

# Michigan Avenue reimagined

\$6M development  
would raze portion  
of Emil's block

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LANSING - A \$6 million retail and residential development on East Michigan Avenue would reinvent the "miracle mile" between Lansing and Michigan State University, officials said.

The proposed four-story East Town Flats would comprise 11,500 square feet of retail space and 39 apartments, developer Scott Gillespie announced Friday. He said he hopes to break ground as soon as spring of 2016.

The development's first ten-

ant would be Strange Matter Coffee, currently at 2001 E. Michigan Ave., Gillespie said. He said the coffee shop will close its current location across the street and have about double its current space. The apartments would range in price from \$800 a month for a studio apartment to \$1,300 for a two-bedroom apartment, Gillespie said. He said he's in talks with other potential tenants, including a restaurant, to fill the remaining retail space.

Gillespie said he hopes to complete the project by spring of 2017, starting with the demolition of existing business units Gillespie owns from 2002 E. Michigan Ave. to 2016 E. Michigan Ave. Included in the demolition would be the recently closed Emil's restaurant and Capital City Homebrew Supply,

which plans to relocate. Gillespie said the development will include as many as six more businesses.

The project would bridge a divide between Lansing and Michigan State University, said Bob Trezise, president and CEO of the Lansing Economic Area Partnership. Trezise said the project may be eligible for Michigan Economic Development Corp. tax incentives.

"We're filling in Michigan Avenue. We're looking like a global community," he said. "We're connecting university and capital."

Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero said new businesses and residents would expand the diversity of the surrounding neighborhoods.

"We are witnessing the rebirth of the east side, the rebirth



COURTESY OF THE LANSING ECONOMIC AREA PARTNERSHIP

**A rendering of the proposed East Town Flats development on East Michigan Avenue.**

of Michigan Avenue," Bernero said. "Now it's time to the build for the next 50 years."

Todd Branstner, owner of Capital City Homebrew Supply, was less enthusiastic. Branstner said he's one year into a five-year lease, and learned he would have to vacate about six weeks ago.

He said he plans to relocate his business to the former site of 621 restaurant, located at 621 E. Michigan Ave., by early January. He said the East Town Flats proposal is out of charac-

ter with the business district.

"It's terrible. It's going to destroy the neighborhood," Branstner said. "It's a shame to see all the buildings go."

The project was approved for a 20-year Brownfield incentive Friday morning by the Lansing Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. The incentive and project site plan await City Council approval, officials said.

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