



## **eCities 2020 Summary**

iLabs, The Center for Innovation Research  
College of Business  
University of Michigan-Dearborn

eCities is an annual research study that examines community-level factors that foster entrepreneurship and small business development. The focus is on entrepreneurship and small business growth because of their importance to the expansion and diversification of regional economies and job creation. The primary purpose of eCities is to understand the impact of the strategies and success stories of Michigan communities across the state. The data collected not only provides a means for benchmarking performance, but it also allows communities to learn from the qualities and efforts of their neighboring communities.

### **Background**

Across the country, economic development activities are carried out by various entities, including state agencies, regional associations, and counties. While these broader organizations engage in promoting economic development in Michigan, similar activities are also undertaken by many townships, cities, and villages. Given this, the eCities project uses the community as the unit of measurement, and not a county or metropolitan area, as other studies have used.

The eCities project seeks to provide benchmarking tools and overview reports for participating communities and has incorporated new ways to learn from the success stories of local communities across the state. While there is no single solution for every community, the success stories allow communities to understand strategies that can be tailored to local resources and communities. Helping local communities, who often have the most impact on small and entrepreneurial firms, provides an opportunity to improve the environment for entrepreneurialism throughout the state. Since its inception in 2007, eCities has grown from 14 to over 250 eligible communities and more than 300 communities invited to participate each year. As communities continue to demonstrate their interest in the annual project, the eCities team is implementing new ways to benchmark community progress and offer more comprehensive analysis to participating communities.



## Data Sources

This year, five-year's worth of publicly available data on communities was collected by the eCities team to analyze trends surrounding business and economic cycles. Such data demonstrates growth, investments, and the cost of doing business within the communities.

More specifically, eCities examined eleven publicly available data points relating to community growth and investment metrics that impact the business community. Data was collected on 277 Michigan communities from 54 of the 83 counties in the state. Communities were chosen based on population, geography, and relative size within counties.

**Property Values (7 data points):** Examines the changes in the amount of real commercial property, real industrial property, real total property, personal commercial property, personal industrial property, total personal property, and overall total property

**Property Taxes (1 data point):** Examines the changes in the average non-homestead tax rate

**Governmental Assets (3 data points):** Examines the changes in non-depreciated, depreciated, and total governmental assets

## 2020 Five-Star and Four-Star Communities

A total of 206 communities were recognized as 5-star and 4-star communities. The 5-star and 4-star communities in the eCities project are part of a group of Michigan communities that have seen the strongest growth in business development over the past five years, while controlling the costs of doing business in town.

## Five-Star Honored Communities

Allendale Charter Township	City of Farmington	City of Kentwood	Port Huron Charter Township
City of Ann Arbor	City of Farmington Hills	City of Laingsburg	City of Reading
Antwerp Township	City of Fenton	City of Lapeer	City of Richmond
Armada Township	Fenton Charter Township	Leighton Township	City of Rochester Hills
Bedford Township	City of Ferndale	Leoni Township	City of Romulus
City of Berkley	City of Flushing	Lyon Charter Township	City of Royal Oak
City of Birmingham	Gaines Township	Macomb Township	Shelby Charter Township
Brandon Charter Township	Garfield Charter Township	City of Madison Heights	Springfield Township
Bridgeport Charter Township	Genoa Charter Township	Manchester Township	City of St. Clair
City of Brighton	Georgetown Charter Township	Marine City	City of St. Johns
Brownstown Charter Township	City of Gladstone	City of Marysville	City of St. Louis
Byron Township	City of Grand Blanc	Milford Charter Township	City of Sterling Heights
Caledonia Charter Township	Grand Haven Charter Township	Mount Morris Charter Township	Superior Charter Township
Cambridge Township	City of Grand Ledge	Mundy Charter Township	Texas Charter Township
Cascade Charter Township	City of Grand Rapids	City of New Baltimore	City of Troy
Chesaning Township	Green Oak Charter Township	City of Niles	Tyrone Township
Charter Township of Clinton	City of Grosse Pointe Farms	Northville Charter Township	City of Utica
Commerce Charter Township	City of Grosse Pointe Park	City of Novi	Vassar Township
Davison Township	City of Grosse Pointe Woods	City of Oak Park	Vienna Charter Township
Delhi Charter Township	Hamburg Township	Oakland Charter Township	City of Walker
Delta Charter Township	City of Hamtramck	Oceola Township	Washington Charter Township
City of Detroit	Harrison Charter Township	Orion Charter Township	Waterford Charter Township
DeWitt Township	Hartland Township	Oshtemo Charter Township	West Bloomfield Charter Township
City of East Grand Rapids	City of Hazel Park	City of Owosso	White Lake Charter Township
City of East Lansing	Highland Charter Township	Paradise Township	City of Wixom
City of Eastpointe	City of Houghton	City of Perry	City of Wyoming
Elmwood Charter Township	City of Hudsonville	Plainfield Charter Township	Charter Township of Ypsilanti
Emmett Township	City of Ironwood	Plymouth Charter Township	

## Four-Star Honored Communities

City of Albion	Grand Blanc Township	City of Port Huron
City of Allen Park	City of Grand Haven	City of Portage
City of Alma	Grand Rapids Charter Township	City of Rochester
Atlas Township	City of Grandville	City of Rockford
City of Auburn Hills	City of Grosse Pointe	City of Roseville
Bangor Charter Township	City of Harper Woods	Saginaw Charter Township
City of Belding	Holland Charter Township	City of Saline
Benton Charter Township	City of Holland	Saugatuck Township
City of Benton Harbor	Holly Township	City of Sault Ste. Marie
Blackman Charter Township	City of Howell	City of South Lyon
Blendon Township	City of Huntington Woods	City of Southfield
Bloomfield Charter Township	Huron Charter Township	City of Southgate
City of Burton	Independence Charter Township	Spring Lake Township
Cannon Township	City of Kalamazoo	City of St. Clair Shores
Canton Charter Township	Kochville Township	St. Joseph Charter Township
City of Charlotte	City of Lansing	City of Sturgis
Chesterfield Charter Township	Lawrence Township	Summit Township
City of Clawson	City of Livonia	Township of Sumpter
City of Coldwater	Marquette Charter Township	City of Taylor
Comstock Charter Township	City of Mason	City of Tecumseh
City of Davison	City of Melvindale	Thomas Township
City of Dearborn	Meridian Charter Township	Traverse City
City of Dearborn Heights	City of Milan	Union Charter Township
East Bay Charter Township	City of Mount Pleasant	Van Buren Charter Township
City of Escanaba	City of Northville	City of Walled Lake
City of Flint	City of Norton Shores	City of Warren
Flint Charter Township	Charter Township of Oxford	City of Westland
City of Frankenmuth	Park Township	City of Williamston
Frenchtown Charter Township	Pere Marquette Charter Township	City of Woodhaven
Fruitport Charter Township	City of Petoskey	City of Ypsilanti
Genesee Charter Township	Pittsfield Charter Township	City of Zeeland
	City of Plymouth	
	City of Pontiac	

## Highlights

This year, the 277 eligible communities from 54 counties span the state of Michigan and are home to 70% of its population. Over the five-year period of 2015-2019, these communities increased their capital assets by an average of 2.4% per year by investments such as library equipment, building, water, and sewage improvements, and street renovations. In 2019 alone, these communities spent over \$25.2 billion on such investments. Further, these places are home to 87% of Michigan's real commercial property and have 65% of the state's total property value.

In 2020, eCities recognized 206 municipalities as four- and five-star communities. The four- and five-star communities come from 43 Michigan counties. These communities vary in size, with some being the most populated places in the state, to others being home to just over 1,000 residents. From 2015-2019, these communities were able to grow property values by 5.87% and capital assets, up 2.34%.

## Conclusion

eCities 2020 marked more than a decade of helping communities to improve the state's entrepreneurial climate by collecting and sharing the strategies and successes of Michigan municipalities and providing an understanding of what strategies are successful in engaging the business community. The eCities project highlights how local governments from across Michigan are growing their communities and supporting businesses. As a university, the University of Michigan-Dearborn wants to share the successes and educate about the best practices that can be used by other communities in the state. As the nature of economic development evolves, eCities is a tool to help local governments demonstrate their role in the changing economy. These governments are supporting unique and innovative efforts locally, while collaborating regionally to help Michigan businesses compete in an ever-changing business climate.

Much like the entrepreneurs whom they covet, communities need to understand that strategies cannot be copied and applied without consideration. Communities need to recognize and match their resources to best meet the needs of their businesses if they are to encourage growth and attract entrepreneurial investment.

To learn more about the eCities project or iLabs, please contact [kporembi@umich.edu](mailto:kporembi@umich.edu). eCities 2021 will launch in May 2021. Visit the [eCities website](#) for more information and updates.