

Northeast Michigan Prosperity & Resiliency

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2021 - 2025

COMMUNITY
SUPPORT

ECONOMIC
EXPANSION

TALENT
ADVANCEMENT

The Northeast Michigan Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration.

DISCOVER
Northeast Michigan
EAST OF EXPECTED

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**The 8-county region
of Northeast
Michigan is home to
approximately
132,900 people**

Covering 4,995 square miles with numerous bodies of water and small urban centers, the region is both remote and communal. Its culture celebrates the seclusion that comes with its wide-open spaces and pristine forests, yet residents have a shared association and great pride in their communities.

In this environment, prosperity equates to high quality of life. What makes for a high quality of life in Northeast Michigan? A slow pace, outdoor recreation, small town character, and a sense of community. However, these idyllic conditions cannot be achieved or sustained without hard work and careful planning. The region must strive for economic prosperity in order to thrive.

Achieving economic prosperity is a challenge for many reasons. The vast, wide-open spaces make for low population density. Transportation and other infrastructure can be costly, increasing the burden on residents, businesses, and communities. The region can't compete with larger urban areas when it comes to social and cultural diversity, income opportunities, and amenities.

Despite the challenges, many dedicated residents show great passion for the region every day. That passion and perseverance reflects a shared pride in the many assets of the region. Collectively, the region leverages those assets in order to support a vision of thriving, connected communities. Communities in all corners of the region are working diligently to improve quality of life and showcase Northeast Michigan as an ideal place to live, work, and play.

132,900 people, 1.3% of the state's population

8 counties, 81 townships, 14 cities and villages

Over 3,000 private-sector businesses that employ 27,152 people

5,876 businesses have 1-9 employees

50 businesses have 100+ employees

2 community colleges

10 ports, including 4 deep sea ports

Executive Summary

This plan highlights the shared vision, goals, and strategies for the entire region that were identified through data and stakeholder participation. The plan considers the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Northeast Michigan in regard to loss of human life, businesses, and household income.

A Vision for Prosperity

Our vision is to provide current and future generations with a vibrant, sustainable, and prosperous Northeast Michigan region that:

- Promotes innovation across the economy and supports entrepreneurs with connections and resources
- Markets Northeast Michigan as an interconnected network of great places

- Sustains excellence in education from early childhood through all stages of life
- Provides the skills needed by employers through education and training that results in a continuously transforming and responsive workforce
- Ensures the protection and enhancement of our natural resource based economy through incorporating sustainability best practices
- Fulfills the current and future needs of the region through strong collaboration and leadership
- Ensures a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment to reach prosperity goals across the region

The mission of Northeast Michigan is to create sustainable economic development through public-private collaborations that result in increasing employment opportunities, income, and overall quality of life in Northeast Michigan.

REGIONAL PROFILE

Data & Demographics

The **population** in the region is low and has low density, at **132,900** people spread across 4,995 square miles. This is a decrease of 2,046 people since 2014.

The area is **aging** with a median age of 52 years, with **35%** of the population aged 60 years or older. The age group 20-59 comprises **45%**, a decrease of 1% since 2017.

The **education** of the region is improving, with **17.6%** of the population holding a Bachelor's Degree or higher and **34.6%** with Some College or an Associate's Degree. This is an increase from 14.9% and 33.8% respectively in 2014.

The region ranks **higher** than the state average in population with Some College or an Associate's Degree (32.8%), but **lower** than the state average for Bachelor's Degree or higher (29.1%).

The **unemployment rate** for the region is **6.6%**, a decrease of 1.6% from 2015.

The total **labor force** is **55,923**, a decrease from 56,139 in 2014.

Median household income is **\$46,073** in 2019, an increase of \$9,837 since 2010.

The **poverty rate** is high at **10.4%**. The rate of children living in poverty (under the age of 18) is **20.4%**. Families with a female householder with no husband is **30%** and increases to **42.5%** when children (under the age of 18) are present.

The region has **7,022** businesses, **65.9%** of which are small businesses in 2019.

Larger companies (10 or more employees) provide a majority of jobs in 2019, at **62.8%** of total jobs in the region.

ASSETS

Numerous recreation opportunities and plentiful fresh water, forests, and farmland

High quality programs and services for the workforce, businesses, and communities

Collaboration across the region

High quality of life combined with low cost of living and small-town character

Infrastructure that provides a foundation for growth

Challenges & Opportunities

Decreasing **working age** population, increasing **retirement age** population

Higher than state average **poverty** rates, high school **drop-out** rates, and **long-term unemployed**

Lack of available, quality childcare

Minimal entrepreneurship culture

High rates of opioid and other **substance abuse**

Lack of high-speed, affordable **broadband**

Transportation difficulties

Lack of affordable and middle **housing** stock

Community Support

Placemaking

Goal: Strengthen the quality of place throughout Northeast Michigan.

- Target investment in small towns, cities, and villages
- Coordinate placemaking efforts to establish linkages across communities and the region

Results: *Diversified, more resilient economy; Unified, stable communities*

Regional Branding

Goal: Improve awareness and recognition of the region in state, national and global markets.

- Build a solid collaboration with tourism councils, chamber of commerce's on regional marketing and promotion utilizing regional brand and websites

Results: *Unified identity and coordinated promotion; Targeted economic development*

Transportation & Transit

Goal: Develop or enhance transportation options across the region for efficiency and accessibility.

- Increase awareness of existing transportation options and resources for the workforce
- Collaborate and coordinate across sectors to reduce costs for logistics and workforce transportation

Results: *Reduced costs and more successful businesses; Increased, more reliable workforce*

Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors.

- Continue increasing availability of and access to high-speed internet
- Continue providing resources to improve infrastructure, including assessments, plans, and technical assistance

Results: *Increased use of broadband; Improved awareness of infrastructure capacity and conditions; Plans and support for improving infrastructure*

Shared Vision

- Innovation
- Interconnected Network
- Excellent and Efficient Education
- Transforming & Responsive Workforce
- Sustainable Natural Resources
- Collaboration & Leadership
- Diverse, equitable, inclusive

Regional Collaboration

Goal: Enable consistent and coordinated services in the region.

- Facilitate a collaborative approach for all projects throughout the region
- Achieve efficiencies by sharing services where appropriate
- Build on existing regional groups for collaborative ventures

Results: Efficient systems and effective use of limited resources; Leading collaborative approaches in the region and state

Economic Expansion

Business Development

Goal: Foster an entrepreneurial culture in the region and grow existing businesses.

- Encourage entrepreneurship through intentional, facilitated activities
- Increase volume of and access to business support resources
- Diversify and globally connect businesses

Results: Improved climate for small business; Thriving economy

Targeted Industry Clusters

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace
- Energy, Efficiency, and Renewables
- Healthcare
- Local Foods
- Tourism
- Wood Products

Goal: Support targeted industry clusters.

- Provide enhanced business development support
- Develop and attract a skilled workforce
- Promote the industry inside and outside the region
- Coordinate logistics and transportation for goods and talent

Results: Increased capacity and market expansion; Skilled workforce; Successful, growing businesses

Entrepreneurship

Goal: Increase awareness about entrepreneurship

- Widely promote the Business /Entrepreneurial Support website
- Develop a "Entrepreneurial Success" Campaign
- Regularly conduct Pitch Events throughout the region
- Deliver entrepreneurial programming to youth

Results: Stronger workforce system; Successful businesses

Talent Advancement

Workforce Development

Goal: Attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce that meets the needs of local employers.

- Diversify funding for the workforce system
- Increase collaboration among stakeholders in the workforce system

- Engage employers

Results: Stronger workforce system; Well-prepared labor pool; Successful businesses

Talent Attraction

Goal: Target an audience of skilled workers who desire the lifestyle offered by Northeast Michigan

- Finalize and promote the Talent Hub website to provide a means of networking young adults
- Create promotional and recruitment tools for businesses and communities
- Promote innovative and successful companies headquartered in the region
- Attend large-scale events to attract skilled workers

Results: Highly-skilled, younger workforce

Talent Development

Goal: Conduct talent development activities using a sector-based approach.

- Ensure strong connections between sector-based partnerships and workforce development boards
- Develop career pathways for in-demand occupations

Results: Stronger workforce system; Successful businesses

Goal: Increase utilization of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships

- Promote USDOL Registered Apprenticeships to local employers
- Create a centralized coordination function for USDOL Registered Apprenticeships
- Ensure long-term, ongoing support for employers and apprentices

Results: Stronger workforce system; Successful businesses

Goal: Develop comprehensive Career Pathways systems within sector partnerships

- Create a Career Pathways Roadmap
- Develop training programs where gaps exist
- Promote adult education programs as an entry into career pathways
- Continue to strengthen the region's Business Resource Network (BRN)

Results: Stronger workforce system; Successful businesses

Goal: Improve Soft Skills through Work-Based Training

- Build soft skills training into the structure of work experience programs
- Train work experience supervisors
- Increase the quantity of work experience placements

Results: Stronger workforce system; Successful businesses

MEASUREMENT

Increased labor force participation Decreased unemployment

Increased household income Increased working age population

Improved educational attainment Increased number of small businesses

Chapter One

Introduction & Regional Framework

What is a Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

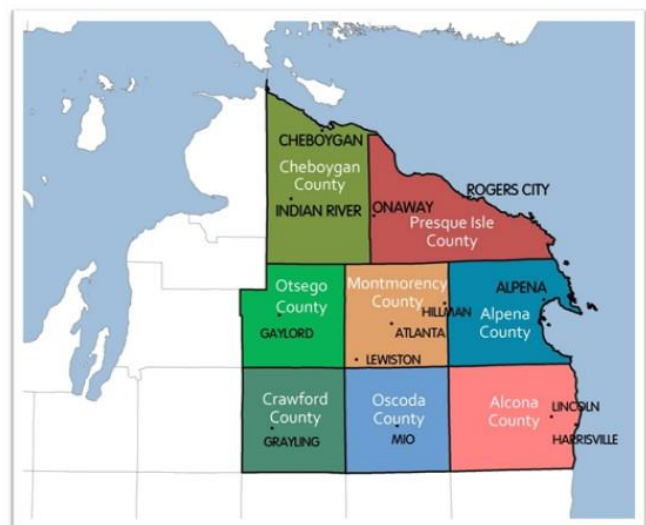
Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) was formed in 1968 under Public Act 281 of 1945 and has been building a strong foundation of partnerships with local communities, organizations, and agencies for over 50 years. One of the roles as an economic development district, as designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), is the development of a Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the eight counties in NEMCOG's planning area: Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle Counties. The EDA uses the CEDS to evaluate grant and resource requests.

Northeast Michigan strives to ensure all residents have access to economic opportunities. The Northeast Michigan Prosperity and Resilience: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is designed to employ a comprehensive, collaborative approach to short- and long-term economic and community development prosperity and resiliency in Northeast Michigan through community support, economic expansion, and talent advancement. The plan supports other regional plans and assists in fostering job creation, improving quality of life, ensuring a diversified economy, and responding to natural and public health crises that can change with market needs. The Northeast Michigan Prosperity and Resiliency Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy builds upon the 2015 Northeast Michigan Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

COVID-19 Pandemic

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created uncertainties in Northeast Michigan's economy, increased awareness about the disparities across the region, and increased the pace for regional changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that low-income earners, less educated and younger workers, women, and communities of color are more vulnerable to job loss and decreased wages. Furthermore, the pandemic has heightened awareness that employer familiarization with work-sharing programs seems to have increased the likelihood that local workers will have to work multiple low paying jobs to increase their quality of life.

The impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need to ensure economic resiliency through continued short- and long-term strategies that address the pandemic's regional economic shocks that include the impacts social distancing measures have on businesses, the impacts industry shutdowns have on household income and corresponding household expenses, and the impacts telecommuting have on office space and broadband needs. Decisions made about investment in diversifying the workforce and economy will impact the region's overall economy.



Economic Resilience

Since the region's economic prosperity relies on its economic resilience, the economy needs to be able to withstand, quickly recover from, and/or avoid economic downturns and natural disasters. After the loss of large manufacturers from the region since 2008, the region has begun to experience a sustained decline in unemployment and the benefits of new companies being attracted to the area in the last few years. The onset and economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the region lacks preparedness to address significant economic shifts. Specific weaknesses in basic economic infrastructure, such as broadband, and the lack of businesses in the region that have pivoted to more modern sales techniques has increased awareness about the region's economic resilience vulnerabilities. Resources provided to combat the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have begun to assist in addressing the region's resiliency vulnerabilities, but greater strides need to take place to stabilize existing businesses, and to implement long-term, structural strategies that continue developing a diversified regional economy. Some of these strategies include providing access to advanced education and training, developing a comprehensive strategy to assess how the region would recover after a major recession or hazard event, growing new industries, holding meetings to provide updates on projects and to address pending and future issues, and hosting a regional informational website. Past small-scale economic resilience efforts have focused on adapting marketing campaigns to the region's climate and promoting the outdoor sport and recreational opportunities.

The region employs resiliency planning practices to determine and address its risks and exposure to extreme weather conditions and disasters. The counties have adopted hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness plans to create resilient, sustainable communities. The hazard mitigation plans evaluate potential hazards and identify mitigation strategies. Each county reviews and updated their mitigation strategies to or minimize the impacts of hazards through governmental regulations, property protection, public education and awareness, natural resource protection, emergency services, and structural projects.

Planning Process

The Northeast Michigan CEDS process is guided and overseen by the Regional Collaborative Development Council (CDC), and the Northeast Michigan Regional Prosperity Collaborative (RPI)/ Workforce Development Board (WDB). The EDC contains representatives from local and state agencies, local government, higher education, and county economic development corporations. The RPI/WDB Collaborative consists of representatives from higher education, adult education, transportation, local economic development organizations, private businesses, and public agencies. The EDC and RPI committees provide input and oversight regarding the overall plan development. The CDC reviews and approves the CEDS draft plan as well as provides the overall direction for the economic development portion of NEMCOG's programs. After the draft plan is approved by the CDC, it is distributed to the NEMCOG Board for final approval before being submitted to the EDA. The following report provides:

- Background information and current economic conditions in Northeast Michigan
- An assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the region
- A description of the goals and strategies to spur economic growth and sustainability in the region
- Strategic action items
- Description of current and future economic resilience strategies
- Evaluation framework

Chapter Two

Current Economic Conditions

The Northeast Michigan region has seen ongoing trends that indicate both strengths and weaknesses in the area’s population, workforce, and economy. ¹ The goal of this plan is to acknowledge the areas where improvement is needed, and enact strategies that leverage strengths for maximum impact.

¹Data in this section is reported from the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, State of Michigan Labor Market Information, and Bureau of Economic Analysis unless otherwise noted.

Population

The Northeast region has seen a 2.8% population decline from 136,711 persons in 2010 to 132,900 persons in 2019. The population is projected to decline based on the high immigration rate of retirement-aged individuals and the low immigration rate of young adults. Additionally, the region has a disproportionate amount of its population that is either aging into retirement or is retired. In 2017, 33% of the population was aged 60 years and older. This age cohort increased to 35% in 2019, which reflects the area's draw as a desirable retirement destination. The region has also seen its median age increase from 38.2 years in 1990 to 52.0 in 2019, which shows a portion of the population is aging in place. As the region's population ages, the need for public and assisted transportation will increase.

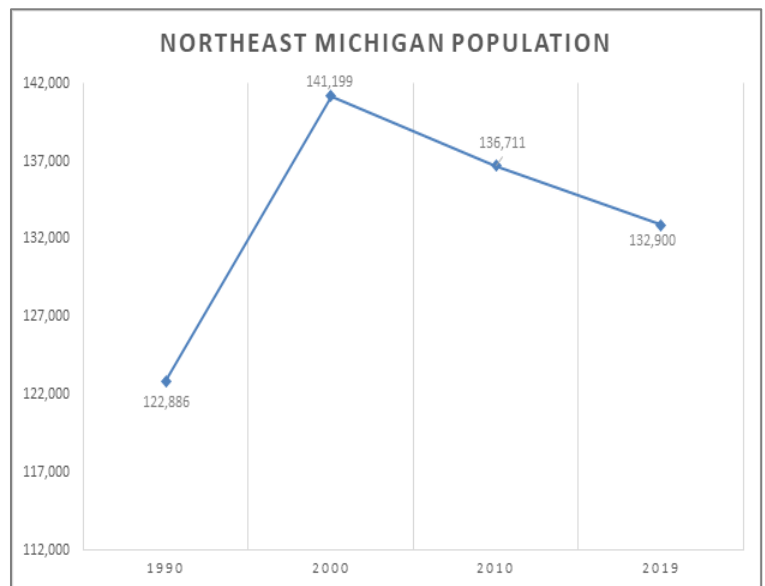


Figure 1: Northeast Michigan Population

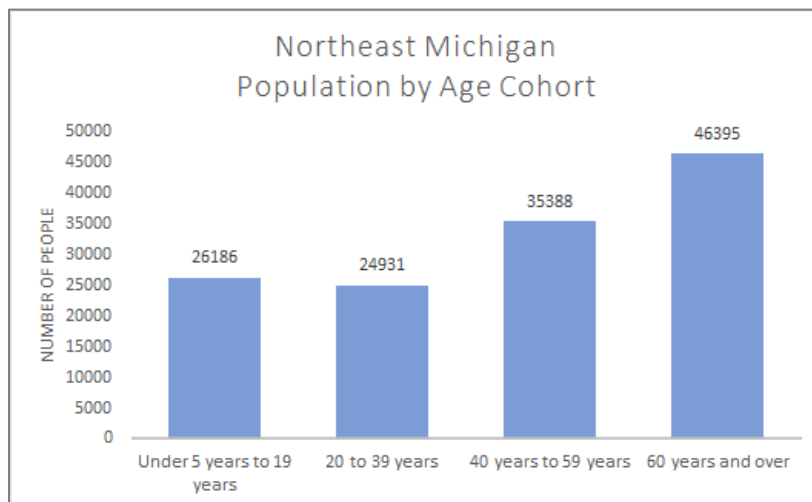


Figure 2: Population by Age Cohort, 2019

In 2017, 46% of the population was between the ages of 20-59 years. As of 2019, the age cohort had slightly decreased to 45%. As the region's population continues to age and experiences low immigration and high emigration of younger cohorts, the region will face a strain on its available workforce, an increased demand for health services, and other economic implications.

Education

As the economy changes requiring higher levels of education to gain technical skills required in jobs, more people are seeking higher education to remain competitive and businesses are considering the percent of bachelor's degrees in an area to decide where to locate or expand their businesses. In 2014, about 14% of the region held a Bachelor's Degree or higher. The number of people with a Bachelor's Degree or higher has grown to 17.6% in the region, which is still lower than the statewide average of 29.1%.

An alternative to pursuing a Bachelor's Degree is the pursuit of an Associate's Degree, which provides training and specialized education that can create a foundation for a four year degree. Northeast Michigan has seen an increase from 32% in 2014 to 34.6% in 2019 for the amount of people pursuing an Associate's Degree or some college with no degree, which is greater than the statewide average.

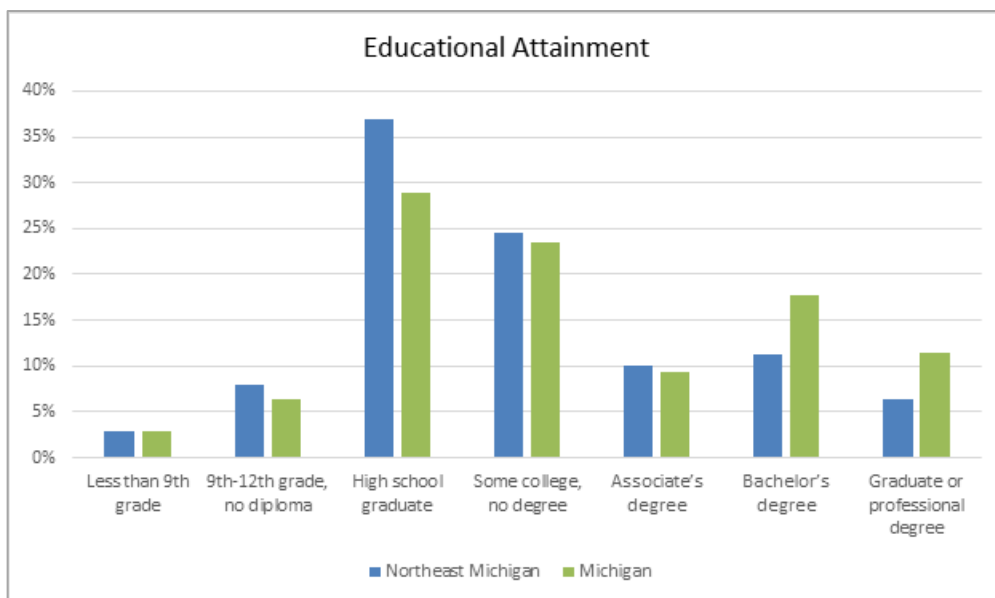


Figure 3: Educational Attainment

Housing

Housing in Northeast Michigan is concentrated in the cities, villages, and unincorporated communities with small residential lots located along the numerous lakes and Lake Huron shoreline. The majority of the housing was built between 1970-1979 with Alpena County having the largest number of housing built in 1939 or earlier. Since the last plan, Cheboygan County has seen an 8.5% decline in the percentage of its housing stock built in 1939 or earlier. Newly constructed homes account for less than 3.5% in all of the counties' housing stock.

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stock.

Despite the region adding 7,452 housing units since 2000, Northeast Michigan has continually seen a 4% increase in housing vacancies. In order to improve the housing issue in the region, each county participated in a Target Market Analysis in 2015 to acquire best practices for improving vacant housing units and attracting new residents. Since 2010, housing tenure in the region has transitioned from people owning homes to more people renting, which is mirrored by an increase in more multi-dwellings than single units. As housing continues to evolve in the region, housing options need to be diversified to ensure affordability and accessibility for all income levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the housing market challenges in the region by creating a housing boom in 2020 as people sought places outside of the urbanized areas. Due to the pandemic restrictions a dramatic increase in home sales was experienced, limiting availability and increasing the cost of housing in the region. Additionally, consideration should be given to the effect that low density sprawl has on school bus routes, fire protection, emergency medical response, and road maintenance since sprawl tends to increase service costs.

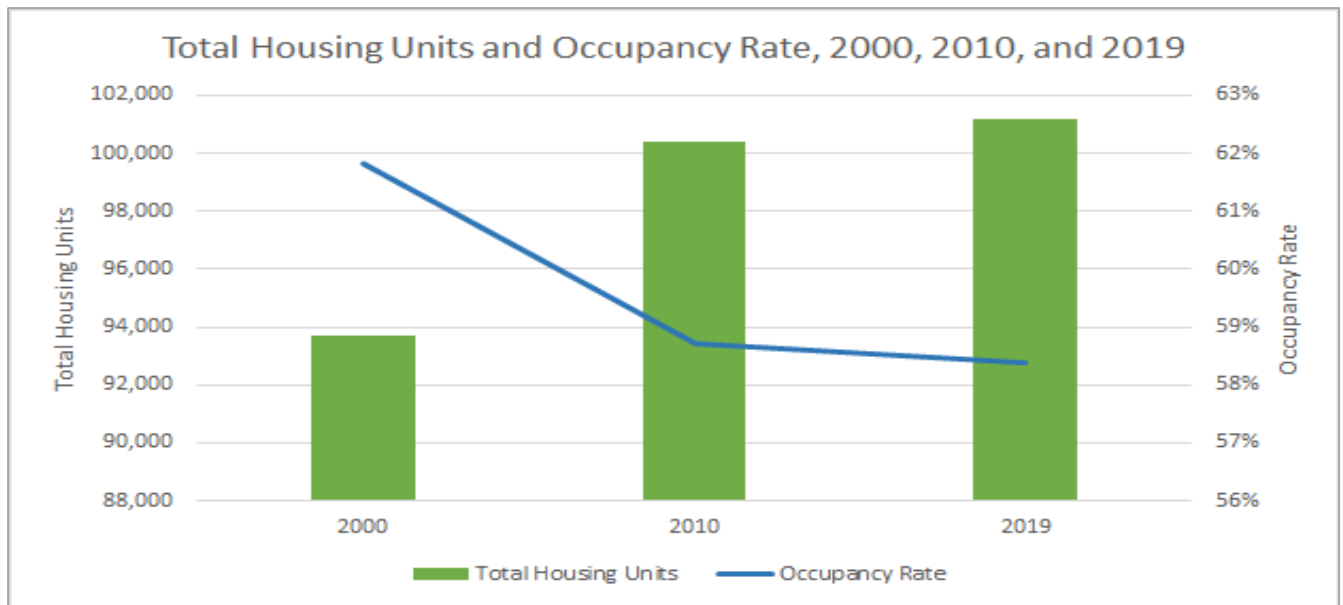


Figure 4: Total Housing Units and Occupancy Rate, 2000, 2010 and, 2019

Housing Type	2010	2019	Percent Change	Numeric Change
Single Unit	83,995	86,016	2.4%	2,021
Multi-Unit	5,049	5,364	6.2%	315
Mobile Homes or other	11,167	9,783	-12.4%	-1,384
Total Housing Units	100,211	101,163	0.9%	952

Housing Tenure	2010	2019	Percent Change	Numeric Change
Owner-occupied	50,039	48,558	-3.0%	-1,481
Renter-occupied	9,949	10,517	5.7%	568
Vacant	40,223	42,088	4.6%	1,865
Total Housing Units	100,211	101,163	0.9%	952

Figure 5: Housing Types and Tenure, 2010 and 2019

Housing Unit Age & Value: 2019

Housing Unit Age & Value	Alcona County	Alpena County	Cheboygan County	Crawford County	Montmorency County	Oscoda County	Otsego County	Presque Isle County
2010 or later	1.0%	0.8%	1.3%	1.5%	0.8%	0.8%	3.0%	1.8%
2000-2009	7.9%	7.2%	13.7%	9.7%	7.1%	7.8%	10.4%	8.0%
1990-1999	13.4%	9.4%	19.8%	18.7%	12.4%	13.2%	20.6%	12.5%
1980-1989	12.0%	9.6%	11.6%	14.1%	13.9%	12.5%	14.9%	10.6%
1970-1979	22.0%	20.3%	18.4%	23.5%	23.8%	20.1%	26.2%	17.9%
1960-1969	15.0%	13.9%	10.7%	11.0%	18.5%	19.9%	9.4%	14.7%
1950-1959	14.5%	15.3%	8.2%	10.5%	11.7%	11.8%	6.6%	15.3%
1940-1949	6.1%	8.2%	4.6%	5.2%	7.8%	8.4%	3.7%	7.1%
1939 or earlier	8.1%	15.4%	11.7%	5.9%	4.2%	5.5%	5.1%	12.0%
Median Home Value	\$112,000	\$96,500	\$130,900	\$105,000	\$102,700	\$90,500	\$139,500	\$105,400

Figure 6: Housing Unit Age & Value, 2019

Income

An important measure of economic health in a region is the median household income. The region's median household income has steadily increased since 1990, and has been consistent with the rate of increase in the state. However, the median income for the region is below the state.

Median Household Income: 1990-2019

	1990	2000	2010	2019
Northeast Michigan	\$20,750	\$33,719	\$36,236	\$46,073
Michigan	\$29,937	\$45,512	\$46,276	\$57,144
United States	\$29,943	\$41,990	\$49,276	\$62,843

Figure 7: Median Household Income, 1990- 2019

Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Real gross domestic product (GDP) measures the value of all the goods and services produced by an economy. Northeast Michigan's real GDP accounts for 1% of Michigan's total economic output. Between 2016 and 2019, Northeast Michigan's real GDP grew by 8.5% from \$3.8 million to \$4.1 million with the real estate and rental and leasing sector rising by 33.2%. This sector consists of establishments that manage real estate, sell, rent, and/or buy real estate and appraise real estate. Its growth is due to real estate and hunt clubs being sold, secondary homes being purchased, and an increase in rental units including vacation and airbnbs. The real estate and rental and leasing sector has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as secondary homes are being put up for sale.

Industries

Diversification of the economy can grow, stabilize, and make the region competitive for jobs and private

investment. Economic clusters enhance competitiveness, productivity, innovation, technology, and specialized talent. There are two types of clusters: traded and local. Traded clusters are industries that export goods and services to other regions, while local clusters consist of industries that provide goods and services in the region and support traded clusters.

The Northeast Region's economy predominantly focuses on its local clusters to contribute to region's attractiveness. Retail trade is the largest employment industry followed by healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and accommodation and food services. The region's primary traded clusters are hospitality and forestry.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased awareness that the retail, accommodation and food services, and arts and entertainment industries are highly vulnerable to the impacts from a pandemic since these businesses were deemed to be not essential as well as being workplaces with a high-risk for transmitting the disease from person to person. Approximately 38.2% of the population in the Northeast Region is employed in these industries and is highly vulnerable to the pandemic's impacts.

Industry	Number of Establishments	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages
Accommodation and Food Services	397	4,789	\$315
Administrative and Waste Services	131	607	\$611
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	85	432	\$707
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	81	707	\$401
Construction	422	1,989	\$922
Educational Services	4	13	\$419
Finance and Insurance	140	1,230	\$929
Health Care and Social Assistance	235	5,472	\$732
Information	57	313	\$732
Manufacturing	196	4,878	\$732
Mining	36	503	\$1,612
Other Services (except Public Administration)	380	1,503	\$446
Professional and Technical Services	190	927	\$793
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	107	347	\$576
Retail Trade	559	6,919	\$505
Transportation and Warehousing	81	795	\$974
Unclassified	33	55	\$197
Utilities	13	110	\$1,695
Wholesale Trade	74	941	\$851

Figure 8: Industry Breakdown in Northeast Michigan, 2019

Location Quotient

The location quotient (LQ) compares the industry concentrations between areas to identify exports and imports. An LQ greater than 1.0 indicates an area produces more of a good or service than is needed to meet local demand, which indicates a skilled workforce and the potential for exporting the product or service. An LQ less than 1.0 indicates the area has an opportunity to develop businesses to meet area demand. An LQ greater than 1.25 classifies the area's industry as an exporter as well as measuring the degree of industry specialization. However, this classification does not necessarily mean the area is exporting the excess goods or services, but may merely indicate the area has excessive goods and services that may be an economic advantage.

Compared to the United States and Michigan, the Northeast Region is specialized in the following industries (LQ is greater than 1.25):

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting
- Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
- Retail Trade
- Healthcare and Social Assistance

Since the Northeast Region of Michigan has an abundance of natural resources due to its small population and lack of significant urbanization, it is highly competitive in the Forestry and Wood Products industries. Timber harvesting is concentrated in aspen, pine, oak, red pine, and northern hardwood stands. The region's predominant land cover is upland forests, which consists of aspen-birch, northern hardwood (sugar maple, American beech, basswood, red maple, and ash), oak (red, white and northern pin) lowland conifers (northern white cedar, black spruce, white spruce, tamarack and balsam fir), lowland hardwoods (elm, ash, balsam poplar, red maple and white birch) and white, red and jack pine. According to the U.S. Forest Service, approximately 56% of the forests are privately owned with a vast majority under non-industrial private ownership followed by state and local government ownership. These forests are also used for recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat. The region also exports limestone from its quarries located along the Lake Huron coastline between Rogers City and Alpena., and exports oil and gas from wells scattered throughout the region.

The region has seen an increase in the amount of agriculture lands, but has generally seen a decrease in the number of farms. In the areas where the amount of agriculture lands have decreased, the lands are either converted to non-forested lands characterized by grasses and shrubs or developed into large lot, residential areas. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture 2017 Report, the total market value of agriculture products was \$84,612,000 for the region (a decrease of approximately 4.9 million since 2012) with Alpena and Presque Isle Counties the largest percentage of market value. In 2017, crop sales account for 47.1% of the total market value (down from 54.5% in 2012) and livestock sales account for 52.9% within the region (up from 45.5% in 2012). Currently, much of the agricultural production is shipped in its unprocessed forms to markets outside of the region, and there is ongoing work to develop the local agricultural market through community-based agriculture and processing agricultural crops into products in the region.

Compared to the United States only, the region also specializes in manufacturing. Compared to Michigan only, the region is also specialized in construction, accommodation and food services. Additionally, the region has an LQ greater than 1.0 for the following industries: utilities, and other services (except public administration). Compared to Michigan only, the region also has an LQ greater than 1.0 for arts, entertainment, and recreation.

- Management of Companies and Enterprises

- Educational Services
- Management and Remediation Services
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

Location Quotient for Northeast Michigan			
NAICS Code	NAICS Code Description	Location Quotient (MI)	Location Quotient (US)
11----	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8.87	6.97
21----	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	9.32	2.25
22----	Utilities	1.01	1.21
23----	Construction	1.29	0.97
31----	Manufacturing	0.89	1.50
42----	Wholesale Trade	0.82	0.82
44----	Retail Trade	1.69	1.65
48----	Transportation and Warehousing	0.84	0.67
51----	Information	0.62	0.41
52----	Finance and Insurance	0.70	0.60
53----	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.78	0.63
54----	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.31	0.32
55----	Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.04	0.05
56----	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.25	0.24
61----	Educational Services	0.21	0.14
62----	Health Care and Social Assistance	1.31	1.33
71----	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.03	0.72
72----	Accommodation and Food Services	1.27	1.20
81----	Other Services (except Public Administration)	1.17	1.14

Businesses and Jobs

The private sector is the employment foundation for the region's economy. Unfortunately, this sector provides the lowest wages since a significant portion of it consists of low paying, seasonal jobs in the retail, service, and tourism industries.

The region has 7,022 businesses that include private and public for profit, nonprofit, and government businesses. A vast majority of the businesses (83.7%) have nine employees or fewer. However, more than half of the total jobs (62.8%) are provided by companies ten employees or more. This number has increased slightly since 2014 when 58.3% of jobs were provided by larger companies.²

Ownership	Number of Establishments	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages
Federal	64	614	\$1,077
State	66	935	\$1,293
Local	145	5,493	\$741
Private	3,269	33,122	\$719

The public workforce development system is charged with identifying growth industries and occupations that

are in-demand. The Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium and Michigan Works! Region 7B have identified industries with potential for providing high quality jobs. These industries were identified based on a combination of labor market information, job openings, long-term vacancies, and local employer input.

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Wood Products
- Construction
- Professional and Business Services
- Transportation and Warehousing

²YourEconomy.org; due to the suppression of data for confidentiality purposes, averages were calculated based on percentage from each county rather than number of companies

Industry Projections

The Northeast Prosperity Region industry projections for 2012-2026 include Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, and Roscommon Counties. The industries highlighted in green are expected to undergo a positive change of 10 percent or more, while the projections in red are expected to decline by 10 percent or more. The projections show the region gaining a slight increase in employment with the most growth occurring in the healthcare and social assistance industry. The administrative and waste services, and information industries will see the largest declines.

Industry Projections 2016-2026

General Industry Projections			
Industry	Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	66270	1135	1.7
Accommodation and Food Services	7260	-120	-1.6
Administrative and Waste Services	980	-200	-16.9
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	1000	50	5.3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1190	30	2.6
Construction	3080	190	6.6
Educational Services	3800	40	1.1
Federal Government	890	-50	-5.3
Finance and Insurance	1910	190	11
Health Care and Social Assistance	9770	930	10.5
Information	410	-70	-14.6
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	4140	60	1.5
Management of Companies and Enterprises	50	0	0
Manufacturing	5930	-150	-2.5
Mining	600	-60	-9.1
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2710	-10	-0.4
Professional and Technical Services	1110	40	3.7
Public Administration	6210	30	0.5
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	480	-10	-2
Retail Trade	10910	30	0.3
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	1190	20	1.7
Transportation and Warehousing	2510	140	5.9
Utilities	300	20	7.1
Wholesale Trade	1520	10	0.7
Specific Industry Projections			
Industry	Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Accommodation	920	-130	-12.4
Administrative and Support Services	820	-200	-19.6
Agriculture & Forestry Support Activity	50	10	25
Ambulatory Health Care Services	2570	-130	-4.8
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	1150	30	2.7
Animal Production	480	60	14.3
Beverage & Tobacco Product Manufacturing	70	10	16.7
Broadcasting (except Internet)	80	-10	-11.1
Building Material & Garden Supply Stores	1130	0	0
Chemical Manufacturing	10	0	0
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	390	-50	-11.4

Industry Projections 2016-2026

Specific Industry Projections			
Industry	Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Construction of Buildings	1060	70	7.1
Couriers and Messengers	260	10	4
Credit Intermediation & Related Activity	1160	110	10.5
Crop Production	200	0	0
Electronic Markets and Agents/Brokers	320	10	3.2
Electronics and Appliance Stores	160	20	14.3
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	800	-30	-3.6
Financial Investment & Related Activity	40	0	0
Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	10	0	0
Food Manufacturing	170	20	13.3
Food Services and Drinking Places	6340	0	0
Food and Beverage Stores	2000	10	0.5
Forestry and Logging	270	0	0
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	210	0	0
Furniture and Related Product Mfg.	30	0	0
Gasoline Stations	1080	-10	-0.9
General Merchandise Stores	3110	80	2.6
Health and Personal Care Stores	470	-30	-6
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	550	50	10
Hospitals	3160	200	6.8
ISPs, Search Portals, & Data Processing	20	10	100
Insurance Carriers & Related Activities	710	90	14.5
Machinery Manufacturing	1430	-40	-2.7
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	650	10	1.6
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	550	-10	-1.8
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	270	-40	-12.9
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	90	-10	-10
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	480	-20	-4
Motion Picture & Sound Recording Ind	40	0	0
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	1560	80	5.4
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institute	20	0	0
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Mfg.	340	-30	-8.1
Nonstore Retailers	120	-20	-14.3
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	1850	70	3.9
Oil and Gas Extraction	60	-10	-14.3
Other Information Services	30	10	50
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Relate	20	-10	-33.3
Personal and Laundry Services	460	40	9.5
Pipeline Transportation	30	0	0

Industry Projections 2016-2026

Specific Industry Projections			
Industry	Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Plastics & Rubber Products Manufacturing	640	30	4.9
Private Households	160	-10	-5.9
Publishing Industries	120	-50	-29.4
Rail Transportation	10	-10	-50
Real Estate	300	10	3.4
Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, Repair and Maintenance	1400	-30	-2.1
	700	-10	-1.4
Social Assistance	2200	800	57.1
Specialty Trade Contractors	1470	80	5.8
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Book/Music Stores	200	-10	-4.8
Support Activities for Mining	270	-20	-6.9
Support Activities for Transportation	970	110	12.8
Telecommunications	130	-20	-13.3
Transit and Ground Passenger Transport	40	0	0
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	1110	-30	-2.6
Truck Transportation	480	-20	-4
Waste Management and Remediation Service	160	10	6.7
Water Transportation	180	30	20
Wood Product Manufacturing	760	0	0

*Source: State of Michigan Labor Market Information,
Northeast Prosperity Region 2016-2026 Long Term Projections (Total, 2-digit and 3-digit NAICS)*

Labor Force and Unemployment

The labor force consists of 55,923 people as of 2019, a decrease of 6.2% from 59,635 in 2010. This correlates to the decrease in numbers for the working-age population. Although this trend has been consistent for many years, the decrease is lessening: the region's labor force fell by 0.4% between 2014 and 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic showed how some businesses can be successful as workers remote work. This awareness means businesses can employ people beyond the region's commuting shed as well as save money on real estate/office costs.

Unemployment has declined substantially since the Great Recession. As of 2019, the region's unemployment rate is 6.6%. This is a reduction from 16.3% in 2010, but is still higher than the statewide rate of 4.1%. The 2020 impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic increased the state's unemployment rate to 9.7%. In Northeast Michigan, the unemployment rate increased for all counties except Cheboygan County as businesses were slowed or closed per state executive orders. In June 2020, the state was gradually reopened where the unemployment rate decreased for all counties except Cheboygan County. In November 2020, there was a second wave of COVID-19 outbreaks and an increase in business restrictions, which increased the unemployment rate for all counties. As the economy in Northeast Michigan begins to rebound from the pandemic, working age residents will need assistance to return to the labor force.

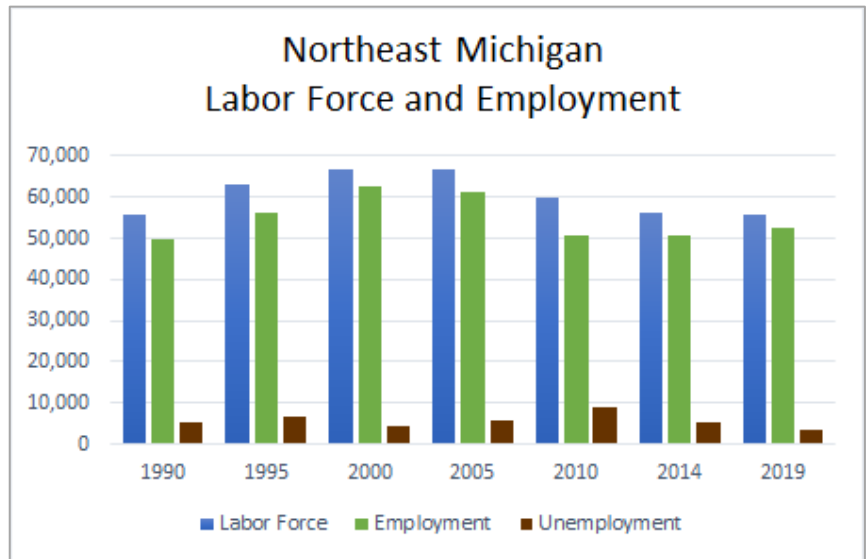


Figure 9: Labor Force and Employment 2019

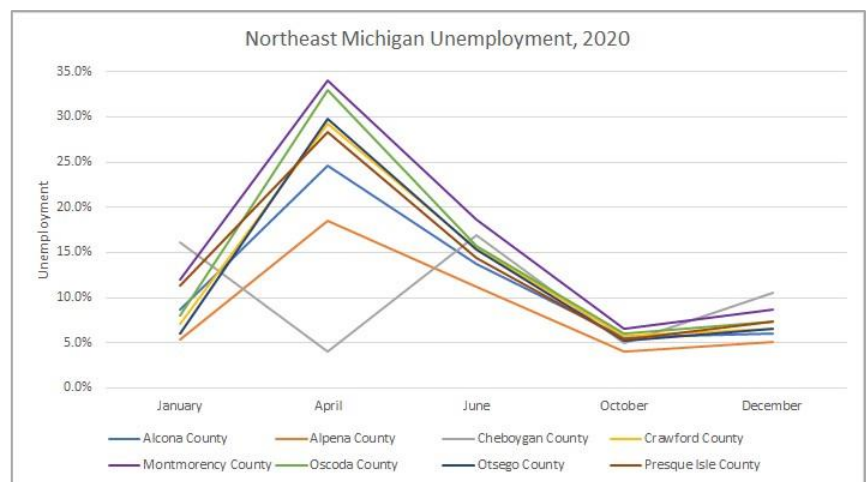
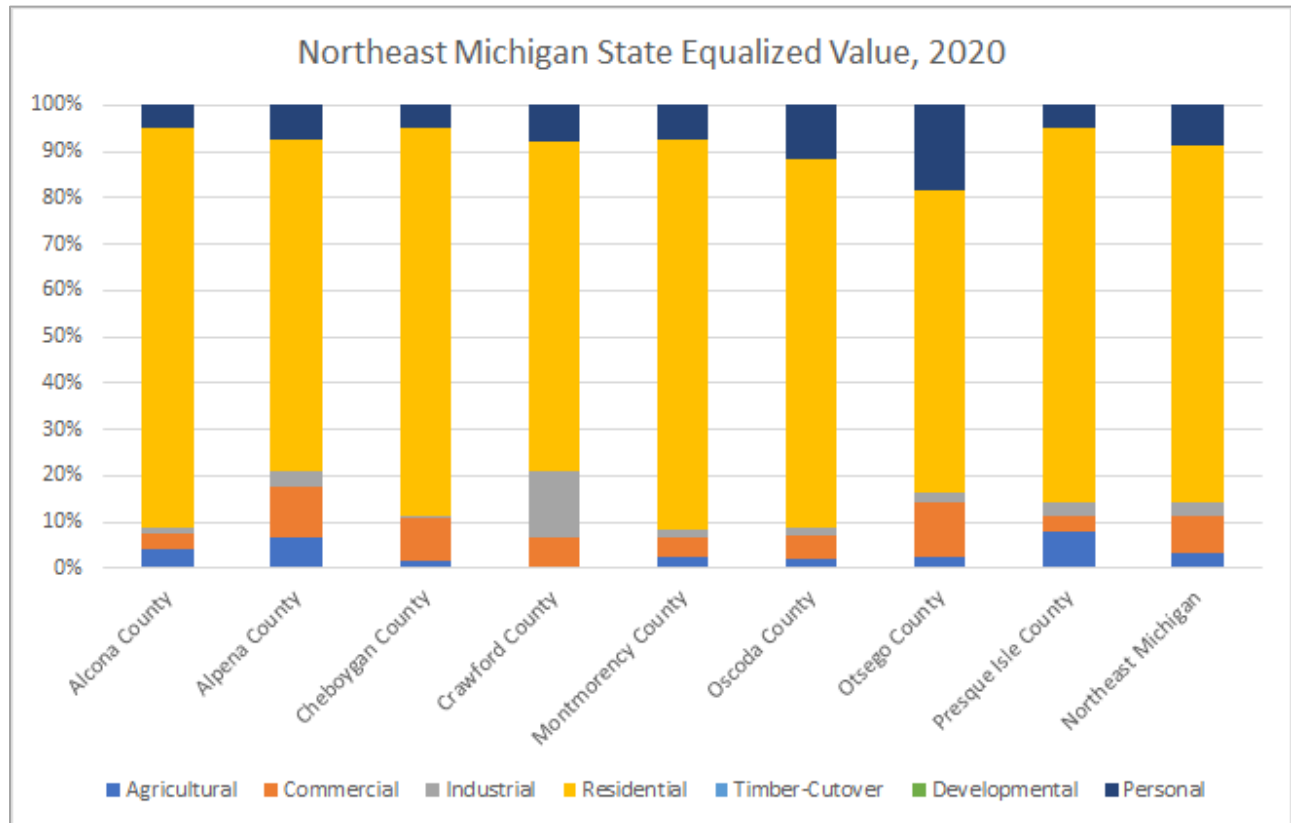


Figure 10: Northeast Michigan Unemployment, 2020

State Equalized Value

Characteristics of property values can be obtained through the analysis of the State Equalized Value (SEV). The SEV constitutes a community's tax base and is equal to approximately one-half of the true market value of real property and certain taxable personal properties. According to the Michigan Department of Treasury, the 2020 SEV for Northeast Michigan shows residential property makes up the largest percentage of the region's SEV, which is over nine times the value of the commercial property in the region.



Infrastructure

Northeast Michigan's ability to accommodate economic growth and development depends on its infrastructure. The region's infrastructure is aging and in disrepair. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened awareness that the region lacks accessible, reliable, and affordable high-speed broadband infrastructure and service for telehealth, remote learning, and telecommuting. Several initiatives are working to expand high speed internet service in most communities that includes fiber, DSL, cable, and wireless. Fiber broadband is available in Curran, Gaylord, Lachine, Long Rapids, and Mikado. Wireless service is available across the region through fixed wireless or mobile wireless broadband. The City of Alpena partnered with 16 other agencies to bring high-speed, next generation networking to the Alpena area by constructing an integrated fiber optic network. The Alpena Regional Fiber Consortium has improved local services through a community telecommunications network, while reducing communication expenses.

Other infrastructure in the region includes ten communities with public water and sewer systems (Mio and Posen have public water systems, but no sewer systems), and twelve communities that have industrial business parks (the City of Alpena and Gaylord have more than one facility).

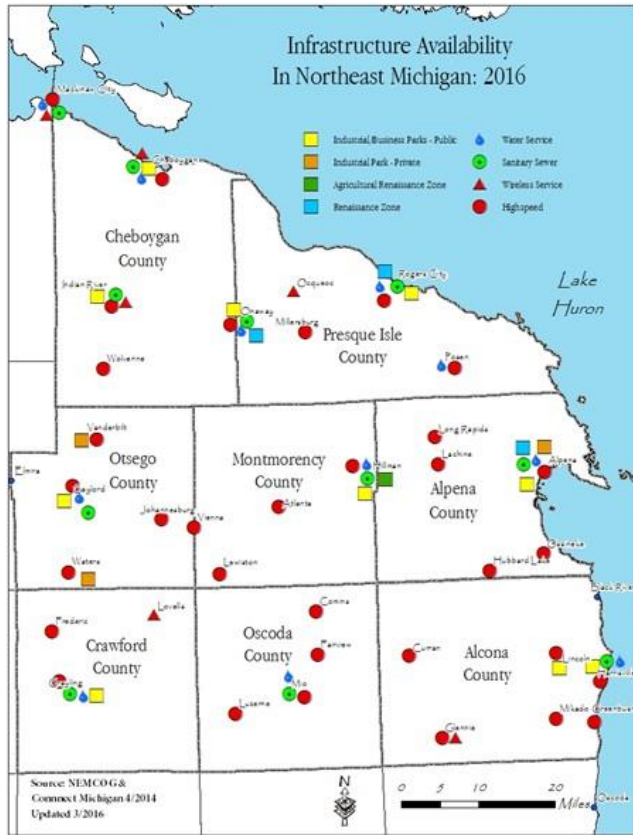


Figure 11: Infrastructure, 2016

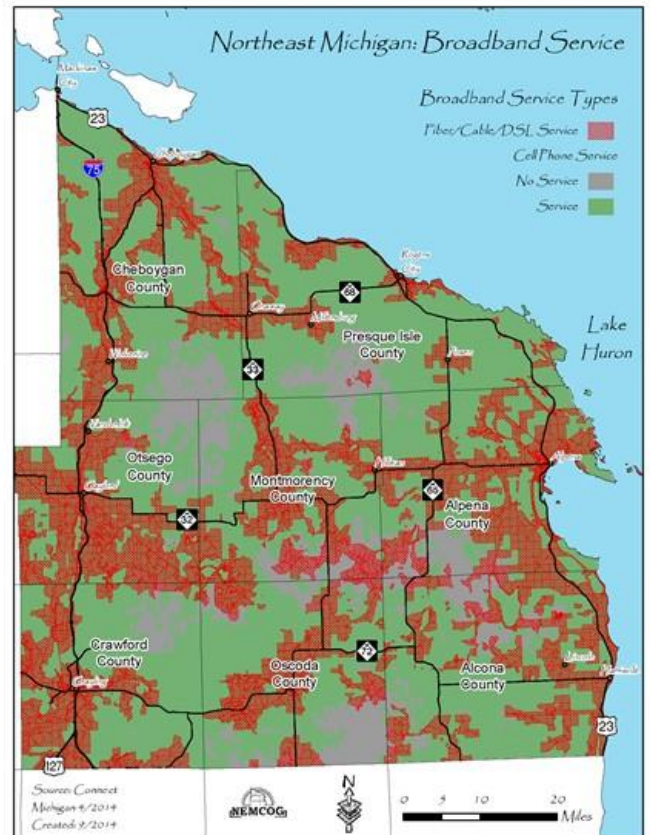


Figure 12: Broadband Service

Transportation

The transportation network assists in supporting the region's economy and increasing the quality of life. The network enables the region to ship goods, such as timber and limestone, to other areas through deep sea ports, rail service, and highways, and to connect residents and tourists to the region's commercial areas that include resorts and recreational businesses. Considerations regarding efficient access to markets, environmental impacts, and cost reduction should be adapted as the economy shifts.

The four deep-water ports in Alpena, Cheboygan, and Presque Isle Counties are used for commercial uses with the ports in Alpena, Stoneport, and Rogers City utilized to ship limestone to markets. The port in Rogers City is also used to ship large products from Moran Iron Works in Onaway.

Lake State Railroad Company provides freight rail service to deliver raw materials and products to and from the heavy industrial users in the area. Lake State Railway also services a number of customers via transloading (truck-to-rail and rail-to-truck reloading) at their rail yard in the City of Alpena and to the City of Gaylord. Although the volume of freight is expected to increase, no extension or expansion of the line is anticipated.

The region has several airports. The Alpena County Regional Airport provides commercial passenger service to Northeast Michigan. In 2017, there were 20,404 passengers that used the commercial passenger service, up 3,429 from 2016. With its 9,001 foot and 5,028 foot concrete runways, full time fire service and clear air space, the FAA has selected this as an emergency landing site for in-flight emergencies. The airport can accommodate any type of commercial or military aircraft and has state-of-the-art communications and radar systems. The airport is also home to the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) of the Michigan National Guard. The Grayling AAF Airport at the Grayling Army Airfield in Crawford County has multiple runways and is operated by the government. Airport expansions have occurred at the Rogers City and Gaylord airports. The airport in Mio has a paved runway. Alpena, Gaylord, Hillman and Rogers City have industrial parks located at their airports.

Local bus systems provide a limited level of service across the region and are funded by a combination of federal, state, and local monies, in addition to fare box and contracts with agencies. The Thunder Bay Transportation Authority (TBTA) provides scheduled public transportation services to the residents of Alpena, Alcona, and Montmorency Counties, and a small portion of Presque Isle County. Alpena Dial-A-Ride Transportation (DART) operates as an on-demand transportation service by TBTA. Interstate bus service (e.g. Indian Trails) provide statewide public transportation service along U.S. 23 through Alpena and Presque Isle Counties. The Straits Regional Ride coordinates buses in Cheboygan, Emmet, and Presque Isle Counties. The Presque Isle County Council on Aging provides transportation services to senior citizens and disabled persons. However, riders under 60 years old and who are not disabled can ride for a fee. The Crawford County Transportation Authority (CCTA) is a demand response, dial-a-ride service in Crawford County.

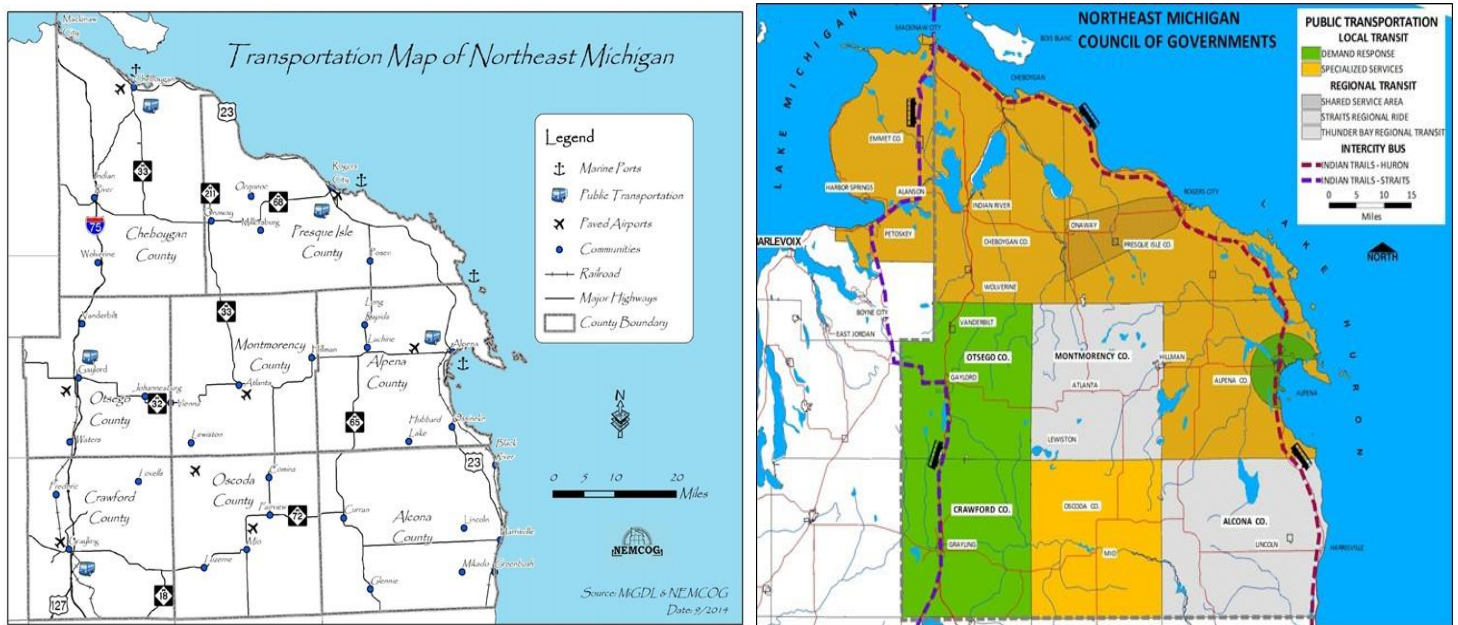


Figure 13: Transportation Maps

Chapter Three

SWOT Analysis

Assets

High quality of life is a primary goal for any community. Northeast Michigan's quality of life is based on numerous factors, including natural resources, relaxed, rural character, recreation, and much more. Assets represent existing strengths and opportunities that can be leveraged to further support economic activity, tourism, research, and other successful ventures within the region. The region plans to continue collaboration efforts, enhancing partnerships, building upon existing efforts, and leveraging the strengths and opportunities in the region.

Water

The region's many waterways and access points are critical for the area's tourism industry. They enhance business opportunities and draw national, state, and local investment. These assets include, among many:

- 160,000 acres of inland lakes
- 4,000 miles of rivers - AuSable River, and other Blue-Ribbon Trout Streams, such as the Sturgeon River, Pigeon River, and Upper Black River
- Lake Huron and its Blueways System
- Michigan Inland Waterway
- Ocqueoc Falls
- Over 200 public water access points
- Freshwater research
- Numerous locations for swimming and recreation including fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, boating, ice skating and ice fishing in the winter, and much more
- Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary - the world's only freshwater shipwreck sanctuary
- Critical habitat for rare and endangered species
- Seven lakes greater than 5,000 acres: Mullett Lake, Burt Lake, Hubbard Lake, Black Lake, Grand Lake, Long Lake, and Fletcher Pond

Land

Open spaces are plentiful in the region, giving access and opportunity for recreation, agriculture, tourism, and more.

- Farmland
- Mackinac Island
- Minerals and quarries: largest open quarry in the world
- Scenic beauty
- Unique glacial and limestone geology
- Wetlands
- Wide-open spaces with aesthetically pleasing vistas

Forests & Wildlife

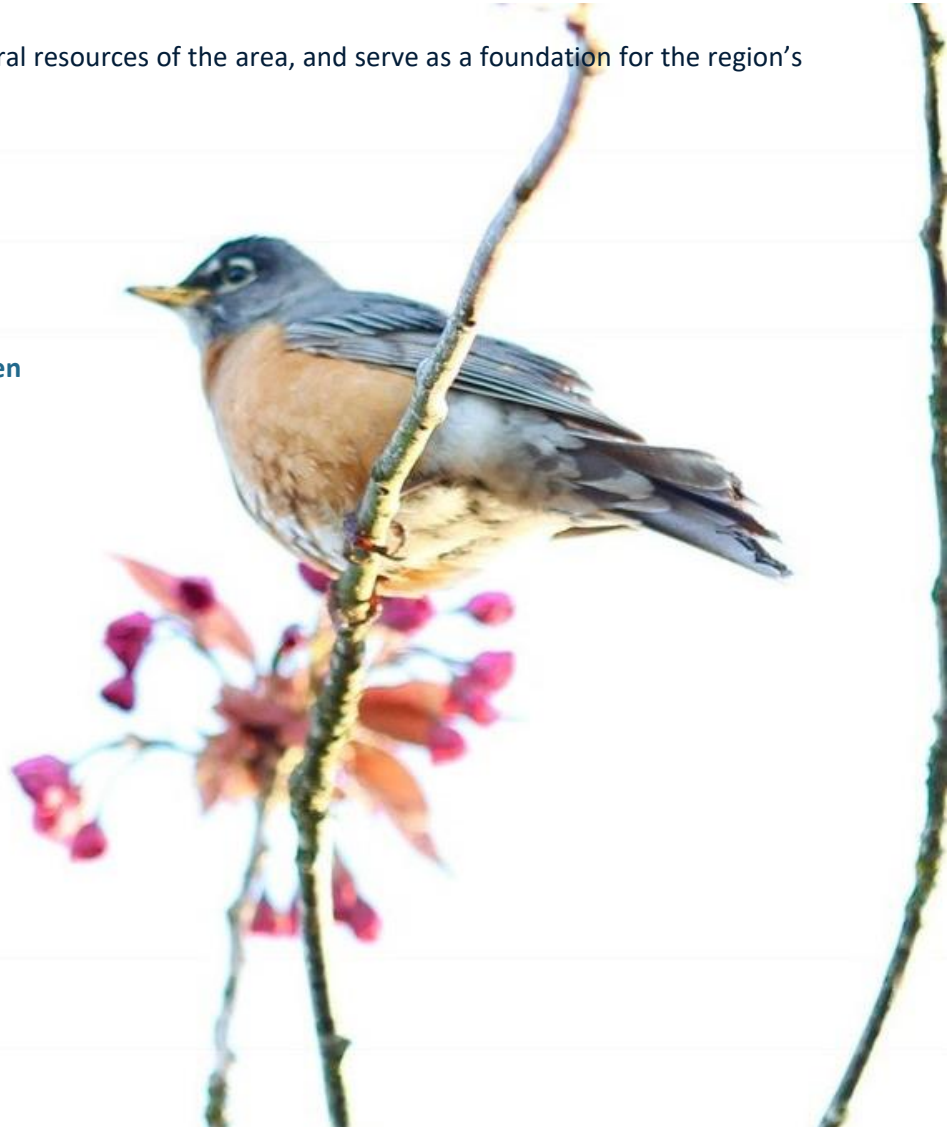
A vast proportion of the region's geography is dedicated to forests and wildlife. Preservation and sustainable use of these natural resources is of critical importance to the prosperity of the many communities across the region. The region's forests and parks are owned by local, state, and federal governments as well as private entities.

- 1.6 million acres of National and State forestland
- Dark sky parks
- Elk viewing at Thunder Bay Resort and Gaylord Elk Park
- Hartwick Pines
- Hundreds of parks and campgrounds
- Thousands of miles of hiking and biking trails
- Hunting and fishing
- Huron National Forest
- Kirtland warbler
- Old growth forests
- Pigeon River State Forest; Largest elk herd east of the Mississippi
- River Road National Scenic Byway
- Snowmobiling, snow-shoeing, and cross-country skiing through snow-covered forests
- Wood products industry

Culture

Cultural amenities are based on the natural resources of the area, and serve as a foundation for the region's high quality of life.

- 16 Lighthouses
- ARTrail
- Cheboygan Carnegie Building
- Cheboygan Opera House
- Community theaters
- Historic Mill Creek
- Moran Iron Works Sculpture Garden
- Museums
- Quilt Trails
- Sunrise Side Wine & Hops Trail
- UpNorth Trails
- U.S. 23 Heritage Route



Infrastructure

Despite the small, widespread population base in the large rural area, the region's infrastructure provides a solid foundation for economic growth.

- **Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center**
- **Camp Grayling National Guard Training Center**
- **Dams and electric powerplants and other alternative energy facilities**
- **Deepwater ports at Rogers City, Alpena, Cheboygan**
- **Extensive cellular telephone network**
- **General aviation airports and commercial airport in Alpena**
- **High Wire Corridor (Rogers city)**
- **Industrial parks**
- **Kirtland M-TEC**
- **Marinas**
- **Oil and gas facilities**
- **Public sewer and water in urban centers**
- **Rail connections**
- **Regional / local hospitals**
- **Steady increase in high speed internet access**
- **Trail systems to hike, bike, cross-country ski, ride horseback, ORV, motorcycle, snowmobile**
- **University Center representing eight colleges and universities**
- **US 23, US 127, I-75, and state highways**

Community

A strong sense of community is one of the strongest aspects of Northeast Michigan that spurs collaborative efforts between counties, townships, and agencies to highlight the region's uniqueness, livability, and tourist attractions.

- **Close to Canada**
- **Community events and festivals**
- **Distinct four seasons**
- **Golf courses**
- **Growing population of retirees**
- **Low cost of living**
- **Outdoor recreation – live, work, and play out your backdoor**
- **Room for expansion and growth**
- **Safe communities – low crime rates**
- **Slower pace of life and low traffic congestion**
- **US-23 Heritage Route**
- **Young Professionals organizations**
- **Commercial and cargo ports**
- **Growing tourism industry**
- **Strong technical training programs**

Challenges

While the assets of the region are many, there remain threats and weaknesses to economic vitality and community prosperity. These challenges represent opportunities that, when overcome through collaboration and investment, can become strengths. Addressing these challenges will support talent attraction, business growth, community development, and overall regional success. Over the years, many challenges have significantly improved due to the proactive efforts but there are still many threats and weaknesses that remain at varying levels of need.

- **Aging infrastructure**
- **Decreasing population in the 25-54 age bracket; increasing population in retirement age**
- **Difficulty recruiting and retaining talented workers**
- **Finding a drug-free, skilled workforce**
- **High commute times**
- **Lack of regional economic resiliency**
- **Negative perception of jobs with available training programs (fear jobs will move overseas)**
- **Lack of knowledge about the region's opportunities**
- **Fragmented industry**
- **Slow/limited business growth**
- **Exporting wood out of the region instead of producing wood products regionally**
- **Freight costs – long distances to larger markets**
- **Focus on growing the tourism industry with low playing, seasonal positions**
- **Lack of major highways in the region**
- **Geography: large land area with sparse population and low density**
- **High levels of poverty and working poor**
- **High percentage of long-term unemployed compared to the rest of the state**
- **Lack of accessible public transit in most of the region**
- **Lack of strong regional voice for advocacy at state and national levels**
- **Limited affordable high-speed broadband access**
- **Lack of updated, vibrant downtown areas**
- **Lack of placemaking efforts**
- **Low level of educational attainment**
- **Steady and long-term decline in the number of K-12 students**
- **Inability of the housing market to meet demand for affordable, quality housing**
- **COVID-19 pandemic impacts**
- **Impacts of climate change, PFAS/PFOA, aging infrastructure, etc. on the region's natural resources**

Proximity to Selected Markets – Measured from geographic center of the region (Atlanta, Michigan)

Market	Shortest Distance by Road	Shortest Drive Time	Metropolitan Population
Lansing, MI	199 miles	3 h 00 min	464,036
Grand Rapids, MI	201 miles	3 h 16 min	988,938
Ann Arbor, MI	207 miles	3 h 17 min	344,791
Detroit, MI	223 miles	3 h 35 min	4,296,250
Chicago, IL	376 miles	5 h 59 min	9,461,105
Cleveland, OH	378 miles	5 h 53 min	2,077,240
Columbus, OH	397 miles	6 h 20 min	1,901,974
Toronto, ON	406 miles	6 h 23 min	5,583,064
Buffalo, NY	430 miles	6 h 45 min	1,135,509
Indianapolis, IN	451 miles	6 h 42 min	1,887,877
Milwaukee, WI	476 miles	7 h 22 min	1,555,908
Pittsburgh, PA	494 miles	7 h 30 min	2,356,285
Minneapolis, MN	588 miles	9 h 38 min	3,348,859
New York, NY	822 miles	12 h 43 min	19,567,410

Sources: Driving distance and driving time – Google Maps; United States Metropolitan Data – US Census 2010; Canada Metropolitan Data – Statistics Canada 2011

The region is not alone in struggling with these issues. Many communities throughout the state of Michigan, and across the country, are experiencing declines in the working age population. This has ripple effects, impacting other aspects of community prosperity: fewer families enrolling students in local schools, less revenue for public investment in infrastructure, and fewer small businesses to offer job opportunities.



Chapter Four Goals & Strategies/Action Plan

Successful economic growth and development depends on the creation of goals and strategies in three interconnected areas: community support, economic expansion, and talent advancement. Communities with a high quality of life stimulate the economy through their ability to be attractive places for businesses to locate and for people to live. Contributing to the quality of life is an area's ability to provide high quality, well-maintained infrastructure, and the ability of the land and buildings to adapt or be repurposed to address the needs of the changing economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased awareness that people have more choices about where they live as long as they have access to high quality broadband for telecommuting purposes. In addition, a strong business environment creates jobs, enhances community vitality, retains industries, and supports entrepreneurs. It is essential for a competitive business environment to have practical costs, an ease of conducting business, connections to infrastructure, local government support, technological advancements, innovation, and a fair and transparent tax and regulatory structure. Furthermore, talent development connects education, workforce development, and employers to create a talent pool with highly-skilled employees.

This plan has developed key activities and strategy and tactic lists to assist the region in determining projects, prioritization, available resources, and capacity. When large-scale collaboration is effective, the region will see large-scale impacts that can be monitored through certain benchmarks. The following benchmark changes indicate successful implementation:

- Increased labor force participation
- Decreased unemployment
- Increased household income
- Increased working age population
- Improved educational attainment
- Increased number of small businesses

Vision: The Region's vision for Prosperity is to provide current and future generations with a vibrant, sustainable and prosperous Northeast MI that:

- Promotes innovation across the economy and supports entrepreneurs with connections and resources
- Markets Northeast Michigan as an interconnected network of great places
- Sustains excellence in education from early childhood through all stages of life
- Provides the skills needed by employers through education and training that results in a continuously transforming and responsive workforce
- Ensures the protection and enhancement of our natural resource based economy through incorporating sustainability best practices
- Fulfills the current and future needs of the region through strong collaboration and leadership
- Ensures a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment to reach prosperity goals across the region

Community Support

Placemaking

Goal: Strengthen the quality of place throughout Northeast Michigan

The new economy provides flexibility for a knowledge-based workforce. Virtual networks make it easy to work anywhere, whether as an entrepreneur or at a home office. The significant need for employees across the country also enables mobility for skilled workers. In other words, workers can choose where they want to live, knowing that job opportunities are available in a variety of forms. Therefore, a region's advantage is determined by its quality of place – the features and benefits that attract people to live and work there.

Northeast Michigan holds many assets for this type of attraction. These same assets may also improve retention – a high quality placemaking approach can reduce the “brain drain” that occurs when young people move elsewhere.

Despite the strength of these assets, there are many improvements that can be made in order to enhance their appeal for a targeted audience. Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in a diversified, more resilient economy, more good jobs, and stable communities.

Following are specific strategies that will enhance quality of place in Northeast Michigan:

Strategy: Target investment in small towns

This strategy involves providing support to the cities and villages that have existing capacity and infrastructure, place-based appeal, and interest in placemaking activities.

- **Strategic Placemaking Centers (SPCs):** Alpena, Cheboygan, Gaylord, Grayling, Houghton Lake, Oscoda/ AuSable, Rogers City, Tawas City/East Tawas, West Branch. These communities are small-urban centers that have a critical mass of population and supportive infrastructure.
- **Strategic Placemaking Nodes³ (SPNs):** Atlanta, Harrisville, Hillman, Indian River, Lewiston, Lincoln, Mackinaw City, Mio, Onaway, Posen, Roscommon. These communities are smaller in population size, but have significant placemaking appeal demonstrated by significant tourism activity.

Strategy: Coordinate placemaking efforts to establish linkages across communities and the region

This strategy involves regional coordination and connection. It will unite placemaking activities through a regional approach, while recognizing the unique value of each community.

³Strategic Placemaking Nodes were identified in the RPI 5-year plan; they are designated as “nodes” rather than centers because of their smaller size.

Placemaking Key Activities

- Obtain Redevelopment-Ready Community certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for targeted placemaking centers
- Conduct Target Market Analyses to determine need and suitability for targeted investment
- Attain Michigan Main Street community designation from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for targeted placemaking centers
- Create community plans that strategically target investment such as Trail Plans, Place Plans, and Recreation Plans

Indicators of success:

- Increased number of families living in the region to increase the volume of workers, small business start-ups, and school enrollments
- Increased total number of business establishments

Regional Branding

Goal: Improve awareness and recognition of the region in state, national, and global markets.

Northeast Michigan has long struggled with recognition for its economic and community development potential. It is often seen as a vacation destination and/or retirement locale, but rarely selected as a hot spot for business activity. The strategies below seek to use the assets that attract tourists as a means of attracting talent and business. In order to do so, a regional identity must be solidified and promoted widely. This should be done in a way that allows each individual community to emphasize its strengths and assets, while still participating in a larger regional marketing effort.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in a unified identity and coordinated promotion, support for targeted economic development, and an influx of talent, new businesses, and tourists.

Strategy: Continue to solidify and implement a regional identity that leverages placemaking and tourism, and incorporates individual community branding

Many communities across the region have developed brands that showcase their unique assets. When developing this RPI plan five years ago, a study was conducted that inventoried community identities and branding, and also identified common themes. As a result, two regional identities were established: “East of Expected” and “Our Trails Take You Farther.”

This strategy will build upon those efforts to better promote the regional identity and make it widely available for implementation across numerous markets. It will also provide tools for use in attracting and retaining talent, businesses, and tourists. All efforts will highlight both the unity and uniqueness of the region.

Strategy: Create a strategic tourism partnership that coordinates connections across branding, tourism, talent attraction, and community identity

This strategy will ensure alignment across multiple activities by convening tourism stakeholders to provide leadership and coordination. This group will connect placemaking efforts and regional identity with tourism marketing in order to strengthen overall promotion of the region. Tourism is a primary driver of the economy, and provides a connection to the region for many people. It should therefore be leveraged and coordinated in various forms and methods for promoting the region

Regional Branding Key Activities

- **Develop a consistent marketing and outreach strategy with buy-in and support from strategic placemaking centers**
- **Create a tourism partnership that incorporates community development and placemaking**
- **Coordinate a strategic partnership with Pure Michigan**
- **Improve the region's online presence across multiple websites that represent various communities, natural resources, and other assets**
- **Develop place-based branding packages for companies to use when attracting talent**

Indicators of success:

- Recognition of the region from national and state entities
- Increased tourism activity
- Increased number of families living in the region to increase the volume of workers, small business start-ups, and school enrollments
- Increased number of small businesses to diversify the economy and create more good jobs

Transportation and Transit

Goal: Develop or enhance transportation options across the region for efficiency and accessibility.

In most local and/or regional plans, transportation issues are addressed along with other infrastructure, such as water and sewer. However, this issue is of such high importance in the region that this plan has elevated it to its own category.

There are two primary needs related to transportation: logistics for businesses and mobility of the workforce. Both of these needs rely on roads that are safe, stable, and well-maintained. In addition, businesses rely on the availability of service for every facet of supply and distribution chains, and workers rely on access to

working vehicles or public transit. Alternative and expanded options are of great interest to all stakeholders.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in reduced costs for supply chain delivery and goods distribution; a larger and more reliable workforce due to stable transportation to and from work; and increased overall business success due to sustainable, stable transportation solutions.

Strategy: Increase awareness of existing transportation options and resources for the workforce

In communities where public transit exists, local businesses and their employees must be well-informed about their options. In addition, resources that provide support to those in need of transportation should be inventoried and shared widely.

Strategy: Collaborate and coordinate across sectors to reduce costs for logistics and workforce transportation

All stakeholders should come together to brainstorm and devise solutions for increased availability of transportation options. This may include sharing delivery systems and supply chain management, and/or supporting carpool options for workers.

Transportation & Transit Key Activities

- Coordinate meetings and/or roundtables among transit agencies and transportation providers
- Connect transportation stakeholders with the workforce system, educational entities, and local employers
- Create partnerships that formalize commitments to collaboration and enable efficiency
- Explore opportunities for non-motorized transportation options in more densely populated areas
- Map and analyze transportation support services, and share resource information widely

Indicators of success:

- Increased public transit routes and hours of service across the region
- Increased regional partnerships for enhanced transportation options
- More businesses locating here because the transportation barrier is reduced

Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure adequate infrastructure that meets the needs of business, residents, and visitors.

Adequate infrastructure is essential to job creation, economic growth, and community stability. It provides a foundation for business vitality and gives residents the structure for success. In this plan, infrastructure consists not only of municipal systems, but also broadband internet access as an essential component of supporting the needs of communities.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in increased access to broadband, especially in placemaking centers, and across the region; improved awareness of infrastructure capacity and conditions; and plans to fill gaps where infrastructure is lacking.

Strategy: Continue increasing availability of and access to high speed internet

Stakeholders in the RPI Collaborative have been working diligently and have succeeded in increasing access throughout the region. Some challenges remain, especially the cost of providing broadband infrastructure to rural areas that lack a critical mass of consumers.

Strategy: Provide Integrated Asset Management Technical Assistance to improve infrastructure, including education, assessments and plans

Communities throughout the region have committed to improving infrastructure, and require an infusion of support and various resources in order to do so. Support and resources may consist of technical assistance, assessment of current capacity and needs, planning, funding, and more.

Infrastructure Key Activities

- Take an inventory of municipal needs and analyze local policies and ordinances
- Use this inventory to select specific, high-impact projects for investment
- Assist with water and sewer needs in local communities
- Identify and pursue funding from federal and state as well as well as private sources
- Asset Management Inventory and PASER Road Ratings (annual assessment of road conditions)
- Where private sector investment and build-outs are occurring, work with providers and municipalities to address challenges and concerns early in the process that may delay build-outs.

Indicators of success:

- Business growth within placemaking centers
- Increased funding from multiple sources for infrastructure improvements
- Increased broadband availability

Regional Collaboration and Leadership

Goal: Enable consistent and coordinated services across the region.

Collaboration is the primary tenet of the Regional Prosperity Initiative; it is the key to leveraging resources and building capacity. Working together towards a common goal helps to leverage resources from each agency, fill gaps, eliminate redundancies, and improve programs and services.

Regional leaders have committed to collaborative ventures, joint planning, and sharing information. In addition, some have begun consolidating and sharing services across compatible agencies. For instance, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments and Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium are now sharing accounting and human resources services. They intend to build on this foundation with more sharing of services where efficiency may be achieved. Stakeholders in the RPI will continue to explore opportunities for joining together for maximum impact.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in more efficient systems and effective use of limited resources.

Strategy: Achieve efficiencies by sharing services among compatible agencies

One significant effort towards implementing this strategy comes in the form of Collaboration. Several steps have already been taken in this effort, including shared services, and the designation of representatives for shared governance.

Additional efficiencies among agencies in the region will be encouraged and facilitated where appropriate.

Strategy: Build on existing regional groups for collaborative ventures

Several groups exist throughout the region for various purposes; taken collectively, they have broad representation of the region's interests and stakeholders. These groups should be utilized instead of creating new, additional groups whenever a collaborative effort is pursued. Some of the groups in existence include the Collaborative Development Council, Workforce Development Board, Career & Educational Advisory Council, and many more.

This strategy seeks to streamline projects and information sharing and encourage additional collaboration where

Collaboration Key Activities

- **Develop models for shared services across multiple agencies**
- **Combined meetings among compatible groups to encourage cross-pollination of diverse ideas and efficient use of time for group members**
- **Develop and offer regional services, such as GIS and medical examiners**

Indicators of success:

- Increased collaborative projects
- Decreased duplication of services
- Increased information sharing

Economic Expansion

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Support

Goal: Foster an entrepreneurial culture in the region and grow existing businesses.

Small businesses provide a significant number of jobs in the region, and self-employment is a viable career option that is often overlooked. The systems that support business start-up and growth are available but not well-known. The strategies below seek to enhance and promote these systems.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in stronger infrastructure for cultivating entrepreneurs, an increase in the number of entrepreneurs, and an improved climate for small businesses to create a thriving economy.

Strategy: Encourage entrepreneurship through intentional, facilitated activities

In order to increase small business start-ups, an entrepreneurial culture must be developed and nurtured. It is critical to improve awareness that starting a small business is a promising career pathway. This will, in turn, improve awareness that Northeast Michigan is a good place to do business, attracting more and better businesses and jobs.

Strategy: Increase volume of and access to business support resources

Systems are currently in place that support and foster business development. These include the Michigan Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, a new SCORE chapter, chambers of commerce, economic development entities, and more. In addition, access to capital has improved with more commercial lending activity from banks and non-traditional lenders (Community Development Financial Institutions and revolving loan funds). However, there remains more need than capacity to meet it, and general awareness of these many resources is limited. This strategy will work to increase the resources available, and improve access to them through better coordination and promotion.

Strategy: Diversify and globally connect businesses

The regional economy is concentrated in the tourism sector, including food and beverage, accommodations, and service industries. In order to ensure stability through economic ups and downs, the region should support a variety of businesses in multiple sectors that show growth potential. Often, opportunities lie outside the region, through exporting goods, providing services virtually, and accessing customers in other parts of the world. Connecting local companies to diverse markets across the globe is essential to expanding beyond the small population within the region's limits.

Strategy: Provide market and economic impact information to support business expansion

Businesses that are poised to grow and/or relocate to the area need to base this important decision on reliable, local, and recent data. This may include economic inputs and outputs, target market profiles, household expenditures, and more. This information can also reveal the extent to which local dollars are spent elsewhere, presenting an opportunity to capture new markets.

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Support Key Activities

- Support the development and growth of an entrepreneurial and small business network
- Support, connect, and increase pitch events
- Facilitate youth-based entrepreneurial education
- Provide small business development resources in an easy to use and readily accessible manner, such as a web-based portal
- Support existing incubators and create more
- Share success stories regarding entrepreneurial endeavors in the region

Indicators of success:

- A diversified, thriving, and stable economy
- Increase in small business start-ups and survivals
- Increase in number of businesses

Industry Clusters

Goal: Support key industry clusters with targeted economic development.

While many industries are growing in the region, some are better suited for targeted support, given their impact on the economy and potential for supplying good jobs. The following clusters are either currently significant contributors to the economy, or poised to emerge as industries of impact. All have growth potential and have been identified for targeted support:

- **Advanced Manufacturing, Automation and Mechatronics**
- **Aerospace**
- **Energy, Efficiency, and Renewables**
- **Healthcare**
- **Industrial Cannabis**
- **Local Foods**
- **Tourism**
- **Wood Products**

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in increased capacity and market expansion for each of these clusters, a skilled workforce that meets employer needs, and successful, growing businesses. The strategies listed below are intended to provide support to the common issues and needs of all targeted industry clusters.

Strategy: Provide enhanced business development support

Each of these industries is comprised of many small businesses that are positioned to grow, add jobs, and stabilize their communities. Using the resources mentioned in the previous Goal, business development assistance should be provided to these clusters.

Strategy: Develop and attract a skilled workforce

Talent needs are paramount for every growth industry at this time. Therefore, development, attraction, and retention of a skilled workforce is an essential component of supporting these targeted industry clusters.

Strategy: Promote growth industries inside and outside the region

Leveraging the unified branding efforts of Goal #1, these specific industry clusters should be promoted as thriving and growing. Promotion should occur within the region for improved awareness of career options and economic impact. Concurrently, these clusters should be promoted outside the region as well, as efforts to market the overall region are conducted.

Strategy: Coordinate logistics and transportation for goods and talent

Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to success for the region; the rural, widespread geography and seasonal environment create significant difficulties in moving goods and people. Both supply chain and product delivery can be costly for companies located in Northeast Michigan. In addition, the cost of driving long distances from home to work every day can be prohibitive for skilled talent to obtain and retain employment. Therefore, it is imperative that solutions be developed to address the entire spectrum of transportation needs.

Industry Clusters Key Activities

- Increase the use work-based training programs to develop a skilled workforce for each cluster
- Convene transportation agencies and businesses to facilitate collaboration and development of solutions that will address transportation and logistics challenges
- Inform and encourage local and state-wide policy that encourages business growth for these clusters
- Incorporate industry promotion into regional marketing activities in order to expand business markets for targeted clusters
- Work with local partners to pilot new marketing and sales opportunities for business most impacted by COVID-19, including but not limited to community supported dining options for local bars and restaurants
- Promote local, state, and federal resources for businesses adversely impacted by COVID-19
- Establish and/or support sector-based approaches to economic and workforce development, such as industry associations or collaboratives
- Ensure that all stakeholders understand the specific needs of the target clusters and support activities that enhance their success

Indicators of success:

- Increased number of jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and offer growth opportunities
- Business activity that attracts more business and skilled talent
- Entrepreneurial mindset and culture that rewards small-business start-up
- Dollars and resources provided to local businesses in need of assistance
- Post-COVID-19 business survival rate and growth

Talent Advancement, Enhancement & Development

Workforce Development System

Goal: Enhance and expand the multi-faceted system that supports employers and workers.

The local workforce holds great potential for meeting the needs of local companies. The systems in place for supporting the workforce are strong, well-connected, and readily accessible. These include career assessment and planning, basic academic skills and GED completion, occupational training, postsecondary programming, on-the-job training and apprenticeships, job search assistance, and much more. The current workforce can improve their skillsets, the future workforce can plan for success, and new workers can come to the region expecting ongoing educational support. The strategies listed below will leverage existing systems and improve their impact, ensuring that services are aligned, effective, and efficient.

Stakeholders in the workforce development system include:

- **Michigan Works**
- **Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity**
- **Department of Health & Human Services, including Michigan Rehabilitation Services**
- **Adult Education**
- **K-12 Schools**
- **Career & Technical Education**
- **Postsecondary Institutions**
- **Trade schools**

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in a strong workforce development system that helps to prepare a skilled workforce and thereby meets the talent needs of local businesses.

Strategy: Diversify funding for the workforce system

The Michigan Works! agencies present a significant resource for improving the skills of the workforce and meeting employer needs. However, their funding streams can be restrictive and their base funding is primarily built on federal sources. It is important, therefore, that this vital system diversify its funding sources in order to maintain stability. In the next five years, it is expected there will be a significant infusion of federal and state dollars to address the COVID-19 pandemic impact regarding worker displacement.

Strategy: Increase collaboration among stakeholders in the workforce system

While the collaborative nature of the region and its many stakeholders is a strength, there is always opportunity to increase collaborative partnerships. Collaboration among the Michigan Works! agencies, employers and associations, as well as educational entities will strengthen the approaches used to improve the skillset of the workforce and support industry needs.

Strategy: Increase awareness and use of training programs

There are numerous opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills, whether academic or occupational, from GED preparation to specialized certifications to advanced degrees. Despite the opportunity and the great need for improved skills, these programs are underutilized. Both employers and job seekers must be well informed about their educational options, so they can access and build a pathway that leads to successful employment and ongoing advancement. The COVID-19 pandemic has hastened the retirement of many employees, which has increased the need for the region to develop and attract talent.

Workforce Development System Key Activities

- Pursue grant opportunities as a region
- Collaborate on events and activities that impact the entire region, such as apprenticeship programming, MiCareer Quest, and more
- Increase targeted marketing to improve awareness of educational opportunities
- Market the region and its high quality of life/low cost of living to newly minted remote workers.

Indicators of success:

- Increased funding from multiple sources
- Increased enrollments in educational programs
- Increased educational program completions
- Increased ability of employers to fill jobs in fewer days with qualified candidates

Talent Attraction

Goal: Attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce and small business sector that supports a thriving local economy.

During many discussions in the planning process, community members lamented the difficulties with attracting and retaining talent. Companies state that when they recruit a high-level professional from another area with a great job, the person leaves within a year because they are not satisfied with the community. Several of the issues listed in the Challenges section of this report were cited as the reasons for this dilemma; low wages, decreasing population, and lack of amenities were mentioned most frequently.

As Northeast MI is just one of many areas throughout the state, country and world competing to attract talent, Northeast MI CDC determined they will target an audience of skilled workers who desire the lifestyle offered by Northeast Michigan. The following strategies will be aimed at those desiring the lifestyle the region affords.

Strategy: Continue to reach out to millennials through the promotion of the Talent Hub website

The past five years involved information gathering through focus group sessions and meetings with millennials to better understand the target audience. One of the recommendations that is in completion stage, was a “Talent Hub” website to provide a platform for young adults to share networking events and other interests on a website.

Strategy: Develop local ambassadors

Recruit ambassadors to represent the region for various purposes. Choose locals who are passionate about the area, and who are members of the same target audiences you want to reach. Utilize these ambassadors in the following ways:

- **Feature them in the talent attraction tools (brochures, web sites, videos) created via the strategy below.**
- **Connect them with potential candidates who are scoping out the area. They can meet with the candidates at a coffee shop, brewery, or park to talk about what it’s like to live in Northeast Michigan.**
- **Promote the region on social media, blogs, and websites.**

Most descriptions of the millennial generation will include how relationship-oriented they are. The same is true for all other generations when looking to relocate to another area. **Making a personal connection with someone who has similar values can make all the difference in successful recruitment.** Local ambassadors can be called upon in many situations, and can come to personify the cultural aspects of the region.

Strategy: Create promotional tools for businesses and communities

Local businesses are struggling to find local and non-local talent. Their Human Resources staff (typically either managers, owners, or office staff) are often not trained as recruiters; they lack the knowledge and resources to effectively compete with recruitment efforts in other regions. Providing these companies and their communities with tools specifically designed to recruit skilled talent will go a long way to supporting their efforts.

Tools should include information on schools, recreation, festivals/entertainment, cost of living - all of the information that a person looking to relocate to the region would be seeking. The more appealing the information, the better. Consider the role of economic development as a model: they consistently work on attracting new businesses to an area by presenting a “package” of information and incentives.

Strategy: Develop more Young Professionals groups

Young people want to know their communities aren’t dying. One of the Best Practices cited in this report is that of Greater Minnesota Rising. Through targeted interviews, they learned that millennials who left the area did so partially because they were worried their communities would “transform into ghost towns.” **Connecting millennials with each other, with opportunities to get engaged in their community, and with local businesses is a great way to attract and retain workers in this generation.** Young Professionals groups can be instrumental in the strategies identified below, as well as several of the talent development strategies presented later in this report.

Potential activities for Young Professionals groups:

- Connect young workers with mentors at local businesses (mentorship is very important to this generation);
- Volunteer for non-profits or a community such as cleaning up a park;
- Getting involved in local politics;
- Acting as the “welcome wagon” for new young professionals - very important to this population;
- Hunting, fishing, or other recreational activities that emphasize the Northeast Michigan lifestyle;
- Serve as regional ambassadors (see strategy below).

Strategy: Promote innovative and successful companies headquartered in the region

Whether as part of the talent attraction tools above, or as a coordinated marketing campaign among partners, everyone can play a part in promoting the great companies of Region 3. Why promote specific companies? Because great companies attract people. Great companies are the “employers of choice” - the places where everyone wants to work. These companies aren’t struggling as much as others to find and keep skilled talent right now. They offer good wages and benefits, great culture, promotion from within, internal training, and more.

Strategy: Take it on the road

After developing the tools needed to effectively recruit skilled talent, including developing local ambassadors, take them on the road to showcase the region. Use the local ambassadors, economic development representatives, and/or chamber of commerce professionals to do a roadshow. **Attend events in larger markets, once it is deemed appropriate and safe to do so regarding COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, to target people who don’t want to live in bigger cities anymore.** Potential events include hunting and fishing expos, snowmobiling events, gun shows, and more. Career fairs and business expos could be effective events as well, but primary focus should be given to recreation-oriented, large-scale events. This will best align with the focus of targeting an audience that desires the cultural qualities of life provided by Northeast Michigan.

Talent Attraction Key Activities

- Conduct at least three events with target audiences; local millennials and young families to promote the Talent Hub and continue to build a network
- Develop a team of ten local ambassadors
- Develop and disseminate package of talent attraction tools
- Every significant population center in the region should have an active Young Professionals group within five years
- Create features for ten companies. Share these features widely through all partners
- Visit three events once funding is procured. Determine effectiveness and plan for continued attendance at appropriate events in the future

Indicators of success:

- Better understanding of appeal of NE MI from target groups. Use info to enhance attraction.
- A following of NE MI enthusiasts.
- Customizable package available to communities and businesses that promotes the region.
- Local ambassadors connect with new/existing workers – engage with community.
- Residents and job candidates see depth of opportunities in region.
- Region presented to new audiences with potential interest in the region

Talent Development Part 1

Developing the workforce that already resides in the region can be much more effective on a large scale than attracting talent, but it requires more energy and resources. To be most efficient and effective, the talent development strategies below utilize the sector-based approach. They are intended to support NEMCOG's goals for increasing employment opportunities, developing skilled talent with the existing workforce, and working collaboratively to improve economic conditions. Sector partnerships are a proven strategy for improving outcomes of talent development activities, due to heightened awareness within the industry sector, along with enhanced communication and coordination. The sector-based approach connects employers, education, economic development, and workforce systems in a coordinated way. Partners within a sector work together to undertake specific activities that advance opportunities for entry into the sector. Together, they achieve tangible results and support the long-term growth and success of the region.

Strategy: Add Healthcare to the Region's list of priority industries

The CEDS past plan identified several industries of focus, including Tourism, Local Food, and Wood Products. While all of these industries are key to the success of the region, Healthcare is noticeably absent. This industry boasts the second highest projected increase in jobs in the region for the 2012 to 2022 timeframe. It also provides the most variety of jobs, with several career pathway options.

Strategy: Develop a sector partnership in the wood products industry

There is already synergy in the wood products industry in the Region; it is a significant asset to the area. This strategy will focus on developing a Career Pathways for in-demand occupations in the industry. A visual roadmap that clearly delineates the jobs and educational milestones will be developed for use in events, presentations, and other promotional initiatives for attracting students to pursue careers in this field.

Strategy: Ensure strong connections between sector-based partnerships and workforce development board

Workforce development boards, both across the country and locally, exist to guide and direct workforce programming across a local area. Regionally, the NE MI Consortium Workforce Development Board supports employers with their in-demand talent needs. **For sector-based approaches to be successful, workforce boards must be engaged and supportive.** They must believe in the potential of sector partnerships enough to dedicate resources and provide leadership on the approach.

The NE MI Consortium's WDB will ensure that the board has representation from each industry of focus. Sector-based approaches will be developed and aligned with the board's strategic plans. Sector partnerships can regularly report to the board, ensuring accountability for achieving the outcomes that both have prioritized.

Talent Development Key Activities – Part 1

- Select three industries of focus to begin developing sector partnerships within one year. Industries of focus include the wood products industry and healthcare
- Create well-established sector partnerships in the healthcare and wood product sectors within two years; establish a partnership in a third priority industry within four years
- The workforce board will have representation from the established sector partnership and will actively endorse the partnership

Indicators of success:

- Collaboratively establishing industries of focus develops partnerships and reduces the overwhelming nature of getting started in sector partnerships, making them more attainable.
- Information to enhance their talent attraction efforts
- Partnerships with structure, goals, and dedicated resources.
- Workforce Board has representation from established sector partnerships.
- Workforce programming aligns with activities of sector partnerships.

Talent Development Part 2

Strategy: Increase utilization of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships in the Region

Apprenticeship is an effective means of training a skilled workforce, offering benefits to both the worker and the employer. The worker receives instructor-led training and on-the-job training with a skilled mentor. He/she also earns a wage while progressing through training milestones. The employer gains an employee with increasing levels of productivity, and can train each apprentice to the company's specifications. This recommendation leverages the blue-collar culture of the region, emphasizing that work-based, hands-on learning is the most effective means of developing new skills.

The United States Department of Labor now allows a multitude of apprenticeship programs, which are customizable to each employer's needs. These can include time-based or competency-based apprenticeships, or a hybrid of the two. Also, the apprentice's on-the-job mentor does not need to be a registered journeyman; the company designates the best mentor for the skill being taught.

Apprenticeships are available for thousands of occupations, and are no longer solely the realm of the skilled trades. Apprenticeable occupations can include Home Health Care aide, Software Developer, Farmer, and many more. Almost all of the in-demand occupations in the Region are apprenticeable. In addition, unions do not need to be involved unless they are already established at the company; creating an apprenticeship at a non-union shop does not in any way predict union activity.

Strategy: Promote USDOL Registered Apprenticeships to local employers

Due to the current low utilization and availability of apprenticeship programs, the region should focus on

educating local employers, thereby promoting the benefits of this workforce development strategy. It is recommended that a robust regional promotional plan be developed to properly educate employers about apprenticeships. It is anticipated that the promotional plan will include relationship building with local companies through the sector partnerships, apprenticeship representatives on the region's workforce development boards, industry sector coordinators at the State of Michigan's Workforce Development Agency, the USDOL Office of Registered Apprenticeship, and more.

Strategy: Create a centralized coordination function for USDOL Registered Apprenticeships

A coordination function within the Region can offer the kind of support to local employers that is needed to truly implement effective programming. It is recommended that this function be filled by a dedicated staff position.

A staff position that is focused on apprenticeship programming for the region will ensure that local employers have access to the information and resources they need. A coordinator would not only be the local "go to" expert on how to set-up and manage an apprenticeship, but would also heavily promote apprenticeship. He or she would:

- **Get involved in the business community through active participation in sector partnerships;**
- **Turn current apprenticeship-supporting employers into advocates and champions;**
- **Assist employers in creating customized programs, including connecting to appropriate postsecondary programs;**
- **Assist employers in calculating return on investment;**
- **Work with existing educational programs to develop pre-apprenticeship programming, which will provide employers with a productive employee upon hire;**
- **Promote apprenticeship in an ongoing fashion, using local information.**

Strategy: Ensure long-term, ongoing support of employers and apprentices

The region must be committed to continued support of apprenticeship programming for the long-term. This will require dedicated resources to fund the apprenticeship coordinator position, wrap-around support for apprentices to ensure completion, and ongoing promotion to the community. The sector partnerships should make this issue a regular agenda item at meetings or designate a task force.

A viable funding model for this position should be developed early in the timeline. Because the coordinator will support the region and his/her work will benefit many stakeholders, the funding model should leverage multiple sources. This could include federal and state workforce funding, educational institutions, employer support, and discretionary grants.

Wrap-around supportive services for apprentices will ensure retention and completion of the program. This can be provided by a combination of federal workforce funding and employer support.

Follow-through on documentation of training and communication with USDOL is critical to success for each individual apprenticeship program as well as for the strategy overall.

Talent Development Key Activities – Part 2

- Develop promotional plan early and focus heavily on promotion for the first two years
- Work within the sector partnerships to increase the number of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships by 25 programs in ten years, resulting in 150 trained apprentices
- Procure resources to support apprenticeship coordinator and cost of apprenticeship training

Indicators of success:

- Local employers will accurately understand the benefits of apprenticeship and the ways in which it could impact their company
- Additional work-based training opportunities will be available to workers and companies grow their own skilled workforce
- Funding sufficient to provide effective and high quality services for all aspects of apprenticeship available in region

Talent Development Part 3

Strategy: Develop comprehensive Career Pathways systems within sector partnerships

Career Pathways have been defined for Career & Technical Education (CTE) in various ways for decades. In CTE, career pathways represent major occupational clusters, within which students can pursue a number of career options. However, for purposes of this strategy, the term Career Pathways will be defined as follows: “A Career Pathway is the education and training required along with the expected employment outcomes for each level of achievement in a certain industry or occupation” (Pierce College). In addition, the term used in the context of talent development programming implies that wrap-around services will be provided to ensure that the student/worker is able to overcome barriers that could get in the way of completion.

Career pathways offer job seekers and students a venue for progressing through an industry. They can achieve (and celebrate) accomplishments throughout that progression, often increasing earnings. A well-designed career pathway program gives each individual a personalized roadmap for long-term career planning. **Employers within a sector benefit by ensuring that career pathways systems are designed to train new and potential workers with the skills they need, and to their standards.**

The structure provided by sector partnerships should be used to develop career pathways. The group may want to appoint a committee or focus the energy of the entire partnership on development of career pathways. Be sure that representation from Adult Education and postsecondary institutions are involved, as they will surely play a role in providing training. The group may decide to utilize just one employer who is willing to share information on the career progression options within that company. This will be an effective way to get started and quickly attain tangible outcomes. If multiple employers are interested and willing to participate, the committee will need to find commonalities among the employers in order to develop the career pathway.

Strategy: Create a Career Pathways Roadmap

The first career pathways system to be developed will be targeted with the wood products industry, but any sector desiring will also be addressed. The roadmap provides a visual representation of the occupations and credentials required to progress through the pathway.

Strategy: Develop training programs where gaps exist

If development of the career pathways roadmap reveals gaps in available training, work with local training institutions to develop them. Several examples of this kind of development have occurred in the Region including the timber grading training. **Work collaboratively to brainstorm solutions to potential capacity issues, and conduct comprehensive marketing to recruit students into the new program.** Utilize Michigan Works! to recruit, screen and possibly fund potential trainees.

Strategy: Promote Adult Education programs as an entry into career pathways

Adult Education programming is in a perfect position to jump-start career pathways for adults. Attainment of a GED is the first step in a career pathway. Educating the communities throughout the region about Adult Education services should go beyond advertising for GED completion. Promoting these services should emphasize that basic skills are necessary to enter postsecondary education, on-the-job training, and long-term employment.

Strategy: Develop an Employer Resource Network (ERN)

Where there is synergy and support, engage the employers who participated in development of the career pathways within their sector to create an Employer Resource Network. An ERN will take the next step beyond credentials and jobs and set up a collaborative method of providing wrap-around support to employees. **The critical element is that workers have access to a neutral source of supportive services that will address potential barriers to employment before they interfere with job success.** The combination of upward mobility within a company, along with the supportive services resources, will improve retention and workplace culture.

Talent Development Key Activities – Part 3

- Create a Career Pathways Roadmap with an established sector partnership by the second year
- If a new training program is needed, develop and begin offering it within two years
- Create a marketing plan for Adult Education programs, emphasizing their connection to career pathways, within the first year
- Develop an Employer Resource Network within five years

Indicators of success:

- All stakeholders have access to visual representation of career pathways for long-term career planning
- Programs available to train workforce for every milestone within career pathway
- Enrollment in Adult Education services increases as communities understand basic skills, including GED, are essential first step in any career pathway
- Multiple employers provide access to supportive services so that their workforce will succeed in progressing through the career pathways

Talent Development Part 4

Strategy: Improve Soft Skills through Work-Based Training

During the input process for this plan, soft skills were clearly identified as a priority issue. Employers, educators, agency representatives, and private citizens all agree that the workforce must be better trained on the kinds of skills that are required for every job, regardless of industry.

There is a multitude of evidence that shows the importance of soft skills. Individuals who are proficient in these skills are more likely to stay persistent when searching for a job; they are also more likely to get hired, excel on the job, and earn more. They succeed in both educational and employment endeavors.⁴ Improving these skills among the current and future workforce in the region is paramount to meeting employer needs.

An independent review of multiple studies on soft skills concluded that the most commonly cited, highly desired skills are the following:⁵

- **Social skills**
- **Communication skills**
- **Higher order thinking (problem solving, critical thinking skills)**
- **Self-control**
- **Positive self-concept**

It is these skills that make the difference in whether a person is successful or more likely to fail at education, employment, and personal activities.

Soft skills are critical for employment success, so should be a priority when designing employment and training programs. However, teaching soft skills is a challenge. The common perception is that these types of skills are taught at home, and if a person did not learn them from parents then there is no hope. Learning soft skills in a classroom, with no real practical application, is not nearly as effective as learning them in real-life scenarios, whether at home or on a job.

Fortunately, there are effective and successful programs occurring all over the world that show marked improvement of soft skills. These programs are most often hands-on, work-based experiences. They include immediate feedback from a job coach, and leverage “teaching moments” throughout the workday. **The work-based model is successful because the job coach is positioned as both a supervisor and a trainer - someone who teaches, guides, and encourages soft skill development and success.** Unfortunately, these programs are labor- intensive and expensive; they are often funded through government grants and some private donations, and take an immense amount of administrative effort to develop and maintain.

This recommendation takes the effectiveness of these programs, and transfers the coaching role to the business community. Work-based learning is best conducted at work, so we ask businesses to step up and take part in the solution to this challenge. The following strategies ask businesses to take more work experience, co-op, and internship placements; intentionally train the student/worker on soft skills; and work collaboratively with the workforce agencies and educational systems to raise the standard for soft skill development and attainment. The strategies also provide the structure needed for businesses to succeed in this new role. We recommend utilizing the framework established through sector partnerships to begin implementation.

⁵ Ibid.

Strategy: Build soft skills training into the structure of work experience programs

Several entities in the region utilize work experience programming for educational and workforce development purposes. A job seeker or student is “placed” in a business or non-profit agency to work on a temporary assignment. These programs include Work Experience Programs for youth and disadvantaged populations through Michigan Works; co-op programs at high schools and career and technical education; and college-level internships. The purpose of any of these programs is to give the student or job seeker an opportunity to spend time in a work environment, learning both the occupational skills as well as the cultural and often unspoken workplace skills that are so necessary for success. **This strategy takes those “unspoken” workplace skills and makes them spoken and intentional.**

Most of these programs already utilize a student/worker review form. The work experience supervisor (usually the point of contact at the company) completes the form on a regular basis. The review addresses items such as punctuality, attitude, appearance, and job skills. The completed form is used as a way to determine if a person is job ready. However, the form can also help the supervisor with specifically training the person where it’s needed. Including other training-oriented structural elements in the work experience program will build the structure we recommend, such as:

- **The supervisor should provide immediate feedback when the student/worker does well and when he/she is deficient.**
- **A curriculum should be developed to ensure that soft skills are taught during the work experience placement. The curriculum can be laid out in an easy-to-follow plan so the supervisor is given the tools needed to act as a job coach. There are many programs available that provide soft skills curriculum for classroom instruction; we recommend conducting research to determine which of these could best be adapted to a workplace environment.**
- **An assessment proving attainment of soft skills should be conducted at the end of the work experience placement. A certificate of achievement can be provided to the student as evidence of his/her learning.**

Comparable Best Practice: [ROCA Transitional Jobs program](#), Boston MA

Strategy: Train work experience supervisors

Once the training structure and appropriate curriculum is developed (above), conduct trainings with work experience supervisors. Gather several company representatives via an established sector partnership to conduct the training. Give them the skills they need to teach soft skills to others. This training will guide them through the process of recognizing the errors in judgement that so often occur among people who don’t have soft skills. Rather than passing judgement and simply marking the person down on the review form, the supervisor will be equipped to show the worker an appropriate skill instead. The training will also teach the supervisor how to use “teachable moments,” implement curriculum, and assess competence in each skill.

We do not know of any existing program for teaching work experience site supervisors how to train on soft skills. However, a skilled educator or strategist could utilize available soft skills curriculum and modify it for this purpose. We feel that this strategy is imperative to the successful implementation of the

recommendation; **teaching soft skills in a work environment requires skilled, dedicated individuals at the worksite.**

Strategy: Increase the quantity of work experience placements

With the new training-oriented work experience model, and skilled work site supervisors, more companies and non- profits throughout the region should take work experience, co-op, and internship placements. This is a community- wide endeavor; businesses should see how much of a difference they can make in helping people improve their soft skills. The sector partnership groups can work together to increase the number of overall placements.

In order to recruit more companies to take placements, the following activities will be completed:

- **Develop success stories of work experience placements who have graduated to full-time, permanent positions and share these stories widely.**
- **Maintain data on work experience successes to show potential businesses the impact it has on individuals as well as the workforce.**
- **Entice more business participation through local civic groups, such as rotary, Kiwanis, and optimists clubs. The businesspeople who participate in these groups are there because they are committed to giving back to the community; what better way to do that than to teach a young person or**

As with all programs, the entities coordinating work experience programs have costs associated with each placement. Michigan Works! agencies pay the wages for youth placements; educational institutions usually have an internship coordinator who works directly with companies to place individuals in program-related jobs. The costs for increasing numbers in these programs can be mitigated by partnering with companies and local foundations. For instance, Michigan Works! agencies can split the cost of wages with the companies who take placements, rather than paying the entire wage. The economy is ripe for such an arrangement, since so many businesses are desperately seeking entry level workers. Costs for coordination of programs can be supported through grants from government, local foundations, or civic groups.

Talent Development Key Activities – Part 4

- **Develop the curriculum and training structure for work experience programs within one year**
- **Develop the training program and begin delivery during the second year. Conduct one training per year, ongoing.**
- **Recruit 50 additional companies for work experience, co-op, and internship placements within five years. Continue recruiting through the last five years.**

Indicators of success:

- **Work experience programming provide intentional, systematic, and high quality soft skills training**
- **Work experience supervisors have the skills needed to teach soft skills to students and workers during the program**
- **The companies offer soft skills training through work-based learning through a variety of work experience programs**

Chapter Five

Priorities

Community Support

Infrastructure

1. Continue increasing availability of and access to high speed internet
2. Continue providing resources to improve infrastructure

Transportation & Transit

1. Collaborate and coordinate across sectors to reduce costs for logistics and workforce transportation
2. Increase awareness of existing transportation options and resources for the workforce

Placemaking & Regional Branding

1. Target investment in small towns
2. Coordinate placemaking efforts
3. Solidify and implement a regional identity
4. Create a strategic tourism partnership

Regional Collaboration

1. Achieve efficiencies by sharing services
2. Facilitate collaborative approaches

Economic Expansion

Target Industries

1. Provide enhanced business development support
2. Identify growth opportunities in targeted sectors
3. Promote growth industries inside and outside the region
 - Coordinate across regions
 - Develop and prepare shovel-ready sites
 - Improve connections between industries and economic development
4. Coordinate logistics and transportation for goods and talent
5. Develop and attract a skilled workforce

Entrepreneurship

1. Support entrepreneurship through intentional, facilitated activities, i.e., Entrepreneurial Website
2. Develop Youth entrepreneurship and mentorship programs
3. Succession planning

Small Business Support

1. Increase access to small business support resources
2. Provide market and economic impact information to support business expansion (retention)
3. Diversify and globally connect businesses (growth)

Talent

Talent Advancement

1. Improved educational attainment
2. Increased number of small businesses

Talent Attraction

1. Better understand young professionals who live in Northeast Michigan
2. Develop more Young Professionals groups and cultivate them as regional ambassadors
3. Create promotional tools for businesses and communities to

Talent Development

1. Increase awareness of career options and training programs
2. Conduct talent development activities using a sector strategy
3. Promote USDOL Registered Apprenticeship and other work-based learning

Workforce Development

1. Increase and diversify funding
2. Increase collaboration

Chapter Six

Evaluation Framework

Evaluating the progress of Northeast Michigan’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is occurring in two key ways. First, we are tracking important data that will allow us to review progress being made to our goals as previously outlined. Second, as part of our Regional Prosperity Plan, each of our goals has specific action items that are being measured. Each action item has a timeline of when it should be completed and how success will be measured. A copy of the complete table outlining each action item is shown below in the following table. Adjustments to the plan will be made yearly based on the progress that is made and if more work is necessary to complete an action item.

<i>Evaluation Framework</i>				
Action Item	Measureable Goals	Status/Year Planned	Performance	Goal Met
Placemaking - Goal: Strengthen the quality of place throughout Northeast Michigan				
Obtain Redevelopment-Ready Community certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for targeted placemaking centers	Communities are RRC Certified	Ongoing (Communities in region with RRC-certified status: Alpena, Grayling, and Rogers City.)		Yes & in progress
Conduct Target Market Analyses to determine need and suitability for targeted investment	Completed TMA for each county	Study was completed in December 2015.		Yes
Attain Michigan Main Street community designation from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for targeted placemaking centers	Main Street status obtained	Ongoing (Communities in region with Main Street status: Grayling and Cheboygan); Rogers City Main Street in progress		Yes & in progress
Create community plans that strategically target investment such as Trail Plans, Place Plans, and Recreation Plans	Plans created	Ongoing; Recently developed plans: four trail town plans, one coastal trail feasibility study, one place plan (Grayling), and 17 recreation plans.		Yes & in progress
Regional Branding - Goal: Improve awareness and recognition of the region in state, national, and global markets.				
Develop a consistent marketing and outreach strategy with buy-in and support from strategic	Marketing Plan in place	Under development		In progress

placemaking centers				
Create a tourism partnership that incorporates community development and placemaking	Partnership in place	Coastal tourism partnership has functioned since 2004 and continues to move projects forward. A trails collaborative has been developed for the Up North Trails program. A full regional tourism partnership is occurring in 2021 – partnership is partially established.		Yes & in progress
Coordinate a strategic partnership with Pure Michigan	Pure MI campaign in place; projects aligned with Pure MI brand	Sunrise Coast brand/US 23 Heritage Route program (Pure Michigan Byways) aligned with Pure Michigan Future project – regional brand partnership with Pure Michigan Several attempts have been made to partner with Pure Michigan, however the pay to play program has made partnership difficult due to lack of funding.		Yes & in progress
Improve the region’s online presence across multiple websites that represent various communities, natural resources, and other assets	Website presence	Existing – US 23 Heritage Route, Up North Trails, M-33 Dark Sky Byway, discovernortheastmichigan.org. A talent attraction/tourism website is under development.		Yes & in progress
Develop place-based branding packages for companies to use when attracting talent	Packages developed	Future project		No
Transportation & Transit - Goal: Develop or enhance transportation options across the region for efficiency and accessibility.				
Coordinate meetings and/or roundtables among transit agencies and transportation providers	Meetings held	Future project – funding needs to be secured		No
Connect transportation stakeholders with the workforce system, educational entities, and local employers	Transportation systems promoted by these stakeholders	Future project – funding needs to be secured		No
Create partnerships that formalize commitments to collaboration and enable efficiency	Signed partnership agreements	Future project – funding needs to be secured		No
Explore opportunities for non-motorized transportation options in more densely populated	Bike trails established	City of Alpena/Alpena Township Nonmotorized trail extension in progress. Future projects – funding needs to be secured		In progress

areas				
Map and analyze transportation support services, and share resource information widely	Maps, Information created and shared	Future project – funding needs to be secured		No
Infrastructure - Goal: Ensure adequate infrastructure that meets the needs of business, residents, and visitors.				
Take an inventory of municipal needs and analyze local policies and ordinances	Inventory complete	Complete local readiness assessment tool – integrated asset management – underway.		Yes & in progress
Use this inventory to select specific, high-impact projects for investment	Projects selected	Municipal America Rescue Plan funds may fund some high impact projects		No
Assist with water and sewer needs in local communities	Projects engaged in	Assistance with grants upon request (ongoing).		Yes & in progress
Identify and pursue funding from federal and state as well as private sources	Funding obtained	Assistance with grants upon request (ongoing); Alcona County Broadband Rollout Plan – obtained 2021.		Yes & in progress
Asset Management Inventory and PASER Road Ratings (annual assessment of road conditions)	Each city/village has asset management inventory; road ratings complete annually	Ongoing – road ratings occur annually; asset management inventory is in progress.		Yes & in progress
Where private sector investment and build-outs are occurring, work with providers and municipalities to address challenges and concerns early in the process that may delay build-outs.	Partnership with providers	Ongoing		Yes & in progress
Regional Collaboration - Goal: Enable consistent and coordinated services across the region.				
Develop models for shared services across multiple agencies	Models developed for multiple services	NEMCOG and Northeast Michigan Consortium (accounting services shared service).		Yes
Combined meetings among compatible groups to encourage cross-pollination of diverse ideas and efficient use of time for group members	Meetings held	Regional Prosperity Initiative; Collaborative Development Council.		Yes
Develop and offer regional services, such as	Services offered	Ongoing; NEMCOG provides regional GIS services; medical services - shared		Yes

GIS and medical examiners		services in place.		
Entrepreneurship and Small Business Support - Goal: Foster an entrepreneurial culture in the region and grow existing businesses.				
Support the development and growth of an entrepreneurial and small business network	Network resources available on the internet	Website under development.		In progress
Support, connect, and increase pitch events	Pitch events held	Pitch events have been held in Gaylord and Cheboygan (four total)		Yes
Facilitate youth-based entrepreneurial education	Educational events held	Received funding from State to support entrepreneurial education mini-grants to schools.		Yes
Provide small business development resources in an easy to use and readily accessible manner, such as a web-based portal	Business resources on the internet	Website under development.		In progress
Partner with Sault Ste. Marie SmartZone for product development	Partnership in place	Explored and not feasible – eliminated as action item		No
Support existing incubators and create more	Services provided to incubators; additional incubators created	Feasibility study in Village of Lincoln; services provided as requested.		In progress
Share success stories regarding entrepreneurial endeavors in the region	Success stories posted online	Success stories on job attainment shared on discovernortheastmichigan.org. SBDC success stories will be on business resource website.		In progress
Industry Cluster - Goal: Support key industry clusters with targeted economic development.				
Increase the use work-based training programs to develop a skilled workforce for each cluster	Number of people in the workforce with skilled training increased	Northeast Michigan Consortium has increased training.		In progress
Convene transportation agencies and businesses to facilitate collaboration and development of solutions that will address transportation and logistics challenges	Meetings with stakeholders held. New solutions in place.	2021 – will be brought to workforce development board		In progress
Inform and encourage local and state-wide policy that encourages business growth for these clusters	Develop business growth strategies	Ongoing - Region 3 Collaborative Development Council monitors and encourages policies.		In progress
Incorporate industry promotion into regional	Promote clusters on the web	Videos completed for community attraction that highlight some industries.		In progress

marketing activities in order to expand business markets for targeted clusters		To be expanded as funding is obtained.		
Work with local partners to pilot new marketing and sales opportunities for business most impacted by COVID-19, including but not limited to community supported dining options for local bars and restaurants	New pilot programs created	Ongoing; CSA-type restaurant pilot; Digital Works pilot.		In progress
Promote local, state, and federal resources for businesses adversely impacted by COVID-19	Provide online information for businesses	Holding and creating webinars; participation in execution of state grant funding for COVID-19		In progress
Establish and/or support sector-based approaches to economic and workforce development, such as industry associations or collaboratives	Form collaborative group for each sector	Otsego County Economic Alliance has created an industry committee to support manufacturing in the county. Michigan Works facilitates a manufacturing sector group in Grayling		In progress
Ensure that all stakeholders understand the specific needs of the target clusters and support activities that enhance their success	Inventory needs of clusters; develop solutions to fill those needs	Michigan Works is currently rolling out a massive career pathways initiative through the partnership with employer clusters. With the goal of identifying needs.		In progress
Workforce Development System - Goal: Enhance and expand the multi-faceted system that supports employers and workers.				
Pursue grant opportunities as a region	Grants obtained	Currently working with the Region on State funding initiative for Talent		In progress
Collaborate on events and activities that impact the entire region, such as apprenticeship programming, MiCareer Quest, and more	Events held and programs created	Collaboration occurs when events are held. Covid has not allowed certain activities to occur but when able collaborative approach will resume.		In Progress
Increase targeted marketing to improve awareness of educational opportunities	Enrollment numbers increased	Hot Jobs featured created online and distributed to schools– videos and information online		Ongoing
Market the region and its high quality of life/low cost of living to newly minted remote workers.	Website created which promotes the region	Talent Attraction/Retention Website will be launched in 2021.		In progress

Talent Attraction - Goal: Attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce and small business sector that supports a thriving local economy.				
Conduct at least three events with target audiences; local millennials and young families to promote the Talent Hub and continue to build a network	3 events held	Targeted for 2021 – when able due to Covid restrictions.		Ongoing
Develop a team of ten local ambassadors	Team in place	Targeted for 2022 – funding needed.		No
Develop and disseminate package of talent attraction tools	Package distributed online and in packets	Completed Hot Jobs Packets and Videos. Reevaluate for continued distribution.		Yes
Every significant population center in the region should have an active Young Professionals group within five years	Groups established	Collaborative to reach out to local partners to assist with creation of groups in 2021.		No
Create features for ten companies. Share these features widely through all partners	Features created	Hot Jobs Videos were completed and disseminated. Reevaluate needs for continued dissemination.		Ongoing
Visit three events once funding is procured. Determine effectiveness and plan for continued attendance at appropriate events in the future	Visit events	Once able, events will be attended if funding to be obtained.		Ongoing
Talent Development Part 1				
Select three industries of focus to begin developing sector partnerships within one year. Industries of focus include the wood products industry and healthcare	Three industries selected	Sector based approach is established.		Ongoing
Create well-established sector partnerships in the healthcare and wood product sectors within two years; establish a partnership in a third priority industry within four years	Partnership formed	Sector based approach is established.		Ongoing
The workforce board will have representation from	Add sectors to workforce board	Added sectors.		Ongoing

the established sector partnership and will actively endorse the partnership				
Talent Development Part 2				
Develop promotional plan early and focus heavily on promotion for the first two years	Plan developed	Funding to be obtained.		No
Work within the sector partnerships to increase the number of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships by 25 programs in ten years, resulting in 150 trained apprentices	Increased USDOL Registered Apprenticeships	Funding to be obtained.		No
Procure resources to support apprenticeship coordinator and cost of apprenticeship training	Funding obtained	Funding to be obtained		No
Talent Development Part 3				
Create a Career Pathways Roadmap with an established sector partnership by the second year	Career Pathways Roadmap created	Michigan Works is currently rolling out a massive career pathways initiative through the partnership with employer clusters. With the goal of identifying needs.		Ongoing
If a new training program is needed, develop and begin offering it within two years	New training programs developed	Proposal is currently being developed.		Ongoing
Create a marketing plan for Adult Education programs, emphasizing their connection to career pathways, within the first year	Marketing plan written	Funding to be obtained.		No
Develop an Employer Resource Network within five years	Employer Resource Network created	Funding to be obtained.		No
Talent Development Part 4				
Develop the curriculum and training structure for work experience programs within one year	Structure created	Funding to be obtained.		No
Develop the training program and begin	Training program created	Funding to be obtained.		No

delivery during the second year. Conduct one training per year, ongoing.				
Recruit 50 additional companies for work experience, co-op, and internship placements within five years. Continue recruiting through the last five years.	50 companies recruited	Funding to be obtained.		No
Positive				
Neutral/In Progress				
Negative				
No data available				

Chapter Seven

Adoption

Collaborative Development Council

The Region 3 Collaborative Development Council reviewed and accepted the CEDS as presented on May 6, 2021. The meeting notes are found below:

REGION 3: MEDC-Collaborative Development Council (CDC)
May 6, 2021 at 11:00 am

MEETING NOTES

1. Members Present: Erich Podjaske, Brenda Bachelder, Mary Bickel, Lisa McComb, Donna LaCourt, Angie Ross, Sara Wycoff McCauley, Jessie Mitchell, David Emmel, Tom Stephenson, Mike Mahler, Clara Sherman, Nate Engle, Mike Nunneley, and Denise Cline.
2. American Rescue Plan Update: Sara Wycoff McCauley provided an update on the funding to local governments as part of the American Rescue Plan and the rules and process of distribution that are being communicated from the Federal government and the Michigan Department of Treasury.
3. CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy): The CDC members discussed the draft copy of the CEDS which became available for public review on April 5, 2021. A detailed discussion occurred related to the industry clusters listed in the plan. It was noted that housing and childcare have become very important issues that need to be addressed. The CDC members decided that, in the fall of 2021, they would like to open up the discussion on the industry clusters stated in the CEDS to determine if they accurately reflect the current conditions in the region or if changes are needed. The Region 3 CDC unanimously accepted the CEDS as written and recommended transmittal to the NEMCOG Board of Directors.
4. Regional Projects
 - A. Childcare Centers: Lisa McComb provided an updated on the meetings that were held related to the childcare shortage that is currently occurring in the region.
 - B. Business Website Update: Sara Wycoff McCauley provided an update on the development of the business website. She and Denise Cline have been meeting with Flight Path Creative to craft the final version of the website. Once that is complete, they will begin finalizing the service providers on the website and assuring that all are represented accurately. CDC members agreed to review their local areas once the draft is complete: Brenda Bachelder – Roscommon County, Dave Emmel and Angie Ross – Cheboygan County, Mary Bickel – Ogemaw County, Clara Sherman – Iosco County, Mike Mahler – Alpena County and Presque Isle County, Erich Podjaske – Crawford County, and Lisa McComb – Otsego County. Donna LaCourt and Jessie Mitchell will assist region-wide.
5. Agency Updates: Updates were provided by the agencies present.

NEMCOG Board of Directors

The NEMCOG Board of Directors approved the CEDS on May 20, 2021. The Resolution of Adoptions is found below:

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

NE MI COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS): 2021-2025

WHEREAS, Northeast Michigan continues to experience high and persistent unemployment; and

WHEREAS, the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) desires to alleviate this situation and to stabilize and improve the Region's economy, and

WHEREAS, NEMCOG's Regional Collaborative Development Council (CDC) has provided input and review of the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to reflect accomplishments over the past years and the development of strategies to attract and retain jobs in the Economic Development District consisting of Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego and Presque Isle Counties, and

WHEREAS, the CDC has approved the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and

WHEREAS, the 2021-2025 CEDS provides strategies that once implemented will lead to improved prosperity for the 8-county region,

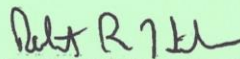
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments Board of Directors does hereby adopt the 2021-2025 Northeast Michigan Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

Moved by Scott McLennan, seconded by Doug Baum to adopt the above Resolution, at a meeting of the NEMCOG Board on May 20, 2021.

Ayes 13 Nays 0

Dated: May 20, 2021

Attested by Robert Heilman, President
Northeast Michigan Council of Governments



Public Notice

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Economic Development by County

MEDC Collaborative Development Council - CDC

NEMCOG Staff Contact:
Diane Rekowski

[Home / Community / Economic Development / Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#)

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

April 5, 2021

CEDS available for 30-day public review.

The 2021-2025 CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) is available for public review and comment for 30 days. Comments are **due by May 5, 2021**. Please send comments to Denise Cline at dmcline@nemcog.org. [Download the draft 2021-2025 CEDS](#). Thank you!

About the CEDS

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development in communities and regions through a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process. Economic development planning – as implemented through the CEDS – is not only a cornerstone of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) programs, but successfully serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. The CEDS provides the capacity-building foundation by which the public sector, working in conjunction with other economic actors (individuals, firms, industries), creates the environment for regional economic prosperity.

[Download the 2015-2020 CEDS](#)

Public Comments

There were no public comments received.

Minutes of CEDS Approval



Northeast Michigan Council of Governments

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MINUTES

OF THE

NORTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

May 20, 2021

Video-conference: GoToMeeting

Call to Order

The Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) Board of Directors meeting was called to order by Robert Heilman, President, at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was declared.

Roll Call

Board Members

Present: Dan Gauthier, Dave Karschnick, Kevin Osbourne, John Wallace, Carey Jansen, Dawn Hubbard, Rob Pallarito, Carl Altman, Robert Heilman, Mark Becmer, Doug Baum, Nathan Skibbe, Adam Poll, and Scott McLennan

Staff Present: Diane Rekowski, Theresa Huff and Eric Szymanski

Guest: Sara McCauley, Ruth Ann Largent, Tom Sobec and Tom Stephenson

Approval of Minutes

R. Heilman presented the Minutes of the April 15, 2021 meeting. D. Baum moved, seconded by R. Pallarito to approve the minutes as presented. Yes all, motion carried.

Financial Report

None

President's Report

Regional Project Review: R. Heilman stated there are (2) Federal Grant projects for regional review; (1) other project for regional review and (1) public notice. J. Wallace moved to approve the projects as presented, seconded by N. Skibbe. Yes all, motion carried.

Director's/Staff Report

S. McCauley briefly covered the NEMI Economic Recovery Report April/May 2021 report that was sent to the board. ARPA funding - counties and metro communities must request the funds from US Treasury directly using the US Treasury Application system. For communities that are non-entitlement communities (meaning not a county

or metro area), their state government is responsible for distributing the funds. She believes more information should be out in June. Lisa McComb/OCEA is focusing on Childcare needs and is putting together a group to discuss the challenges of childcare needs in the region. Workforce is experiencing a lack of employees. Unemployment Agency will soon require proof of job searching in order to continue to receive benefits

Webinar today at 3:30 p.m. American Rescue Plan Act: DUNS and SAM Registration Workshop. S. McCauley encourages input from the Board.

Projects/Staff – D. Rekowski

- Staff continues to work remotely. Will likely return to office in June following new Hybrid format.
- Received policy reviews from Attorney. Will organize a meeting to review with Executive Committee.
- The next Board Meeting will likely be held in person at the University Center.
- Three counties are considering hiring a County Administrator. A meeting with Treasury staff and Counties can be arranged to discuss the budgetary concerns.
- ARPA Funds access webinar will be held by various partners.
- New project contracts are coming in, Hazard Mitigation approval process is moving along.
- Assisting Alpena County with a Solid Waste Plan Consistency Determination of Lafarge’s application for their Type III Landfill expansion.
- Forming a stakeholder group for the new Market Development Recycling grant.
- Nearing the end of the Local Foods Supply Chain project. Setting up a meeting soon.
- Eric Szymanski, our new Regional Planner, is working on JLUS and helping D. Cline with various other projects.

Committee Reports - None

Previous Business - None

New Business

CEDs Resolution for Adoption: D. Karschnick moved to waive the reading of the Resolution, D. Gauthier seconded. Yes all, motion carried.

S. McLennan moved to adopt the NE MI Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs): 2021-2025, D. Baum seconded. A roll call vote was taken, yes all, motion carried.

County Updates

Alpena Chamber: Advocating rules; beginning to have events again.

Alpena Twp.: Keeping abreast on disbursements of funds. Thunder Bay Island receiving funds. They support Alpena Chamber with returning to a sense of normalcy.

Alcona Co.: No Report.

Alpena Co.: Exploring the hiring of a County Administrator. Informed the group there were 1,000 troops from 4 different states in training at the Air Base, giving the economy a boost.

City of Grayling: Economic Development project tied with Brownfield. Starting to get back to running annual events. Asked Board to consider encouraging legislatures to review Unemployment benefits, all businesses are struggling to find employees.

Chebovgan Co.: No report.

Crawford Co.: Excited that things are opening up again. Airport is closed until Mid-July. Marathon Canoe event coming soon, Business After Hours back up. Putting together a Recycling Taskforce for county-wide recycling solutions. Monday, May 24 at 11:00 a.m. there will be a "Laying of the Wreath" event for 2 privates at Johnson Cemetery.

Montmorency Co.: Having a special meeting to discuss closing the jail in Montmorency County. Considering plan to join Alpena County jail.

Otsego Co.: State and County Parks - all big weekends are full, although there are some week days still open. Tourists are arriving, town was very busy yesterday. Unemployment is causing issues finding employees to work. Every business seems to be hiring.

Mackinaw City: Tourist season is ramping up. Weather is a little iffy. 2 businesses have been purchased.

Region 7 Health Coalition: Alternate Care Trailers have been restocked, one is currently in Alpena County, the Coalition is closing out After Action and Improvement planning from the second wave of COVID 19 and our new budget period (BP3) begins on July 1, 2021.

D. Rekowski stressed that if you know anyone that doesn't plan on applying for ARPA funds, to let us know. It's very important.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m. by R. Heilman. The next meeting will be June 17, 2021. Details will be provided as to whether it will be in person or virtual.