

Saline Leadership Institute Shared Vision - 1/24/2016

The Saline Area Community has a lot going on these days. Many have looked to it as an example of a place with thriving people of all ages. What is so special about Saline, and how have they done it? Let's try to paint the picture.

The City of Saline continues to be very attractive for young families. New housing developments have boosted the tax base and enrollment at SAS is at optimum levels. We see greater diversity among students, and among young professionals moving here. On the heels of our branding effort "Saline Puts Family First", we were named among "The Best Places to Raise a Family" on numerous national lists. While residential development has increased, we have been careful to balance our growth with preservation of nature and open spaces. The newly designated Animal Preserve ensures native species are respected and given proper resources to thrive in a safe place within the environs of Saline.

Saline has made great strides in renewables and energy efficiency. Investments in solar panels on public and private buildings have decreased utility bills, having already offset much of the installation costs. LEED Certification of new construction is now commonplace and we see new innovations embraced as building science develops new techniques and technology for more sustainable and healthy structures. Public health and environmental awareness have also been served greatly by the prevalence of Saline farm-to-table menus and farmer's market.

Saline is a place that engages, values and cares for its seniors, as evidenced by the highly utilized Senior Center. Annual events and festivals remain as traditions that bring us together and benefit local businesses.

Now that the Washtenaw County border-to-border trail connects through Saline, residents have more opportunities to enjoy our area's beauty on foot, or non-motorized vehicles. Surveys show the lowest obesity rate on record, as well as the highest rate of satisfaction with parks and recreation options. We were proud to be named the "Most Walkable Community in Southeast Michigan" this year.

Saline Area School district has achieved the #1 ranking in the state! It's partnership with Saline Technical College continues to grow and graduate legions of skilled tradespeople, and people of a variety of ages interested in public service careers. Education has been expanded to offer vocational technician training that allows people to work and continue to learn while filling the high demand for skilled labor. As a result, the average student debt has been lowered dramatically over recent years. New businesses have opened in connection with the program. Traffic flow into and through Saline has been alleviated with the new US-12 bypass. As a result, travel times, accidents, and stress has been reduced. Public transportation options now include several new bus stops that help connect people to jobs and other activity hubs throughout the county.

High-Tech companies have filled our former industrial office parks. Downtown has grown with the new parking structures, boutique hotels, entertainment venues, restaurants, galleries, bars and shops. Commercial space vacancies are few and far between. Community assets like the library and hospital have completed expansions and are invaluable to us. Exceptional public services such as police and fire keep our residents and visitors safe, and crime is low. Overall, Saline remains to be a close-knit community, with a high rate of volunteerism and pride.