



# risingtide

## Action Strategy

Village of Central Lake  
January 2016



# rising tide

Rising Tide is an initiative envisioned by Governor Snyder and implemented by the Department of Talent and Economic Development (TED) with the mission of supplying at-risk communities with the tools they need to design and build a successful economic framework. Project Rising Tide supports vibrant, thriving communities to attract business investment and talent by creating a sustainable path toward economic stability and growth.

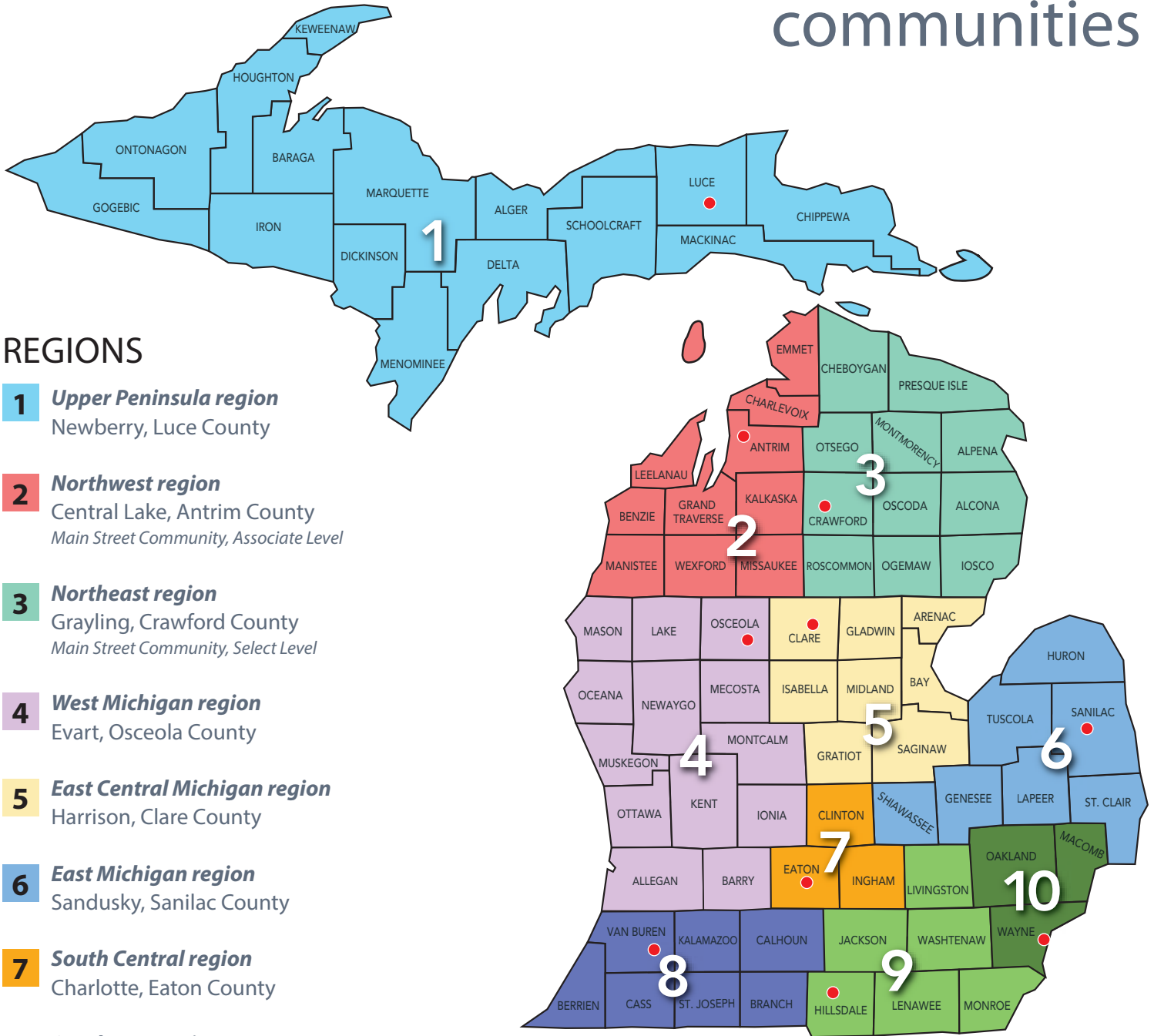
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (TED team) have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential.

One community in each of the 10 prosperity regions was selected using the following data cross matched by population (the data are provided in Appendix A):

- Poverty level
- Unemployment level
- Labor participation rate
- Renter occupied units
- Vacancy rates
- Percentage of households receiving food stamps

This initiative will employ the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program as the initial mechanism to support the Rising Tide platform in each of the 10 prosperity regions. Depending on each community's unique challenges, additional supportive services may be provided.





## REGIONS

- 1
**Upper Peninsula region**  
 Newberry, Luce County
- 2
**Northwest region**  
 Central Lake, Antrim County  
*Main Street Community, Associate Level*
- 3
**Northeast region**  
 Grayling, Crawford County  
*Main Street Community, Select Level*
- 4
**West Michigan region**  
 Ewart, Osceola County
- 5
**East Central Michigan region**  
 Harrison, Clare County
- 6
**East Michigan region**  
 Sandusky, Sanilac County
- 7
**South Central region**  
 Charlotte, Eaton County
- 8
**Southwest region**  
 Paw Paw, Van Buren County
- 9
**Southeast Michigan region**  
 Hillsdale, Hillsdale County  
*Redevelopment Ready Communities, evaluation completed*
- 10
**Detroit Metro region**  
 River Rouge, Wayne County  
*Redevelopment Ready Communities, evaluation pending*

## SUMMARY FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over the past three months, the TED team has interviewed a variety of stakeholders including representatives from village staff, neighboring Banks Township representatives, local business owners, Downtown Development Authority members, planning commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, Central Lake School District representatives, Northern Lakes Economic Alliance staff, and Central Lake citizens. Initial meetings spurred conversations identifying the current state of local economic development and visions of what the community would like to achieve. Regardless of the spokesperson at the time, the message identified several reoccurring strengths, challenges and opportunities within both the downtown and surrounding Central Lake community.

Throughout stakeholder interviews, it was apparent the group is proud of many assets in the village, including Thurston Park on Intermediate Lake and its connection to the Antrim County Chain of Lakes, infrastructure improvements within the downtown to encourage walkability, existing historic building stock, and agricultural farms and industry. These assets are supported by the community's strong local school system, the overall presence of community support, and the growing number of new and seasonal residents who are investing in the village's businesses and utilizing local assets.

Economic challenges and barriers within the community were also identified during stakeholder interviews. Several topics were discussed as well as an array of social and financial constraints within the community. Perceived or actual, these challenges may be inhibiting the village from growing their local economy. The community's primary area of focus is around its long-term reliance on seasonal industry activity and a lack of year round business and employment opportunities.

Another challenge for the village is its current housing stock. The single family housing stock is in need of improvements and there is very limited options for the multifamily housing. Additionally, the lack of a local brand and marketing strategy needs to be addressed. A community brand and marketing strategy will aid in attracting talent, businesses and investment to the area.

This is not a comprehensive list of every opportunity and challenge identified by stakeholders in Central Lake, but rather reoccurring themes identified across multiple stakeholder interviews.

The TED team assisted local stakeholders in completing the six RRC self-evaluations and have provided recommendations on where the village may begin to make improvements to move toward economic growth and development. The TED team has also provided the village with analysis review of the municipal website and suggested improvements that will impact the effectiveness of this key marketing tool (Appendix B).

## RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

Stakeholders prioritized the development of a comprehensive economic development strategy with a focus on talent attraction and retention as the top priority for the village of Central Lake. This action strategy will be the shared responsibility of village staff, village council, DDA/Planning Commission, Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, Small Business Development Center and additional stakeholders, with the assistance of the TED team, when appropriate. It is the intention the action strategy will be a shared vision for what will be accomplished over the next 6–12 months and helps to establish accountability for the work to be done.

In addition to the steps listed in the action strategy, the TED team encourages the village to explore:

- Customer service training needs across all downtown retail operations
- Downtown parking needs/capacity through completion of a parking study
- Improved communication with surrounding communities
- Updating the municipal website
- Continuing work to implement the Redevelopment Ready Communities® best practices currently not in place as identified in the self-evaluations completed in December 2015

The philosophy of this action strategy is to lay the foundation for economic development activities in the village that can sustainably function without in-depth assistance from the TED team and are championed by the community.

- ✓ Address seasonal nature of employment opportunities
- ✓ Revitalize downtown and its building stock
- ✓ Better utilize the surrounding agricultural industry to positively impact the village
- ✓ Create an overall marketing and branding strategy
- ✓ Assess current and future housing needs

JANUARY–MARCH 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Establish local steering committee	Village staff, DDA, chamber, SBDC, local stakeholders	Steering committee members selected
Define mission of local steering committee	Steering committee	Steering committee mission is identified
Review of economic development strategy	TED team	Feedback on existing economic development strategy presented to local stakeholders
Review zoning ordinance	TED team	Feedback on zoning ordinance presented to village staff
Gather local economic background information including existing market and industry makeup and conditions	SBDC, steering committee	Market analysis completed summarizing existing economic climate
Summarize economic challenges based on data gathered	Steering committee	Comprehensive list of economic challenges identified
Communicate results of existing and future market analysis documentation	SBDC	Presentation to the steering committee outlining industry needs
Coordination with local partners to begin public outreach to promote results of the market analysis	Village council, chambers, DDA, major employers, education system, Antrim County EDC, NLEA, SBDC, Northwest MiWorks!, surrounding community representatives	Creation of a public outreach “blitz” throughout the region promoting market conditions

Throughout discussion with local stakeholders, the need for a cohesive vision to move the village forward was evident. Talent attraction and retention is a major challenge for the village. While many communities have a general idea of how they intend to encourage economic development, a clear strategy that describes how they intend to build tax base and retain talent is key to attracting investment. Economic development strategies are often rooted in various community planning documents including master plans. The TED team will review the Central Lake master plan and any available economic development plans to determine a baseline of where the community has focused economic development efforts to date. In addition to reviewing existing economic development plans, the TED team will provide feedback to the village on the current zoning ordinance to further assist the community with economic development and placemaking goals. It is difficult to attract investment without consistent regulations in place for land use.

A steering committee is necessary to lead the community in the creation of a new economic development strategy. This new plan will guide efforts to attract new business, sustain existing businesses and improve the economic climate of the

village. A major focus of the economic development strategy will be talent attraction and retention, as this was identified as a challenge in all stakeholder meetings. This document is a blend of best practices found within the MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities® program as well as a promotional guide to highlight existing financial, social and physical incentives that could attract new investment in Central Lake.

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will conduct a market analysis for the village. The information delivered to the community will outline existing market conditions and identify new industries that could be supported within downtown. Downtown vacancies and underutilized properties were identified as a major barrier to economic growth and community revitalization by stakeholders. By identifying both current and potential future market conditions, the community can be strategic when considering how they can influence and encourage new private investment, industry and jobs to locate within the village limits. The steering committee will develop a comprehensive list of economic challenges based on the background data gathered. This will begin to align stakeholder efforts and create accountability moving forward.

APRIL–JUNE 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Review village of Central Lake’s development process	TED team	Flowchart of development process and additional feedback presented to village staff
Conduct follow-up meetings/ interviews with local stakeholders to inform economic development strategy	Steering committee, village staff	Stakeholder interviews conducted as support documentation for economic development strategy
Identify available financial incentives for future development/redevelopment opportunities	Steering committee, TED team	Incentive package assembled to include in draft strategy
Draft economic development task list	Village manager, steering committee	Tasks will be identified and prioritized including responsible parties, timelines and potential funding sources
Develop a workforce component for the economic development strategy	Steering committee	Connect with other strategies and economic development activities that relate to and support workforce strategy action items, such as the Main Street program and enhancement of Wi-Fi capacity
Reintroduce Main Street concept to the community and discuss future involvement with the program	Michigan Main Street staff, village council, DDA	Determine if the village should reengage in the Main Street program

The TED team will review the village’s current development process and make recommendations to clarify and streamline the process, as appropriate. A flow chart will be developed and posted on the village’s website to make navigating this process more user-friendly.

The second quarter of the PRT initiative will focus on drafting an economic development strategy to further strengthen local support for economic growth and talent attraction and retention. Development of the draft strategy will begin to align stakeholder efforts and create accountability in economic development activities moving forward.

While developing the draft strategy, Northwest MiWorks! will assist the village and steering committee to identify existing employers within the village/region and begin to work on expansion efforts and begin to fill current vacancies at local employers. As discussed during several of the community work sessions there may be a limited skilled workforce within the village. This issue should be explored as well as means in which existing employees may “grow from within” a company via cross-training exercises and the creation of internal career paths. Adult education in general was another key in the promotion of workforce development within the village and must rely on both existing and new regional resources for hosting this educational component.

There are two major opportunities that are currently not being utilized by the village of Central Lake which could attract new private investment and job opportunities to the community. An educational fund under the control of the local education system in the village known as “CLEEO” or the Central Lake Early Education Opportunities. The intent of this program is to provide early childhood opportunities for young families within the local school district. Additionally this effort will promote both growth and development of the youth of the village as well as potentially develop additional capacity within the existing school system which would then market the village of Central Lake as a leader in the education system within the region and state.

A potential piece of the “CLEEO” efforts could partner with another large opportunity for the village which is based around increasing the community’s access to technologies, specifically Wi-Fi and Internet capacity. Central Lake currently has very limited access to high speed Wi-Fi services which many businesses as well as households alike today utilize as a significant lifestyle, business opportunity and standard of living. This portion of the year should begin to identify ways in which the village, or in partnership with its surrounding communities, may attract new internet providers to the region as well as outline what new industry and new business growth could occur in doing so. Other similar communities

have greatly benefited from this exercise as this market option tends to allow residents of the community to work remotely from home, have flexible work hours and attract new private investment for start-up companies within the community who otherwise could not exist with today's Wi-Fi conditions.

The Michigan Main Street program is an option for the village to consider to build local capacity. In the past, the village of

Central Lake has participated in the Main Street program at the associate level. The village will explore the possibility of reengaging with the Main Street program. If supported by the community, the creation of a dedicated Main Street manager position in the future will add a village staff member to assist with implementation of the economic strategies discussed within this document.





JULY–SEPTEMBER 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Inventory redevelopment sites	Steering committee, village staff, TED team	List of prioritized sites available for redevelopment Complete one property information package for downtown redevelopment site
Refine talent-related items in the economic development strategy	Steering committee, local employers, Northwest Michigan Works!	Draft workforce development action items detailing talent attraction efforts that meets the needs of local employers
Develop a collaborative approach to talent development and attraction	TED team, Northwest Michigan Works!, local employers	Identify and engage local partners and additional resources for talent development and attraction
Target existing employers within the community to assist with talent development and attraction	Steering committee, Northwest Michigan Works!	Local employers will receive assistance in order to implement the action items of the workforce strategy
Finalize economic development strategy	Steering committee	Economic development strategy completed
Presentation of economic development strategy to village council for consideration	Steering committee	Adoption of economic development strategy by village council

In the third quarter, the TED team will assist the village with the identification of priority redevelopment sites and assist the village to assemble a downtown property information package that includes basic site information, a vision and available incentives.

The steering committee and local stakeholders will draft a workforce strategy as a component of the economic development strategy. Discussions with the community revealed a significant need for workforce development to improve the skills of the existing workforce as well as attract new talent to the area. Along with business attraction, talent attraction is a primary component of economic development and will be an important element of the economic development strategy.

Based on input already collected, it is anticipated that the following action items will be included in the workforce strategy:

- Provide adult education programming to improve academic skills of the existing workforce. Northwest Michigan Works! adult education program will be a primary partner for this action item.
- Work with local employers to develop career pathways within their businesses, and look at ways to train and promote from within. Convening a group of employers who could collectively share career pathways will be an important first step for this action item.

- Work with local employers to develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy to attract talent to the community. Utilizing the recently developed [www.MyNorth.com](http://www.MyNorth.com) “Live-Work-Play” website will be an important piece of this action item.
- Identify resources for assisting employers with training new and existing workers to meet their needs. Northwest Michigan Works!, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and the Skilled Trades Training Fund are examples of resources that could be accessed by local employers.

Most importantly, the workforce strategy will ultimately deliver the talent development and attraction activities that meet the needs of new and existing local employers. Local employer engagement throughout the process will be critical to achieving this goal.

The steering committee will continue to build capacity by establishing an organizational structure. This working group will likely mirror that of the Main Street designated steering committee which strives toward increasing community awareness of the group’s intentions while working with those previously established constituents such as the local Chambers, DDA, village council and surrounding jurisdictions. In doing so, even if the community chooses not to officially pursue the financial commitment of the Main Street program and its staffing requirements, the steering committee could



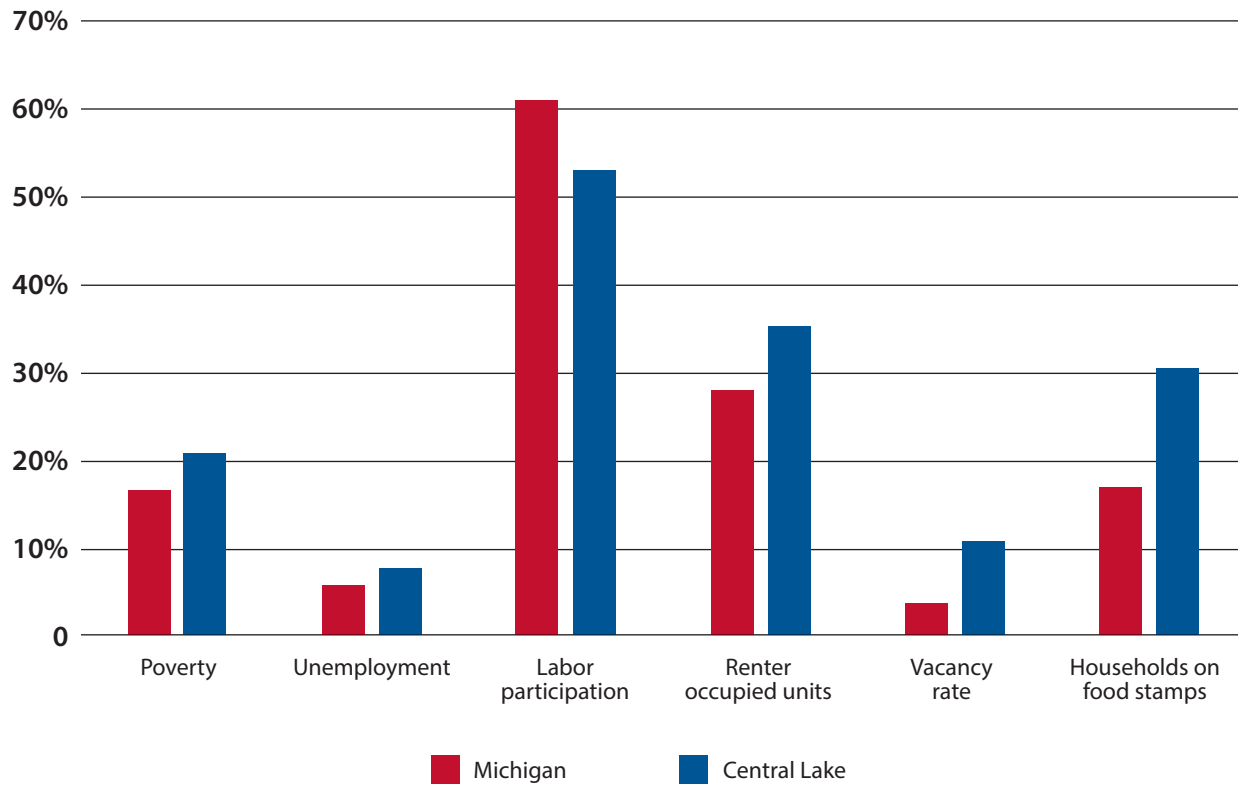
still function with a proven format and effective model. If the village does decide to pursue the Main Street program in its entirety, then the steps to do so should be executed in this quarter. The Michigan Main Street program is led by a steering committee of committed individuals that are willing to contribute both ideas, but also their time to accomplish improvement in the downtown. In building the foundation for this program, it is vital there is consensus of roles and expectations of the Main Street steering committee.

The economic development strategy outlining responsible parties, timelines and will be presented to the village council for adoption. The economic development strategy should drive major community decisions and be a reliable predictor of future village actions to support economic development.



**APPENDIX A**

DATA USED TO SELECT PROJECT RISING TIDE COMMUNITIES											
	Michigan	Region 1: Newberry	Region 2: Central Lake	Region 3: Grayling	Region 4: Evart	Region 5: Harrison	Region 6: Sandusky	Region 7: Charlotte	Region 8: Paw Paw	Region 9: Hillsdale	Region 10: River Rouge
Population	9,886,095	1,673	1,078	1,849	1,569	2,324	2,651	9,064	3,498	8,257	7,857
Poverty	16.8%	34.2%	21.1%	32.7%	36.4%	32.9%	26.2%	18.00%	46.3%	31.60%	38.50%
Unemployment	5.9%	7.3%	7.5%	7.7%	6.8%	7.9%	6.6%	4.70%	6.5%	5.80%	7.70%
Labor participation	60.5%	58.4%	53.6%	50.2%	50.3%	47.9%	53.8%	57.30%	57.6%	56.50%	53.60%
Renter occupied units	27.9%	38.0%	35.4%	52.7%	53.6%	39.5%	42.5%	35.90%	62.1%	46.20%	43.50%
Vacancy rate	4.0%	9.0%	10.7%	11.9%	4.7%	9.7%	5.0%	6.50%	7.4%	7.00%	9.50%
Households on food stamps	16.9%	30.6%	30.9%	35.6%	40.9%	39.1%	31.4%	24.20%	34.1%	28.10%	40.80%



**APPENDIX B**

**Project Rising Tide website review:  
Village of Central Lake**

A municipal website serves numerous purposes. At a basic level, it is a way to share information about public meetings, access public documents, find links to other community organizations and to obtain general community information. The main audience for this basic information is local residents and officials. Beyond this, a municipal web site is also a demonstration of community character and image. People unfamiliar with a community will often look to a website for information and form first impressions and conclusions. In the context of the RRC program, it is essential that communities meet the threshold of functionality. Beyond basic functionality, a municipal website should also communicate an appealing community image. The village of Central Lake website is functional and well organized, however website enhancements could lead to greater impact and higher performance levels. These are discussed below in the context of the RRC best practices and in terms of general observations.

**Assessment of community website and potential future steps**

**1. Does the website incorporate basic methods of public notification?**

Relevant contact information is available. The village website includes minutes and video for the village board meetings (the village board also serves as the Zoning Board of Appeals). Meeting agendas and minutes are also available for the DDA/ planning commission, but a schedule for upcoming meetings is only available by phone.

**Recommendations**

Include a schedule of future meetings for the village board and planning commission/DDA under the “Government” tab.

**2. Is it easy to locate pertinent planning, zoning and economic development documents on the village website?**

The website includes a header quick access menu bar across the top to organize the home page and make it easy for viewers to navigate. Information is well organized and includes links to the master plan, DDA/TIF plan, zoning ordinance (including map). The village does not have an economic development strategy, but if one is completed, it should also be made available on the website. Several applications are available on the website including a fence permit, land use zoning permit, sign permit, special land use application. The applications are easy to use and include contact information. The fee schedule is also available on the webpage with zoning forms. All other village ordinances are also online.

**Recommendations**

While there may not be a planning and zoning department, it would be helpful to organize all of the planning and zoning documents under one page, rather than throughout several pages. The following documents should be added to the website as developed: site plan review requirements, application and flowchart including timelines; variance process and application; rezoning/zoning text amendment process and application. Procedures for special meetings should be added. Brief descriptions of board and commission duties should be added to the website, along with an application for open seats.

**3. Does the community website include housing and talent information and link to external partner organizations?**

The village website links to numerous external organizations include state representatives, county and local government services, the Chamber of Commerce, Central Lake Public Schools and the Central Lake District Library. There is no information or external links on the village website regarding housing or talent information.

**Recommendations**

Include links on the village website to additional external partner organizations to cover talent, housing and additional development information. Links to consider:

- Networks Northwest
- Northern Lakes Economic Alliance
- Link to county building department for building permit information
- Link to Northwest Community Action Agency for low-income weatherization services
- Link to Antrim County for homeowner rehabilitation

**4. Does the website serve as a community marketing tool?**

The village website is well designed to provide information to the public and invokes a positive public image. Pleasant civic images are provided with the use of photos of local scenes. The website also has a tab connecting to the village Facebook page, linking directly to the news feed. A tab for Thurston Park campground is located prominently on the page, providing quick access to general campground information as well as reservations.

**Recommendations**

A long-term goal could include the development of a community logo and tagline to express the character of the village of Central Lake. A focused branding effort, resulting in a community supported logo and tagline, could provide a sense of local opportunity and vibrancy. This step may be best accomplished a part of a larger community marketing effort and could lead to related website enhancements.