



risingtide

Action Strategy

City of Hillsdale
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.

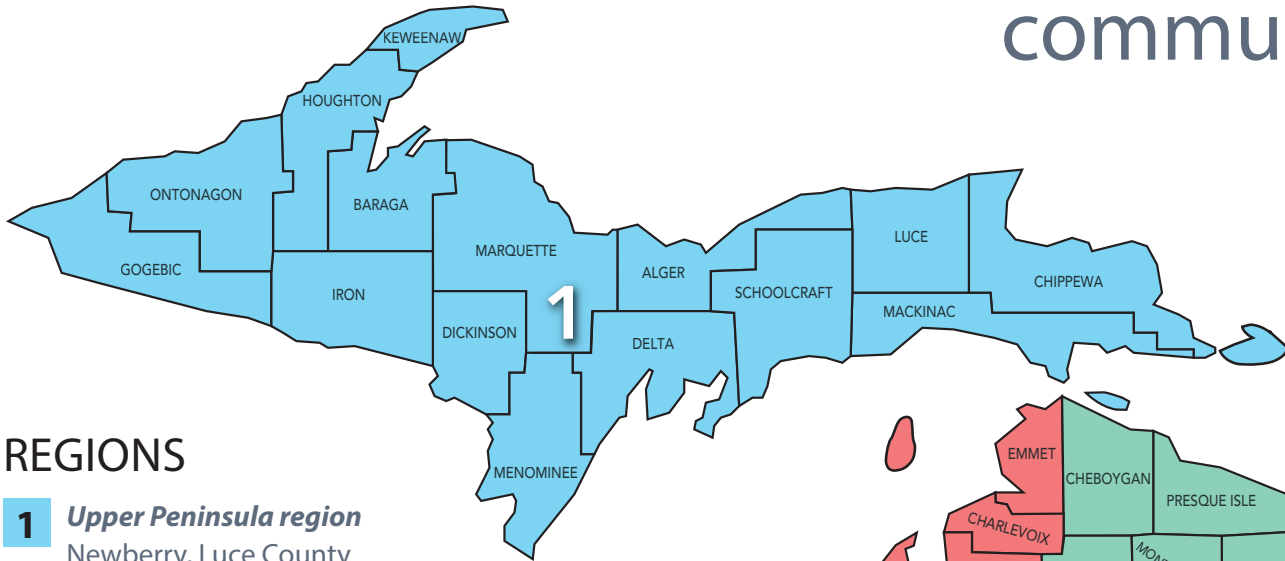
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority (TED team) have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential.

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 County
Main Street Community, Select Level

- 4
West Michigan region
 Ewart, Osceola County

- 5
East Central Michigan region
 Harrison, Clare County

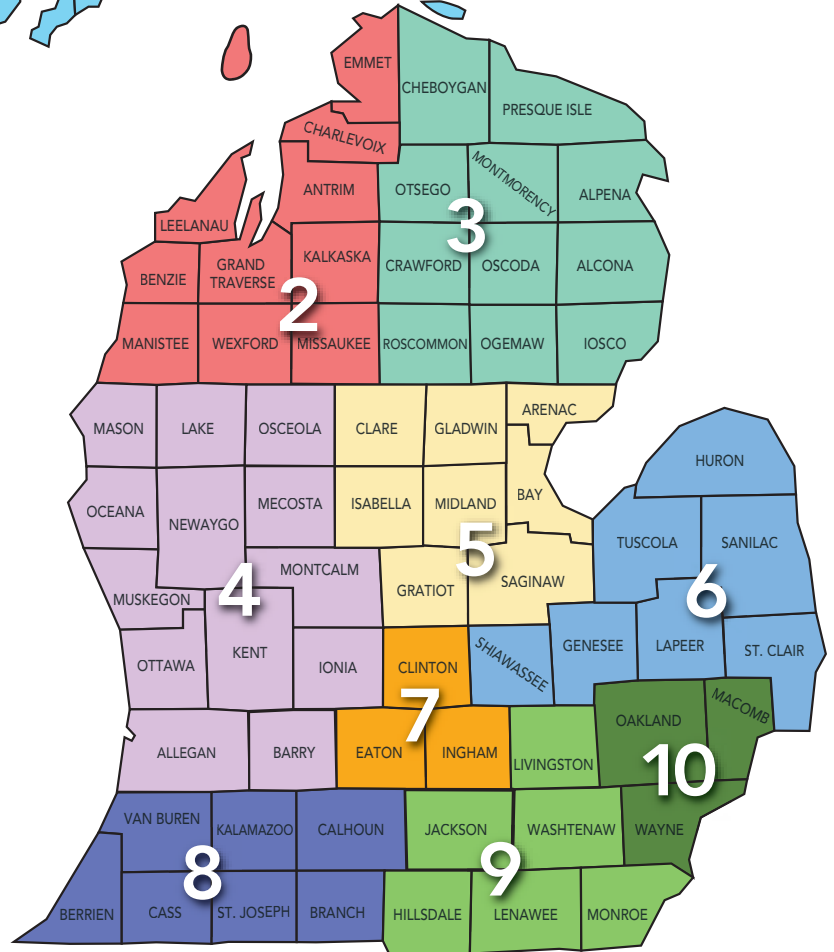
- 6
East Michigan region
 Sandusky, Sanilac County

- 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 city staff, the TIFA board, Hillsdale College, and staff from Economic Development Partnership of Hillsdale County and the Economic Development Corporation.

The stakeholders identified many assets, including Hillsdale Hospital, Hillsdale College, the historic heritage of the community, recreational opportunities, the airport, Hillsdale Board of Public Utilities, low crime, fiber connectivity, strong schools and the downtown district.

From these interviews, it was clear there is not any specific “problem” impacting the data sets used to identify this community as a priority for the Project Rising Tide (PRT) pilot. In Hillsdale, various economic development opportunities need to be strengthened and a clear path of activities and owners should be outlined. The community definitely has areas of opportunity such as increasing downtown vibrancy, increasing home ownership, attracting new businesses and investment, and retaining residents. The TED team, in conjunction with stakeholders, identified the need for developing a comprehensive economic development strategy covering downtown development, business development, housing development and marketing would lay the framework for increased economic activity in the city. There are many players already working on great projects; the city, the Economic Development Corporation, the Economic Development Partnership of Hillsdale County, the Hillsdale Board of Public Utilities, the Chamber of Commerce, the TIFA, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale Hospital, and many others are all doing great work to increase economic prosperity, but a coordinated comprehensive economic development strategy would identify additional opportunities and solidify partnerships. This action strategy will act as a guide over the next nine months for crafting a complete and coordinated strategy for economic development.

Hillsdale is uniquely situated because the city has already been diligently working through the RRC best practices and are further along than other communities in achieving RRC certification. The RRC “Report of Findings” presented last year, gave the city a clear direction on what can be improved at the municipal level to increase business friendliness of

policies, procedures and plans. The creation of an economic development strategy will directly align with gaps that the RRC Report of Findings identified and put the city one step closer to certification. Having an economic development strategy as well as a marketing strategy are best practices that must be met in order to receive the Redevelopment Ready Communities® certification. The stakeholder engagement outlined in this action strategy, may also help the city identify partners to assist in implementing all of the RRC best practices.

The TED team has also completed a website review. The recommendations from this review are attached in Appendix B. This is a resource to help city staff continue to make the municipal website more user-friendly.

Furthermore, the Michigan Vacant Properties Campaign (MVPC) has been identified as another resource to assist with the development of an economic development strategy. The MVPC exists to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of leaders in the state who are committed to turning the vacant properties in their communities into assets. The MVPC is a working collaboration of four organizations with unique expertise related to vacant property issues: the Center for Community Progress, Community Economic Development Association of Michigan, Michigan Municipal League and Michigan Community Resources. Created to develop a statewide network of practice and expertise, the MVPC assists small, rural, suburban and metropolitan areas. The MVPC’s core activities are to provide education and outreach, community and partner technical assistance, local campaign formation and policy and systems development. Their work will be influential in addressing the higher vacancy rate identified in the Project Rising Tide selection process.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

This action strategy will be the shared responsibility of city staff, the TIFA board, city council and other identified Economic Development Partners, with the assistance of the TED team when needed. It is the intention the action strategy will be a shared vision for what will be accomplished over the next 9 months and will help to establish accountability for the work to be done. The philosophy of this action strategy is to lay the foundation for economic development activities that can function without in-depth assistance from the TED team.

JANUARY–MARCH 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Establish an economic development steering committee	City staff	ED steering committee selected
Summarize essential background information and draft outline for document	City staff/ ED steering committee	ED strategy started
Develop plan for stakeholder engagement	City staff/ ED steering committee	Important stakeholder groups identified and plan developed for how to engage them and on what topics
Michigan Vacant Properties Campaign site visit	City staff	MVPC interviews stakeholders to inform their report
Education regarding target market analysis (TMA). Connect to other interested communities in region.	TED team/city staff	Community decides if TMA is desired in community. If so, funds identified for TMA

The first quarter action items will prepare the city for crafting the economic development strategy. A major mistake communities make is to create a strategy without stakeholder buy-in and then not use the plan. Steering committee members should represent a variety of roles to produce the maximum amount of input across stakeholders. The city of Hillsdale has already crafted a public participation plan through the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program, this should be used to ensure a collaborative approach when seeking stakeholder input.

This quarter will be setting the baseline for economic development in a variety of ways. The ED steering committee will work on completing an overview of economic

conditions of the city. In addition, the Michigan Vacant Property Campaign will conduct a site visit in order to craft recommendations on how to eliminate blight and vacancy in the city of Hillsdale. Lastly, more information will be provided on target market analysis (TMA). The collaborative community development team under TED offers a matching grant to complete a TMA. This report provides an in-depth study of households migrating into the city and within the region, their lifestyle preferences, and desired housing types. Housing developers use this kind of data when deciding what product will be marketable in an area. The community can use the TMA data to market Hillsdale to real estate developers and inform the economic development strategy.



APRIL–JUNE 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Engage stakeholders	ED steering committee	Relevant information collected for economic development strategy
Draft ED vision, goals and strategy	ED steering committee	Info to populate chapters of ED strategy drafted
Options and alternatives generated for community brand	ED steering committee	Info to populate chapters of ED strategy drafted
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. This quarter the ED steering committee will be busy gathering information. Some examples of stakeholders to engage would be the county housing contacts, public schools, Hillsdale college students, the Economic Development Corporation, the Economic Development Partnership of Hillsdale County, the Hillsdale Board of Public Utilities, the Chamber of Commerce, the TIFA, Hillsdale College, and Hillsdale Hospital.

The TED team will assist in providing best practices for each chapter of the ED strategy as well as potential resources such as the “RRC Economic Development Strategy Guide” and the “RRC Marketing and Branding Strategy Guide” that has been developed by the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program.

If the city decides to pursue the target market analysis, the steps to do so should be completed in this quarter.



JULY–SEPTEMBER 2016		
Action item	Owner	Deliverable
Inventory redevelopment sites	City staff, city council	List of prioritized sites available for redevelopment finalized. One property information package develop and posted online
Draft ED strategy	ED steering committee	All chapters populated for the ED strategy with timelines and owners of action steps
Adopt ED strategy	All ED players	Any “owner” of an action step in the strategy as well as the city council to adopt formally

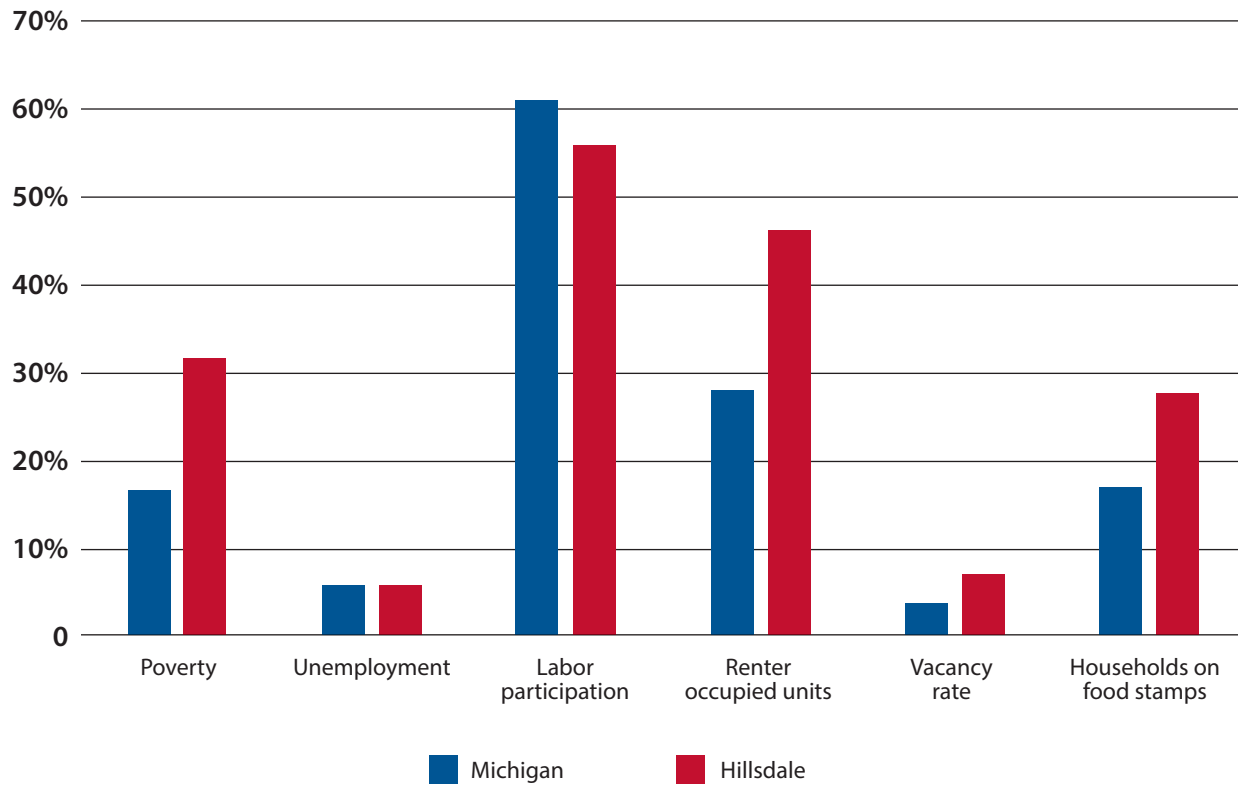
In the third quarter, the TED team will assist city staff and council to prioritize and market priority redevelopment sites. As part of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program, sites were identified in the city, but they were not prioritized, nor was a strategy for redevelopment established. This includes putting together information packages that outline available incentives and additional information such as the target market analysis.

Many months of consensus building and research will come together in the economic development strategy. It is important the document is “owned” by all economic development stakeholders, not just the city staff or council. This will ensure a collaborative approach to economic development in the future. In addition, this will be meeting an important RRC best practice and make the city one step closer to certification. Being a certified Redevelopment Ready Community® will make the city more attractive for outside investment and prepped for economic prosperity.



APPENDIX A

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

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 Hillsdale'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 first home page features an easy to use "City" section that includes public notices. In addition, 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 as well as meeting notices for the TIFA, Plant Rehabilitation District and the BPU. In addition, agenda packets and video recording of public meetings are available online.

The city's website includes numerous opportunities for public input, including the staff and offices/information directories and city council directory that includes email addresses and phone numbers. In addition, Freedom of Information Act Information is readily available.

Recommendations

Overall the website is extremely functional. The only recommendation would be to post meeting minutes as well as video online.

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

Under the build section, the city has pertinent economic development information that includes information regarding demographics, manufacturing/tech park, quality of life, business resources, housing, the TIFA district and the Three Meadows subdivision. The city zoning ordinance is under the "City" tab.

Recommendations

Several links seem to be broken or missing. Under "Demographics: Data Tables," only a few of the items are linked to anything; under the TIFA "District" tab, the "click here" to find out more information does not link to anything; the "Planning and Zoning Information" link under the "Business Resources" tab does not link to anything. The website could benefit from creating a "Guide to Development" tab under the build section that includes relevant plans, the zoning ordinance, relevant future land use maps/zoning maps, relevant contact information, link to meeting schedules, a flowchart of development process, conceptual meeting procedures, site plan review requirements and application, rezoning request process and application, variance request process and application, special land use request process and application, fee schedule, special meeting procedures, financial assistance tools, design guidelines (if any), building permit requirements and applications. Best practice 3.2 of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program can provide more information in the "Guide to Development" section.

In addition, there is one great section on the Three Meadows subdivision. The website could benefit from adding additional sites that are available for redevelopment as well as the information outlined in best practice 5.1 of the RRC program.

3. Does the community website include housing and talent information and link to external partner organizations?
Under the “build” section, there is a tab for housing as well as the TIFA district. Under the “Business Resources” tab, there are multiple links to partners such as the EDC, chamber, MEDC, LARA, SCMW. In addition, under the “Demographics” tab, there is a link to labor force characteristics.

Recommendations

Additional information regarding housing and possible incentives can be added to the website. The links can be added into the “Demographics” tab as mentioned above. The website can link to the state site selection data base at www.michiganbusiness.org/site-selection/commercial-real-estate-database. Making sure relevant sites are also found on this website.

4. Does the website serve as a community marketing tool?
The website is aesthetically pleasing and presents a cohesive brand. On the main page there is a “Visit” tab that includes events and tourist attractions. There is also a page for quality of life.

Recommendations

As a marketing strategy is developed, the website may need to be updated to reflect this plan.