneficial to the whole community.”

The residential units will be rented at 80% to 100% of the Area Median Income and help address the housing shortage in the city.

The project is being awarded a \$1.4 million RAP grant to support the costs of the new development and is expected to generate a total capital investment of \$10,669,625.

Development team North Lake Street Flats, LLC, will be redeveloping this property with management partner Veneklasen Construction.

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The development team received an Act 381 Brownfield Plan with an estimated reimbursement over 15 years of \$2,510,784. The City of Cadillac approved the plan in Oct. 2024. In addition to local tax capture, they are working with both the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy and the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority for eligible activities.

The project builds on placemaking efforts between the MEDC and Cadillac in recent years, including [RAP funding in Oct. 2023](#) that awarded \$2.7 million to redevelop the historic Cooley School into apartments.

Escanaba - \$500,000

A vacant, functionally obsolete building will be redeveloped into a new restaurant space and one-bedroom apartment.

The RAP funding gets this project off the ground, with the goal of attracting foot traffic and adding vibrancy to the city's downtown said Escanaba City Manager James McNeil.

“Redeveloping a vacant building into a new restaurant and apartment space is exactly how we drive economic growth and enhance our downtown vibrancy,” McNeil said. “This investment, alongside our recent Redevelopment Ready Community recertification, ensures Escanaba continues to move forward.”

The project builds on the city’s efforts to invest in its downtown through the recent recertification as a Redevelopment Ready Community with the MEDC and significant upgrades to the streetscapes and utilities along Ludington Street.

The project is being awarded a \$500,000 RAP grant to assist with redevelopment costs of the former mixed-use building on the site and is expected to bring a total capital investment of \$1,064,653.

The MEDC adds that the developer of the project, Curt Spaulding of Spaulding Real Estate LLC, is a retired Michigan Corrections Officer who returned to his hometown of Escanaba to own and operate a restaurant on the same block as the proposed project location.

Spaulding owns local bar and eatery Cat-man-do on Ludington Street. In October, city council approved his plans to rehabilitate what used to be Crispigna’s Restaurant into a cocktail lounge, according to the Daily Press.

After stabilizing the operation of his current restaurant, Spaulding utilized a Build MI Community grant from the MEDC in 2024 to activate vacant space above his restaurant into three new attainable residential apartments. Spaulding has worked with the Michigan Small Business Development Center to review the business plan for the new restaurant.

Marquette - \$1.5 million

A vacant, 8,000-square-foot building located at 401 W. Washington St. will be redeveloped to create a four-story, mixed-use development.

This project will add 11 residential units, two commercial spaces, and lower-level indoor parking to downtown.

Karen Kovacs, city manager for the City of Marquette called the grant “pivotal in making this downtown Marquette project a reality.”

“With this support, a long-vacant property will become a vibrant mixed-use development that delivers workforce housing and retail space, fueling economic growth and revitalizing our community,” Kovacs said. “This partnership demonstrates what’s possible when public and private sectors unite behind a shared vision for Marquette’s future.”

The project is being awarded a \$1.5 million RAP grant to support the cost of construction on the vacant, blighted building, and is expected to bring a total capital investment of \$4,803,602.

The Marquette County Land Bank is supporting the project with a \$46,000 Blight Elimination Grant and the Marquette Brownfield Redevelopment Authority approved an Act 381 Brownfield Housing TIF Plan with an estimated value of \$1,131,825 in further support of the redevelopment.

Development partner Midwest Construction Group has extensive experience in construction, renovation, and redevelopment projects across Michigan. Their portfolio – which includes projects in Holland, Zeeland, and Hastings – reflects a strong track record of delivering high-quality developments that contribute to community and economic growth, according to the MEDC.

The project “represents a strong vote of confidence in the continued growth and vibrancy” of Marquette’s downtown, said Tara Laase-McKinney, executive director of the Marquette Downtown Development Authority.



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Lindsay Moore

Lindsay Moore is originally from Metro Detroit and is currently based in Grand Rapids. She studied journalism and sociology at Indiana University. Before returning home to Michigan, Lindsay spent time reporting...more

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