



# risingtide

## Action Strategy

City of Harrison  
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.

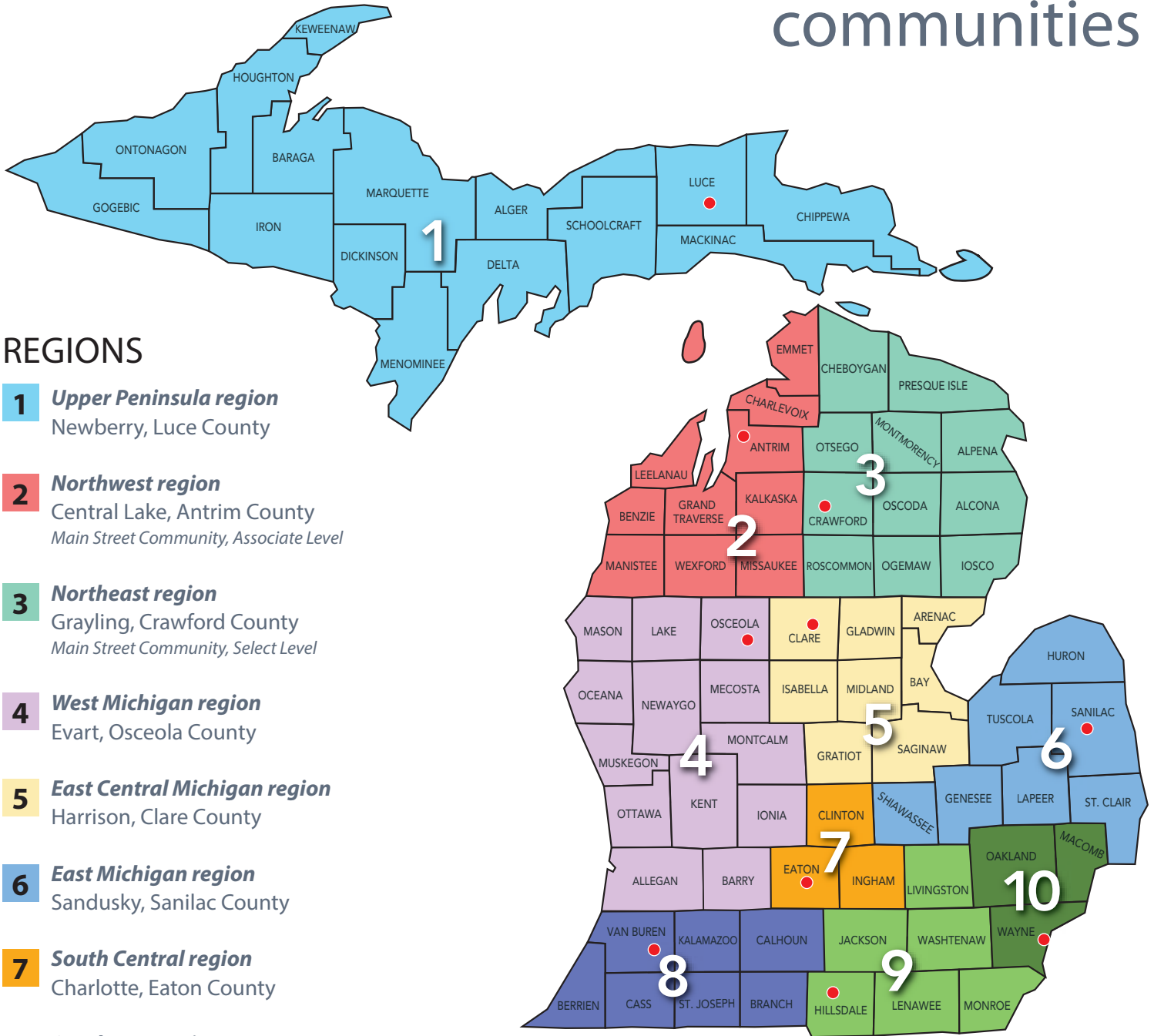
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (TED team) have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential.

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*

## PROJECT SCOPE AND MISSION

Provide a targeted and sustainable path toward community reinvention and economic prosperity for the city of Harrison.

## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Over the last 50 years or more, the city of Harrison has been known as a welfare community with high unemployment and large pockets of poverty. Its assets, such as Budd Lake, Wilson State Park, the Clare County Fairgrounds, the traditional downtown area, and the school system have not been utilized to their capacity or updated to a level that will be attractive to new business and residents.

Harrison is a community with a small number of manufacturing firms but those that do exist are stable and in some cases expanding. Harrison is the county seat for Clare County so many of the well-paying jobs are within the government sector. Manufacturing, education, retail trade, food service, and construction tend to provide the greatest amount of jobs in the private sector.

In the last five years, the city of Harrison has taken a good look at its deficits and its assets. There are several areas that the community has identified that could be improved upon and those include greater collaboration with its partners and its neighbors, better use of the county fairgrounds for hosting events, enhancing the usage and access of Budd Lake, improving the quality and infrastructure of its schools, and creating a better image of the community through branding and marketing of its assets. The city has made great strides in fostering a good relationship with Hayes Township, which surrounds the community. However, efforts to improve the school system, the lake access, and the fairgrounds continue to be a challenge. The current leadership and staff of the city of Harrison have a “can do” attitude that has led to improvements and future plans for improvement of the downtown and better relationships with their partners and neighbors.

The city of Harrison’s assets include:

- Active downtown development authority
- Active chamber of commerce
- Abundant recreational assets
- Clare County Fairgrounds
- Wilson State Park
- Mid-Michigan Community College
- A good health care system
- Engaged stakeholders
- A community that readily rallies around improvement projects

## ACTION STEPS

For the purposes of this project, the goal is to develop an action strategy of recommended steps for the city. The action strategy will be the shared responsibility of the city staff and other partner organizations with the assistance of the TED team when appropriate. It is intended for the action strategy to be a shared vision for what will be accomplished over the next nine months and help to establish accountability for the work to be done so progress can be made. Specific action steps have been designed to lay the groundwork for the community’s economic vitality first through the principles and best practices of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program. Ensuring a community’s guiding development documents and processes are in order is vital for continued investment and prosperity. RRC empowers communities to shape their future by assisting in the creation of a solid planning, zoning, and development foundation to retain and attract businesses, investment, and talent. Implementation of the RRC best practices will serve as the framework for which economic development programs and visions can flourish in the Harrison community.

Through fact-finding measures and strategic stakeholder meetings the TED team has developed a targeted scope of three specific areas of focus that are important to the Harrison Community. Stakeholder discussions involved a wide array of community leaders, elected officials, all levels of the education system, healthcare, state agencies, and representatives of specific community assets such as Wilson State Park and the Clare County Fairgrounds. Through the guidance of the Harrison City Council and the stakeholder group, the areas of focus were prioritized to help provide a framework of tasks to be completed through the end of the fiscal year. This work plan must be championed by local leaders in the Harrison community and in order for it to succeed local leaders and community stakeholders must continue to work toward these areas of focus beyond the assistance of the TED team.

### PRIORITIZED AREAS OF FOCUS

Harrison community marketing and branding

Place-based asset building (Wilson State Park and Clare County Fairgrounds)

Local education modernization (facilities and programming)

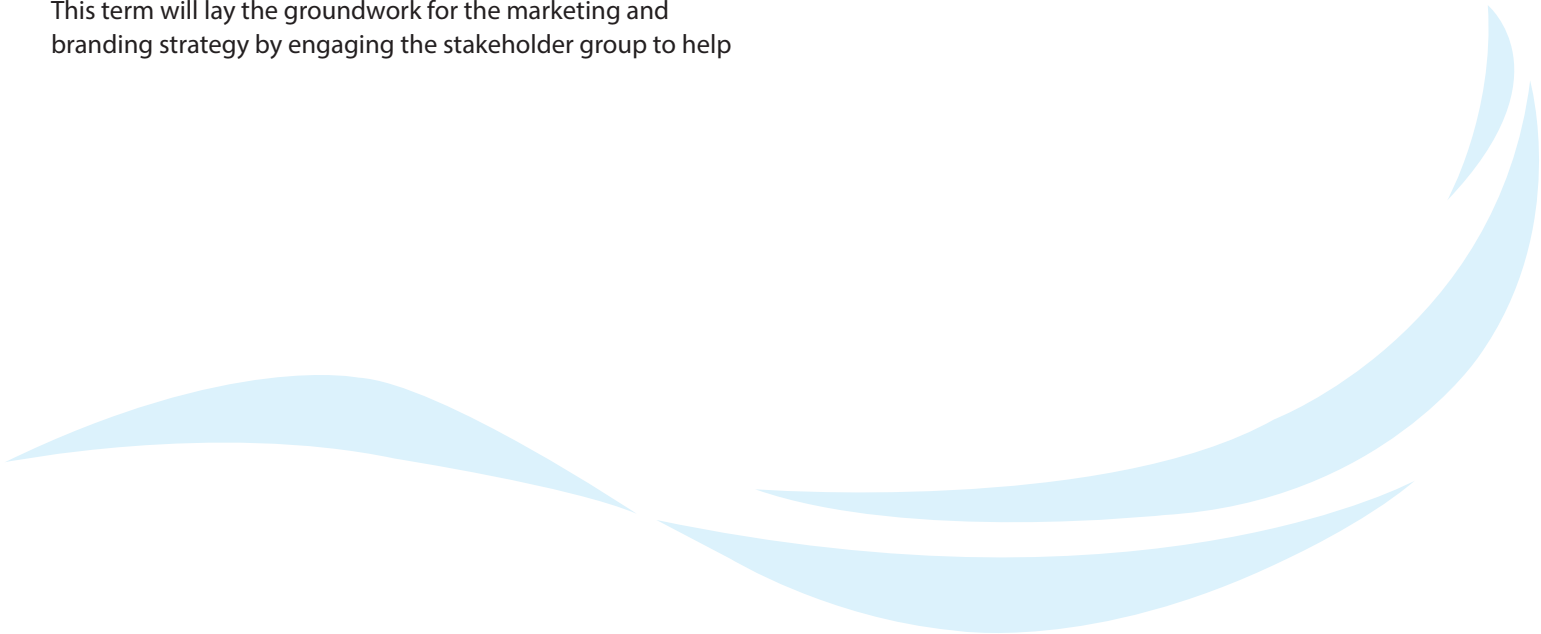
**2016 OBJECTIVES**

<b>JANUARY–MARCH 2016</b>		
<b>Action item</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
Complete MEDC community profile video outline	City staff, stakeholder group, TED team	Provide completed outline to TED team
Engage stakeholder group (brand and marketing strategy work session(s))	City staff, stakeholder group	Strategy outline via RRC “Marketing and Branding Guide”
Hold ABCD event (asset-based community development)	City staff, stakeholder group	Document identifying community links and opportunities to enhance economic development processes and community assets.
Engage MMCC/CMU student marketing group (Capstone project)	City staff, stakeholder group	Agree on outline, time line, and expectations in written scope document.
Review zoning ordinance	TED team, city staff, master plan consultant	Evaluate the community’s ZO to determine if it aligns with the goals of the master plan, allows for a variety of housing types, allows mixed use by right and includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.

Throughout the first term of the PRT action strategy the TED team will focus primarily on reviewing the city’s zoning ordinance to ensure it aligns with the city of Harrison’s master plan and allows for smart development practices. The city plans to engage with a consultant to update their master plan and the TED team should work in concert with the consultant ensuring the zoning ordinance aligns with the new plan. Also the TED team will work with city staff and the stakeholder group to provide a framework for a community profile video that the city can use for promotional purposes.

This term will lay the groundwork for the marketing and branding strategy by engaging the stakeholder group to help

frame a message the businesses, residents and local officials alike want to promote. In an effort to best frame that message and identify resources to assist in the enhancement of economic development tools and processes, the community will organize an asset-based community development (ABCD) event. Utilizing the Redevelopment Ready Communities “Marketing and Branding Strategy Guide,” city staff and community stakeholders will look to involve the student group from Central Michigan University and Mid-Michigan Community College to assist them in building this brand and the strategy for marketing their community in the future.



**2016 OBJECTIVES**

<b>APRIL–JUNE 2016</b>		
<b>Action item</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
Review economic development strategy	TED team, city staff	Determine if the community has an ED strategy identifying opportunities and challenges and implementation steps related to planning, zoning, development, housing and talent.
Document development review process	TED team, city staff	Review and visually depict community’s development process(s). Complete flow chart(s) for community
Continue guidance and engagement with student marketing group for marketing strategy	City staff, stakeholder group	Monthly meetings built in to provide feedback loop. More frequent if needed.
Engage with 1–2 place-based assets to develop asset-building plan. (Wilson State Park and Clare County Fairgrounds)	City staff, stakeholder group, planning consultant, TED team	Meeting(s) to discuss development of enhancement plans
Engage with MEDC PR and marketing for community profile video	City staff, stakeholder group, TED team	Work with MEDC staff to capture video content, provide edits

The second term of the PRT action strategy engages the TED team in reviewing the city’s economic development strategy and documenting the development review process—both vital elements of the RRC best practices and important steps in making the community more marketable to the development world.

Through the stakeholder sessions, it was determined that more focus should be given to some of the important place-based assets in the community such as Wilson State Park and the Clare County Fairgrounds. City staff and area stakeholders, along with the city’s new planning consultant, should

engage directly with these assets to formulate a plan for their enhancement. This should identify resources with which they will be able to bring these enhancements to fruition. The TED team will assist in identifying these resources and engaging with other state and federal agencies.

City staff and stakeholders will continue working through the development of the marketing and branding strategy with the assistance of the CMU/MMCC student group through monthly meetings and feedback loops as the strategy develops. MEDC marketing staff will work directly with city staff and local stakeholders to produce the community profile video.



**2016 OBJECTIVES**

<b>JULY–SEPTEMBER 2016</b>		
<b>Action item</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
Inventory redevelopment sites	TED team, city staff, stakeholder group	Assist community to identify and prioritize up to three redevelopment sites. Gather basic site information and organize into property information packet to be posted online
Deliver marketing and branding strategy	City staff, stakeholder group, student group	Marketing and branding strategy
Unveil new Harrison community “brand”	Stakeholder group, city staff	125th birthday event (street fair), press releases, media engagements, MEDC community profile video
Incorporate place-based asset plans and marketing strategy into city’s guiding documents	City staff, planning consultant	Update master plan, recreation plan with information.
Maintain ongoing relationship with MEDC community assistance team	City staff	Identify potential project and technical assistance opportunities in city of Harrison

In an important step toward marketing the city of Harrison to the development world, the TED team will engage with city staff and stakeholders to identify and prioritize specific redevelopment sites in the community and gather essential property information on each. This information will be packaged and readied for listing on the community’s website as well as other property listing sites.

Completion and delivery of the final marketing and branding strategy will be unveiled through press releases and media engagements, utilizing the community profile video when applicable. The 125th birthday event, this year to be held in concert with the annual street fair, should be an important

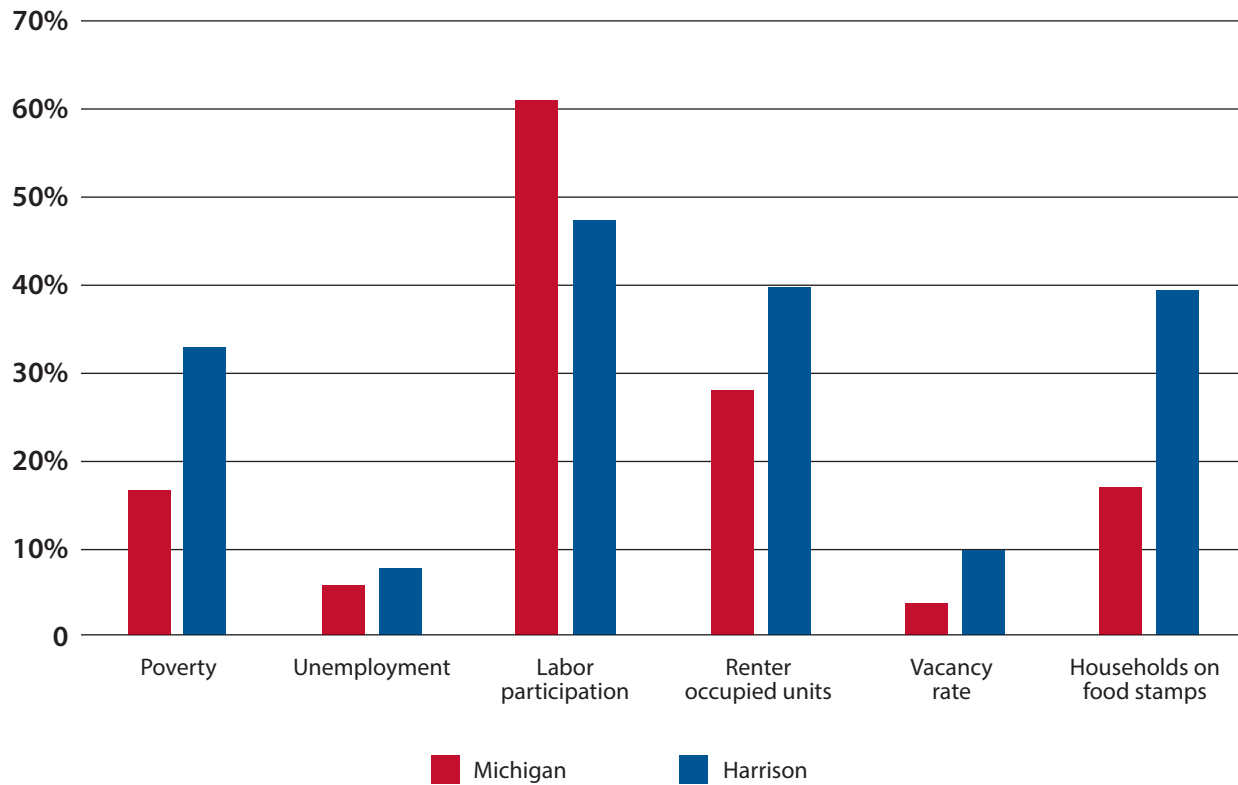
part of this roll-out highlighting a “rebirth” of the Harrison community. Not only was it identified that the community needs to better market its assets to those beyond their borders, the community also needs to look inward helping current residents see the positives in Harrison and instill a sense of pride to encourage better stewardship.

Continuing discussions on the enhancement of Wilson State Park and the Clare County Fairgrounds should become solidified by incorporating these plans into the city’s master plan and parks and recreation plans. Working with city staff and the new planning consultant, specific steps and resources should be identified to bring these enhancements to fruition.



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: City of Harrison

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 city of Harrison's website is functional and 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?

The city of Harrison website incorporates basic methods of public notifications through various "contact us" links and direct emails to specific staff members. There is currently no contact information for the city council members but there are emails listed for the planning commission members. Meeting minutes and past agendas for the city council are held on a separate site known as CivicWeb Meeting Portal. This can be accessed now through a link but there are also links to the minutes on the regular website before you access the portal.

#### Recommendations

Contact information is sufficient, but a "staff department" list on what page may want to be considered. This information should be included for the city council members and staff at a minimum. A decision should be made to either utilize the CivicWeb Portal or have the minutes and agendas listed on the main site. With this information currently in two places it can become confusing for the user.

#### 2. Is it easy to locate pertinent planning, zoning and economic development documents on the city's website?

Currently these items are not readily available on the site. The zoning code of ordinances and the zoning map are available on the city clerk's page.

#### Recommendations

The city website should have all pertinent planning documents readily available for residents, businesses, and potential developers. These documents give a sense of where the community is going in the future and lays the framework of how they intend to get there. The city may want to consider a dedicated page for these items specifically that is titled accordingly.

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

The city of Harrison does not include housing but does offer links to area sites of interests. Specifically to Clare County services such as Emergency and Veteran. In addition, the city of Harrison website includes talent information with a couple links such as Pure Michigan and the Middle Michigan department.

#### Recommendations

With respect to housing, links to the Clare County Housing Commission and Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency would be helpful to residents and or potential residents. Housing programs have been financially stressed both at the federal and state levels. However, these two organizations have a rich history of providing housing services to the residents of Harrison. Also, any homeless shelters or transitional living facilities if available. Update these links to the community icon.

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

The city of Harrison website does not invoke an identity as evidenced by the about icon on the home page. The about icon lists out a privacy policy. This could be an icon that is under construction but at the moment a full page of privacy and personal policies is a far cry from marketing the city of Harrison.

#### Recommendations

A long-term goal for the city of Harrison includes the development of an updated community logo and tagline, could provide in an improved sense of local opportunity and vibrancy. This step maybe the best accomplished part of a larger community marketing effort which could lead to related website enhancements. Reorganizing the links to links of interest by type rather than alphabetical order maybe beneficial to users. In particular, featuring a link to the city of Harrison's visitors bureau will assist with community marketing. The city of Harrison may also want to include links with Facebook pages from prominent businesses in the city of Harrison.