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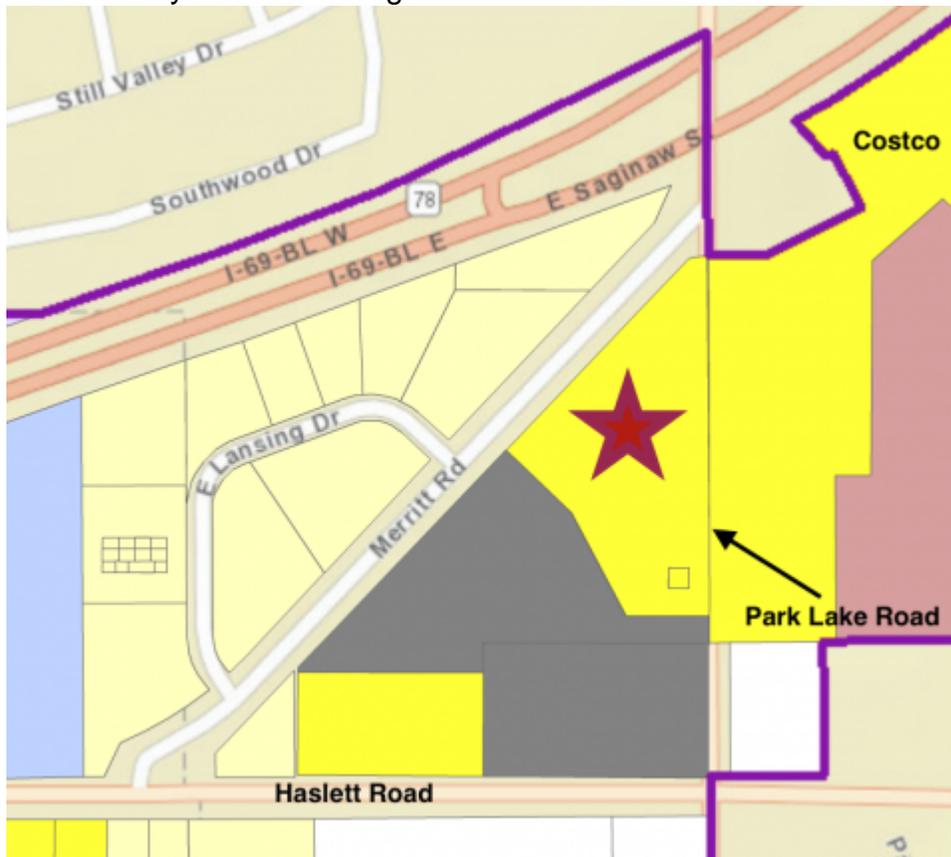
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## City to Sell Public Land in Deal Brokered by Marijuana Industry Player <sup>[1]</sup>

Tuesday, March 5, 2019, 8:02 am

**By:**

Dan Totzkay and Alice Dreger



East Lansing City Council is set to vote tonight on a purchase agreement <sup>[2]</sup> brokered through a marijuana industry real estate company for the former Department of Public Works (DPW) land on Merritt Road, near Costco.

Reached for comment, the East Lansing owner of a local moving company tells ELi he was never informed the property was up for auction, even though he told City staff last year his company was interested in buying it. The site is just northeast of the location of Red Cedar Spirits.

According to a memo [3] included in tonight's Council's agenda [4] from East Lansing Director of Planning, Building, and Development Tim Dempsey, a company named Kodiak Landarc was the "winning auction bidder" for the site.

Kodiak Landarc's representative is named as Jeff Yatooma, the owner of Cannabis Property Brokers of Michigan [5], which calls itself "Leaders in the Michigan Cannabis Real Estate Industry."

The 6.4-acre property is to be purchased for \$1,000,900, but only if Council agrees to also approve a to-be-submitted special use permit (SUP) application and site plan. No details are provided with regard to the plans for the site.

There is no public record available online of an auction for the former DPW land. Dempsey's memo doesn't say how many bids were received, where the auction was advertised, or how long a time-frame was made available for bids to be submitted.

The public property being sold is close to a privately-owned property that may become a medical marijuana provisioning center. East Lansing's Planning Commission recently recommended approval of a medical marijuana provisioning center at 1950 Merritt Road [6], on the other side of Red Cedar Spirits from the former DPW land. City Council will hold a public hearing for that provisioning center on March 26.

City Council moved recently to introduce a somewhat controversial ordinance [7] that would change marijuana zoning in the area that includes that site. The ordinance would relax, only in that area, the rule about how close two provisioning centers can be to each other, reducing the setback from 1,000 feet to 500. Council is set to hold a public hearing and vote on that ordinance on March 26.

The local franchise owner of College Hunks Hauling Junk, Bill Willbrandt, told ELi that his business had inquired about whether it could buy this former DPW property when attempting to relocate into East Lansing [8] last year. Willbrandt, an East Lansing resident, was looking to move his company here.

According to Willbrandt, City planners told him in 2018 that, under the East Lansing master plan, this property was to be rezoned into a retail property and it was therefore inappropriate for his moving company.

When asked yesterday if he or his business partner knew about any auction of the site the company had wanted, Willbrandt told ELi that he "did not know that the property was out for bids."

Willbrandt says he "would have certainly been interested at that price."

ELi spoke with another local business owner who also did not know the property had been up for sale, who said he might have been interested. (He did not wish to be identified.)

Last fall, as Council was debating where, if anywhere, to allow provisioning centers, the publicly-owned property on Merritt Road was not originally on the map of considered areas. Then, at the

October 30 meeting of Council, Mayor Mark Meadows introduced a draft ordinance [9] that included the public property.

Three members of Council, including Mayor Pro Tem Erik Altmann, voted down that ordinance [10] for different reasons. A week later, Altmann moved to bring it back for consideration, saying "the smoke had cleared." The ordinance was then discussed, amended, and passed unanimously [11].

If all goes as the published agenda indicates, Council will vote on the purchase agreement for the former DPW property tonight during the consent agenda. That means the Mayor expects no discussion of the matter, just a simple "yes" vote with a number of other items.

No public hearing will be held about this sale, but the public can make comment during the session's "Communications from the audience" portion, near the beginning of the 7 p.m. meeting in the courtroom upstairs at City Hall. Comments can also be sent by email to Council [12].

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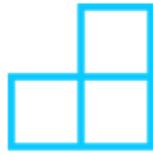
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- [10] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/three-council-members-vote-down-sale-medical-marijuana-east-lansing>
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