

# Blog: Bay City is buckling down and doing the creative work to rise after the COVID-19 pandemic ends

MIKE LOOMIS | THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2020

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Photo courtesy of Mike Loomis

Mike and Pam Loomis say they see great things in Bay City's future. His sons – from left, Jared, Justin, and Brandon – do too, so they're choosing to return to Bay City to begin their careers.

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*This blog is in the sixth in an occasional series written by local people and businesses as they navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. This week, Route Bay City features Mike Loomis, founder and CEO of MDL Companies, a full-service real estate sales and investment*

*company. It opened more than 30 years ago and now includes the following divisions – insurance restoration; property management; general construction; and real estate brokerage.*

I remember sitting in the conference room in March watching as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer discussed the plans to shut down the state due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This decision caught us all off guard. The business had been doing so well, making us very optimistic for the future. I am often amazed how quickly life changes. I sent my employees home that afternoon, not knowing it would be months before we would see any resemblance of normalcy again.

My first order of business was to keep our people safe, but following closely behind was to keep the company together. All projects were in limbo as the stay-at-home order was extended time after time.

My employees never missed a beat. We got creative in how we work. If we could work remotely, we did. We kept time in the office to a bare minimum. We held three company-wide video conferences to share words of encouragement. We had virtual meetings between the different department heads to make sure that when we could resume business, we were ready to hit the ground running.



**Mike Loomis and his family settled their company in the old PNC Bank Building at 310 Center Ave., in the heart of Downtown Bay City.**

Construction work slowly resumed, but with that came the challenges of keeping our office staff safe. We adopted staggered work hours and spread out the desks, gradually working back into a new routine.

I can honestly say that I am excited to get up and go to work now. The current crisis isn't the first that this community has faced. During the meltdown of 2008, businesses throughout the state struggled. It sometimes felt as if I had to perform magic to cover our daily expenses. I made the decision to take on debt to stay afloat while trying to create new business deals. It took a long time to see Bay City start to recover. I sometimes wondered if it would ever fully come back. But as the son of a dairy farmer in Cass City, I had been taught to have faith in God and to push through tough times.

About 5 years ago, Bay City started turning the corner. I remember touring The Times Lofts apartment building with Rod Hildebrandt and leaving very impressed. I admitted to being confused as to why he was investing so heavily in Bay City, but I will always remember what he said: "Mike, the people who live here don't know how good they have it. The low crime, traffic, the low cost of living, the Saginaw Bay, the schools are better than we give them credit for. You watch, people are coming to Bay City. It is going to change." I was quickly becoming proud of our city. I remember Dr. Samuel Shaheen saying, "We who live here need to be the first to promote our community."

**"Now, it is 2020 and while Bay City is seeing the same challenges as the rest of the world, we are growing. Homes are going up in value and selling at a pace I haven't seen in 34 years in the business."**

**- Mike Loomis**

I dared to hope for what Bay City could be. When I moved here in 1989, I found a city I loved that was filled with hard-working people. My family business grew here. I made a decision to focus on the positives and create opportunities to grow my real estate investment company in this community.

There have, of course, been bumps in the road, but I don't regret a single decision. I am now living a life I never thought possible back in 2008. We have been fortunate to grow our company to include five separate divisions, all lending stability through the tough times that are sure to come again.

It all goes back to a wonderful thing that happened slowly. My family began not leaving on the weekends. The game-changer came three years ago when we bought a pontoon boat and kept it in Liberty Marina. I had spent several years living in Bay City without taking advantage of one of the best aspects that the city had to offer. My boys were of college and high school age and started inviting their friends to join us. Together, we walked through downtown, enjoying the nightlife or summer concerts in the park. Eventually, we decided to move the MDL offices to the old PNC Bank Building at 310 Center Ave. in the heart of the downtown district.

Slowly, Bay City began drawing my family back. The younger generation wanted to stay here because they liked Bay City.

First my nephew, Drew, graduated from Northwood University and turned down job offers in bigger cities to be part of what we're doing in Bay City. Next my son, Jared, graduated from Michigan State University and brought his friends here on weekends to enjoy boating, walleye fishing, and duck hunting. After graduation, he joined our team too. My youngest son, Justin, anticipates graduating from Northwood this spring. He works in our Restoration Division now and expects to join us full-time soon. My oldest son, Brandon, serves on our board of directors.

Now, it is 2020 and while Bay City is seeing the same challenges as the rest of the world, we are growing. Homes are going up in value and selling at a pace I haven't seen in 34 years in the business. Rental units are going fast too.

Downtown Bay City is bustling and healthy, even as businesses continue to follow safety protocols. I am proud to say that the employees of MDL have worked hard to keep our company moving forward. Our employees have always been resilient and willing to adapt for the success of the company.

I have never been more proud of our staff than I have been as I've watched them handle both the business struggles and personal struggles that COVID-19 has thrown into our lives. Looking back, I can truly say that going through the unknown thrown upon us last March has made us stronger. Overcoming struggles in the last year has taught us that through hard work, hope, and a little bit of luck, we can get through anything.