

## Prosperity Plan

Recently, the *Michigan State University Land Policy Institute* has directed efforts to research and establish strategies that help community and regional leaders leverage their community assets to establish a high quality of life, attract or retain knowledge workers, establish a dynamic economy and create prosperous communities. Most of these strategies are appropriate for well-established urban settings. However, many of these strategies may be applied to support prosperity in small or rural communities, like the Greater Thompsonville Area.

This portion of the Master Plan is not a prescription for growth and economic prosperity for the Greater Thompsonville Area. Rather, the *Prosperity Plan* is intended to provide a vision of the future and a generalized plan for growth and economic prosperity. This Plan also offers tools and suggestions for cooperative efforts to be undertaken by the area toward success and prosperity in the new economy.

### Community Assets

To compete in the global new economy, communities must build upon and leverage their distinct community assets, sometimes referred to as “strategic assets.” According to the *Land Policy Institute*, strategic assets are unique resources that can make a region distinct in attracting the right mix of resilient and sustainable growth and global opportunities. As part of the development of the Master Plan, the joint planning commission and the residents of the Greater Thompsonville Area were asked to develop a comprehensive list of community assets under the following categories:

- Natural Assets
- Cultural Assets
- Special and Unique Assets

As listed below, several community assets were named in multiple categories. *Map 10* depicts the location of each asset.



What are Community Assets? Community (or “strategic”) assets are unique resources that can make a region distinct in attracting the right mix of resilient and sustainable growth. Above: Citizens help identify community assets at a public meeting.

Natural Assets

Michigan Legacy Art Park  
 Betsie River Campground  
 Grass Lake Campground  
 Day Use Park  
 North Hills  
 Edison Swamp  
 Weldon Cemetery  
 Nessen City Cemetery  
 Catholic Cemetery  
 Betsie Valley Trail  
 Thompsonville Airport  
 Thornhill Orchard  
 Betsie River Pathway  
 Village

Cultural Assets

Little Betsie River  
 Lost Lake  
 Betsie Valley District Library  
 State Land  
 Pavilion/Park  
 Horseshoe Curve  
 Trail  
 The Diamond RR crossing  
 Historical Marker  
 Oil Wells (8-10)  
 Bridge (good for fishing)  
 Historic House  
 Underground Railroad  
 Wallin Depot  
 Benzie Bus

Special & Unique Assets

Betsie Valley Trail  
 Dair Creek/Old Mill Pond  
 Wallin Swamp  
 Twin Lakes  
 Wallin School  
 Sportsman Club  
 Wallin Airport  
 Snowmobile Trail  
 Beaver Pond/Dair Creek  
 Betsie River  
 Fishery  
 Village/Logging  
 Old Dam  
 Village Cemetery  
 Railroad Trestle  
 Crystal Mountain

Community (Strategic) Assets  
 Cultural Asset - Betsie Valley District  
 Library



The joint planning commission will continue to work with community stakeholders to further identify and re-evaluate the community's assets. The joint planning commission, local leaders and community members should take careful measures to protect these assets as much as possible. Once the assets have been identified and protected, local leaders have an opportunity to leverage the community assets and create a vibrant and unique community where people want to live, work and play.

## The New Economy

The 2009, Land Policy Institute (LPI) report, *Chasing the Past or Investing in Our Future* characterizes current economic conditions as “dark economic times.” Communities across the nation are facing a difficult transition from what is known as the “old economy” to the “new economy.” This is especially true for communities in Michigan, one of the states hit hardest by the recession.

As explained in the report, the old economy is based on industrial activity that emerged in the mid-1800s. At one time, this economic model produced a great amount of wealth for communities. For example, in the automobile industry’s heyday, Detroit was one of the country’s wealthiest cities and this wealth was reflected in the city’s growth and extensive development of infrastructure, such as roads, museums and hospitals.

In contrast, the “new economy refers to a global, entrepreneurial and knowledge-based economy where business success comes increasingly from the ability to incorporate knowledge, technology, creativity and innovation into their products and services.” This departs from the old economic principles familiar in the manufacturing sector, such as “economies of scale.” Decreases in the U.S. manufacturing economy have accompanied a shift toward an economy built upon creativity and knowledge. The job market is increasingly geared towards people with increased technical skills, higher education, and extensive social connections, rather than skilled laborers.

The shift from the old economy to the new economy has implications for many aspects of Michigan communities. In relation to planning, the new economy requires communities to examine their “placemaking” attributes. Placemaking attributes such as cultural amenities and access to nature-based recreation are believed to attract, retain and inspire new economy workers, otherwise known as “knowledge workers.”

Knowledge workers, entrepreneurs and the talented are said to be attracted to quality of life features, which include green infrastructure assets, leisure amenities, cultural amenities and other amenities (Benedict and McMahon, 2002). Venture capital and private equity are expected to follow knowledge workers to these quality places. Therefore, the natural, environmental and social assets of a place may well be important levers for economic developers to pull to position their communities for prosperity in the New Economy.

### What is the Old Economy?

In the Old Economy, the currency for growth and development was attracting manufacturing companies with significant plant capacity. Places defined themselves and their economies on the basis of their manufacturing infrastructure and their ability to accumulate old capital (plants, equipment, land, lending capacity, etc.). Therefore, people followed jobs. Because of the huge capital outlay and long-term planning involved in establishing a manufacturing facility, communities could keep, for a long time, whatever economic activity they had. In the Old Economy, keeping the cost of doing business low was a critical economic strategy since low tax, low wage communities were potentially more competitive. The oversight of people, companies and communities was largely based on the notion of management and control. Labor markets were regional, competition among communities was regional, and since the talent pool adjusted to the needs of the region, the talent market was largely regional.

- Dr. Soji Adelaja, Director  
MSU Land Policy Institute  
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In the new economy, communities will also need to *leverage* their assets to attract talent.

In addition to attracting knowledge workers, a report developed by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (*2009 Economic Forecast*) suggests Michigan communities adopt the following suggestions to adapt to changes in the economy.

1. Michigan will need to move beyond its past and current mindset of doubt into an attitude of motivated optimism for a new and brighter economic future.
2. Michigan must foster *New Economy* principles in all its workforce and economic development activities. The *New Economy* demands talented individuals, sustainability, entrepreneurial activity, risk-taking, innovation, and a strong sense of place to compete on a national and global scale. Businesses must also engage in what is being termed “the triple bottom line” which looks at economic, environment, and social sustainability components of the best-run and most profitable businesses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. Government and industry must work together to create structural change that will support a sustainable economic infrastructure that provides greater economic diversification and is less susceptible to threats.
4. Leadership will be needed at individual, organizational, community, regional and state levels. In the book *Leadership Challenges* (Kouzes and Posner), the effects of good leadership are very well articulated - “It’s about the practices leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. It’s about leadership that creates the climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable success.”

### **The New Economy - Implications for the Greater Thompsonville Area**

Throughout the planning process and the development of this document, one question the steering committee attempted to address was: How does the new economy impact the Greater Thompsonville Area?

Rural areas in Michigan such as the Greater Thompsonville Area have been affected by the difficult transition from the old economy in many of the same ways as urban areas. Therefore, according to the Land Policy Institute, every community within a region has a significant role in attracting talent, leveraging assets and improving the overall quality of life of the community. As stated by Dr. Soji Adelaja, Director of the Michigan State University (MSU) Land Policy Institute, “a successful region maintains interdependency between its urban and rural communities, building on the strengths and assets

What is the New Economy?

In the New Economy, the Old Economy paradigm has been turned on its head. Talent has replaced manufacturing plants as the currency of economic growth and prosperity. The New Economy thrives in places where there are lots of talented people and new ideas are rapidly generated. In short, place matters! It is no longer about attracting companies, but about attracting talented people and therefore quality of life plays an important role. Today, areas seeking economic prosperity are focused on creating a climate known for producing new ideas, enabling productive partnerships and attracting talented people rather than manufacturing goods and services. To prosper in the New economy, regions must be adaptable – they must engage partnerships among various sectors (business, government and nonprofit). Communities committed to helping build the new economy are finding that prosperity comes if the right mix of economic development and placemaking strategies are in place.

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of each to grow in the New Economy. The strengths and assets in all communities are different, and a high-performing region successfully leverages those unique assets instead of just trying to replicate the strengths of one community in another.”<sup>1</sup>

The success of the Greater Thompsonville Area will depend largely on the success of the greater Northwest Michigan region and the core cities of Manistee, Cadillac and Traverse City. These core cities should continue to focus on building places to attract new knowledge workers. The Greater Thompsonville Area should place more emphasis on enhancing their small town assets, improving its quality of life and building upon its natural resources assets. According to Dr. Adelaja,

“Maintaining the scenic quality and water quality of Michigan’s abundant natural areas are key to the long term viability of tourism - the third largest industry in Michigan. While tourism is the number one industry in many parts of rural Michigan, if scenic vistas are tarnished, destroyed or simply reduced in number, then the area becomes less desirable to visit. Land use policies that discourage sprawl and promote compact small towns with a high quality of life will help ensure the sustainability of naturally scenic areas and associated recreation opportunities.

In addition, rural communities can also capture the benefits of nearby urban communities by tapping into their appetite for tourism and entertainment by offering one-day recreational trips, eco-tourism, farm-based recreation, and opportunities to simply enjoy the country experience. But rural communities need to be imaginative and creative, by using “rural innovation” as a driver of sustainable economic development plans. Rural communities cannot continue to see agriculture as an afterthought.”

#### What is Prosperity?

“A state of stable, reliable and secure economic growth, with rising employment, income and overall quality of life, that ensures transcendental success.”

- Dr. Soji Adelaja, Director  
MSU Land Policy Institute

<sup>1</sup> Comparison of the Old Economy To The New Economy & The Relevance of the New economy To Urban and Rural Michigan. Dr. Soji Adelaja Planning and Zoning News January 2008 Vol. 26 No. 3

## Northwest Michigan Council of Governments - Regional Strategic Growth Plan

In most instances, regional economic development planning in Michigan is facilitated through the State's fourteen regional planning and development agencies. These fourteen regional planning and development agencies are designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and recognized by the state. One of the primary responsibilities of each regional planning and development agency is to prepare and implement a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS serves as the blueprint for economic development throughout the region and helps secure federal funding for local implementation projects. Recently, each regional planning and development agency agreed to develop and integrate a series of strategic growth strategies into their regional CEDS Plan. The strategic growth strategies are being developed under a separate strategic growth planning effort.

Planners from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, (the regional planning and development agency serving the Greater Thompsonville Area) in partnership with the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute worked with local and regional economic development agencies to develop the strategic growth strategies. The strategies are based upon economic strategies addressed in previous CEDS documents, results from recent "New Economy" training workshops facilitated by the MSU Land Policy Institute and interviews with economic development agencies from throughout the region. The planning and development process has determined ten *draft* strategic growth strategies for the region:

1. Business Assistance, Acceleration and Attraction
  - a. Business Assistance:
    - **Priority:** Plan for community investment centers, streamline regulation and review processes while maintaining sense of community and protecting natural assets.
  - b. Business Acceleration:
    - **Priority:** Build and enhance regional innovation clusters in food innovation, advance manufacturing, fisheries and freshwater, finance and insurance, recreation/tourism, defense and security, energy
    - Accelerate business expansion through exporting assistance and coordination
  - c. Business Attraction:
    - Develop targeted attraction program for seasonal residents and visitors to relocate home and business in region

Regional Planning and Development Agencies - Region 10, The Greater Thompsonville Area is served by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG)



2. Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Capital Attraction
  - a. Priority: Facilitate local investment circles to facilitate business development
    - Leverage and mobilize wealthy retirees for the purposes of business and social entrepreneurship
  - b. Integrate research capacity of four-year institutions into community colleges
3. Workforce Development and Higher Education
  - a. Priority: Develop and invest regionally in a collaborative systems approach to ensure every child (0-5 years), in every care setting, has access to educational experiences
  - b. Expand workforce development services to support the full range of workforce needs in the region.
  - c. Priority: produce globally-competent workforce and provide specialized recruitment services for diverse workplaces
4. Infrastructure Improvements
  - a. Priority: Significantly expand infrastructure that supports new economy concepts
5. Regional Collaboration
  - a. Engage in capacity building activities to improve leadership and service quality across the region
  - b. Priority: Align local plans with regional assets and strategies and prioritize local investments that have regional benefits
6. Regional Identity and Image
  - a. Create a regional-wide marketing campaign
  - b. Create consistent entryway aesthetics and wayfinding
7. Population and Talent Retention and Attraction
  - a. Focus on attracting and retaining talented young adults by maintaining a diverse economic and cultural environment and a high quality of life in the region
8. Placemaking Improvements
  - a. Target investment in key growth centers
  - b. Celebrate four seasons (residents & tourists)

9. Cultural and Creative Assets

- a. Increase the visibility and connectivity of public art
- b. Clustering of key cultural facilities and activities

10. Green Economy and Sustainability

- a. Focus on Creation of Green Jobs
  - Develop workforce skills in green trades and generate demand for skills through marketing, education, incentives, partnerships and the updating of local government policies to accommodate green economic activities
- b. Renewable Energy
  - Pursue renewable generation opportunities in environmentally, socially, and economically appropriate areas that increase regional energy independence and reliability
- c. Energy Efficiency
  - Expand residential, commercial and municipal energy efficiency programs

In addition to these strategies, several “Major Assets” were identified (see list at right). The strategies are now being implemented into the new CEDS plan for the region. At first glance, it appears that most of the strategies are consistent with the overarching goal statements, the building blocks of prosperity topics and goals/objective/strategy statements outlined in this Master Plan. Local leaders from the Greater Thompsonville Area, in cooperation with economic development agencies from Benzie County and the NWMCOG, should continue to participate in planning for prosperity wherever possible.

Region 10 Major Assets -

**Natural Assets**

- Inland lakes and rivers
- Bays
- Orchards/Vineyards
- Water
- Sand Dunes
- Public Lands
- Lake Michigan

**Infrastructure Assets**

- Community Colleges
- Hospitals
- Working Ports
- Trail Systems
- Airports

**Other Assets**

- Set of unique, small cities and villages that are destinations
- Distinct four-seasons
- Sustained population growth
- Resorts
- Tribes
- Long and strong history of collaboration among economic development, education and workforce development organizations
- Large population of well-educated and skilled retirees
- Interlochen
- K-12 Educational system
- Potential energy sources
- Number of local lending institutions
- Social entrepreneurship
- Environmental entrepreneurship