



## Wood Products

**Background:** The Wood Products Industries form a broad sector of business activity in Northern Michigan, and particularly in the eleven counties of Region 3. An MSU Extension study in 2012 described the forest industry as “Michigan’s third largest manufacturing sector,” supporting “about 136,000 jobs and adding \$17 billion to Michigan’s economy.” (MSUE, 2012) While timber harvests could increase somewhat above their current levels, the greatest opportunity for economic growth lies in the added value provided by manufacturing wood products.

Timber harvest, sawmill operations, and wood products manufacturing represent traditional industries for the people of this area of Michigan. The sector offers long-term sustainability, opportunities for positive environmental impact, and lifestyle compatibility.

The actions proposed in this section will work to stabilize and maintain the existing industry, as well as to promote the establishment and growth of new entrepreneurial businesses.

### **Strategy: Expand, enhance, and support the Wood Products Industry Cluster in the Region.**

1. **Continue to provide professional marketing and business development assistance to continue to implement the production of value-added furniture products in the region.**
  - a. Organize and hold an Annual Pure MI Furniture Show to market furniture that has been designed and produced by NE MI companies.
  - b. Add two new product lines of furniture each year.
  - c. Pursue children’s furniture and futon companies for production in region.

- d. Develop cooperative ventures that link material suppliers, manufacturers, and end user markets to streamline process.
- e. Explore areas of cooperation, and facilitate efforts at local sourcing, group training, and team efforts in logistics and other services.
- f. Establish a regional association of wood industry executives.
- g. Survey Grand Rapids area for value-added furniture opportunities.
- h. Collaborate with Prosperity Regions 4 and 5 on “*Pure Amish*” Furniture Initiative as Market Place is ripe for furniture branded by the Amish.

## **2. Implement effective vocational and entrepreneurial training programs for the wood industry.**

- a. Expand and enhance the MiFair program to include broader areas of wood manufacturing and associated activities (e.g., machine maintenance, packaging, logistics, etc.) and more advanced techniques.
- b. Survey wood industry and other manufacturers to identify additional areas for focused vocational training.
- c. Provide coordination and project management services to facilitate one-time or periodic efforts to fill workforce gaps.
- d. Work with the business community and the schools to expand and enhance cooperative and distributive education opportunities in important trades.

## **3. Provide lifelong learning opportunities for the wood industry.**

- a. Provide training and certification opportunities for people already in the workforce and for companies needing skilled employees who are willing to invest in their best workers.
- b. Survey regional businesses (as a part of item 1B above) to identify more opportunities to upgrade the skills of workers in the workforce.

## **4. Bring the wood industry wider recognition.**

- a. Promote, through the Region 3 CDC Website and Marketing Initiative, to bring the wood industry in the region wider national and global recognition.
- b. Complete the branding and marketing strategy currently being developed for Northeast Michigan Pure MI Wood Products to be used for Furniture Show in February 2015 and future events.