



risingtide

Action Strategy

City of Sandusky
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.

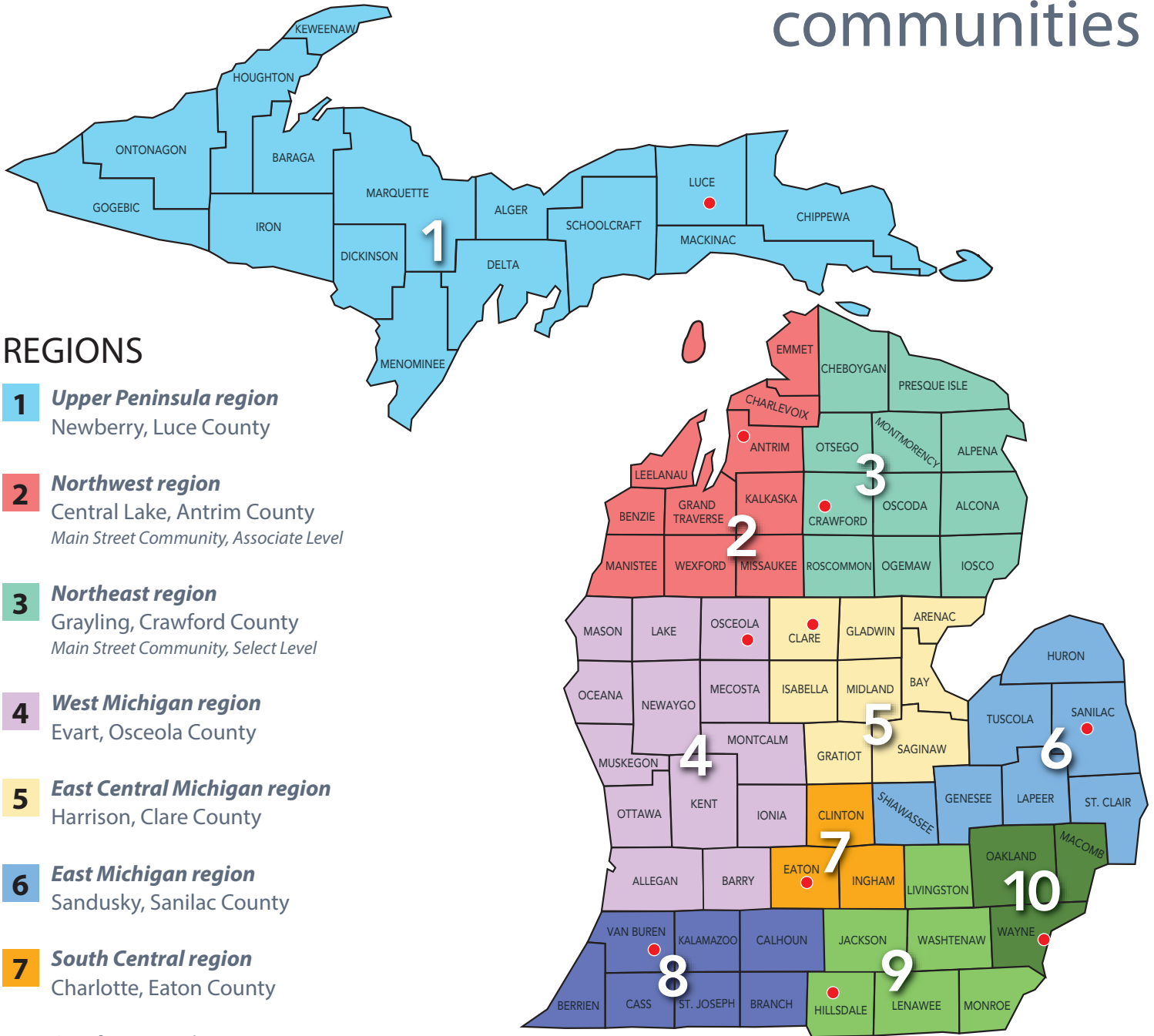
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (TED team) have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential.

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

Prosperity for the city of Sandusky.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Founded in 1870 and incorporated in 1889, Sandusky is Sanilac County's largest city and the county seat. Sandusky's location in the heart of Michigan's Thumb offers easy travel in any direction. An hour north of Port Huron and I-69, and one hour east of Saginaw and I-75, Sandusky offers small town friendliness and integrity with conveniences found in larger cities. Farming and industry combine to make it a progressive community. Sandusky has an honest, hardworking and dependable workforce available. The community has low crime rate and clean, safe neighborhoods. Many civic clubs and churches are active in the community and appeal to all ages. Recreation activities are abundant for the whole family: movie theater, bowling alley, hunting, golf courses, tennis and Lake Huron just 15 minutes away to offer marinas, beaches, fishing and boating opportunities.

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 Sandusky 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 Sandusky community. Stakeholder discussions involved a wide array of community leaders, elected officials, the school superintendent, McKenzie Health System, state agencies, and representatives of large area employers. Through the guidance of the Sandusky City Council and the stakeholder group, the areas of focus were prioritized to help provide a framework of action steps to be completed through the end of the year. This work plan must be championed by local leaders in the Sandusky 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

Sandusky community marketing and branding

Homeownership and talent attraction

Downtown placemaking and asset-building for talent attraction

2016 OBJECTIVES

JANUARY–MARCH 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Complete MEDC community profile video outline	City staff, stakeholder group, TED team	Provide completed outline to TED team
Engage stakeholder group (marketing and branding strategy work session(s))	City staff, stakeholder group	Strategy outline via RRC “Marketing and Branding Guide”
Engage student marketing group (SVSU Cardinal Consulting)	City staff, stakeholder group	Agree on outline, time line, and expectations in written scope document
Review zoning ordinance	TED team, city staff	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 Sandusky’s master plan and allows for smart development practices. 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. Utilizing the Redevelopment Ready Communities’ “Marketing and Branding Strategy Guide,” city staff and community stakeholders will look to involve the SVSU Cardinal Consulting student group to assist them in building this brand and the strategy for marketing their community in the future.



2016 OBJECTIVES

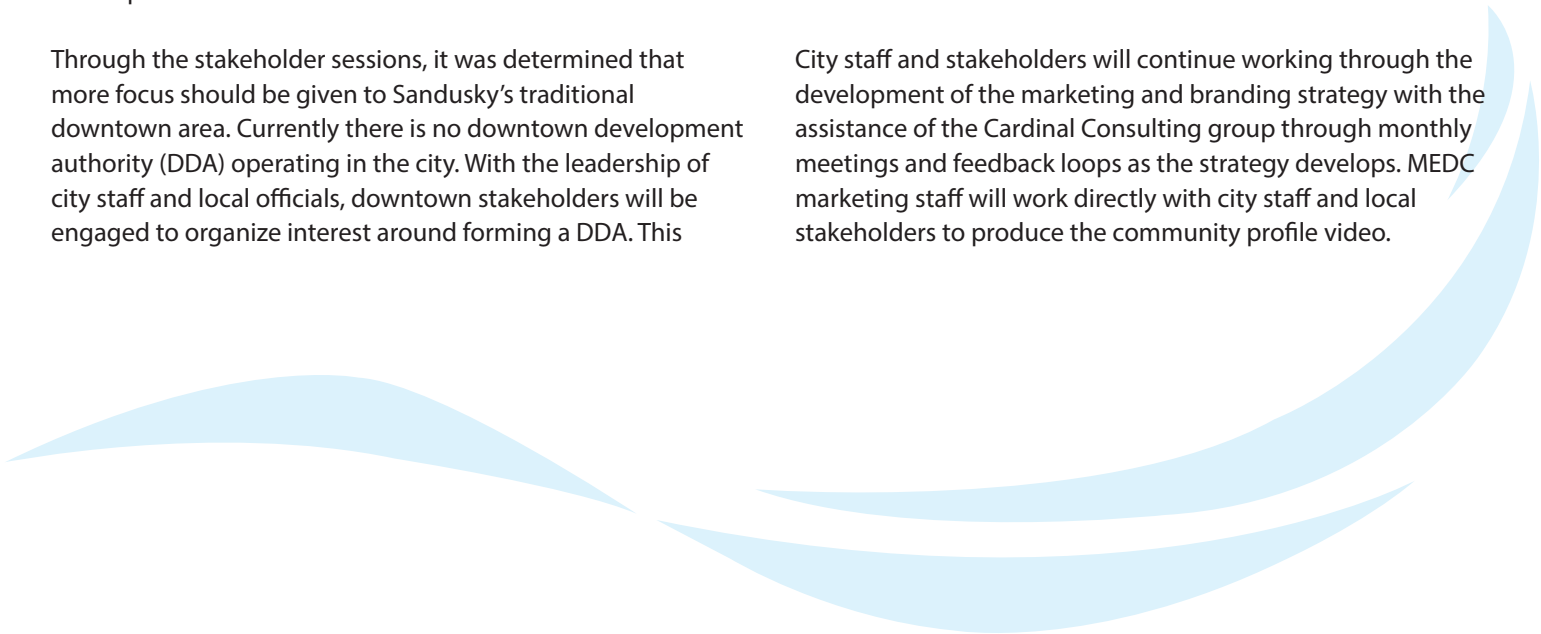
APRIL–JUNE 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Review economic development strategy	TED team, city staff	Determine if the community has an ED strategy identifying opportunities and challenges and implementation steps related to planning, zoning, development, housing and talent
Document development review 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 Cardinal Consulting Group for marketing strategy	City staff, stakeholder group	Monthly meetings built in to provide feedback loop. More frequent if needed.
Engage with downtown stakeholders to organize interest in DDA formation	City staff, stakeholder group	Meeting(s) to discuss development of DDA
Provide presentations, examples on quality DDA practices to downtown businesses and residents. Include Michigan Main Street Center and Michigan Downtown’s Association	TED team, city staff, stakeholder group	Provide planned seminar surrounding DDA best practices and quality downtown development
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 Sandusky’s traditional downtown area. Currently there is no downtown development authority (DDA) operating in the city. With the leadership of city staff and local officials, downtown stakeholders will be engaged to organize interest around forming a DDA. This

will be reinforced by the TED team, and future partnerships with the Michigan Main Street Center and the Michigan Downtown’s Association through education and best practices illustrating quality downtown development practices and the benefits of having a targeted group focused specifically on the downtown area.

City staff and stakeholders will continue working through the development of the marketing and branding strategy with the assistance of the Cardinal Consulting 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

JULY–SEPTEMBER 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
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, Cardinal Consulting group	Marketing and branding strategy
Unveil new Sandusky community “brand”	Stakeholder group, city staff	Press releases, media engagements, MEDC community profile video
Organize community housing summit to promote homeownership	City staff, stakeholder group, TED team	Community housing summit held with local, state, and federal agencies and resources
Maintain ongoing relationship with MEDC community assistance team	City staff	Identify potential project and technical assistance opportunities in city of Sandusky

In an important step toward marketing the city of Sandusky 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.

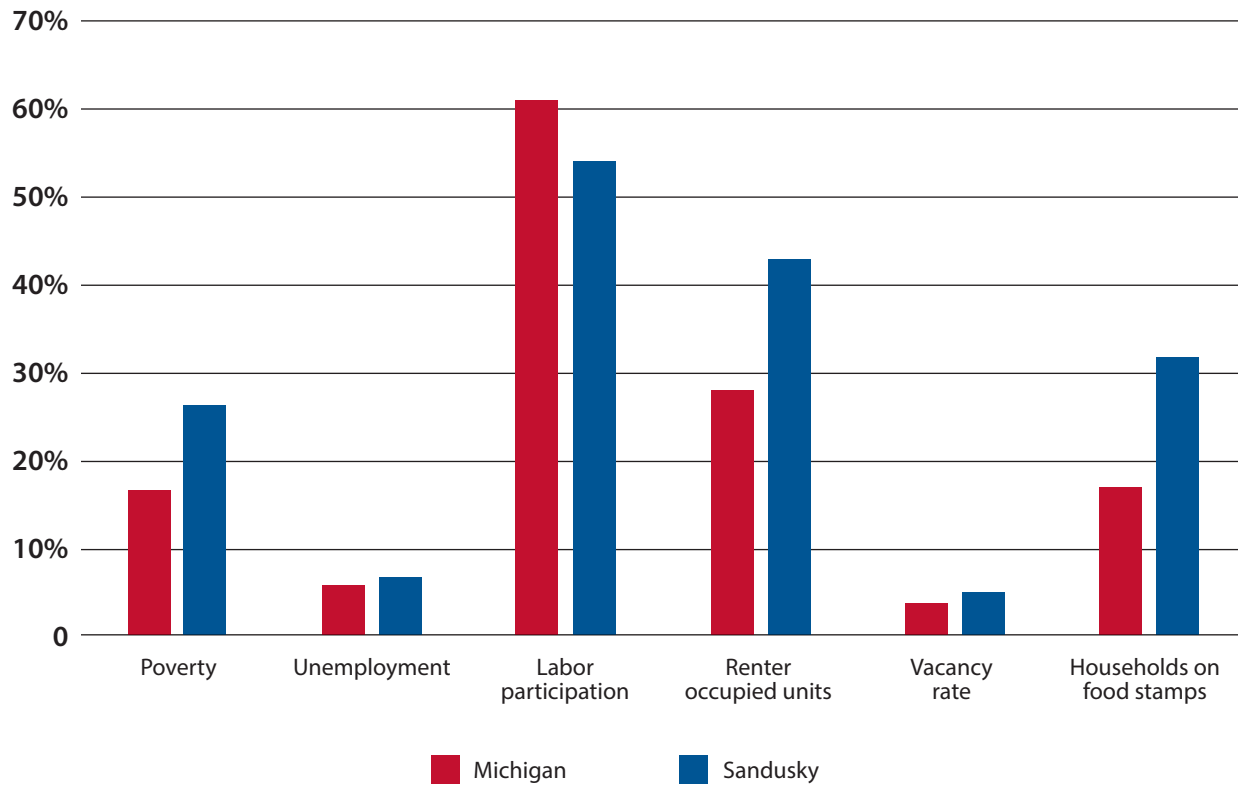
Completion and delivery of the final marketing and branding strategy will be unveiled through press releases and media engagements, utilizing the community profile video when applicable.

Promoting homeownership was a strong theme that came through during the stakeholder meetings. A community housing summit will be organized by city staff, area stakeholders, and the TED team. Some targeted agencies that will be invited to provide guidance and program information include MSHDA, MEDC, USDA Rural Development, Habitat for Humanity, local banks and major local employers. A roundtable discussion among these agencies should be facilitated to discuss new programs and innovative partnerships that could be used to promote homeownership in the Sandusky community.



APPENDIX A

DATA USED TO SELECT PROJECT RISING TIDE COMMUNITIES											
	Michigan	Region 1: Newberry	Region 2: Central Lake	Region 3: Grayling	Region 4: Evert	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 Sandusky

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 Sandusky'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?

Council minutes and agendas are available and up to date. There is a city dashboard and citizens guide that informs the public of government accountability/transparency and finances. The city government tab provides contact information and photos of the city council and contact information for city staff providing critical functions. Public notices are located on the homepage (should there be a place for archiving notices?)

Recommendations

The city of Sandusky should explore the use of a directory of staff and contact information in an easy to access tab (i.e., contact us). The following commissions and board agendas and minutes have not been updated: Planning Commission October 2012; Zoning Board of Appeals October 2014 (the heading for this page should have the word "zoning" added as well as the link); Board of Review March 2014; Housing Commission January 2012.

Clicking on links sometimes opens new tabs rather than taking you directly to the source material resulting in multiple tabs being opened. This is not mobile device friendly. Website should be optimized for use with mobile devices.

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

Zoning ordinance is available in PDF format and is easily found on the left side of the webpage. City ordinances and the master plan are found under the header menu bar "City Government." Some forms and documents are available for download on the Forms tab on the left of the website. No economic development information—business tab directs user to call the city manager.

Recommendations

Planning, zoning and economic development information should have a clear and distinct tab in the header of the website (see city of Detroit's website for navigation ideas). Planning, zoning and development information should be grouped together (see RRC Best Practice Six: Evaluation Criteria 2). Forms should be located within the appropriate city functions.

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

There is some information about housing but is difficult to find. There is a link for Sanilac County EDC and another for job opportunities—information for the MI Talent Bank

Recommendations

Information regarding housing and talent attraction could be added under the header "For Our Community" or the city may consider adding a new tab all together.

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

There are links to the Sanilac County EDC, the Sandusky Chamber of Commerce and a visitor's guide.

Recommendations

The main goal of the PRT action strategy for the city of Sandusky is to create a marketing and branding strategy. This document will go a long way in marketing the community and should include specific methods of marketing the community through the website. The city should incorporate any federal, state, and local partners with which the city of Sandusky is working.