

And a river runs through it

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9/18/2009 12:26 PM

This morning I had the distinct pleasure of starting my day with Jason Kildea and Pat Gillespie of the Gillespie Group, riding along the Grand and Red Cedar Rivers on a pontoon boat for the Grand River Development Tour. Now, as an individual who looks for optimism in situations and usually sees the glass half full, I knew I would enjoy the unique city views, and be able to see the forest through the trees as it pertains to the progressing development of Lansing's downtown. But, after having been on the tour, and listening to the plans and ideas and, frankly, the challenges, for creating a better downtown Lansing and riverfront area from the folks at Gillespie Group, I left the tour feeling nothing short of inspired. Not only was it fun to see the progress of current developments from the unusual angle of the rarely traveled waterway, but the potential for some real excitement in town got bubbling seeing the parks that back up to the river, but are currently blocked from river view by underbrush. We saw that right in the middle of our bustling downtown, the river provides quiet and scenic places, currently going nearly completely unseen by human eyes. The opportunities for community enrichment, development and beautification projects are limitless. This untapped treasure proposes to be that "something" that truly makes downtown sparkle. After all, if downtown is the heart of Lansing, this river simply must be those invaluable arteries. Talk of development made the group smile. Talk of what Lansing could be was inspiring. Talk of plans for color tours on the river and water taxis taking downtown workers to hip lunch spots even made a few jaws drop. But if all of those ideas and possibilities and "Why have we never done more with this" scenarios continue, that's all that these inspiring ideas will ever be - simply talk. Gillespie Group made it clear that if we sit and wait for the city, or one developer, to come through and make it happen, the goal for a river that is alive with activity and people and life will never happen. People have to really want it, and want it enough to do something about it. Pat Gillespie made a challenge for those of us that took the tour to think of ideas, help with a plan, organize a group and possibly be a part of something really big. Ideas for riverfront development and what individuals or organizations can do to be a part of it can be directed to Pat Gillespie at pgillespie@gillespie-group.com After all, potential is nothing without action and the potential for an amazing riverfront is right here waiting for minds and hands to make it happen. This is Lansing, Michigan's Capital City, and yes, a river runs through it.