risingtide

Action Strategy

City of Charlotte
January 2016

risingtide

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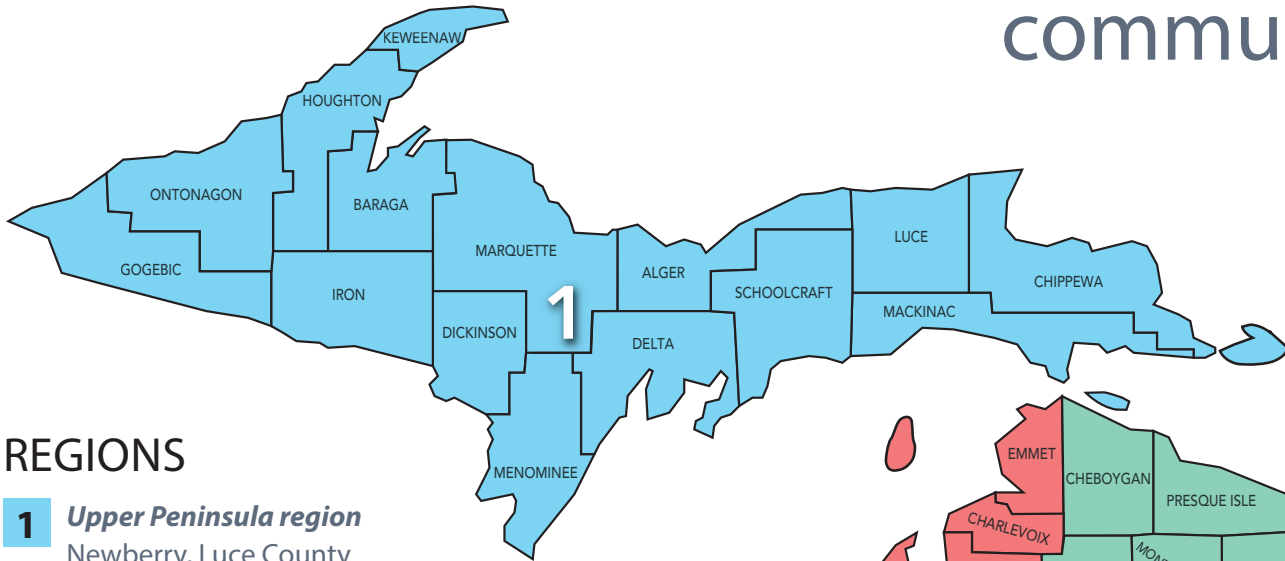
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (TED team) have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential.

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
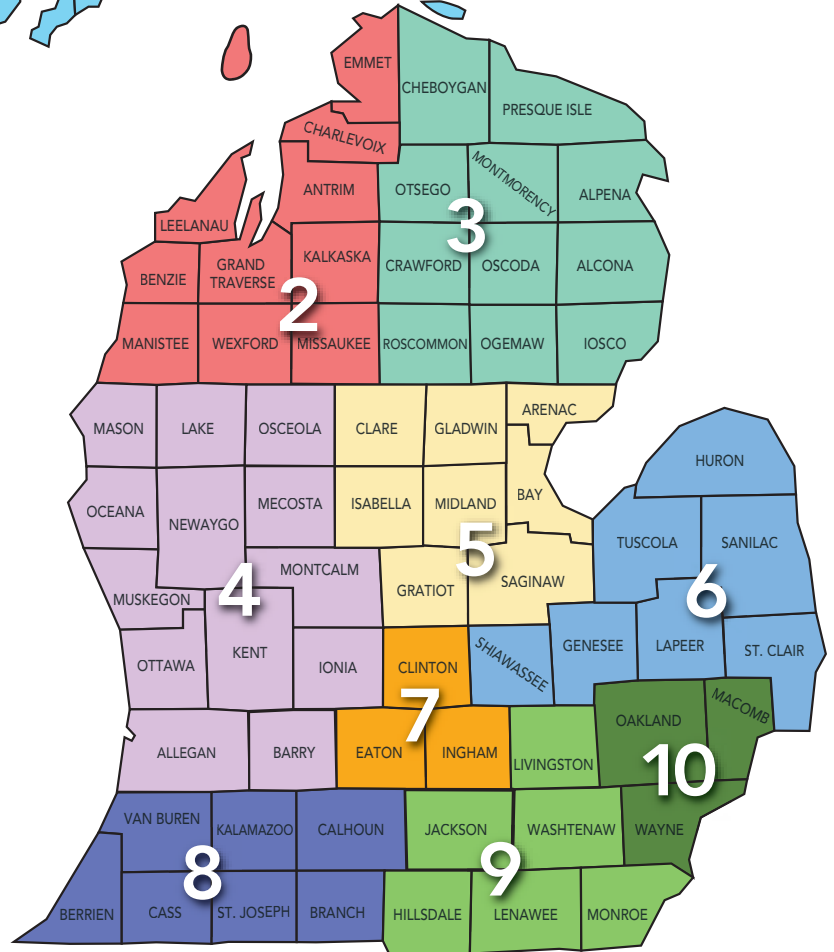- Percentage of households receiving food stamps

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.

TED
TALENT AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

M E D C
MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

tia
TALENT
INVESTMENT AGENCY

MSHDA
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Investing in People. Investing in Places.

rising tide

communities

REGIONS

1 *Upper Peninsula region*
Newberry, Luce County

2 *Northwest region*
Central Lake, Antrim County
Main Street Community, Associate Level

3 *Northeast region*
Grayling County
Main Street Community, Select Level

4 *West Michigan region*
Evart, 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

KEWEENAW
HOUGHTON
ONTONAGON
BARAGA
GOGEBIC
MARQUETTE
IRON
DICKINSON
ALGER
SCHOOLCRAFT
LUCE
CHIPPEWA
MACKINAC
DELTA
MENOMINEE

1

EMMET
CHEBOYGAN
PRESQUE ISLE
CHARLEVOIX
ANTRIM
OTSEGO
MONTMORENCY
ALPENA
LEELANAU
GRAND TRAVERSE
KALKASKA
CRAWFORD
OSCODA
ALCONA
BENZIE
MANISTEE
WEXFORD
MISSAUKEE
ROSCOMMON
OGEMAW
IOSCO

3

2

ARENAC
MASON
LAKE
OSCEOLA
CLARE
GLADWIN
OCEANA
NEWAYGO
MECOSTA
ISABELLA
MIDLAND
BAY
HURON
TUSCOLA
SANILAC
MONTCALM
GRATIOT
SAGINAW
MUSKEGON
GENESEE
LAPEER
ST. CLAIR
OTTAWA
KENT
IONIA
CLINTON
SHIAWASSEE
OAKLAND
MACOMB
ALLEGAN
BARRY
EATON
INGHAM
LIVINGSTON
VAN BUREN
KALAMAZOO
CALHOUN
JACKSON
WASHTENAW
WAYNE
BERRIEN
CASS
ST. JOSEPH
BRANCH
HILLSDALE
LENAWEE
MONROE

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

SUMMARY FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over the past three months, the TED team has interviewed a variety of stakeholders including representatives from city staff, city council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority, CANDO, the school district, Hayes Green Beach Memorial Hospital, local business owners, financial institutions and regional economic development partners.

The stakeholders identified many assets, including long term businesses in the area, Hayes Green Beach Memorial Hospital, the aqua center, Al!ve, amenities of the school district including the performing arts center, and downtown culture including events and the Eaton County Museum. Charlotte's greatest asset is certainly its people. The passion dedicated to making Charlotte a better place shows that many residents are deeply invested in the community.

From these interviews, it was clear there are several challenges impacting the major data sets used to identify this community as a priority for the PRT pilot. A reoccurring theme throughout interviews was the need to develop a cohesive vision for the community and better coordinate activities of stakeholders and groups contributing to economic development. A lack of quality housing stock was also identified as a barrier for community investment and reduces options for current and future residents. Empty storefronts and deteriorating facades also deter new residents and business from locating in Charlotte. Stakeholder input also made a case for the development of a strong community brand to overcome negative perceptions about the city as well as increase community pride.

To assist the city in moving forward, the TED team has put together an action strategy to act as a guide over the next nine months to begin to address some of these issues. Based on stakeholder feedback, the action strategy will mainly focus on issues related to creating an infrastructure for economic development in the downtown utilizing the Michigan Main Street program. Charlotte is uniquely situated to move forward because of their recent acceptance into the Associate Level of the Michigan Main Street program. This provides an unique opportunity to help address the above mentioned challenges where they intersect in the heart of the community, the downtown.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

This action strategy will be the shared responsibility of the local staff, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, the Downtown Development Authority, CANDO, city council, with the assistance of the TED team when needed. 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.

In addition to the items listed in the action strategy, the TED team acknowledges the city is exploring or should explore the following items separate of Project Rising Tide. The TED team felt the following items were important, but do not require additional support from the TED team to act upon:
• Explore code enforcement surrounding housing rentals
• Explore the establishment of a historic district
• Explore alternative truck routes that do not pass through downtown
• Update municipal website based off of TED team's website review (Appendix B)
• Continue to implement Redevelopment Ready Communities® best practices that are not in place as identified in the self-evaluations that were completed in October 2015.

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

✓ **Establish a cohesive vision**

✓ **Improve coordination of activities and stakeholders**

✓ **Increase quality housing stock**

✓ **Improve exterior of downtown buildings**

✓ **Increase occupancy rate downtown**

✓ **Strengthen community brand**

JANUARY–MARCH 2016		
Action item	**Owner**	**Deliverable**
Review of economic development strategy	TED team	Feedback on economic development strategy presented to local stakeholders
Identify Main Street steering committee members	Chamber, DDA, CANDO, city staff, Rotary Club	Main Street steering committee members selected
Clarify expectations of Main Street steering committee	Main Street steering committee	Expectations outlined in written document; coordinates with the economic development strategy
Review zoning ordinance	TED team	Feedback on zoning ordinance presented to city staff
Education regarding low-mod survey	CATeam specialist	Plan to execute low-mod survey developed
Education regarding target market analysis (TMA). Connect to other interested communities in region	TED team	Community decides if TMA is desired in community: if so, funds identified for TMA

The city has already been looking at strengthening economic development and has provided a strategy that was crafted last year. The TED team will review this strategy as the baseline of where the community has been focusing economic development efforts to date. Using best practices from across the state, the TED team will craft recommendations of how the economic development strategy can be strengthened, including focus on placemaking and promoting the arts. This will help to begin aligning stakeholder efforts and create accountability in economic development activities moving forward.

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.

In addition to the economic development strategy, the TED team will be reviewing the city's zoning ordinance. It is difficult to attract investment if the zoning ordinance is confusing, conflicting or not regulating for desired outcomes.

Lastly, there are two major opportunities currently not being utilized by the city of Charlotte that would help to attract investment into the community. Façade grants available from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for the exterior of downtown buildings for communities designated "low-mod" by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. To qualify, 51 percent or more of the population has to be "low income" or "moderate income" in comparison to the region. Charlotte falls just inside this marker at 49.66 percent. By doing a survey of residents that live in the downtown and just outside of it, the city would be able to update the data and get put on the "low-mod list." The effect of this designation would be the opportunity to access federal grant dollars. During this quarter, the Community Assistance Team specialist will present on the low-mod survey and help to organize this effort if desired.

The second opportunity is studying the potential market for additional housing. The Collaborative Community Development team under TED offers a matching grant to complete a target market analysis. This report studies what types of consumers are attracted to the city of Charlotte and what housing type they prefer. Housing developers look for this kind of data when deciding what product will be marketable in an area. The community can use this data to inform and market to potential investors for downtown living and available redevelopment sites. During the first quarter, the TED team will do additional education on pursuing both the low-mod designation and the target market analysis so the community can make an informed decision about pursuing these resources.

APRIL–JUNE 2016

Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Review development process	TED team	Flow chart of development process and additional feedback presented to city staff
Establish organizational structure of Main Street program	Main Street steering committee	Main Street organizational structure established. Michigan Community Resources engaged for free legal assistance if needed
Attend Main Street basics training	Main Street steering committee, Other interested participants	Meeting to share what was learned in training, complete any assignments, Main Street reporting as needed.
Create community awareness of Main Street program	Main Street steering committee	Written communication plan/public participation plan completed
Economic development strategy adopted by council	City staff, council	Economic development strategy adopted by council
Low-mod survey completed (if locally supported)	City staff	Certified low-mod survey information submitted to the MEDC for review
TMA application submitted (if locally supported)	City staff	TMA application submitted for TED staff to review

The second quarter will be building off of previous action strategy items. The TED team will review the city's development process and make recommendations if any improvement is needed. A flow chart will be developed and posted on the city's website to make navigating this process more user friendly. In addition, council should be adopting the economic development strategy that outlines owners, time lines and deliverables for the various economic development stakeholders.

The Main Street steering committee will continue to build capacity by establishing a Main Street organizational structure, increasing community awareness of the program and attending the first Main Street training.

If the city decides to pursue both the low-mod designation and the target market analysis, the steps to do so should be executed in this quarter.

JULY–SEPTEMBER 2016		
Action item	**Owner**	**Deliverable**
Review development process	City staff, city council	List of prioritized sites available for redevelopment finalized. One property information package develop and posted online.
Develop five-year budget and fundraising plan for Main Street	Main Street steering committee	Five-year budget and fundraising plan developed
Attend "Main Street in Practice" training	Main Street steering committee, other interested participants	Meeting to share what was learned in training, complete any assignments, Main Street reporting as needed.
Begin select Main Street application	Main Street steering committee	Team established to work on select application
Market available state incentives	Main Street steering committee, DDA, city staff	One-pager developed for downtown incentives, event held to market rental rehab funds and façade grants.
TMA presented to stakeholders	City staff	Target market analysis marketed to possible investors and posted online

In the third quarter, the TED team will assist city staff and council to identify and market priority redevelopment sites. This includes putting together information packages that include available incentives and additional information such as the target market analysis.

The Main Street steering committee will be attending a second training that will assist in developing a five-year budget and fundraising plan. Furthermore, the steering committee should be beginning the select Main Street application. Once a community is a select level, additional resources become available to the community through the Main Street program such as assistance with branding, additional market studies and design services.

It is the intention at the end of September, the city of Charlotte and community stakeholders will have a better understanding and framework for economic development. At the municipal level, the city will have established a strategy for economic development that aligns the activities of all stakeholders, the website will be updated to be more user friendly, the zoning/development process will be more streamlined and easier to

understand and redevelopment sites will be actively marketed to attract investment to the community. There will be a better understanding of the benefits of investing in Charlotte and available local, state and federal grants to assist in doing so.

In addition, downtown development activities will be coordinated under the Main Street approach with long-term funding solutions identified. The Main Street steering committee will be prepped to access additional assistance by becoming a Select Level Main Street Community.

Most importantly, the conversation about the city will have shifted. Instead of frustrations about lack of progress and confusion about the best direction to proceed, there will be a united group moving towards positive change in Charlotte. Economic development is a long-term game. Changes will be incremental and over a long period of time. To attract investment, there must be the perception of long-term prosperity and opportunity in the community. The first step in doing so is for local stakeholders to believe it and reinforce this message through positive communication.

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%
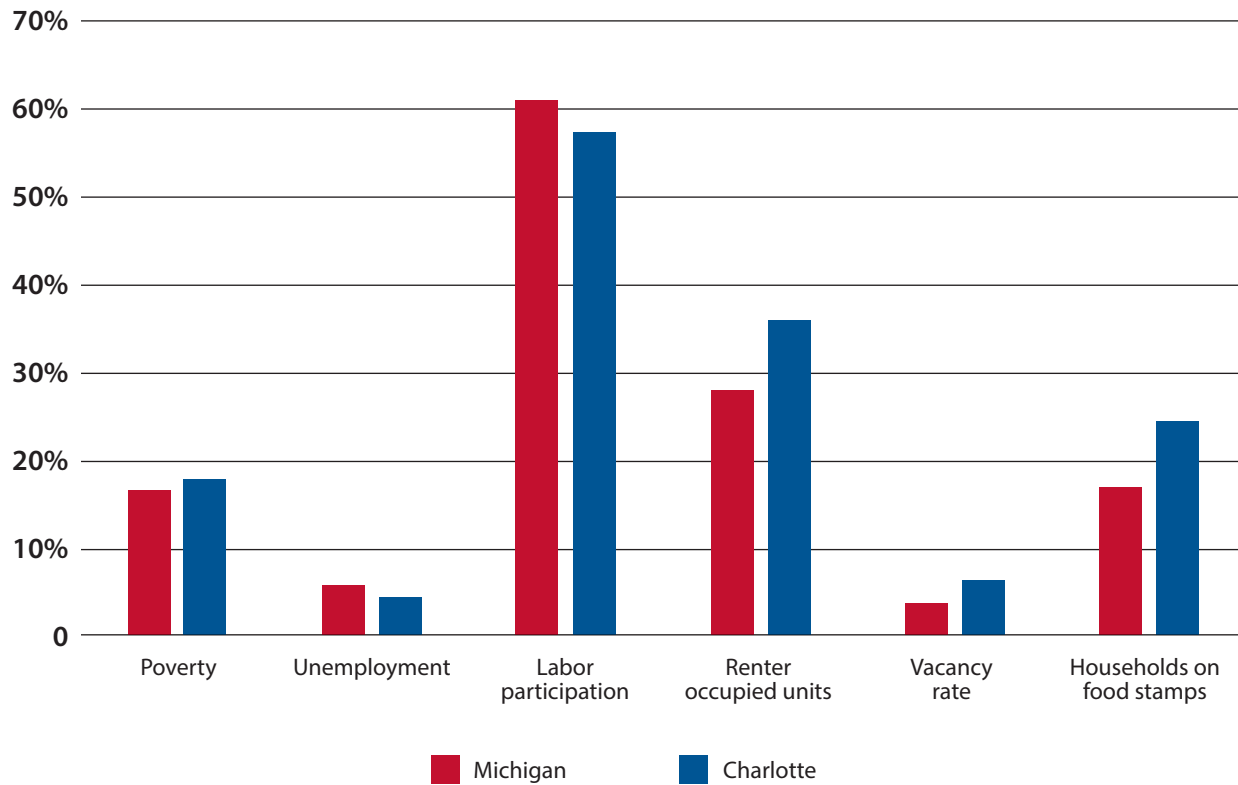
APPENDIX B
Project Rising Tide website review: City of Charlotte

A municipal web site 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 website 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 Charlotte'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?

Relevant contact information is available, including a "Contact Us" header, with directories for staff and offices/information. Meeting schedules for city council and all boards are readily available on the city calendar, which has its own header on the home page. The website includes agenda packets, minutes and video for city council meetings. Meeting agendas and minutes are also available for the DDA and planning commission. The home page features announcements and links to meeting packets for upcoming meetings. A FAQs page is also included.

The city's website includes numerous opportunities for public input, including the staff and offices/information directories, city council directory that includes email addresses, complaints via text, online form with email submittal, ways to make comments at council meetings and the method to submit written comments to council, including the council policy 2015-03 regarding citizen comments.

Recommendations

None, the website is well organized and public notifications are featured prominently on both the homepage and header tabs. The city offers exceptional opportunities for public input and the website is a tool for the city to provide information.

2. Is it easy to locate pertinent planning, zoning and economic development documents on the city's 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. Planning, zoning and economic development Information is organized under several tabs, including services/administration (building, planning and zoning and community development), city code, planning commission and forms. Links to the master plan, zoning map, and the code of ordinances, which includes the zoning ordinance are available. The DDA financing and development and downtown revitalization plans are not available online, but the DDA map is located on the downtown Charlotte page. The city does not have a formal economic development strategy, corridor plan, capital improvements plan or property information packages at this time; should these documents be completed, they should be made available on the website.

Several applications are available on the website including site plan, temporary use request, conditional use, building permits and Class A non-conforming use permit applications. The applications are clear and include contact information. The site plan application packet is detailed and includes step by step instructions and contact information for all stages of the process. The fee schedule is also available on the webpage with building, planning and zoning forms. All other city ordinances are also online.

The header quick access bar includes a council/boards tab with links to pages for each advisory board. Members and terms are listed. Several board pages include a description of the board's role. An application for boards and commissions is available online and the page lists that certain boards and commission have specific membership requirements, which are not detailed out.

Recommendations

It may be helpful to organize all of the planning and zoning documents under one page, rather than throughout several pages. The "Downtown Charlotte" page includes a link to the DDA map, but the DDA plan is not available online. The following documents should be added to the website as developed: conceptual meeting procedures and expectations; flowcharts for development processes including time lines; variance process and application; rezoning/zoning text amendment process and application; financial assistance tools available for projects; and procedures for special meetings should also be added. An online payment option could also be added to the website, if the city began accepting credit cards for payment of planning and zoning fees. A description of the role of each advisory board and membership requirements should be added to the website.

3. Does the community website include housing and talent information and link to external partner organizations?
Charlotte's website features a prominent link to the Chamber of Commerce on the home page that carries throughout the website. The city's website includes a listing and description of numerous community partners; several of the links are broken. There is no information or external links on the city website regarding housing information or resources.

Recommendations
Update links on the city's website to the external partner organizations to cover talent, housing and additional development information.

4. Does the website serve as a community marketing tool?
The city 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 link connecting to the city's Facebook page, and lists the Facebook newsfeed on the home page. Again, the chamber logo is located prominently on the homepage, providing quick access to visitor and festival information.

Recommendations
A long-term goal could include the development of a reworked community logo and tagline to express the character of Charlotte. 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.