

***EAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS***  
**2016 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Approved January 22, 2016



**Prepared by:**  
**East Michigan Council of Governments**

*for the*

***U. S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration***

***For inquiries contact:***

**Jane Fitzpatrick, Program Manager**  
East MI Council of Governments  
3144 Davenport Avenue, Ste. 200  
Saginaw, MI 48602  
989-797-0800 - Office  
989-797-0896 - Fax  
jfitzpatrick@emcog.org

***Funding for the preparation of this document has been provided by the U. S. Department of  
Commerce, Economic Development Administration***

---

**CEDS COMMITTEE**

The East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG) Regional Economic Development Team (RED Team) serves as the CEDS Committee and is designed to help guide the CEDS planning process. The makeup of the committee is guided by EDA legislation, C.F.R. 303.6, effective January 20, 2015. The revised guidelines eliminated the membership thresholds but maintains the requirement that the governing bodies must demonstrate that they are broadly representative of the principal economic interests of the region. The RED Team membership during 2015 and the development of the January, 2016 CEDS included the following:

<i>ERINE ADAMS</i> KIRTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE	<i>BRENDA BACHELDER</i> ARENAC COUNTRY EDC   MICHIGAN WORKS!	<i>BLINDA BAKER</i> CITY OF EAST TAWAS
<i>BOB BALZER</i> GLADWIN COUNTY EDC   MICHIGAN WORKS!	<i>MANDI CHASEY</i> OGEMAW COUNTY EDC   MICHIGAN WORKS!	<i>FRANK CLOUTIER</i> SAGINAW CHIPPEWA INDIAN TRIBE
<i>SARA DIMITROFF</i> CITY OF BAY CITY	<i>ZYGGY DWORZECKI</i> TUSCOLA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION	<i>STEVE ERICKSON</i> TUSCOLA COUNTY EDC
<i>TONY FOX</i> SBDC AT MID MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	<i>GARRETT GEER</i> AKT PEERLESS	<i>CHRISTINE GREVE</i> SBDC AT DELTA COLLEGE
<i>MARK HITCHCOCK</i> MSU EXTENSION	<i>CURT HILLMAN</i> CITY OF STANDISH   BUSINESS OWNER	<i>CLINT HOLMES</i> CITY OF BROWN CITY.
<i>GARY KELLAN</i> OSCODA-WURTSMITH AIRPORT	<i>PAT KILLINGBECK</i> BUSINESS OWNER	<i>ADAM KROCZALESKI</i> ARENAC COUNTY COMMISSION
<i>HARRY LEAVER</i> SVSU CENTER FOR BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	<i>KATHY METHNER</i> MIDDLE MICHIGAN DEV. CORP.   MICHIGAN WORKS!	<i>DEXTER MITCHELL</i> BUENA VISTA CHARTER TOWNSHIP
<i>ROBERT MOFFIT</i> CITY OF GLADWIN	<i>WILLIAM MRDEZA</i> CITY OF MOUNT PLEASANT	<i>ROSALIE MYERS</i> ROSCOMMON COUNTY EDC
<i>TIMOTY NIEPORTE</i> ISABELLA COUNTY	<i>JAY O'FARRELL</i> IOSCO COUNTY COMMISSION	<i>HELEN PASAKARNIS</i> EAST TAWAS DDA
<i>RON QUACKENBUSH</i> OGEMAW COUNTY COMMISSION	<i>WILLIAM RHODE</i> EMCOG CHAIR   CITIZEN AT LARGE	<i>ANN RICHARDS</i> OSCODA TOWNSHIP DDA
<i>ROY SPANGLER</i> KIRTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEE	<i>GARY STEFANKO</i> ROSCOMMON CO. COMMISSION	<i>CAROL WETZEL</i> GREATER GRATIOT DEVELOPMENT CORP.

**EMCOG Team for CEDS Development:**

<i>SUE FORTUNE</i> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	<i>JANE FITZPATRICK</i> PROGRAM MANAGER, CEDS COORDINATOR	<i>DAVID ENGELHARDT</i> PROGRAM MANAGER, TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR
<i>BILL ERNAT</i> HAZARDOUS MITIGATION PLANNER		



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**  
**2016 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY BACKGROUND</b>	
The East Michigan Council of Governments Organization .....	1
Purpose of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy .....	2
EMCOG Vision and Goals .....	2
CEDS Background and Process .....	3
Overview of the EMCOG Region .....	3
<b>CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS ANALYSIS</b>	
Demographic Trends .....	6
Employment, Business and Jobs Performance .....	6
Income and Education .....	8
Property Tax Base and Housing .....	9
Summary of Demographic & Economic Trends and Performance .....	39
<b>CHAPTER 3: SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)</b>	
Introduction .....	10
SWOT: Economic Development, Marketing & Sustainability .....	11
SWOT: Entrepreneurship & Innovation .....	12
SWOT: Talent & Workforce Development .....	13
SWOT: Transportation & Infrastructure .....	14
SWOT: Place-Making, Equitable Development & Community Resiliency...	15
<b>CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND ACTION PLAN</b>	
Strategic Plan Hierarchy.....	16
Regional Growth Strategy Vision, Goals, Objectives and Actions:	
Economic Development, Marketing & Sustainability .....	18
Entrepreneurship & Innovation .....	22
Talent & Workforce Development .....	25
Transportation & Infrastructure .....	28
Place-Making, Equitable Development & Community Resiliency .....	32
Implementation of the CEDS .....	37
<b>APPENDIX A: EMCOG 2016 Five Year CEDS Demographic and Economic Trends Analysis</b>	*
<b>APPENDIX B: EMCOG 2016 Five Year CEDS Implementation Matrix</b>	*

\* A separate document available at [www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org)

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY BACKGROUND

### THE EAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS ORGANIZATION

The East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG) is a voluntary state designated regional council officially organized as a Council of Governments. EMCOG is one of 14 such Regional Councils within the State of Michigan. The region consists of 14 counties, 33 cities, 44 villages, 245 townships and 1 Federal Indian Nation. The region is also a U. S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration designated economic Development district (EDD).

Historically within the State of Michigan, the 14-county EMCOG Region has been known as Region 7. The primary purpose of EMCOG is to foster sustainable, diversified and resilient economies in the east central region of Michigan. As a neutral convener the Council also encourages collaboration and cooperation amongst local governments and public/private initiatives within and among other regions both within and outside of the Region. To further this purpose a primary goal of EMCOG is the development of a five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that brings together the 14 counties around a shared vision to set the stage for sustained regional economic growth and resiliency.

In 2012 Michigan's Governor created the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) and established 10 Prosperity Regions covering the entire State. Eight of the fourteen EMCOG counties are now known as East Central Michigan Prosperity Region 5 (PR-5): Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland and Saginaw counties). The six remaining counties in EMCOG Region 7 are included in two other Prosperity Regions that overlap with the EMCOG Region EDD. Iosco, Ogemaw and Roscommon counties are included in PR-3 and Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola counties are included in PR-6. EMCOG is the designated convener of PR-5 Collaborative for RPI-5 and is a member of the collaborative of both PR-3 and PR-6. In 2014-2015 each of the three Prosperity Regions within EMCOG developed a 5-year Prosperity Strategy. In 2016 the three (3) Plans have been incorporated into this coordinated CEDS for the 14 county region.

EMCOG also serves as the regional clearinghouse for federal and state funded programs under Presidential Executive Order A-12372. Through this role, EMCOG enhances intergovernmental coordination and collaboration and encourages opportunities for public comment on projects of inter and intra regional significance.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The purpose of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is multifaceted. The CEDS is designed to provide baseline information, development strategies, and projects for Council members, the CEDS Committee, staff, local government officials, interest groups and citizens from throughout the region, while meeting the requirements set forth by the Economic Development Administration. The CEDS should be viewed as one of many tools in the economic and community development toolbox. The document is not a still life photo of a period in time but will evolve through the year into the next update.

Vision and goals of the East Michigan Council of Government Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

The CEDS is centered on the most promising opportunities for economic resiliency and prosperity in the 14-county EMCOG region. The summary to the right provides an overview of the CEDS strategies, including the vision and major goals to support the vision. Within the plan, the strategies and actions to support each goal are explained in detail.

<b>CEDS SUMMARY:</b>
<b>VISION:</b>
The 14-county EMCOG Region will become a leading destination in the state for new jobs, investment, and innovation by leveraging its corporate, academic and community leaders to grown the regional economy in a sustainable and resilient manner and elevate the prosperity of the region’s citizens.
<b>GOALS:</b>
<b>Goal 1: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING &amp; SUSTAINABILITY</b>
Grow EMCOG’s economy through economic development activities (business retention, expansion, and recruitment) and marketing efforts that enhance the region’s image as a place to do business that supports long term economic resiliency and sustainability of the region.
<b>Goal 2: ENTREPRENEURSHIP &amp; INNOVATION</b>
Leverage EMCOG’s higher education institutions, major corporations, medical complexes, and innovation assets to establish the region as a center for technology-based entrepreneurship and small business growth.
<b>Goal 3: TALENT &amp; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>
Build on the collaboration among EMCOG’s higher education, adult education, secondary education and workforce organizations to create a strong pipeline of talent to support the region’s current and future employers.
<b>Goal 4: TRANSPORTATION &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b>
Capitalize on EMCOG’s existing transportation assets, roads, rail, port and harbor facilities, airports, Aviation MRO, public and private transit) and make strategic investments in regional infrastructure (including broadband) that improve the region’s economic competitiveness and resiliency.
<b>Goal 5: PLACE-MAKING, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT &amp; COMMUNITY RESILIENCY</b>
Embark on local and regional initiatives to strengthen the quality of place in each of EMCOG’s urban and rural communities and reduce the vulnerabilities (economic, environmental and natural threats) to create an attractive environment for existing and future residents.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## CEDS BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

The 2016 Five Year CEDS is a coordinated document that includes the work done by EMCOG in collaboration with the RED Team and other stakeholder groups over the past two years in developing prosperity strategies within the EMCOG designated EDD. The draft CEDS was vetted throughout the Region via email notification and posting on the EMCOG website for 30+ days in order to solicit public input. Comments received during this timeframe were presented and discussed at the January 22, 2016 RED Team meeting and the draft CEDS was approved after consideration and approval of the addition of language to address all of the comments.

## OVERVIEW OF THE EMCOG REGION

Land Area: 8,607 square miles  
Local Governments: 14 counties; 33 cities; 44 villages; 245 townships; and 1 Indian Nation  
2014 Population Estimate: 766,381 (2% reduction from 2010 Census)  
Population Density: 89 persons per square mile  
Median Age: 43.5

As shown in the preceding information EMCOG is a large geographic space with many different economic and community development focuses. Many counties and smaller regions (i.e. prosperity regions, etc.) within the broader EMCOG EDD have established their own marketing brand for tourism and economic development. However, the common connection or “brand” that all 14 counties of the Region share is the Saginaw Bay Watershed and its freshwater coastal wetland. It is the defining geographical feature for the entire Region. As shown in the illustrations below the watershed covers 22 counties including all or part of the fourteen counties in EMCOG. It is the largest watershed in Michigan and the largest contiguous freshwater coastal wetland system in the Country.



## East Michigan Council Of Governments

The watershed makes EMCOG one of the most diverse areas in Michigan. The resources of the watershed support agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, outdoor recreation and habitat for large variety of wildlife, birds and fish. As can be seen in the illustration a large portion of the watershed's 175 inland lakes and 7,000 miles of rivers and streams are within the EMCOG region. The watershed has been the basis on which the economy of the region was built and upon which the economy and quality of life of the region will grow and sustain themselves.

The watershed is the greatest region-wide asset that we have. A healthy watershed plays an integral part in the economic and community sustainability of the region from access to fresh water, to shipping commerce to tourism, to impacts of storm events and to the connection of cities and towns throughout the system. A healthy watershed supports the economy of the region in a number of ways<sup>1</sup>:

- Lowers drinking water treatment costs;
- Avoids expensive restoration activities;
- Sustains revenue-generating recreational and tourism opportunities;
- Minimizes vulnerability and damage from natural disasters;
- Provides critical ecosystem services at a fraction of the cost for engineered services<sup>2</sup>;
- Increases property values;
- Supports jobs;
- Ensures we leave a vibrant economy for generations to come.

The region is rich in not only the natural resources one first thinks of: water, forests and rich agricultural soils, but it is also rich in natural gas and oil reserves, especially in the northern portion of the Region. Large pockets of soft coal range throughout the entire region. Sand and gravel are extracted along the mouth of the Saginaw River. The huge salt veins that cut across the State are heavily concentrated in the Midland area, so essential to the chemical manufacturing, at Dow Chemical. Commercial grade wind is a resource that is being utilized through the establishment of wind farms, including the largest in the State, in the Region.

The region's economic development organizations, led by the MEDC (Michigan Economic Development Corporation) Collaborative Development Council, have done a good job of growing the Region's Michigan economy in recent years. After multiple decades of job losses in the region and in Michigan as a whole, largely driven by the decline in automotive manufacturing, the region and state have turned the corner since the end of the Great Recession. The region's economic development organizations have played an important role in facilitating the region's recent job growth through the core economic development activities of business retention, expansion, and recruitment. These activities must continue and accelerate over the next five years to build on recent successes and to continue the growth in jobs, wages, and capital investment in the regional economy.

The development of a strong entrepreneurial environment is critical for the long-term success of East Central Michigan's economy. Although not well known nationally or even locally, many of the assets

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.epa.gov/healthywatersheds](http://www.epa.gov/healthywatersheds)

<sup>2</sup> These services include water filtration and storage, air filtration, carbon storage, nutrient cycling, soil formation, recreation, food and timber. These ecosystem services provided by healthy watersheds are difficult to replace and most often very expensive to engineer.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

needed to create a robust culture of entrepreneurship are already in place: a network of top-notch higher education institutions, several major corporations that conduct in-house R&D, and several unique entrepreneurship and small business support assets (CMU Research Corporation, the MidMichigan Innovation Center, the region's SBDCs, and the Blue Water Angels).

EMCOG's workforce has a mixture of strengths (a concentration of workers in manufacturing and health care and a major presence of scientists and engineers thanks to Dow Chemical and Dow Corning) and weaknesses (fewer college graduates than the national average and a low presence of professional services workers). However, the region has a major competitive advantage due to the numerous top-notch colleges and universities that, altogether, contain nearly 60,000 students.

Well-functioning transportation networks and other key infrastructure components (like utilities and broadband) are essential for the long-term success of regional economies. EMCOG is fortunate to have a robust transportation network of highways, rail, water-based transport, and airports. It will be important to maintain and fully capitalize on the region's existing infrastructure, but there are also opportunities to make strategic investments in transportation and broadband infrastructure that will enhance the region's economic potential. One of the region's biggest advantages is the significant amount of underutilized capacity across all modes (roads, rail, water, air). The Oscoda Wurtsmith Airport and MBS International Airport, are major assets for the entire 14-county region (and beyond) that can be leveraged for economic development. The region's rail network and the water-based transport facilities along the Saginaw River and Saginaw Bay can also be further capitalized on to support the growth of freight-intensive industries like agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. Many of the region's major manufacturing and agriculture companies, Dow Chemical in particular, have expressed a desire to increase their use of rail and water-based transport.

EMCOG has struggled to retain and attract talented workers, especially young professionals, in recent decades. This struggle is not unique to the region—in fact, it's a national issue. However, the problem is often more challenging in small and mid-size metro areas that have fewer amenities than large metro areas. Nonetheless, EMCOG is well positioned to emerge as a leading destination for talent. The region has a variety of attractive downtown districts in some of the region's smallest communities and largest cities, many of which are experiencing an uptick in investment and development from both public and private sectors. And the region has many companies (large and small) that are committed to enhancing their communities as a way to retain and attract skilled workers.

Chapter 2 provides a summary of where EMCOG is now based on demographic and economic trends analysis.



# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC TRENDS ANALYSIS

Economic and community development are areas of planning that can be tied to all of the other elements in this document. In a fundamental planning context, economic and community development trends are tools that can be used to create jobs, increase wages and tax bases for communities, enhance work-force training opportunities all of which raise the resiliency and sustainability of the residents and businesses in the Region. This chapter summarizes the demographic and economic components of the Region by in four focus areas:

Demographic Trends;  
Employment, Business and Jobs Performance;  
Income and Education, and  
Property Tax Base and Housing.

A detailed analysis is provided in a separate document Appendix A: EMCOG 2016 5-Year CEDS Demographic and Economic Trends Analysis.

The following is a list of highlights of findings of the economic data provided in Appendix A of this CEDS. Each of the following items includes a reference to the table in Appendix A (i.e., Table A-1, Table A-2, etc.) that is the data source for the item.

### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

- The Region has been losing population since the 2000 Census including a 2% loss since the most recent 2010 Census (based on the 2014 estimate) (Table A-1)
- A portion of the population loss is the result of a net loss of about 1,775 due to people moving into and out of the Region from to/from other states and other counties within Michigan. (Table A-2)
- The Region is forecast to continue to lose population of through 2040, but at a slower rate of 0.06% annually than the approximately 0.5% annual loss from 2010 through 2014 (Table A-3)
- The Region's population is getting older. The 2014 median age of 43.5 has increased by 10% since the 2010 Census. (Table A-4)
- The Region's median age increase of 10% from 2010 to 2014 was at a significantly higher rate than for Michigan (1%) and the USA (0.5%). (Table A-4)

### EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESS, AND JOBS PERFORMANCE

- The 24-month (2013-2014) average unemployment rate for both the Region and Michigan is higher than the National rate of 6.8%. (Table A-5)
- The Region's unemployment rate (8.5%) is only slightly higher than the State as a whole (8.1%). (Table A-5)
- The Region's 2013-2014 average unemployment rate was slightly higher than the 2011-2012 rate of 8.3% that was reported in the 2015 CEDS (Table A-5)
- Isabella County was the only county to have an unemployment rate (6.6%) below the National rate of 6.8%. (Table A-5)

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- The highest unemployment rate was in Roscommon County (12.7%) which was nearly 90% above the National unemployment rate of 6.8%. (Table A-5)
- The Region is fairly diverse in the types of businesses within it. Trade, Transportation & Utilities makes up the largest sector at nearly 27% of all businesses. (Table A-6)
- The smallest business sectors, Manufacturing and Natural Resources & Mining make up a combined total of just over 6% of all businesses. (Table A-6)
- Resident Sector businesses (i.e., either stand-alone businesses or businesses headquartered within the Region or State) make up 90% of businesses within the Region. (Table A-7)
- During 2009-2013 (from the end of the “great recession” to the movement into the “recovery”) the Region’s business establishments decreased by 7.5% (Table A-7)
- The Region’s greatest loss of business establishments from 2009 – 2013 was in the Non-Resident Sector at just over 15% (Table A-7)
- In 2013 approximately 89% of the Resident Sector businesses were either Self-Employed or Stage 1 (2-9 employees); a slight reduction from 92% in 2009. (Table A-8)
- Stage 2 businesses (10-99 employees) made up over 10% of resident sector businesses in the Region. (Table A-8)
- The number of Self-Employed businesses in the Region decreased by over 26% from 2009 to 2013. (Table A-8)
- In 2013 over 78% of jobs came from Resident Sector businesses; the least amount of jobs (just over 10%) came from the non-resident sector. (Table A-9)
- The Region’s jobs grew by 5% from 2009 to 2013. Consistent with the data in Table A-9, the overall net increase is attributed to the growth in Resident Sector jobs. (Table A-10)
- In 2013 the majority of Resident Sector jobs in the Region were from either Stage 1 or Stage 2 businesses. (Table A-10)
- From 2009 to 2013 the number of Self-Employed jobs decreased by over 26% in the Region. The greatest growth in jobs during this time frame was for Stage 2 businesses at over 28% job growth. (Table A-10)
- Resident businesses sales grew by nearly 5% from 2009 to 2013 and generated 90% of sales within the Region, compared to 75% in 2009. (Table A-11)
- Non-Commercial sales dropped by over 75% from 2009 to 2013. The overall sales for the Region decreased by 8%. (Table A-11)
- The Self-Employed and Stage 1 businesses (2-9 employees) generated 21% of sales within the Region in 2013, a smaller share of sales than the 30% in 2009. (Table A-12)
- Stage 2 businesses (10-99 employees) generated 35% of all Resident Business sales, the greatest proportion of sales within the Region in 2013. (Table A-12)
- During the 4 year period of 2009 – 2013 the Region’s Self-Employed and Stage 1 businesses experienced declines in sales (- 24.5% and -9.7% respectively) compared to growth in sales for the larger Stage 3 and Stage 4 businesses. (Table A-12)
- From 2006 - 2009 and 2009 - 2013 the following business activity occurred in the Region:
  - Business Expansions and Contractions (downsizing):
    - 2006-2009: For every 2 businesses that expanded, 1 business downsized. (Table A-13)
    - 2009-2013: For every 1 business that expanded, 0.44 businesses downsized. (Table A-13)
    - 2006-2009: For every 1 job created from business expansion 0.5 jobs were lost due to business downsizing. (Table A-15)

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- 2009-2013: For every 1 job created from business expansion 1 job was lost due to business downsizing. (Table A-15)
- Businesses Moving In and Out of the Region:
- 2006–2009: For every 1 business that moved in to the Region 1.1 businesses moved out of the Region. (Table A-14)
  - 2009-2013: For every 1 business that moved in to the Region 1.1 businesses moved out of the Region (Table A-14)
  - 2006 – 2009: For every 1 job created from businesses moving in to the Region, 1 job was lost due to businesses moving out of the Region. (Table A-16)
  - 2009-2013: For every 1 job created from businesses moving into the Region, 1 job was lost due to businesses moving out of the Region. (Table A-16)
- Employment Forecasts: 2010 – 2040:
    - The largest of the Region’s six Employee Occupation Sectors<sup>3</sup> is “Service” followed by “Other”. (Table A-17)
    - Two of the six sectors are forecast to increase in employment from 2010–2040: “Service” by just over 28% followed by “Other” by approximately 9%. (Table A-17)
    - All of the remaining Employee Occupation Sectors: “Manufacturing”, “OBAS”, “Retail” and “Wholesale” are forecast to have reductions in employment in the 2040 forecast. (Tables A-17)

### INCOME AND EDUCATION

- The Region’s 2013 Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) is 76% of the National average. (Table A-18)
- Midland County, at 100.02% of the National average PCPI is the only county that is not below the National average. (Table A-18)
- The PCPI for Gladwin, Iosco and Ogemaw counties is less than two-thirds of the National average. (Table A-18)
- 17% of the Region’s households (2012) are at the poverty level; or 1 out of every 6 households.
- In addition, 25% of the Region’s households are above the poverty level but below the ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) Survival Threshold. (Table A-19)
- A combined total of 42% of the Region’s households are just getting by (combination of poverty and ALICE households) in 2012; or 1 out of every 2.4 households (Table A-19)
- The portion of the Region’s population that is 25 or older with a high school diploma has been grown slightly from nearly 87% in 2011 to nearly 88% in 2013. (Table A-20) There was a small increase in the level of educational attainment at all levels high school diplomas, college degrees) in the Region between the short time frame between 2011 and 2013. (Table A-20)

---

<sup>3</sup> Manufacturing; OBAS (Other Basic: Agriculture/Fish, Forest, Farm, Mining); Retail; Wholesale; Other (Utilities, Construction, Transport/Warehouse, Information, Finance, Real Estate, Government); and Service (includes Education/Schools)

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## PROPERTY TAX BASE AND HOUSING

- Taxable values in the Region have increased by just over 45% over the past 15 years (2000–2014) but the rate has slowed considerably to less than 4% for the final 4 years. (Table A-21)
- The number of housing units in the Region in 2013 is actually less than existed in 2011. This is consistent with the change statewide. (Table A-22)
- The housing vacancy rate for the Region is nearly 22%, about 43% higher than the vacancy rate statewide. (Table A-23)
- The Region has a high seasonal or recreational housing rate of over 14% which is nearly 130% higher than the rate statewide (Table A-23).

Chapter 3 describes EMCOG’s strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats which, along with the data analysis and findings from Chapter 2 were used to develop economic growth strategies and goals and objectives for the Region as shown in Chapter 4.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## CHAPTER 3: SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

### INTRODUCTION

Beyond the general findings and observations a more extensive analysis of EMCOG's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT), which relied heavily on qualitative input and quantitative data analysis was conducted through the 2014-2015 development of regional prosperity plans. These analyses were then reviewed and revised by the EMCOG RED Team for the broader 14 county CEDS.

The SWOT Analysis can be defined as follows:

- **Strengths.** Advantages that can be built on to grow and strengthen the regional economy.
- **Weaknesses.** Liabilities and obstacles to economic development that could limit the region's growth potential.
- **Opportunities.** Assets and positive trends that hold significant potential for increased regional prosperity and the attraction of new businesses, investments, and people.
- **Threats.** Unfavorable external factors and trends that could negatively impact the regional economy.

The SWOT Analysis is organized around five major themes:

1. **Economic Development Marketing & Sustainability.** This includes traditional economic development (business recruitment, expansion, and retention), regional planning & collaboration, and marketing & regional image.
2. **Entrepreneurship & Innovation.** This includes entrepreneurship, innovation, academic research & development, technology-based start-ups, and small business development.
3. **Talent & Workforce Development.** This includes workforce development, adult education, secondary education (K-12), and higher education.
4. **Transportation & Infrastructure.** This includes transportation infrastructure (roads/highways, rail, airports, water-based transport), utilities (electric, gas, water, broadband), and public/private transportation modes.
5. **Place-Making, Equitable Development & Community Resiliency** This includes downtown revitalization, urban vitality, recreation/entertainment amenities and vulnerabilities (economic, environmental and natural threats) within the region.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## SWOT ANALYSIS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING & SUSTAINABILITY

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse existing concentrations in automotive, agriculture, food processing, chemicals, materials, thermoforming, health care, tourism, higher education, construction and energy</li> <li>Well run EDCs that collaborate regularly and focus on business retention, expansion and recruitment</li> <li>Strong business planning and promotion groups such as the SBDC Growth Team Services.</li> <li>Several large private employers</li> <li>Major investments and expansions in business</li> <li>Numerous business/industrial parks with available land</li> <li>Employer Resource Network in the greater Saginaw urban area (Nexteer, Morley,Covenant)</li> <li>Lansing Area Foreign Trade Zone includes Gratiot, Isabella and Clare counties.</li> <li>Many selling points for business recruitment: manufacturing history, workforce strengths, natural resources, quality of life, low costs, great educational institutions, improving state tax climate, diversity, shovel ready sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the region’s economic development organizations are not well funded</li> <li>Regional/state economy has struggled in the last 20-30 years</li> <li>Quantity and quality of lodging options for tourism</li> <li>Tourism not viewed as economic development</li> <li>Limited awareness among the private sector of the CEDS and other regional strategies.</li> <li>No regional marketing organization (an economic development organization or chamber of commerce) exists</li> <li>Barriers cited by economic development prospects: workforce availability (esp. in the rural areas), lack of incentives; urban blight, perception of heavy unionization, airport access, high energy costs, availability of quality buildings.</li> <li>Historic nationwide negative perception of the area</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplier opportunities associated with Dow, Nexteer, and other major private-sector companies in region</li> <li>The timing is right to do things differently and collaborate more regionally</li> <li>Potential target industries include: health care, medical specialties, energy (biomass, solar, wind, battery storage, oil &amp; gas) manufacturing ( chemicals, plastics, materials, automotive, semiconductors, medical devices), higher education, robotics, software&amp; app development, foodie businesses (local craft restaurants, breweries, wineries), organic farming</li> <li>State tax structure will likely become more competitive (eliminating personal property tax)</li> <li>Saginaw County has a large (\$3.0 million+) revolving loan fund that can be used throughout the region for economic development</li> <li>International investors have made and are seeking opportunities for investment in the region</li> <li>Collaboration between Great Lakes Bay Manufacturers Assoc. and Central Michigan Manufacturers Assoc.</li> <li>Regional marketing by Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance</li> <li>Consumers Energy is doing \$1 billion of in-state bid letting</li> <li>The money is out there: government, private, requires hard work to secure it</li> <li>Market sales of businesses to encourage local acquisitions.</li> <li>Building capacities to grown the blue water economy and promote the region’s access to fresh water.</li> <li>Look at the economic opportunities relating to climate change as well as the risks; technology accelerators, , product research and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michigan has one of the highest auto insurance rates in the US because of the unlimited cap on catastrophic coverage</li> <li>The sheer number of townships, municipalities, counties, transit agencies, and other governmental entities makes regional collaboration difficult</li> <li>Saginaw County (and City of Saginaw especially) is viewed in a negative light by many people in the region, despite having many of the region’s most important cultural assets</li> <li>Potential for Regional Strategy to be viewed as “forced collaboration”</li> <li>Reliance on a handful of large private-sector employers (Dow Chemical, Dow Corning, Nexteer)</li> <li>High prices for farm land</li> <li>Assumption that government is responsible for making change happen</li> <li>Financial resources</li> <li>Lack of effective communication</li> <li>Loss of businesses due to on line sales.</li> <li>Loss of full time residents in northern towns results in a shift to a seasonal economy; not enough support for year round businesses which are closing their doors</li> </ul>

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## SWOT ANALYSIS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous spin-offs from Dow Chemical</li> <li>CMU’s entrepreneurship program is a major asset</li> <li>CMU New venture Competition supports entrepreneurship across the region</li> <li>CMU Research Corp. and MidMichigan Innovation Center are nationally recognized resources for entrepreneurs</li> <li>Blue Water Angels Network in Midland is responsible for 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the state’s total angel investments</li> <li>Numerous small business training and counseling assets (community colleges, SBDCs)</li> <li>Sprout Lab Ag and Co Starters entrepreneurship partnership between EMCOG, SVSU and GVSU</li> <li>Northwood University International Auto Show</li> <li>Some of the region’s major employers have a strong focus on research, development and innovation.</li> <li>High level of enthusiasm for entrepreneurial activities from community leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited access to start-up capital</li> <li>Lack of awareness of entrepreneurial resources and programs in the region</li> <li>Many entrepreneurs leave Michigan to take advantage of the entrepreneurial networks of other metropolitan regions (Chicago, West Coast, East Coast, Texas)</li> <li>Overwhelming number of entrepreneurs and start-ups are focused on a single product, rather than disruptive technologies or systems design (software, biotech).</li> <li>The region has the image and reputation as a corporate center rather than a location for start-ups</li> <li>Entrepreneurship is not celebrated enough in the region’s communities</li> <li>New ideas/people aren’t always embraced: “local” vs “outsiders”</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place more emphasis on agriculture-related entrepreneurship opportunities through kitchen incubators, farmers markets, and other efforts</li> <li>Potential for additional SBIR/STTR/STIF funding</li> <li>Build on the software and information technology capability hidden in some of the region’s large employers (Dow, Morley, Nexteer)</li> <li>Leverage Michigan State University’s new Midland Research Institute for Value Chain Creation</li> <li>Attract programs and research to the region from other top schools (MSU and U of M in particular)</li> <li>Potential for additional R&amp;D in the region: biotech, chemicals, electronics, advanced materials, plastics, automotive, battery technology, alternative energy</li> <li>Expand on the tech transfer at CMU and SVSU</li> <li>Potential linkages between chemical industry, precision manufacturing, plastics, and health care</li> <li>Potential for additional incubators in the region</li> <li>Expose more students to corporate R&amp;D</li> <li>Leverage SVSU Independent Testing Lab</li> <li>Look at the economic opportunities relating to climate change as well as the risks: green infrastructure job training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued loss of entrepreneurs to other areas</li> <li>Limited access to capital could prevent growth of start-up companies or expansion of existing businesses</li> <li>Some engineering functions in automotive sector many need to take place elsewhere to access the necessary talent (Silicon Valley, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, Austin, and other high-tech regions)</li> <li>The MidMichigan Innovation Center relies heavily on funding from Dow Chemical</li> <li>New structure of MSU Extension has limited local expo – training opportunities.</li> </ul>

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## SWOT ANALYSIS: TALENT & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outstanding higher education institutions in the region: CMU, SVSU, Alma College, Northwood University, Davenport University, Delta College, Mid-Michigan Community College, Kirtland Community College, Baker College</li> <li>Workforce strengths: skilled trades, manufacturing, health care, chemical industry (many PhD-level scientists), Midwest work ethic</li> <li>Numerous Intermediate school district tech and or career centers</li> <li>Bay Area Chamber partnership with Bay-Arenac ISD for co-op and internship program</li> <li>Dow Foundation of \$5.0 million to SVSU; \$5.0 million to Alma College; and \$4.0 million to Delta College for STEM education</li> <li>The region’s workforce boards are employer driven</li> <li>Increasing collaboration among region’s workforce boards</li> <li>Adult education funding at state level allows for re-training</li> <li>Strong partnerships between major employers and community colleges (Delta, KCC, Baker College and MMCC)</li> <li>Merrill Institute offers a welding training program</li> <li>Fast-Start (Delta) and Rapid Response (MMCC) programs</li> <li>CTE Millage in Gratiot-Isabella RESD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many of the region’s school districts struggle to sustain themselves; a steady and long term decline in the number of students</li> <li>High percentage of adults without a high school diploma in some portions of the region.</li> <li>Aging population; decreasing population in the 25-44 age group</li> <li>Difficulty in finding a drug free skilled workforce</li> <li>Difficulty attracting talented workers</li> <li>High level of disabled workers</li> <li>Seasonal nature of work; acceptance and desirability of winter unemployment among workforce</li> <li>Many segments of the workforce are lacking in soft skills, especially manufacturing and low-skill positions</li> <li>Specific workforce shortages in several occupational categories</li> <li>Low K-12 math scores</li> <li>Large population of unserved adults in need of adult education</li> <li>Loose alumni ties of area universities (still function like a “commuter school” for alumni)</li> <li>No strategy to inform high school students of technical jobs that do not require a degree</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for much more collaboration among region’s colleges and universities</li> <li>Community Ventures program</li> <li>Many jobs currently going unfilled</li> <li>High demand for STEM jobs (at Dow Chemical and Dow Corning especially)</li> <li>Potential for a career and tech training center (K-12) that serves multiple counties</li> <li>Region’s rural counties could play a more active role in filling the workforce needs of Dow Chemical and other large employers</li> <li>Fast Start (Delta) and Rapid Response (MMCC) programs are replicable models that could apply to many industries</li> <li>Increase the amount of internships and work co-op programs throughout the region</li> <li>Tap into the region’s seasoned workforce (age 50+) especially early retirees, for start-ups, retraining, and mentoring of younger workers and business owners</li> <li>Continue improving the region’s educational attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle-skills workforce gaps, especially in skilled trades (electricians, journeymen, systems engineers, HVAC)</li> <li>Low levels of interest from younger generations in skilled trades and manufacturing</li> <li>Large group of Baby Boomers soon entering retirement age</li> <li>Continued loss of young adults, especially college graduates</li> <li>Technology: robotics in manufacturing; retail competing against online sales</li> <li>Redundancy: job development, OSHA and MIOSHA</li> <li>Labor union stigma</li> <li>Concerns that employees are paying insufficient wages and are underestimating the cost of turnover and the loss of quality work due to low wages</li> </ul>



# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## SWOT ANALYSIS: TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Region’s strategic location and good interstate and highway system offers easy access to Detroit metro and northern Michigan</li> <li>Major wind energy production in multiple counties; numerous dams and electric power plants.</li> <li>Public water and sewer systems in most larger communities ( Bay City is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest municipal utility in Michigan)</li> <li>Fiber optic network; expanding high speed internet access</li> <li>MBS Airport (new terminal) and the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport large aircraft maintenance facilities are major assets for the region as are the numerous other general aviation airports that are key assets for some companies</li> <li>Marinas</li> <li>No traffic congestion issues</li> <li>Lake Huron, Saginaw Bay, and the Saginaw River are major assets</li> <li>Port of Bay City is second largest port in Michigan for tonnage shipments</li> <li>Water Supply: availability of capacity via water lines and lake intake</li> <li>Water resources available for industrial and food processing purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Class 1 railroads in region (nearest Class 1 railroads are to the south in Flint and Lansing); many existing rail lines are slow (10-15 mph)</li> <li>Region’s “peninsular” geography makes it less supportive of a major logistics &amp; distribution industry and contributes to the expense of shipping freight</li> <li>Inadequate broadband infrastructure and cellular service in some rural areas</li> <li>Very few transit hubs; the transit system is not connected for both residents and tourists</li> <li>Rails to trails program has reduced freight rail capacity</li> <li>Highway 127 has a missing section of 4-lane freeway in Gratiot County; no expressways in some areas of the region.</li> <li>Prices are generally higher at MBS International Airport than in Flint (Bishop International Airport)</li> <li>Bishop Airport has much more freight cargo than MBS</li> <li>A perception that roads and signage leading to MBS are inadequate</li> <li>Michigan’s relatively high electric utility rates (compared to other Midwestern states)</li> <li>Water rates are increasing</li> <li>Aging water and sewage treatment infrastructure</li> <li>The need for services for transportation, education, training, economic development and infrastructure improvements, far outstrips available funds.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Airports and Ports have capacity to expand operations</li> <li>Potential for additional direct flights from MBS: Denver, Houston, New York, DC</li> <li>Complete section of US Highway 127 north of Lansing, between St. Johns and Ithaca (Northern Clinton County and southern Gratiot County)</li> <li>Dow Chemical would like to use more rail to ship products/materials</li> <li>Potential for an inter-modal (truck to rail) facility in region</li> <li>Expansion of region’s freight rail infrastructure would spur additional growth in agriculture &amp; other industries</li> <li>RACER site in Buena Vista Charter Township could be a place for an intermodal facility.</li> <li>Expand public transportation hours to include evenings to support adult education and college students</li> <li>Combine individual transit agencies to pool resources and provide improved service</li> <li>Increase collaboration among the private port operators in Saginaw Bay and Saginaw River</li> <li>Standish grain elevator creates new transport options for agriculture industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State policy banning ballast from being dumped into the Great Lakes puts water-based transport at a disadvantage (compared to surrounding states)</li> <li>Public transportation does not adequately serve the region’s workforce and adult education needs</li> <li>Transportation (to/from work &amp; School) is also a big challenge for high school and college students</li> <li>Roads are generally in poor condition in the region (and in Michigan as a whole) and the current/expected funding for maintenance is far less than what is needed</li> <li>Infrastructure costs</li> <li>Continued pressure from outside the region and state to utilize Great Lakes water resources</li> <li>Cyber security</li> </ul>

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## SWOT ANALYSIS: PLACE-MAKING, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

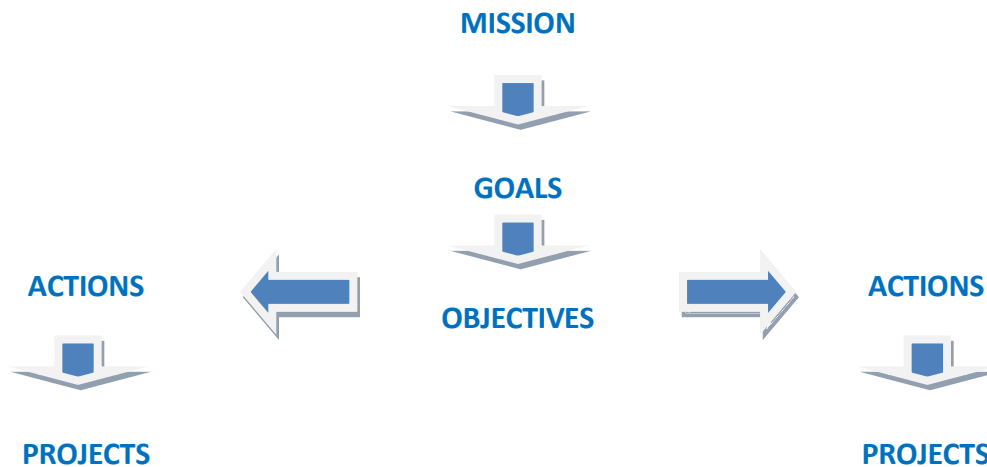
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low cost of living throughout the region</li> <li>• Diversity of living options (urban, suburban, rural); strong downtown districts with a sense of place; urban revitalization</li> <li>• Wide range of tourism/local residents options for 4 seasons of outdoor recreation; wide range of community events</li> <li>• Lots of second homes in the northern counties of the region; baby boomer retirement area.</li> <li>• Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe Casinos serve as amenities and resources for local governments.</li> <li>• Major companies and chambers of commerce have young professionals groups.</li> <li>• High quality inland lakes and rivers; clean water for swimming and recreation, blue ribbon trout streams; nationally recognized walleye fishing, blue-ways trails</li> <li>• Wide open spaces with aesthetically pleasing vistas, Heritage routes</li> <li>• Slower pace of life and low traffic congestion, safe communities, a good place to raise families.</li> <li>• Room for expansion and growth</li> <li>• Regional/local hospitals</li> <li>• Major companies and Colleges/Universities support community development</li> <li>• Emergency management staff in place with approved hazardous mitigation Plan.</li> <li>• Existence of regional collaborations of stakeholders from public, private, education and non-profit sectors that meet on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stagnant population growth or population decline in most of the region's counties; young talent is leaving.</li> <li>• High levels of poverty in some of the region's urban areas and rural areas.</li> <li>• Declining tax base; Depressed home values and home sales in parts of the region.</li> <li>• Large land area with sparse population = isolation</li> <li>• Lessor engagement of younger generation in the community</li> <li>• Difficult to recruit talent for professional jobs, especially from outside of the Midwest</li> <li>• The region does not have any major metro areas; lack of "fun" activities in a downtown or urban environment.</li> <li>• Limited amount of jobs to attract/retain young adults from larger cities</li> <li>• Recreational trails are not connected</li> <li>• Bad press for Michigan</li> <li>• 42% of households in the Region are at either the poverty or ALICE income level.</li> <li>• Employment centers and affordable housing availability are not linked</li> <li>• Few transportation options for getting to and from work and classes</li> <li>• Lack of affordable quality child care options</li> <li>• Low staffing levels for public safety personnel.</li> <li>• Lack of funding for hazardous mitigation, pre-mitigation action grants</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive momentum and major assets in the greater metropolitan region as well as region-wide: CMU College of Medicine, Delta College (new downtown campus), Dow Events Center, Children's Zoo, VA Hospital, new downtown housing, Frankenmuth tourism; Uptown in Bay City</li> <li>• Capitalize on the growing community of retirees and second home-owners in northern part of region (especially Gladwin County)</li> <li>• Conduct survey of the region's young adults to identify strengths and gaps in the region's quality-of-life amenities</li> <li>• Continue downtown revitalization across region</li> <li>• Expand young professionals groups into the rural portions of the region</li> <li>• Align arts/culture efforts with economic development</li> <li>• Walkable communities waterfront, tourism/shoreline; historical downtowns, parks and recreation as a destination</li> <li>• Promote ongoing place-making initiatives as a business attraction/outside investment tool.</li> <li>• Gaming Industry expansion to family oriented events; not just gaming activities</li> <li>• Public education and planning strategies regarding the public and private costs of developing in sensitive areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited amount of professional staff dedicated to urban planning, zoning and community development for place-making, equitable development and community resiliency.</li> <li>• Perceptions/reality of high crime rates in Saginaw; blighted city stigma</li> <li>• Loss of young adults to larger metro areas (Chicago, Detroit, New York, others)</li> <li>• Depressed home values in parts of the region make home sales and residential mobility difficult</li> <li>• Canadian nuclear waste storage by Lake Huron</li> <li>• Proposed energy legislation could allow other companies to come into Michigan with possibility of residents being on the hook for any contamination clean-up</li> <li>• A large area of the region is under-served for medical services</li> <li>• Ever changing weather patterns</li> <li>• Wildfires</li> <li>• Harmful &amp; nuisance alga blooms and invasive species; changing lake levels.</li> </ul>

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND ACTION PLAN

This strategic plan will guide the economic development efforts for the East Michigan Council of Government (EMCOG) over the next five years. This plan presents a shared regional vision, a set of goals, and specific objectives and actions to accelerate the region's economic success. This document provides a roadmap for EMCOG's economic development program, but the ultimate success of the recommendations will depend on the level of commitment from the region's business and community leaders in executing the strategies laid out in this plan. Specific projects are not included in the strategic plan. Specific projects will be identified through the implementation of the action items that carry forward the strategies within the plan. These projects will be included in the annual assessment of the CEDS.

### Strategic Plan Hierarchy



The plan is structured around a single vision and five goals. This framework is presented below:

#### **Vision**

*The 14-county EMCOG region will become a leading destination in the state for new jobs, investment, and innovation by leveraging its corporate, academic, and community leaders to grow the regional economy and elevate the prosperity of the region's citizens.*

#### **Goals**

The following five goals support the vision statement and form the framework for the strategic plan.

**Goal 1. Economic Development, Marketing & Sustainability:** Grow EMCOG's economy through economic development activities (business retention, expansion, and recruitment) and marketing efforts that enhance the region's image as a place to do business that supports long term economic resiliency and sustainability of the region.

**Goal 2. Entrepreneurship & Innovation:** Leverage EMCOG's higher education institutions, major corporations, medical complexes, and innovation assets to establish the region as a center for technology-based entrepreneurship and small business growth.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

**Goal 3. Talent & Workforce Development:** Build on the collaboration among EMCOG’s higher education, adult education, secondary education , and workforce development organizations to create a strong pipeline of talent to support the region’s current and future employers.

**Goal 4. Transportation & Infrastructure:** Capitalize on EMCOG’s existing transportation assets and modes (roads, rail, port and harbor facilities, airports, aviation MRO services, public and private transit providers) and make strategic investments in regional infrastructure (including broadband) that improve the region’s economic competitiveness and resiliency.

**Goal 5. Place-Making, Equitable Development & Community Resiliency:** Embark on local and regional initiatives to strengthen the quality of place in each of EMCOG’s urban and rural communities and reduce the vulnerabilities (economic, environmental and natural threats) to create an attractive environment for existing and future residents.

The Goals are not prioritized. Each of the goals is integral to the sustainability and growth of the Region. The Objectives for each Goal on the following pages are listed in order of priority. The priority rankings of the objective within each of the five Goals, were determined by the Regional Economic Development (RED) Team.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## **Goal 1. Economic Development, Marketing & Sustainability**

*Grow EMCOG's economy through economic development activities (business retention, expansion, and recruitment) and marketing efforts that enhance the region's image as a place to do business that supports long term economic resiliency and sustainability of the region.*

The three economic development organizations, led by the MEDC (Michigan Economic Development Corporation) Collaborative Development Council which are located either entirely (East Central Michigan region 5) or partially (Northeast Region 3 and East Michigan Region 6) in the 14 county EMCOG region have done a commendable job of working to grow EMCOG's economy in recent years. After multiple decades of job losses in the region and in Michigan as a whole, largely driven by the decline in automotive manufacturing and the closing of the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Air Force Base, the region and state have turned the corner since the end of the Great Recession. The region's economic development organizations have played an important role in facilitating the region's recent job growth through the core economic development activities of business retention, expansion, and recruitment. These activities must continue and accelerate over the next five years to build on recent successes and to continue the growth in jobs, wages, and capital investment in the regional economy.

New programs and efforts will also be needed to accelerate the region's economic success. Some of the biggest opportunities for economic development will come from both internal efforts (internal marketing efforts to promote collaboration within the region and the inclusion of more groups in economic development) and external efforts (marketing the region on the national stage and developing formal efforts to develop international business opportunities). Tourism and the leveraging of the natural and cultural assets of the region are part of the economic opportunity to establish the area as a four-season destination point and a sustainable marketing tool for attracting business.

## **OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS**

**Objective 1** Increase the level of funding for economic development activities across the 14 county Region.

- 1.a** Explore ways to establish a pool of grant funds that economic development organizations within the region could apply for to advance economic development initiatives. This would not be a redistribution of existing funding for economic development organizations and programs in the region; instead, it would be aimed at increasing the overall resources for economic development initiatives in the 14-county region.
- 1.b** Catalog existing efforts that are not adequately funded, as well as new initiatives that should be funded.
- 1.c** Launch a formal fund raising campaign to build this pool of resources from the public sector, private sector, and foundations. Consider hiring a fundraising consultant to execute the campaign.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

**Objective 2** Initiate a major regional internal marketing campaign promoting EMCOG as a unified region.

- 2.a** Promote shared threads among the region's 14 counties, highlighting data that demonstrate their connectedness (e.g., commuting patterns, retail spending, higher education facilities, and entertainment and recreation).
- 2.b** Encourage community leaders to talk about the region as a whole. Consider using public service announcements to highlight regional activities and information.
- 2.c** Communicate the economic development goals of the 14-county region and encourage every citizen to participate and support growing the local economy.
- 2.d** As part of internal marketing efforts, engage the region's service industry – especially restaurant and hotel staff – and partner with the region's chambers of commerce to develop training sessions for service industry workers so that they can become better salespeople for EMCOG, projecting a positive image to residents and visitors alike.

**Objective 3** Market and promote the 14-county region as a great place to do business on the national stage.

- 3.a** Expand existing marketing and business promotion efforts taking place in individual counties within the region to include references of the 14-county region as a whole including access to fresh water throughout the region's watershed.
- 3.b** Identify and develop relationships with key decision makers (business executives, site consultants, and commercial real estate brokers) to promote the region as a place for business recruitment/expansion.
- 3.c** Market to the identified industry cluster audiences by utilizing specific media channels that serve those industries at national and international conferences and by directly contacting decision makers and thought leaders in those industries.
- 3.d** EMCOG should continue to work closely with the three MEDC Collaboratives within the region and state-level economic development officials to pursue new economic development opportunities for the region.

**Objective 4** Provide for greater efficiencies and collaboration in economic development efforts across the region by establishing a regional research and data resource for economic development organizations, workforce development groups, and local governments.

- 4.a** Establish a centralized research resource within EMCOG for the 14 county region's economic development efforts [cities and economic development organizations (EDOs)]. The council can prepare regularly updated economic and demographic data sets for economic development efforts across the region thereby freeing up resources of each EDO/city so they can focus more on business recruitment and retention/expansion activities.
- 4.b** EMCOG should provide a questionnaire concerning the type of research utilized by EDOs and cities to identify common areas where it could provide support with a dedicated research analyst and online resources.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

**Objective 5** Enhance the regional economy through promotion of the natural and cultural resources of its blue water economy for industry and tourism.

- 5.a** Work with the Visitors and Convention Bureaus, MDNR, MEDC and regional/local partners to establish unique natural or cultural resource brands for the region and establish the region as a four seasons travel experience.
- 5.b** Increase the opportunities for both visitors and residents to experience the natural and cultural resources within the region through diverse, adaptable and accessible outdoor recreation activities.
- 5.c.** Promote sustainable state forest products industries in the region that support communities by providing jobs, products and diverse and resilient forests.
- 5.d.** Support sustainable fisheries and wildlife-based industries that promote the region's world-class fishing and wildlife opportunities and provide sustained economic growth to the regional economy.
- 5.e.** Work with stakeholders to develop and implement a designated water trail system for inland waterways and along the coastal areas of the region.
- 5.f.** Collaborate with MDNR in the implementation of the *Managed Public Land Strategy* for the conservation, use and management of public lands within the region to ensure that the strategies meet the needs of the regional and local economies to provide jobs, grow the tourism economy and protect the region's woods, waters, wildlife and other natural and cultural assets (see [www.michigan.gov/dnrlandstrategy](http://www.michigan.gov/dnrlandstrategy) for details of the MDNR plan).

**Objective 6** Engage a broad cross-section of organizations in the region's economic development & marketing efforts. Every organization in the region, whether non-profit, public, or private should be aware of the overall economic development strategies in the region and consider how they might contribute to their community's economic success.

- 6.a** The Regional Economic Development (RED) Team for the 14-county region could lead this effort.
- 6.b** Set up regular meetings between the region's economic development organizations, Small Business Development Centers and other groups to enhance shared awareness of economic development activities and to get on the same page with regional marketing efforts. In addition to the region's economic development organizations, other groups that should be engaged include utility providers, railroad companies, community foundations, chambers of commerce and convention & visitors bureaus.
- 6.c.** Encourage as much collaborative across the region as possible between organizations that have similar missions, including mergers or joint meetings, if appropriate. For example, consider building a stronger alliance between the Great Lakes Bay Manufacturers Association and the Central Michigan Manufacturers Association.

**Objective 7** Encourage coordination and collaboration within the region that ensures that common water resource and adjacent land resources are managed in such a way as to protect water resources while facilitating waterway-appropriate public use, commercial and amenity development and recreation.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- 7.a** Emphasize the region's water resources in regional and community planning efforts to provide appropriate, sustainable protection and to fully leverage community-based economic opportunities.
- 7.b** Collaborate with MDEQ, MDNR, public and private entities on efforts of river and stream restorations and dam removals to create aquatic system connectivity and restore stream stability throughout the region.

**Objective 8** Expand international relationships & foreign investment in the 14-county region by establishing a formal effort to target and develop international business opportunities.

- 8.a** Utilize the strength of the region's higher education institutions and workforce training efforts as a resource to build international relationships. Utilize and expand international programs and campuses that serve international students, like the Saginaw Valley State University sister school partnership with Mng Chuan University from Taiwan.
- 8.b** Leverage the existing concentration of international students at regional higher education institutions. Evaluate where students are coming from and establish a relationship with those regions. Build a database of international alumni and communicate with them regularly so they stay connected to the region after they return to their home country. Utilize international students as interns to assist in the development of these efforts.
- 8.c.** Market and promote the services of the region's workforce training expertise in specific industry clusters to educational institutions in other countries.
- 8.d.** Assist large corporations in the region with the creation of a welcome program for international employees. This program could include receptions and networking opportunities for international employees, community information and marketing material in foreign languages, and other transitional resources and support.
- 8.e.** Build on the region's relationships with Canada that might have an interest in expanding into Michigan. Also, continue to look for ways that companies in their region can develop focused marketing efforts to promote their products/services to Canadian customers.



# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## Goal 2. Entrepreneurship & Innovation

*Leverage EMCOG's higher education institutions, major corporations, medical complexes, and innovation assets to establish the region as a center for technology-based entrepreneurship and small business growth.*

The development of a strong entrepreneurial environment is critical for the long-term success of EMCOG's economy. Although not well known nationally or even locally, many of the assets needed to create a robust culture of entrepreneurship are already in place: a network of top-notch higher education institutions, several major corporations that conduct in-house R&D, and several unique entrepreneurship and small business support assets (including CMU Research Corporation, the MidMichigan Innovation Center, the region's SBDCs, and the Blue Water Angels).

Michigan also has two global research universities (Michigan State University and the University of Michigan) with high levels of R&D investment. In fact, the University of Michigan ranked second in the US with more than \$1.3 billion in academic R&D expenditures in 2012. There is an opportunity to connect the research and innovation taking place in these two institutions with R&D activities being pursued by companies in the region.

### OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

**Objective 1** Create a regional entrepreneurship and start-up eco-system map indicating the various programs, initiatives, and assets that are in place to drive forward new business activity.

- 1.a** Create an online map to help the entrepreneurs, start-ups and investors to navigate the region's existing entrepreneurship and innovation resources and network.
- 1.b** The eco-system map can serve as a tool to improve awareness of the region to outsiders sending the message that the EMCOG Region is a great place to launch a new enterprise or invest in a new venture.
- 1.c.** The map can also be used to educate the local community about the spirit of entrepreneurship that exists and the start-up activity that is taking place. Because so many people within the region are unaware of existing entrepreneurship and innovation assets, the map can serve as a promotion piece to get the community thinking of itself as a hotbed for entrepreneurs.

**Objective 2** Improve access to start-up capital for local entrepreneurs by fully utilizing existing investment sources within the region and developing stronger ties to angel and venture capital investors outside of the region.

- 2.a** Bring in venture capital and angel investors from major markets along the East Coast (Boston, New York, DC) and the Midwest (Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis) to showcase the region's potential as a hub for start-ups and entrepreneurs. Partner with local businesses (law firms, accounting firms, and other professional services businesses) to sponsor and fund this effort. (See description of the Venture Investment & partnering [VIP] Forum example from the Washington Biotechnology & Biochemical Association in the RPI-5 Strategy at [www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org))
- 2.b** Work with the region's SBDCs (Small Business Development Centers) to assist local entrepreneurs with tapping into federal funding sources by applying for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants, the Small Business Technology

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

Transfer program (STTR), and other programs available to entrepreneurs.

- 2.c. Leverage the alumni networks at CMU, SVSU, Alma College, Northwood University, Baker College, Davenport University and ultimately other colleges and universities to communicate with successful alumni who are entrepreneurs, looking to invest in or return to the region.

**Objective 3** Build on the region's entrepreneurship & innovation assets to support business growth across the region.

- 3.a. Market and promote CMU's New Venture Competition, which is a major asset for the region and the state of Michigan as a whole. Utilize the competition's success to elevate the region's image as a great place for start-ups and entrepreneurs.
- 3.b. The CMU Research Corporation's crowdsourcing funding model is a great way to support early-stage companies and could be replicated in other programs across the region.
- 3.c. Building on CMU's success, encourage all of the region's higher education institutions to expand their focus on entrepreneurship as a way to retain graduates in the region.
- 3.d. Work with the MidMichigan Innovation Center to explore the potential for spin-off companies and technologies from Dow Chemical and other major corporations in the region.
- 3.e. Work with the region's chambers of commerce and business associations to enhance networking opportunities available for entrepreneurs, investors, and small business owners.

**Objective 4** Work with the region's major employers and medical complexes to attract R&D spending from other Michigan universities.

- 4.a. Build on the relationships between major corporations in the EMCOG region (Dow Chemical, Nexteer and others) and Michigan's two major research institutions (Michigan State University and University of Michigan) to attract additional R&D investments into the region.
- 4.b. Leverage the Midland Research Institute for Value Chain Creation to expand the amount of R&D taking place in Midland and the surrounding area. Support the ongoing development of closer ties between MSU and Dow Chemical.
- 4.c. Host key researchers and leadership from the University of Michigan to showcase some of the potential collaborative research opportunities with the region's major corporations. Use regional businesses to sponsor/fund this event.
- 4.d. Leverage the new CMU School of Medicine to expand opportunities for life sciences R&D associated with the region's large medical complexes.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

**Objective 5** Work with CMU and SVSU to support more R&D at each institution, especially research that benefits or leverages the region's existing companies.

- 5.a** Leverage CMU's Institute for Great Lakes Research to attract additional R&D into the region associated with wetlands, fisheries, water ecology, GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and related fields. Explore the potential to collaborate with the private sector to fund this type of research.
- 5.b** Support CMU's plans to grow the university's R&D budget from \$11 million in 2012 to \$25 million by 2018.
- 5.c.** Consider establishing shared space for additional 3-D printers and other physical and chemical testing equipment within SVSU's Center for Business and Economic Development. This could be a regional asset that supports R&D and prototyping needs of local companies in the 14-county region.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## Goal 3. Talent & Workforce Development

*Build on the collaboration among EMCOG's higher education, adult education, secondary education, and workforce development organizations to create a strong pipeline of talent to support the region's current and future employers.*

Access to a skilled workforce is the most important factor affecting the success of businesses in today's economy. Demographic trends at the national level will lead to a shrinking in the working-age population over the next couple decades. If economic and job growth continue, even at a minimal rate, employers will continue to have difficulties in finding skilled workers. Thus, one of the most urgent priorities for communities is to develop a pipeline of talent to support the growth of existing and future employers. Communities with an educated and skilled population have a big advantage in the competitive landscape of economic development, because employers are increasingly drawn to areas with concentrations of skilled workers.

EMCOG's workforce has a mixture of strengths (a concentration of workers in manufacturing and health care and a major presence of scientists and engineers thanks to Dow Chemical and Dow Corning) and weaknesses (fewer college graduates than the national average and a low presence of professional services workers). However, the region has a major competitive advantage due to the numerous top-notch colleges and universities that, altogether, contain about 60,000 students. One of the most important outcomes of this strategic plan will be a greater emphasis on leveraging the region's higher education institutions for economic development and retaining graduates within the region as part of the workforce.

### OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

**Objective 1** Improve the workforce readiness of the region's K-12 students and adult population by increasing the number of internships, apprenticeships, work co-op programs, and other initiatives.

- 1.a** Expand the number of internships and work co-op programs for high school and college students to expose the region's young talent to employment opportunities in the region's businesses, government entities, and, for non-profit organizations. Utilize Alma College's leading internship programs as a model.
- 1.b** Work with MCAMP (Michigan Communities Association of Mapping Professionals) to expand educational opportunities associated with GIS (Geographic Information Systems) throughout the region. Leverage the GRACE (GIS Resources and Applications for Career Education) Project, a four-year project sponsored by the National Science Foundation and developed by Eastern Michigan University for this purpose (see a description of the GRACE Project in the RPI-5 Strategy at [www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org))
- 1.c** Develop short-term and long-term training programs, early middle college and dual enrollment programs, internships, apprenticeships, and work co-op programs for adult students, ensuring that these programs are designed to lead to employment opportunities.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- Objective 2** Conduct a talent analysis to quantify and document the region’s labor talent so that economic developers may more successfully market the region and attract businesses and employers.
- 2.a** Profile the current and potential labor force of the region by analyzing various resources and data bases.
  - 2.b** Profile the college graduates and certification program graduates of the region.
  - 2.c** Create a profile benchmark dashboard that can be updated on an annual basis.
- Objective 3** Encourage collaboration among the region’s civic leadership programs to bring the region’s young leaders together to discuss regional issues and challenges.
- 3.a** Tap into Alma College’s Responsible Leadership Institute to serve as a convening organization to bring tougher civic leadership efforts across the region.
- Objective 4** Build on the success of Delta College’s Fast Track program, Kirtland Community College’s Fast Track program and Mid Michigan Community College’s Rapid Response and Plastics Technology programs to support “just in time” workforce training for the region’s employers. (See a description of the Delta College Fast Track Program and the MMCC Plastics Technology programs in the RPI-5 Strategy at [www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org) and the KCC Fast Track Program at [www.kirtland.edu](http://www.kirtland.edu) )
- 4.a** Promote and market these workforce training programs as models of effective workforce training, to both employers and students.
  - 4.b** Work with the region’s employers, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and industry associations to identify other industries that could be served by these programs.
  - 4.c** Consider expanding workforce training services to companies outside of the region. This would help create a pipeline of talent to feed into the region’s higher education institutions and would also help support programs within the region’s colleges and universities through larger class sizes.
- Objective 5** Establish a new career and technical training center in the region’s rural counties. This could serve multiple counties and school districts.
- 5.a** Identify a site for a shared career and technical training center to serve K-12 and adult education students in one of the region’s rural counties.
  - 5.b** Consider partnering with the Associated Builders and Contractors construction training program (for electricians, welders, pipe fitters, etc.) for this effort.
- Objective 6** Conduct a feasibility study to explore the potential for a center of excellence that leverages the unique capabilities of higher education institutions and major corporations in the region to pursue new initiatives that do not currently exist in Michigan and have the potential to transform the region’s economy over the long-term/ EMCOG will convene and lead a coalition of partners to conduct a feasibility analysis and evaluation of the planning requirements for a potential Center of Excellence including:

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- 6.a** Identify key stakeholders and regional organizations that should be involved in this effort. These organizations should include, but may not be limited to, area colleges and universities, community and technical colleges, workforce development organizations, corporate research and development programs, as well as organizations and initiatives focused on transportation and economic development
- 6.b** Potential areas of collaboration including R&D, academic training, workforce training, events, etc.

**Objective 7** Support the STEM-focused initiatives led by the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance. (See a description of the initiatives in the RPI-5 Strategy at [www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org) and [www.Greatlakesbay.com](http://www.Greatlakesbay.com) )

- 7.a** Work with the 14-county region's employers, educational providers, and other organizations (EDOs, chambers, industry associations) to promote STEM learning and career pathways for K-12 students and adult education students wherever possible (through newsletters, at business events, on websites, and through social media).
- 7.b** Meet regularly with the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance to explore ways for the region to improve STEM education outcomes in the short-term and long-term.

**Objective 8** Establish an education committee made up of council members and representatives from higher education institutions to discuss potential areas of collaboration among the region's colleges and universities.

- 8.a** Set up regular meetings that bring together this committee with major employers to connect the region's workforce training to the marketplace.
- 8.b** Potential areas of collaboration including R&D, academic training, workforce training, events, etc. and
  - 8.b.1** Developing a healthcare pool for employees across institutions to save on insurance costs;
  - 8.b.2** Advocating for dedicated state funding for training in the region's target industries and/or an increase in the share of the University of Michigan system's R&D spending;
  - 8.b.3** Creating a combined alumni outreach and education program between the higher educational institutions as a tool to market the region and entice alumni to consider coming back to the region to live and work. Establish a regional jobs board for these alumni and local employers.
  - 8.b.4** Encourage the region's higher education institutions to provide financial incentives for students that graduate on time.

**Objective 9** Find ways to align veterans with regional employers

- 9.a** Utilize the region's veterans as a pool of talent for employers, capitalizing on the tendency of veterans to prefer working alongside other veterans.

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## Goal 4. Transportation & Infrastructure

Capitalize on EMCOG’s existing transportation assets and modes (roads, rail, port and harbor facilities, airports, aviation MRO , public and private transit providers) and make strategic investments in regional infrastructure (including broadband) that improve the region’s economic competitiveness and resiliency.

Well-functioning transportation networks and other key infrastructure components (like utilities and broadband) are essential for the long-term success of regional economies. The Region is fortunate to have a robust transportation network of highways, rail, water-based transport, and airports. It will be important to maintain and fully capitalize on the region’s existing infrastructure, but there are also opportunities to make strategic investments in transportation and broadband infrastructure that will enhance the region’s economic potential.

One of the region’s biggest advantages is the significant amount of underutilized capacity across all modes (roads, rail, water, air). MBS International Airport is a major asset for the entire 14-county region (and beyond) that can be leveraged for economic development. Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport is a world class aviation MRO (maintenance, repair and overhaul) facility. There are also several small locale airports within the region that are vital to the economy. The region’s rail network and the water-based transport facilities and harbors along the Saginaw River, the Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron can also be further capitalized on to support the growth of freight-intensive industries like agriculture, construction, and manufacturing and tourism. Many of the region’s major manufacturing and agriculture companies, Dow Chemical in particular, have expressed a desire to increase their use of rail and water-based transport.

There are numerous transit options within the region. However they are not coordinated to the degree needed to provide comprehensive transit options for the needs of the region. For most residents owning a vehicle is their only option for getting to work and for attending the colleges and universities. This greatly limits the mobility of the region’s population. The development of a coordinated mobility plan is needed.

### OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

**Objective 1** Continue to expand and improve broadband internet access throughout the region, especially in rural areas.

- 1.a** Focus on expanding broadband service in areas where it is not currently available (mostly in the region’s rural areas).
- 1.b** Assist in vertical mapping of tall structures to facilitate interest by broadband suppliers
- 1.c** Support regional initiatives through educational workshops, convening of stakeholders and partnering with Connect Michigan to expand broadband infrastructure into the rural areas of the region through the Connect America Fund program.

**Objective 2** Support efforts to maintain and improve the region’s highways and local roadways.

- 2.a** Continue working with the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council, and regional civil engineers to re-evaluate current road maintenance standards to make the most efficient use of financial resources devoted to the repair and maintenance of local roadways.
- 2.b** Continue working with the region’s MPOs, local governments, and transportation planners to prioritize road improvements where they are needed most to improve

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

the safety and connectivity of the region's roadway infrastructure for growth of existing businesses and the attraction of new companies. Possible safety and connectivity issues to be considered include Highway 127 in Gratiot County, and the multiple roadways leading to MBS International Airport.

- 2.c Work with MDOT, MPOs, local road commissions and count road associations to modernize road and highway planning and infrastructure to effectively accommodate storm water runoff and infiltration needs, thereby reducing the costs and impacts of flooding.

**Objective 3** Provide more comprehensive and more efficient transit services to support the region's workforce, employers, educational providers, veterans, older adults, people with disabilities and people with lower incomes.

- 3.a EMCOG will work with MDOT to support and leverage the Governor's Regional Transit Mobility Study as a way to document the region's public transportation needs, with the goal of improving transit access throughout the region.
- 3.b Encourage the region's public transportation agencies to meet regularly and work together to serve the region more efficiently through inter-agency agreements or other cooperative efforts.
- 3.c Work with the region's higher education institutions, adult education providers, major employers, and other key constituents to identify ways to expand transit options to better serve the region's workforce. This may include extending public transportation into evening hours in some cases.
- 3.d Work toward expansion and coordination of public transportation to serve key regional destinations (MBS International Airport, colleges and universities, and major employers).
- 3.e Work with regional stakeholders to identify regional gaps in mobility, particularly for veterans, older adults, people with disabilities and people with lower incomes.
- 3.f Over the long-term, consider combining some or all of the region's separate public transportation agencies into a single, region-wide transit agency.
- 3.g Work with the regional 211 call center to increase mobility within the region based on current conditions and into the future.

**Objective 4** Leverage and make strategic investments in the region's existing rail infrastructure to support the growth of key industries, particularly the agriculture sector.

- 4.a Prioritize rail-related investments based on the recommendations from MDOT's recent report titled "The Role of Rail Infrastructure in the Economic Development of Michigan's Northern Lower Peninsula".
- 4.b Explore the potential to enhance rail infrastructure connecting the region to Canada through Port Huron.
- 4.c Build on the existing great Lakes Central Rail/Northern Dry Bulk transload terminal in Clare, which is the premier transload facility in the northern half of Michigan's Lower peninsula region.
- 4.d Consider investing in re-configurations and/or expansions of the rail yards in Saginaw and Bay City to make rail transport more efficient for the region's rail-dependent businesses.



## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- 4.e** Build on the success of the Standish Grain Elevator by exploring opportunities to develop additional connections, capacity, and rail-related infrastructure (inter-modal facilities, trans-load facilities, grain elevators, etc.) to support existing companies and make the region more competitive in attracting new businesses.

**Objective 5A**<sup>4</sup> Convene a freight mobility roundtable that meets a minimum of two times per year to share information on regional transportation issues.

**5A.a** EMCOG can serve as the convening body for this group.

**5A.b** The roundtable can serve as a regular forum to bring together public and private sector leaders involved in transportation and freight mobility to discuss transportation issues affecting the region, hear presentations from local/state/federal transportation planners, and learn about major transportation policy or funding efforts.

**Objective 5B**<sup>5</sup> Leverage and support MBS International Airport, Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport and the several small local airports to move fully capitalize on their potential for economic development growth throughout the region.

**5B.a** Work with MBS and major employers (Dow Chemical, Nexteer) and other large institutions (Central Michigan University and Saginaw Valley State University) to identify and aggressively pursue additional direct flights to major airports.

**5B.b** Potential destinations for new direct flights from MBS include (Atlanta (expand from once per week to daily), Houston, Denver, New York and DC.

**5B.c** Explore the potential to increase the amount of air cargo to/from MBS

**5B.d** Work with MBS, Oscoda-Wurtsmith and other smaller local airports, local economic development corporations, and the region's real estate community to identify opportunities to capitalize on available unused land and under-utilized buildings on airport properties.

**Objective 6** Explore ways to make better use of the regions harbors for economic growth in tourism and recreational opportunities.

**6.a** Collaborate with the state and other stakeholders to prioritize infrastructure needs for repair and upgrade of public recreational harbors and access.

**Objective 7** Explore ways to make better use of water-based transport for goods movement, especially for the agriculture, construction, and utilities sectors.

**7.a** Support and leverage the US Army Corps of Engineers' study to widen and deepen the Saginaw River shipping channel as a way to encourage the continued and expanded use of the river for goods movement.

**7.b** Conduct an economic impact analysis of the water-based transport facilities in the Saginaw River and Saginaw Bay to demonstrate the number of jobs and amount of tax revenue that these transportation facilities provide to the region and the

---

<sup>4</sup> Objective 5A tied with Objective 5B in the RED Team prioritization of objectives within Goal 4.

<sup>5</sup> Objective 5B tied with Objective 5A in the RED Team prioritization of objectives within Goal 4.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

state, along with historical fluctuations of this impact.

- 7.c** Explore the possibility of expanding water-based transport to Canada.
- 7.d** Support greater collaboration among the region's private port operators and industries that depend on water-based transport (agriculture and construction in particular).

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

## Goal 5. Place-Making, Equitable Development & Community Resiliency

*Embark on local and regional initiatives to strengthen the quality of place in each of EMCOG's urban and rural communities and reduce the vulnerabilities (economic, environmental and natural threats) to create an attractive environment for existing and future residents*

Today's generation of young adults, much more than previous generations, favors urban living and everything that comes with it (riding transit, walking, biking, patronizing locally owned shops and restaurants instead of national chains, etc.). Providing an attractive environment which appeals to young professionals is critical for economic development because the number one issue for companies (and by extension, for communities) is access to qualified workers. And this is not limited to large cities. A growing amount of small cities and towns offer walkable neighborhoods and downtown districts that attract young people. Ultimately, the communities that can attract and retain skilled workers (whether they are large cities or small towns) have a major competitive advantage in today's economy.

The Region has struggled to retain and attract talented workers, especially young professionals, in recent decades. This struggle is not unique to the region—in fact, it's a national issue. However, the problem is often more challenging in small and mid-size metro areas that have fewer amenities than large metro areas. Nonetheless, the region is well positioned to emerge as a leading destination for talent. The region has a variety of attractive downtown districts in some of the region's smallest communities and largest cities, many of which are experiencing an uptick in investment and development from both public and private sectors. The region also has an abundance of natural and cultural resources to enable the population a multitude of outdoor recreational opportunities. And the region has many companies (large and small) that are committed to enhancing their communities as a way to retain and attract skilled workers.

A continuing struggle within the Region and the state is the result of the decade-long economic decline and the Great Recession that hit our communities like a hazardous storm. Those who were hit hardest are the households that are working, often at more than one job, and still struggling to survive. Economic vitality and resiliency strategies must take into account initiatives that assist this large component of our households in the region to shift from a survival mode to a sustainability mode.

As the Region continues to move forward with economic recovery there are other concerns to address regarding its vulnerability. The Region is within the broader Saginaw Bay watershed, a complex network made up of 7,000 miles of rivers and streams, which is particularly vulnerable to storm hazards because of the area's unique topography and land use patterns. Because of the large flat area of the watershed, extreme storms are quickly magnified.

### OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

**Objective 1** Create a regional talent attraction package that highlights many of the region's quality of life assets to assist employers with and retention of new hires.

- 1.a** Work with the region's economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, major employers, and other local organizations to put together a set of marketing materials that highlight the region's key assets (schools, arts and culture amenities, outdoor recreation, downtown districts, etc.) The talent attraction package would be utilized by the region's major employers as a key component of their hiring process, particularly when recruiting for highly skilled

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

professionals (e.g. physicians, engineers, IT professionals, etc.) from outside of the region.

- 1.b** Ensure that the talent attraction package showcases key assets located in the region's urban and rural communities.

**Objective 2** Expand and promote the region's recreation and entertainment opportunities as a way to retain and attract talent within the region.

- 2.a** Explore ways to expand the region's recreational infrastructure (hike & bike trails, parks, ball fields, beach and shoreline improvements, etc.) to expand the outdoor recreational opportunities for the residents. Identify potential funding sources for this.
- 2.b** Launch a regional entertainment promotion effort in partnership with the Great Lakes Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Great Lakes Bay Arts & Entertainment Council, and other local organizations to support the growth of existing festivals/events and to pursue additional events to attract visitors to the area.
- 2.c** Bring civic leadership development groups together to create a promotional strategy to attract young people to, and retain them in the region. Find messages and connection points (including social media) to engage the 60,000 college students living in the region. This effort could be led by Alma College's Responsible Leadership Institute.
- 2.d** Partner with the MDNR and Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy initiatives to encourage and collaborate with public/private entities to develop outdoor recreational activities and integrate green infrastructure and low impact development while preserving natural spaces into urban redesign and redevelopment efforts including projects to improve stormwater management and the quality of life for residents of these areas.
- 2.e** Collaborate with MDNR and other stakeholders to develop bike connections to the state's extensive off-road multi-use recreation trails network to create better access for communities, neighborhoods and families in the region.

**Objective 3** Establish place-making and good urban planning as a regional priority.

- 3.a** Partner with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to develop a targeted marketing analysis of the counties and cities/villages within the region to develop housing marketing studies for promoting investment in the region.
- 3.b** Consider establishing a community and regional planning organization for the 14-county region that assists local governments with land use planning. EMCOG could potentially fill this role by serving as a resource to local governments that cannot afford to maintain a full-time staff of professional urban planners, zoning administrators, and downtown development specialists.
- 3.c** Hold a regional place-making summit that brings together government entities, the real estate community, and major employers from across the region to share best practices and discuss the challenges/opportunities associated with improving the quality of place in each community in EMCOG.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

### Objective 4 Package the region's downtowns as investment opportunities

- 4.a Conduct an inventory of available properties and their condition in each downtown.
- 4.b Highlight unique assets in each area and use targeted marketing to pitch the downtown as an investment opportunity to investors that are interested in urban revitalization, focusing on people with some ties to the region.
- 4.c Conduct an assessment of the housing-related market opportunities to improve stability and density of the urban and rural areas, increase the number of employers and sustainable jobs, increase economic activity and create vibrant and walkable communities throughout the region.
- 4.d Consider establishing a sustainable fund to stimulate redevelopment in the region's downtowns. Explore options to utilize the region's land banks as a vehicle to fund such an initiative.

### Objective 5 Create a regional approach to develop and promote local farmers markets.

- 5.a Work with the region's agricultural sector and existing farmers markets to establish a collaborative effort to promote the ongoing success and growth of locally grown agriculture products.
- 5.b Identify gaps in the region's farmer markets that can be filled by the establishment of new, larger, or more permanent farmers markets. Consider public-private partnerships for this purpose.
- 5.c Utilize farmers markets as tools to promote place-making and downtown revitalization to retain people in and attract people to the region.

### Objective 6 Promote the development and implementation of a uniform sanitary code for local governments that is flexible and provides standards for site suitability based on risk. The Bay County Septic Code is an example of this.

- 6.a Develop marketing and education campaigns and outreach tools directed at homeowners' on-site wastewater management and maintenance.
- 6.b Collaborate with state and local entities to establish long-term, sustainable funding sources to support onsite wastewater programs at the state and local levels and to assist financially distressed owners of private on-site wastewater systems with repair and replacement costs.
- 6.c Promote USDA rural development funding to high-priority areas with high rates of septic system failure to replace or to maintain old septic systems or provide resources to connect to public wastewater treatment systems, if available.

### Objective 7 Tell the stories of successful downtown revitalization efforts across the region.

- 7.a Begin by highlighting the massive transformation of downtown Bay City from an area filled with boarded-up, vacant buildings in the 1980's to a vibrant mixed-use district today. (See a description of Bay City's successful downtown revitalization efforts in the RPI-5 Strategy at [www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org))
- 7.b Also, highlight the progress being made toward increased urban vitality in Saginaw, Midland, Mt Pleasant, and many of the region's smaller downtowns (Alma, Clare, East Tawas, Frankenmuth, Harrison, Ithaca, among others).

# East Michigan Council Of Governments

**Objective 8** Support statewide and regional initiatives to respond to natural and environmental disasters and support the community health and resiliency of the region.

- 8.a** Support the creation of an Emergency Management Directors group to discuss resiliency strategies.
- 8.b** Support the development of a State spill and communication strategy and the organization of an incident command approach to prevent, prepare for and respond to environmental disasters and chemical releases in conjunction with the energy pipeline strategy currently being developed under the leadership of MDEQ and the Attorney General.
- 8.c** Partner with local units of government, water utilities and the MDEQ to evaluate current community practices regarding providing water to financially distressed customers to ensure that all citizens have affordable to water for drinking and sanitation.
- 8.d** Work with MDEQ on convening a regional solid waste group that would meet at least quarterly to keep current on matters related to solid waste in Michigan.

**Objective 9** Improve regional resiliency to extreme storm events which present serious threats to community health, safety and economic stability by providing stakeholders with the resources needed to enhance existing resiliency strategies and implement relevant new strategies.

- 9.a** Conduct an assessment of the perceptions of coastal storm hazards, storm water runoff and risk reduction strategies in the region through a combination of individual surveys and focus groups
- 9.b** Develop education and outreach materials including workshops, online tools and social marketing campaigns targeted at filling the gaps in awareness, knowledge and technical capacity identified through the survey results and focus group assessments and to help integrate water impacts into local land-use planning and decisions.
- 9.c** Work with communities to prohibit development/redevelopment within floodways, floodplains and other areas prone to regular flooding.
- 9.d** Engage and educate regional stakeholders involved in community planning, hazardous mitigation and regional development on coastal storm hazards, storm water runoff and risk reduction strategies.
- 9.e** Collaborate in the work of the University of Michigan NOAA SARP (Sectoral Applications Research Program) project on course-scale climate projections in the Great Lakes including a focus within the EMCOG region to improve our understanding of how changing extreme precipitation regimes will impact areas of vulnerability, especially the urbanized areas, through participation in focus groups, providing the direction of the research and assisting in developing scenarios within the region.

**Objective 10** Model the success of the Hausbeck Pickle Company's employee home purchase program in Saginaw to include other major employers and other communities in the region.

- 10.a** Work with major employers across the region to link them more directly with the revitalization of communities and urban neighborhoods beyond simply providing a job and an income for their employees.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

- 10.b** Identify neighborhoods in need of revitalization and encourage collaboration between the public sector and major employers (larger corporations, hospitals, educational institutions, etc.) to implement employee home purchase programs that target these neighborhoods.

**Objective 11** Support the largest metropolitan area in the region, the City of Saginaw, in its development of catalyst projects to revitalize its downtown district.

- 11.a** Leverage the CMU College of Medicine and upcoming downtown Saginaw Delta College campus as catalysts to spur additional revitalization in downtown Saginaw.
- 11.b** Identify ways to capitalize on the existing entertainment venues (Dow Event Center, Temple Theater) and major events (music festivals, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration, etc.) to further stimulate interest and investment in downtown Saginaw.
- 11.c** Launch a marketing initiative to educate people within the region about the improved level of safety in Saginaw, include updates on recent successes, citing the major decline in the city's rate of violent crime.

## East Michigan Council Of Governments

### *Implementation Of the CEDS*

A strong implementation strategy can be the key to bringing a plan to fruition. Identifying opportunities and the steps needed to make them reality is not enough. Setting priorities is perhaps the most important role that a solid implementation strategy should fulfill. Having clearly established priorities is essential for effective use of public resources.

A complete implementation matrix that combines all the objectives and actions is included as Appendix a of this document (see [www.emcomg.org](http://www.emcomg.org) for a copy of the CEDS Implementation Matrix). The implementation matrix provides a graphic representation of when the actions should realistically be implemented and the most appropriate organizations to carry them out.