

City of Royal Oak Recognized as “Honored Community” by UM-Dearborn’s iLabs’ eCities Research

- *Additionally recognized as a Five Star Community by the organization*

ROYAL OAK, Mich., February 7, 2024 – The [City of Royal Oak](#) today announced it has been named a 2023 eCities Honored Community for its successes and efforts in contributing to Michigan’s growth through impactful policy and recruitment efforts that have spurred entrepreneurial growth.

The designation was given as part of the annual [eCities](#) study, conducted by iLabs, the University of Michigan-Dearborn’s Office of Engagement and Impact. Including Royal Oak, only five communities across Michigan received the honor.

“Over the last several years, Royal Oak has prioritized improving our infrastructure, providing efficient and effective services, removing barriers to encourage sustainable development and showing entrepreneurs why Royal Oak is a great place to live, work and play,” said Royal Oak Mayor Michael Fournier. “We are grateful to be recognized as an eCities Honored Community and to continue our efforts to make Royal Oak an inviting, desirable and diverse community for all.”

Through its strategy to attract new businesses and retain its entrepreneurs, some actions taken by the City of Royal Oak include:

- Made investments in improving its roads and infrastructure
- Updated its zoning and building codes
- Prioritized relationship-building with the business community by actively soliciting feedback
- Thoughtfully implemented American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund
- Achieved accredited agency status for its police department through the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Program.

The City additionally has engaged in partnerships for home buying and homeowner education, improved resident communication, developed a human rights commission, implemented an [Aging in Place](#) strategy and developed a [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan](#).

As a result, the City of Royal Oak was additionally honored as a five-star community along with 89 other communities across the state. Only communities that have seen the strongest growth in business development over the past five years, while controlling the costs of doing business in town, are designated as five- and four-star communities. Responses to three open-end questions, related to business climate improvement efforts and small business support, were evaluated by a panel of reviewers to select the 2023 Honored Communities.

“This recognition confirms that we are on the right path to further establishing Royal Oak as a premier destination for entrepreneurs and anyone looking for a safe, healthy and sustainable community to call home,” said Royal Oak Interim City Manager Todd Fenton.

The eCities study analyzed publicly available data from 277 communities from 54 counties in Michigan. Researchers focused on the five-year changes in property values, community assets and tax rates, which can demonstrate the growth, investments and cost of doing business within the community. For example, over the five-year period of 2018-2022, these communities increased their capital assets by an

average of 3.42 percent per year by investments such as park and road improvements, new police and fire equipment and water system enhancements. Further, these places are home to 87 percent of Michigan's commercial real estate and have 64 percent of the state's total property value.

Although accounting for less than 20 percent of the State's cities and townships, the 277 communities analyzed are home to 71 percent of Michigan's population and 86 percent of the state's commercial property.

"Each year, the eCities project aims to highlight the successes and continued commitment of cities and townships to grow business and support entrepreneurship within their communities," said Kari Kowalski, iLabs project manager.

To learn more about the City of Royal Oak, you can visit romi.gov.