

# Bill awaits governor's signature

By MICHAEL CHARLES

A bill designed to prevent the demise of central business districts and

historic areas among Michigan cities is nearly ready for Gov. Milliken's signature.

Passed by the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives recently, the bill would permit every city, village and township in the state to establish a "downtown development authority" to help "our cities (in) pulling themselves up by their bootstraps," says the bill's sponsor, State Sen. Harry A. DeMaio (R-Battle Creek).

A key section of the bill would allow downtown development authorities to levy a tax of up to two mills in cities of less than one million persons (up to one mill in cities of more than a million).

A SECOND provision of the DeMaio bill would also restrict the use of tax revenues from property in downtown development areas to the improvement of public properties within the district.

Toney raised by the development authority tax, which could be levied only upon property within a central business district, would be limited to providing the development authority with an operating budget.

"The hub of any town is the downtown area," says DeMaio. "Too many people have allowed their downtowns to decay. Too often the (local) millage is levied on everybody."

"This bill will allow the businessman to do something for himself, because he has everything to gain."

UNDER THE DeMaio proposal, a downtown development authority would be composed of nine citizens, including the mayor, city manager or township supervisor as chief executive officer of the municipality. At least five members of the authority must be persons "having an interest in property located in the downtown district" and one of the members must be a resident of the district if it has more than 100 persons living in it.

Chief among the development authority's duties is the responsibility for planning the restoration or reconstruction of public facilities within the downtown district and for building any necessary new public utilities. All development plans and methods of financing the authority, including the organization's tax levy for budgetary purposes, and the creation of a specific downtown development district must first be approved by the local governing body—the city council or the township board.

THE BILL was sent back to the Senate in late July for approval of minor amendments proposed by the House. It is expected the bill will go to the governor's office for his signature this fall.

A Milliken spokesman said the governor is "generally supportive" of the legislation and will probably sign it into law.

Although the DeMaio proposal never encountered much organized opposition, some legislators and lobbyists from business interests expressed doubt about the bill's financial provisions.

"DETROIT IS more than just downtown," said Rep. William Bryant (R-Grosse Pointe Farms), the GOP floor leader in the House.

"We want to make sure there are adequate protections in the determination of what the improvements would be and how they would be funded," he added.

"We fought rather hard to restrict the purposes for which the authority may spend its money," explained Donald Booth of the Detroit Chamber of Commerce. "We tried to bring some good business thinking (to the bill) to clean it up."

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