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“Michigan’s earmark process is an unconstitutional mess that has repeatedly led to criminal investigations.”

Marquette housing earmark is a bad pork deal

Let builders build

By Jarrett Skorup | September 2025

Michigan’s pork barrel spending is out of control. Lawmakers have directed billions of dollars in recent years to politically connected groups, promoting political development, not economic development.

The latest deal is a lousy housing investment that is unlikely to lead to any economic growth. As uncovered by The Detroit News, a \$15 million legislative earmark is being directed to Invest UP, an Upper Peninsula economic development organization. The group has never had an annual budget of more than \$1.5 million — one tenth of the earmark.

Lawmakers’ stated intent for this earmark is to help workers afford housing, but the money is going toward apartments costing nearly \$3,000 per month in what the developer calls an “upscale apartment community.” It is hard to see how this apartment fits the guidelines of “workforce housing stock,” but Michigan’s state-directed economic development

organization — the Michigan Economic Development Corporation — says this is fine.

The earmark won’t go to Invest UP but instead to a different group, Build UP. Despite what the specific language of the budget says, the MEDC says it is fine for the money to go to a different organization. Notably, the developer building these expensive units is a board member of Invest UP.

This is a bad deal.

This pattern of favoritism undermines trust in government programs and diverts attention from real solutions. Instead of targeting funding to projects that genuinely increase affordable housing, the state ends up rewarding connections, leaving ordinary residents with higher rents and fewer options.

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Michigan's earmark process is an unconstitutional mess that has repeatedly led to criminal investigations. Michigan will not subsidize its way out of a housing shortage; that would cost way too much, with funds ending up in the laps of the politically well-connected. The solution is to remove government obstacles and let builders build.

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