

Part II:

Development Strategy

This portion of the CEDS serves as a summary, consolidating economic and social trends that result from the analysis of data gathered and the identified development potentials found in the previous sections. Projects, programs and further studies will be identified which result from, or are suggested through this analysis. Projects that have been proposed by communities will be discussed in regards to how they fit the development strategy. Economic development strategies that are an outgrowth of information gathering efforts and observations provide a sense of direction to economic development activities. After reviewing goals and policies, strategies and more specific activities are proposed and followed by an action plan.

Goals and Policies

The establishment of goals and policies is a vital step in the process of creating an economic development program which addresses both immediate and long-term objectives. These goals and policies provide a standard by which all proposed projects can be measured and prioritized. In this respect the greater the number of expressed goals met by a project the higher priority it should receive in that its beneficial impact will be greater. Hopefully, other organizations or agencies within St. Clair County involved in economic development will share many of the same goals and policies.

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- Sustain a viable and stable county economy through an understanding and application of existing, and emerging technology;
- Improve St. Clair County's broadband infrastructure so we can attract and retain 21st Century jobs and compete in the knowledge economy; and

- Plan public facilities and services (water, sewer, transportation infrastructure) to direct growth toward areas suitable for high-density development.

Objectives:

- Work with appropriate public and quasi-public agencies to facilitate the availability and application of technology which can improve local and county economies.
- Promote and support economic development in the form of research, technology, and telecommunications in order to create new jobs, bring new investment, and improve the quality of life for all residents.
- Encourage, improve, and make affordable the use of advanced telecommunications and computer networks for economic development and job creation.
- Increase the community's stock of technology-ready sites and buildings, designed with sufficient flexibility to allow easy integration of new telecommunications and technological advancements in the future.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- To encourage industrial development in areas which are compatible with existing land uses and site-specific capacity characteristics;
- To develop planned industrial districts;
- To identify/recommend areas for long-range future industrial uses;
- To diversify industrial employment such as, but not limited to medical goods and advanced manufacturing;
- To pursue a county-level industrial land assembly and acquisition program with a 300-600 acre minimum size threshold;
- To promote new and diversified business development in St. Clair County communities; and
- To retain existing businesses and promote expansion of those businesses.

Objectives:

- Recognize the diversity of industrial uses and support adoption of appropriate standards for their location and development.
- To encourage and promote the efficient use of existing infrastructure supporting industrial facilities.
- Encourage industry which would employ currently unemployed or underemployed residents of the county.
- Build on the county's assets by attracting industrial employers that could benefit from such resources as the county's fresh water supply, or its location advantage of being a national border.

- Attempt to further diversify industrial employment by attracting industries from other industrial segments, with higher wage rates, such as but not limited to medical goods and advanced manufacturing.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- Promote a pattern of strategically located commercial areas which are in harmony with surrounding land uses, compatible with the site specific capacity of the land.
- Promote the continued development and strengthening of the commercial sector.

Objectives:

- Encourage and promote the efficient use of existing infrastructure supporting commercial facilities.
- Encourage commercial areas which are suited for such uses and centrally located as to conveniently serve their targeted population.
- Encourage and promote commercial development to realistically relate to market demands for goods and services.

TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- Increase local community and general public awareness of the potential for, and impact of tourism on the county.

Objectives:

- Encourage tourism activities that enhance businesses consistent with the character of the county.
- Improve existing tourist attractions and develop new tourist attractions that can be related to themes such as waterfront, history, shopping, boating, entertainment, architecture, etc.

AGRICULTURE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- Provide for the preservation of agricultural land, to protect both its value in production and the agricultural lifestyle it fosters, and to strive for the growth of the agricultural processing industry within the county.

Objectives:

- Encourage enterprises that would process regional agricultural products.
- The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission should assist local communities in developing ordinances, programs, and other tools to protect and advance agricultural businesses.

- Promote agricultural land and open space preservation for qualified lands under the state Act 116 Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program.
- Continue to promote agricultural land preservation through the county's Farmland Preservation Program and the Purchase of Development Rights Program.
- Encourage accessory recreational uses on agricultural property, such as horseback riding, hunting, fishing, etc., provided they do not conflict with neighboring agricultural uses or require extensive governmental services.
- Encourage diversification of the agricultural economy to include consumer-oriented or high value-added uses such as greenhouses, flower and herb production, specialty crops, 'U-Pick' fruit farms, cider mills, Christmas tree farms, farm-based bed and breakfast lodgings, farm tours, agricultural tourism and the like.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- To provide for a variety of housing opportunities accessible to all income groups throughout the county.

Objectives:

- Work with local communities to increase awareness of the connection between housing and economic change.
- Work with public and non-profit housing agencies, realtors and builders to develop an understanding of the housing issues facing the county and begin to develop solutions.
- Work with appropriate agencies to encourage and promote the development and expansion of affordable housing opportunities for all members of the labor force.

WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal:

- Encourage and promote education efforts aimed at retraining and educating the work force in a changing economy.
- Support the development and availability of significant numbers of diverse technical and highly skilled jobs throughout the county.
- Increase the growth and retention of quality jobs and capital investment in St. Clair County.
- Coordinate planning efforts between local economic development agencies, the individual townships and municipalities, as well as countywide.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of educational and training opportunities that now exist within the county. Ensure results are widely distributed.

- Work with agencies and organizations in the county and state level to provide a full range of advanced education and training opportunities that are both available and accessible.
- Explore existing occupational characteristics and successful efforts and tools used to create and retain these highly skilled jobs.
- Sponsor workshops to share existing information and gather additional input on efforts taken to stimulate the creation of technical and highly skilled jobs.
- Support the EDA's New Business Attraction program which implements aggressive new business recruitment strategies resulting in greater diversification of the local economy.
- Support the EDA's Marketing and Image Enhancement efforts to facilitate the promotion of St. Clair County as a preferred and strategic business location.
- Support the EDA's Business Retention program to aid in the creation of a stronger business environment by retaining local employers and stimulating their expansion and job growth.
- Increase awareness of the goals and priorities of existing economic development agencies at the county, regional, and state level, as well as evaluate and organize their economic goals.
- Convene a forum of employers, educators, and economic development professionals to discuss work force development issues and develop solutions to these problems.

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The CEDS Committee and the agencies that are part of the CEDS Program in the county shall adhere to the following management policies:

- Encourage and involve staff with other interested agencies and organizations in a coordinated and cooperative approach to county-wide economic development;
- Maintain and make available to interested organizations and agencies an informational database dealing with economic activity, labor force trends and developmental concerns;
- Continually monitor the county's economy and track county economic measures with special attention to trends which impact the labor force and employment opportunities;
- Cooperatively manage economic change within the county with the intent of minimizing adverse impacts and maximize beneficial impact associated with change.

Suggested Projects and Activities

The development strategy attempts to identify economic development activities which are an outgrowth of data compiled and analyzed. A total of four (4) new individual projects have been submitted for inclusion in St. Clair County's 2008 CEDS. Projects were solicited from St. Clair County units of government which border or encompass Urban and General Services Development Districts identified in the St. Clair County Master plan. Many projects listed in this year's strategy are carried over from the previous 2002 CEDS and the Overall Economic Development Plan, and these are labeled as "update." The 2008 project proposals are labeled as "new."

PROPOSED LOCAL PUBLIC WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT FACILITIES PROGRAM

Specific economic development projects for which EDA and other funding assistance may be sought are listed below. Additionally, all are supported by adopted program goals and reflect immediate, short-term or longer-term development needs. The CEDS Committee may elect to assign priority ratings to projects when considering funding needs.

New

County of St. Clair: (Project Title—St. Clair County Business Incubator)

In 2007, the Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County and the St. Clair County government began investigating the feasibility of developing a large-scale, regional business incubator in St. Clair County. The county, along with the EDA have made plans to develop a mixed-use business incubator. A Business Incubator Feasibility Study for St. Clair County commissioned by the EDA identified five existing/available buildings in the city of Port Huron and one in the city of Marysville that have potential to house the proposed incubator. This project will have a direct impact on job creation within the first five years. The National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) has provided information and research to help develop and manage a successful business incubation program. Based on NBIA averages that were derived from the square footage of floor space, graduation rates, and other like factors, this development will create five hundred (500) new jobs during those first five years. The construction date for this development is anticipated to start on May 1, 2009. The estimated project budget is \$1,700,000. Possible funding sources include:

- United States Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Development Program
- Various sources of local community investment

New

Ira Township: (Project Title—Marine City Highway Water Main and Sanitary Sewer Extension)

In the 2003 Sanitary Sewer Master Plan for Ira Township, based on the “engineering study” done on the capacity of the existing sanitary sewer system, it was found that Ira Township was reaching their share of the Algonac Treatment Plant. This document proposes a practical sanitary sewer system for the portion of Ira Township not already served by sanitary sewers. This proposed project is listed in their Sanitary Sewer Master Plan with the recommended sewer sizes, slopes, lengths, elevations, as well as the estimation of preliminary costs. This project will provide a water and sanitary sewer extension on Marine City Highway from Bethuy Road to Meldrum Road. The water will serve both sides of Marine City Highway, while the sewer will only operate for Ira Township. There will be the construction of two sanitary lift stations. One will be located at Bethuy Road, and the other located at Church Road.

In terms of short-term impacts, this development will provide additional sanitary sewer capacity. It will also improve the water reliability for both domestic and industrial users, as well as fire protection for both Ira and Casco townships. Impacts that will result over the course of more than two years are facilitating full use of sites with the elimination of reserved land for septic. Additionally, a safe and reliable source of water for domestic and fire protection uses will be provided. The construction date for this development is anticipated to start the summer of 2009. The estimated project budget is \$4,200,000. Possible funding sources include:

- United States Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Development Program
- Local Special Assessment District

New

City of Yale: (Project Title—Roy Drive Improvements)

The city of Yale has made plans to improve a gravel roadway to Class A asphalt with a curb and gutter, a storm sewer, and extended water and sanitary sewer lines. These improvements are projected to create twenty (20) to one hundred (100) new jobs. Expected short-term impacts are the enticement of businesses to locate in the area through the availability of facilities, as well as promoting the expansion of existing businesses. An impact likely to be experienced after two years is the provision of a stable tax base and job opportunities for the city of Yale and the surrounding area. The construction date for this development is anticipated to start on July 1, 2011. The estimated project budget is \$500,000. Possible funding sources include:

- United States Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Development Program
- Local Development Financing Authority (LDFA)

New

Port Huron Township: (Project Title—Range Road Water Main and Sanitary Sewer Extension)

Port Huron Township plans to construct approximately 1,400 linear feet of water main and sanitary sewer on Range Road to open up additional commercial property for development near the interchange on Interstate 94 (I-94). These improvements are projected to create thirty (30) to forty (40) new jobs. Expected short-term impacts are the enticement of businesses to locate in the area during the proposed expansion phase of the Blue Water Bridge Plaza. The long-term impact of the project is the realization of the commercial/business corridor identified in the Range Road Corridor Plan. The estimated project budget is \$516,000. Possible funding sources include:

- United States Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Development Program
- Port Huron Township
- Private developers

The following economic development projects were compiled for the 2002 St. Clair County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. These projects came from the CGA Strategic Planning and Economic Base Study (mentioned earlier and found in Appendix Chart A), or are projects initiated by local government officials. Many of these projects were carried over from the previous Overall Economic Development Plan. The order of presentation should not be taken as a ranking of relative importance or priority.

Update

County of St. Clair: (Project Title—Air Industrial Park Sewer Extension and Road Improvements)

The county plans to extend public sewer service to the Air Industrial Park to replace the on-site lagoon treatment system that was installed as a temporary measure in 1977 when sewers were unavailable in Kimball Township. The lagoon system is reaching the end of its useful life and capacity. The presence of a lagoon system restricts the type of employers that the county is able to attract to the park because of effluent pre-treatment constraints. The public sewer line is to be extended from its present terminus at Allen and Ravenswood Roads south one-mile to Smiths Creek Road where a force main will be constructed across airport property to the existing lagoon site. A pump station will be installed and

connected to the force main. The existing lagoon will be disconnected, demolished, and the site restored. In addition to the sewer work, several industrial park internal roads that are in a state of disrepair will be resurfaced at a cost of \$200,000. Also a stormwater detention pond (\$465,000) and a stormwater collection system (\$835,000) need to be provided. The cost of the project is estimated to be \$2,129,000. The cost estimates were prepared in 2002. An updated cost estimate will be required.

Estimated Project Budget

Federal.....	\$1,064,500
Local – Park Sewer Fund.....	\$200,000
Local – County General Fund.....	\$864,500
TOTAL.....	<u>\$2,129,000</u>

Update

County of St. Clair: (Project Title—Regional Industrial Park)

This particular park would encompass approximately 500 acre; potentially across multiple governmental jurisdictions and possibly involve more than one continuous parcel. Various potential sites are currently under consideration for development that will result in over 100 jobs in the short-term and several thousand jobs when fully developed. The park may include sites for both light and heavy industry. Assistance through United States Economic Development Administration Public Works and Economic Development Program will be sought for required roadway, public water and sanitary sewer improvements including project pre-engineering and final design. The following cost estimate was prepared in 1994. An updated cost estimate will be required. MDOT, CDBG, EDA and other funding will be sought.

Estimated Project Budget

Federal.....	\$5,600,000
Local	\$1,400,000
TOTAL.....	<u>\$7,000,000</u>

Update

City of Marine City: (Project Title—City Industrial Park)

The city of Marine City is requesting assistance with the acquisition and development of a 40 acre, certified level I industrial park. It will be necessary to secure the land and construct roads, public water and sanitary sewer to serve the proposed lots. The cost of this project was estimated in 1995 to be \$516,000. An

up-to-date cost estimate will need to be prepared. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be sought for this project.

Update

City of Marine City: (Project Title—Plank Road Reconstruction and Sewer/Water Extensions)

The city of Marine City in recent years has expanded its city limits to the west along the north side of Plank Road. The road serves several industries that have since developed in this area. This section of road, under the jurisdiction of the St. Clair County Road Commission, is in a severe case of disrepair. This project proposes to reconstruct the road to a Class A industrial park standard. Sewer and water lines must also be extended to serve an additional ten acres of recently annexed land. No cost estimates have yet been prepared for this project. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be requested in the future.

Update

City of Marine City: (Project Title—King Road Extension)

There is a need to provide a more direct truck route linking I-94 with State Highway M-29 through the city. The extension of King Road from Chartier Avenue south to Shortcut Road and M-29 has been identified as a planned project in the Marine City and St. Clair County master plans for decades. This project includes the acquisition of 100 to 150 feet of right-of-way and construction of a three to five lane roadway with enclosed drainage, curb, and gutter. The extension of this roadway will not only provide an improved truck route to the city’s Thompson Road Industrial Area, but will also open up and provide direct access to additional industrially zoned land adjacent to the extended highway. Updated cost estimates will be required. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be requested in the future.

Estimated Project Budget

TIFA Bonds	\$500,000
Sewer Fund Bonds	\$234,125
Special Assessment Bonds.....	\$200,000
TOTAL.....	<u><u>\$934,125</u></u>

Update

City of Marine City: (Project Title—DeGurse Avenue Road Improvements/Reconstruction)

There is a need to improve/reconstruct segments of DeGurse Avenue through the DeGurse Avenue Industrial District. While portions of the existing roadway have enclosed drainage, curb and gutter, the western segment leading to King Road and Marine City Highway has a narrow and substandard two-lane cross section with

open ditches and without curbs. Portions of the existing segment having curbs and enclosed drainage are deteriorated and in need of reconstruction. The project will consist of widening and reconstruction to a Class A industrial park standard roadway complete with curbs and enclosed drainage. Large trucks now have difficulty making turning movements to and from the narrow roadway. The purpose of the project is to improve the marketability of the industrial district and to improve traffic safety. No cost estimates have yet been prepared. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be requested in the future. The balance of the project will be financed using a combination of special assessments and the major street fund.

MARKETING OF INDUSTRIAL SITES

The Economic Development Alliance (EDA) of St. Clair County will serve as the principal marketing agency for sites within the existing and planned industrial parks that have been identified above. The EDA of St. Clair County will continue to aggressively market the sites using a set of practices that have successfully brought leads and prospects throughout the county.

To promote the county as a location for industry, the EDA will continue to undertake an ambitious schedule of marketing events that are carefully arranged around target industry segments. Target industries currently include advanced manufacturing, customer service and back-office operations, Homeland Security and defense industries, and alternative energy manufacturing.

In its marketing efforts, the EDA will participate individually and with partners, such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Detroit Regional Economic Partnership. They will exhibit or attend such events as the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Annual Exhibition, medical design, and manufacturing shows in Minneapolis and New York, plastic industry trade events in Cleveland and Chicago, advanced manufacturing events in Detroit and Chicago, and auto parts specialty events in Detroit and Hamilton, Ontario. They will carry out marketing support activities around these events, including receptions, seminars, target industry advertising, direct mail, and direct company visits as often as possible.

A constant flow of leads and prospects within our target industry segments will continue to be generated by the EDA marketing program. In addition to maintaining an inventory of modern, fully serviced industrial sites, marketing is the key to successful attraction of new business to St. Clair County.

TECHNICAL STUDIES

The following three items are technical studies that are encouraged and may be financed by the EDA if criteria can be met. The funds requested would be used to research an area of potential economic growth with the intent of generating future projects and programs. The three opportunity sectors are U.S./Canada border activity, tourism and convention, and food processing.

Border Activity

The increase in traffic, particularly commercial, at various border crossing points in St. Clair County create an opportunity for businesses which take advantage of commercial traffic. These include free trade zones formed but not well-utilized, customs brokers, bonded warehouses, centralized inspection sites and centralized examination sites servicing both rail and truck traffic. The potential for employment, investment in property development and local deposit of tariffs to be further expanded should be capitalized upon.

A detailed study of the need for and impact of such businesses should be undertaken involving officials and business leaders from both sides of the border. The report would inform and educate community and business leaders as to the scope of such ventures and allow the area to capitalize on needs of the commercial traffic.

Tourism and Convention Activities

The State of Michigan is home to a \$18.8 billion tourism industry which employs 200,000 people and boosts the economic viability of all 83 counties. Much of this revenue comes from Michigan's working families who are taking fewer, but more frequent, vacations closer to their homes. In 1996 it is estimated that there was \$65.4 million spent in direct tourism expenditures in St. Clair County.

Convention facilities do exist in the Port Huron area that could capitalize on their site-specific amenities and regional setting. An obstacle to increased convention business is the fact that a first class hotel is not available within walking distance of the convention facility. Attempts in the past to interest national hotel chains in such a location were unsuccessful.

An independent study should be made of both the tourism and convention sectors of the county's economy. Although solutions to the problems identified may turn out to be more appropriately addressed by the private sector, the county's CEDS Committee can be in a position to assist in analyzing data, identifying trends and planning strategy or programs which work toward implementing solutions. There are certain areas of the county which can be more successfully targeted for tourism development than others. Agri-tourism as a sector should not be overlooked. Identification of these areas, followed closely by some action to reserve the site for future use and development, would be appropriate.

The Blue Water Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau has launched a campaign, "Discover the Blue," that promotes the unique tourism assets of the shores along eastern Michigan. Several tourist attractions and activities are highlighted such as Algonac long known for its important contribution to boating history; Marine City has become a destination for antique collectors; St. Clair offers the world's longest wooden freshwater boardwalk; Marysville provides kids with great fun at the 58-acre Marysville park with a water spray area; and in Port Huron tour Michigan's oldest working Lighthouse, a retired Coast Guard Cutter Bramble, Huron Lightship (the only existing Lightship on the Great Lakes), Maritime Center and the Thomas Edison Depot Museum where Edison spent his childhood.

Agricultural Products—Processing and Distribution

Agriculture has been a strong economic component throughout St. Clair County's history. Farms create jobs, produce revenue for county residents, and grow crops consumed within the county and around the world. Agri-business in St. Clair County is, and can continue to be, an important economic factor that creates jobs, generates income, produces support industries, and is a potential for tourism.

The exceptional transportation system, interstate highways, state highways, rail connections with Ontario and international port facility, all strengthen our opportunity for this activity to be successful and experience continued growth. Steps should be taken to capitalize on these locational advantages and further explore the interest and/or need for such facilities whether they are processing, packaging, warehousing, or international trade. While these factors are being looked at, a profile of site requirements should be developed allowing specific potential sites within the county to be identified. Care should be exercised to assure the potential sites and projects are acceptable from an environmental standpoint (processing plants place great demands on water resources and at times waste disposal systems).

Although over one-third of the total land area in St. Clair County is used for farming, farm employment is estimated to have accounted for slightly less than one percent of total 2005 employment. To help preserve agriculture as an economic component, the county's CEDS Committee can identify those areas of the county that can sustain agricultural business over the long term and increase public awareness of the value that agri-business can play in the county's economy.

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