



# West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

August/September 2016

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## Economic Development Document Being Revised

WMSRDC is preparing to revise its EDA-required EDD CEDS document, beginning with a series of SWOT analyses to be held this fall across the region.

“Wait, say that again?!” Fair enough, let’s start from the beginning... The WMSRDC economic development program is anchored by its designation as an economic development district (EDD), designated by the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). This designation enables communities within the WMSRDC region to remain eligible for EDA funding programs. Since 1966, EDA has made over 40 investments in the WMSRDC region, including those in industrial park and infrastructure improvements, technology centers, technical assistance, and loans.

In order to maintain the EDD designation, WMSRDC is charged with preparing and updating a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the district. The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development, and is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of a region. Additional information is available on the EDA website, <https://www.eda.gov/ceds/>. Preparation of the WMSRDC CEDS is overseen by a committee of representatives from throughout the WMSRDC region which meets quarterly. The CEDS must be updated at least once every five years.

The first step in the CEDS planning process will be to engage public and private stakeholders in a SWOT analysis to identify the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. “SWOT sessions” will be coordinated through economic development boards and committees in the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana.

Results of the SWOT analyses will help identify internal and external factors of the regional economy. This discovery phase will cascade into discussions about where the region’s economy is going and identifying factors that can ensure the long-term success, viability, and durability of the regional economy. Examples of regional attributes and dynamics that may be uncovered during a





## SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

### Muskegon Port Day

On July 26, 2016 WMSRDC, in partnership with the Muskegon County Port Advisory Committee and the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance, hosted the Port of Muskegon's Port Day. It was a beautiful day with nearly 180 people in attendance. Attendees ranged from local, state, and federal government officials to regional business leaders to representatives from ports around the Great Lakes. The event was held on the USS LST World War II vessel which is now a memorial museum in the Muskegon Harbor.

The purpose of Muskegon's Port Day was to continue building a strong foundation and gather additional momentum for the future development of the Port of Muskegon and a multi-modal regional logistics hub. The efforts around the Muskegon Port are consistent with the Governor's call to support investments in the commercial and recreational harbors in the recently released Michigan Water Strategy.

The event began with a series of speakers that shared the importance of a vibrant Port of Muskegon. The attendees were then invited to board the Port City Princess for a one-hour boat tour of Muskegon's commercial port facilities. During this transition, participants were treated to surprise entertainment by several World War II fighter plane fly-bys arranged by the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce.

The event wrapped up with a reception on the upper deck of the USS LST. Port Day was made possible by several local sponsorships including Consumers Energy as the main event sponsor. Overall, the Port of Muskegon's Port Day was a huge success.



## **\$7.9 Million Grant will Restore & Reconnect Wetlands with the Muskegon River**

A \$7.9 million habitat restoration grant was awarded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Great Lakes Commission Regional Partnership.

WMSRDC will implement the project with a \$7,685,000 subaward. It will restore 53 acres of wetland on a former celery farm in Muskegon County. The project will reconnect the restored natural resources with the Muskegon River.

WMSRDC is currently working with GEI Consultants to complete engineering and design with support from an existing Regional Partnership grant. The County of Muskegon purchased the former celery farm property in 2015, with grant funds from the NOAA/Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Areas of Concern Acquisition Program. The project will meet fisheries management goals of the MDNR Fisheries Division

and restore fish passage and aquatic habitat for a variety of native fish and wildlife in the lower Muskegon River Watershed.

The project involves the removal of farm dikes composed of artificial fill, including broken concrete, foundry fill, soil and tree stumps. The Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute is performing pre-post restoration monitoring for the project. The project is expected to increase tourism and enhance the Muskegon Lake fishery, which is estimated to contribute \$1.3 million annually to the local economy.

News of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funded project received favorable remarks from U.S. Senator Gary Peters, Senator Debbie Stabenow, and U.S. Representative Bill Huizenga. They all expressed the port's importance for Michigan's Great Lakes natural resources and economic health.

## **West Michigan Watershed Collaborative**

The goal of the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative (WMWC) is to identify sustainable funding for the implementation of West Michigan's existing watershed plans. West Michigan watershed groups have identified the need for sustainable implementation funding, in addition to the limited funds available through the competitive grant process. Virtually all West Michigan watersheds have plans in place, and all were developed by existing West Michigan organizations, including watershed groups, conservation districts, planning agencies and universities.

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance provided grant support for the sustainable funding study. The Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC), Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) convened a committee of watershed representatives to provide advice and oversight for the project. Public Sector Consultants (PSC) was selected to complete the funding study. The WMWC met at Grand Rapids Township Hall on June 30, with nineteen people in attendance. Feedback was given on the draft funding study and a regional watershed summary. Watershed representatives cited the benefits of the collaborative and expressed the need to continue meeting and to develop funding strategies based on results of the PSC study. The WMPA will support the development of an implementation strategy as the next phase of the project. PSC will present the funding study's final results to the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative on October 19 at the GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute.

## Summer CEDS Meeting

The summer CEDS meeting was held on August 5 in the City of Newaygo. Economic development representatives from all five counties in the WMSRDC region were in attendance. The group, also known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, gathered over lunch at Gala Gourmet to discuss the schedule of steps needed to revise the region's CEDS document, as well as discuss the latest economic news and events from across the region.

One topic of conversation at the meeting was the kickoff of a USDA Rural Development technical assistance program awarded to the counties of Lake, Mason, Newaygo, and Oceana. The Leaders in Economic Alliance Development (LEAD) Program is an offshoot of the better-known Stronger Economies Together (SET) Program. The LEAD process is designed to build capacity in counties or regions through a short partnership development and planning process that enables local residents to accomplish a goal. A concerted effort will be made to coordinate the LEAD and CEDS activities to cross-pollinate and ultimately enhance economic development activities across the region.

## Update from EDA

On July 27, WMSRDC staff participated in a conference call hosted by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). EDA hosts the quarterly call to share information with economic development districts, such as WMSRDC, on topics like federal grant opportunities, administration, and new initiatives. Among other things, EDA staff introduced a new initiative called Economic Development Integration.

Specifically, EDA has been designated by the Office of Management and Budget as the federal government's official economic development integrator in recognition of the agency's successful management of cross-agency initiatives, and because EDA is the only federal agency whose sole mission is economic development.

The purpose of the Office of Economic Development Integration (OEDI) is to facilitate direct engagement between communities and multiple federal stakeholders to collaboratively solve complex economic issues. With three ongoing EDA investments within the WMSRDC region, there currently exists a strong relationship with EDA. OEDI will connect local communities, projects, and initiatives to economic development opportunities across the federal government through existing relationships with EDA staff.

## Michigan Association of Regions Annual Meeting

This summer, WMSRDC attended the Michigan Association of Regional Councils (MAR) Annual Meeting. This year's meeting was held in downtown Detroit on July 12 and 13. The meeting included representatives from the 14 Michigan Regional Planning and Development Agencies.

Some highlights from the meeting included a presentation regarding downtown development at the District Detroit Preview Center at Comerica Park and an update on the planning and construction of the new Gordie Howe International Bridge. Other meeting highlights included presentations from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Economic Development Administration, and a panel update from the Michigan Township Association, Michigan Association of Counties, and Michigan Municipal Leagues.

## UWP Approved

The Fiscal Year 2017 Unified Work Program (UWP) was approved by the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on August 11. The document outlines the budget and activities for the MPO for the next fiscal year.

The UWP is a federally required document, which is reviewed and approved by the MPO Policy Committee on an annual basis. Some of the key roles for the MPO outlined in the UWP include:

- Development of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) which outlines plans for meeting long-term transportation needs with constrained finances.
- Development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP's primary purpose is to identify programs and projects to be funded with federal aid in accordance with federal law and the regulations of the FHWA during the next three-year period.
- Air Quality Planning through the promotion of voluntary emission reduction activities through marketing and outreach programs.
- Supports and facilitates early and continuing public involvement in the development and review of its plans and programs.
- Provides technical assistance to interested community groups upon request.

## West Michigan Pike

The West Michigan Pike was recently designated as Michigan's newest Scenic Byway. This route follows US-31 from the State's southern border to US-10 near Ludington. Traveling through Berrien, Van Buren, Allegan, Ottawa, Muskegon, Oceana, and Mason Counties, the route is 184 miles long. The main goals of the designation are to promote tourism and the history of the area. The Pike was originally developed between 1911 and 1922 as a way to promote tourism in West Michigan.

As part of its Regional Transportation Program, WMSRDC will be working with the Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and other west Michigan CVB's to create an RFP to select a consultant to complete a Corridor Management Plan. WMSRDC will provide coordination services for public and committee meetings and will act as a fiduciary agency for the committee.

## Michigan's 21st Century Infrastructure Commission

WMSRDC provided input on West Michigan infrastructure needs at the Michigan 21st Century Infrastructure Commission meeting, July 21, 2016 at Grand Valley State University.

Members of the Commission presented on the need for sound and modern infrastructure to ensure the health and well-being of the people of Michigan, the next generation, and the future economy. Executive Order 2016-5 created the 21st Century Infrastructure Commission in March, 2016. The Commission, comprised of state and independent industry experts, is charged with identifying strategic best practices to modernize the state's transportation, water and sewer, energy, and communications infrastructure over the next 30-50 years.

Continued public input to the Michigan 21st Century Infrastructure Commission can be given via the internet at <http://www.miinfrastructurecommission.com/participate-list>. For more information, visit [www.miinfrastructurecommission.com](http://www.miinfrastructurecommission.com).

## Region 6 Public Alert Emergency Notification Systems

The recent West Michigan tornadoes on August 20 provide a great opportunity to examine the different forms of Public Alert Emergency Notifications Systems purchased by WMSRDC for counties in Region 6 using Federal Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) funds.

These Emergency Alert Notification systems are used to inform the public in the event of severe weather, natural disasters, active shooter incidents, terrorist attacks and other emergencies that could potentially threaten lives in West Michigan.

One type of Public Alert Notification System used in Region 6 is a Federal Signal 2001 Series Outdoor Warning Siren or something similar. The Federal Signal 2001 Siren is a high-powered, rotating, uni-directional outdoor warning siren. Outdoor warning sirens are designed to alert people outside to go indoors for shelter and further information. These sirens are not meant to be heard indoors.

There are several more high-tech gadget-related Public Alert Notifications Systems being purchased in Region 6, and the first is called Nixle. Over 8,000 agencies across the United States use Nixle

to notify citizens over multiple communication paths, including voice, short message service (sms or texting), email, and social media. Nixle proactively manages incident communications before, during and after an event to keep residents safe and informed.

A second option being used in Region 6 is called CodeRED. From the single CodeRED interface, authorized users can send Integrated Public Alert and Warning System messages via the Emergency Alert System, Wireless Emergency Alerts, National Weather Service, etc. and through public alert feeds. CodeRED uses a single step, single launch process to provide separate message development boxes for each notification delivery path to create the most effective message possible.

Finally there is an option called Rave Alert, which benefits from complete coverage, ease of use, reliability, and accuracy to alert the public in the event of a local emergency, natural disaster or terrorist incident. Rave Alert uses all communication modes to send emergency alerts – mobile phones, land lines, email, text messaging, social media, IPAWS-OPEN and more.

## WMSRDC Representatives to Conduct a Physical Inventory of Equipment Purchased with HSGP Funds

Two WMSRDC representatives will be traveling more than 1,500 miles to conduct a physical inventory of all equipment with the value of \$5,000 and above purchased with Federal Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) funds for all 13 Region 6 counties. The counties being inventoried are Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa. The inventory took place from August 16 through September 15.

According to the Federal Emergency Management – Department of Homeland Security Regulation 2 CFR Part 200, Section 313, a physical inventory of the property must be taken and the results reconciled at least once every two years. The physical inventory results must be reconciled and submitted to the Michigan State Police – Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP-EMHSD) by September 30.

## WMPA Public Meeting

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) recently completed a call for projects that resulted in a total of 13 project submittals. A Public Engagement and Grant Award meeting will be held on Monday, October 3, 2016 at Grand Valley State University's Seidman Center on 50 Front Avenue, SW in downtown Grand Rapids.

During the meeting attendees will view presentations from the sponsors of the top six submitted projects and vote using electronic voting equipment on the priority of each project. In total, over \$200,000 in grant funding will be distributed.

Please RSVP to [mccrathg@gvmc.org](mailto:mccrathg@gvmc.org).

## Clean Air Action Season

The 2016 ozone forecasting season is coming to a conclusion. As of the writing of this newsletter, West Michigan has seen nine Clean Air Action Days as forecasted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. These days were May 23; June 10, 11, 19, and 25; July 23; and August 4, 10, and 11.

WMSRDC is an active partner in the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC). The WMCAC is a partnership of businesses, academic institutions, government agencies, industry, and non-profit organizations in Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo counties working together to achieve cleaner air in the region through the education and promotion of voluntary emission reduction activities.

Clean Air Action Days are announced when ground level ozone, fine particulate matter, or both, are expected to reach or exceed the "unhealthy for sensitive groups" threshold on the air quality index. Since it is possible to have unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter throughout the year, the Clean Air Action program is now year-round.

## West Michigan Water Systems - Regional, Integrated Planning

WMSRDC applied for a grant from the Great Lakes Protection Fund (GLPF) for project design support for a West Michigan Integrated Water Systems project. The \$150,000 grant would integrate water systems planning and design a project for Great Lakes ecosystem resiliency. A multi-disciplinary project design team will collaborate to produce a work plan in support of a GLPF project implementation proposal that will result in efficient and integrated water systems management and improved water resources and related economic benefits in West Michigan communities, watersheds, and Lake Michigan. The West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance is also providing support for the project. The project design team includes community leaders, natural resources, and water systems managers in the areas of drinking water, wastewater, surface water, and green infrastructure.

WMSRDC is currently designing the restoration of 53 acres of wetland on the Lower Muskegon River, with support from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and a grant through the NOAA/ Great Lakes Commission Regional Partnership. The new funding is for construction of the project in 2017. WMSRDC and project partners will restore wetlands, remove unnatural fill material, perform monitoring and reconnect the river to its former, natural floodplain. For many years, this site was a celery farm owned and operated by the Bosma family. It was recently purchased by Muskegon County under a NOAA acquisition grant.



**SWOT** continued from page 1

SWOT analysis include:

- State of the regional economy
- Regional industry clusters
- External trends and forces
- Workforce considerations
- Spatial efficiencies/sustainability
- Infrastructure needs
- Natural hazards
- Equitable development
- Partners for economic development
- Resources for economic development

An opportunity to participate in the SWOT has also been posted on [wmsrdc.org](http://wmsrdc.org). All are welcome to join in on the fun. Let your perspective be known! See the WMSRDC website for details and instructions. Last but not least, feel free to re-read the first line of this article. If it still doesn't make sense, please give us a call and we'll be happy to explain!

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. WMSRDC is also responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa. WMSRDC is also the planning agency for the metropolitan transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and Northern Ottawa Counties.

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