

EMCOG 2021-2025 5 YEAR CEDS STRATEGIES

Implementation & Ongoing Community Building

VISION STATEMENT: East Michigan strives to develop a resilient and adaptive 14-county regional economy, by investing in economic and workforce development, supporting vital infrastructure, preserving the outstanding quality of life, and encouraging economic opportunity for all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **COLLABORATION:** Embrace the interconnectedness of East Michigan and build partnership across the region..
- **RESILIENCY:** Prioritize policies that prepare the region to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic and environmental disruption.
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INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 1. Capitalize on East Michigan's existing transportation assets (roads, rail, port facilities, airports, etc.) and make strategic investments in regional infrastructure, including broadband, that improve the region's economic competitiveness.

Strategy 1.1. Adopt and incorporate the Michigan Infrastructure Council's recommendations for integrated asset management, which ensures more efficient use of public dollars, sustainable community planning, and resilient infrastructure management.

January 2021-2022:EMCOG Staff (2 staff) participated in the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC) Integrated Asset Management Training and are certified as such.

1.1.1. Ensure that community comprehensive development plans incorporate hazard mitigation plans and other regional planning documents to make sure plans and agencies are in alignment.

January 2021-2022: EMCOG reviews local master plans/community development plans for consistency/support of other plans, including the CEDS, transportation plans and hazardous mitigation plans; provide written comments per Michigan PA 33 of 2008 (planning enabling legislation) to encourage coordination and support. EMCOG provides examples and suggestions for policies as part of the public hearing process.

1.1.2. Update and maintain a regional asset inventory of physical resources that support the region's target sectors.

January 2021 - 2022: EMCOG, in partnership with the State MIC is the designated regional hub for submittal of the local government's integrated asset management self assessments

1.1.3. Fill essential gaps in the regional transportation network to support the growth of existing businesses and the attraction of new companies.

January 2021-2022: The Saginaw Area Transit Authority (STARS) is expanding the Pigeon Express route to include Michigan Sugar in Sebawaing (Huron County). EMCOG partners with the 3 MPOs with the Region (Bay, Midland, and Saginaw counties) and facilitates 11 MDOT Rural Task Forces..

1.1.4 Explore opportunities to incorporate smart and sustainable technological innovations into infrastructure improvement projects.

Strategy 1.2. Develop a region-wide broadband strategy to increase the availability of broadband infrastructure in the region, especially in rural and under- served communities

1.2.1. Convene public and private sector leaders to understand and inventory existing efforts underway to expand telecommunications services in the region.

January 2021-2022: Work began in 2021 on a number of federally funding projects in Huron and Sanilac counties.

1.2.2. Leverage the 2018 Michigan Broadband Roadmap strategic plan, as well as state and federal funding resources, to accelerate broadband projects in the region.

- Capacity is often an obstacle for rural communities trying to move forward with technology action plans. Economic development partners should support these efforts by serving as a project lead or assisting with finding project leads.

1.2.3. Coordinate with Connected Nation Michigan (Connect Michigan) to develop technology action plans for the region's communities.

January 2021-2022: Connected Nation planning efforts were completed in Huron and Sanilac counties.

Strategy 1.3. Explore options to expand and improve multi-modal shipping and transportation infrastructure throughout the region.

January 2021-2022: Lake State Railway (Railway Age Regional Railroad of the Year for 2021) is a 373 mile regional railway headquartered in Saginaw was successful in growing its business during 2021 and has been successful in receiving grant awards for infrastructure improvements.

1.3.1. Organize a freight mobility roundtable that meets a minimum of two times per year to share information about regional transportation issues.

1.3.2. Take a proactive and forward looking approach to explore infrastructure improvements needed to support MBS International Airport and surrounding commercial establishments.

1.3.3. Back efforts to maintain and improve the region's highways and local roadways.

January 2021-2022: EMCOG is represented on the National I-73/I-74/I-75 Corridor Association. The City of Mt Pleasant is working with other local partners (CMU, Union Charter Twp, DDA and local businesses) to implement further design improvements to the Mission Street business corridor.

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

January 2021-2022: The Huron and Sanilac EDC is in discussions with the new owners of the former DTE power plant site which has a deep water port.

1.3.5. Leverage and make strategic investments in the region's rail infrastructure to support the growth of key industries.

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Strategy 1.4. Ensure the region's water, sewer, and storm water systems meet the needs of the region's businesses and residents, while protecting the natural environment.

January 2021-2022: City of Mt Pleasant's Industrial Park South's stormwater detention pond was recently upgraded through an EDA PW grant; EMCOG staff is an appointed member of the State of Michigan Water Asset Management Council.

1.4.1. Research and explore dedicated funding mechanisms for watershed protection and restoration.

1.4.2. Ensure the region's waterfront infrastructure meets the needs of residents, businesses, and developers to support healthy downtowns and talent attraction (strategy 4.2.1).

1.4.3. Coordinate with public works departments to identify opportunities for housing developments (strategy 4.3).

Strategy 1.5 Support the work of the Great Lakes Bay Zero Waste Consortium to ensure solid waste and recycling systems in the region are efficient and effective.

January 2021-2022: EMCOG, with support from the ZWC has secured a grant (December, 2021) to focus on "Connecting Discards, Reuse, and STEM". Partners include Iris Waste Management, The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative, Bay-Arenac ISD, and Clare Gladwin RESD.

Strategy 1.6. Continue efforts made in the 2015 CEDS to increase comprehensive and more efficient transit systems, including nonmotorized networks, to support mobility across the region.

January 2021-2022: EMCOG is a participant with the Automated Bus Consortium's study effort to link the Tri-cities (Saginaw, Midland and Bay City) and the Thumb counties of Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola). EMCOG is a participant in monitoring the STARS Pigeon Express (a transit service for workforce and employers) for possible resources to develop other similar opportunities in the Region. The City of Mt Pleasant is working with the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities in Traverse City, together with an number of other Michigan community partners, to pursue the creation of regular passenger rail service between Ann Arbor and Traverse City (A2TC), running through a portion of the EMCOG Region.

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WORKFORCE

Goal 2. Build on the collaboration among East Michigan's higher education, adult education, secondary education (PreK- 12), and workforce development organizations to create a strong talent pool to support the region's current and future employers.

Strategy 2.1. Leverage the region's outstanding higher education institutions for talent retention and recruitment. Explore programs that support and encourage remote workers.

2.1.1. Capitalize on the growing remote worker trend to encourage talent to relocate or remain in the region. Host networking and social events to connect the remote worker community.

2.1.2. Expand CMU's and SVSU's successful "Coming Home" talent attraction strategy to include additional colleges and universities in the region. Strengthen the campaign's online presence and encourage remote networking opportunities.

2.1.3. Encourage collaboration among the region's civic leadership programs. Bring young leaders together to discuss regional issues and challenges; young people that are more engaged in their communities are more likely to stay in the region and be invested in long-term prosperity for the region.

Strategy 2.2. Advocate for and support the region's higher education institutions during COVID-19 economic stabilization and recovery.

2.2.1. Effectively communicate the workforce training needs of the private sector to higher education to ensure that programs with the highest need remain available to students (strategy 5.1.2).

Strategy 2.3. Ensure that workforce development, economic development, and the private sector are working together to address the region's workforce needs (strategy 4.2.3).

2.3.1. Work with employers to develop alternative and flexible internship and experiential learning opportunities that do not require students to be onsite.

2.3.2. Increase awareness of virtual job fairs and events among the private sector.

January 2021-2022: Huron and Sanilac EDC does direct emails to employers o new opportunities for job fairs.

Strategy 2.4. Strengthen programs that build a skilled and resilient workforce, such as cross-training and upskilling employees.

2.4.1. Build on the success of Delta College's Fast Start program and Mid Michigan College's programs to support just-in-time workforce training.

2.4.2. Advance the initiatives under the 2018 state of Michigan Marshall Plan for Talent, which calls for increased and enhanced partnerships between the private sector and education.

- Pursue innovation grants to support the region's goals, which can include curriculum creation, project-based certification programs, equipment, staff, and pilot programs.

- Explore opportunities to establish facilities in the region to support initiatives.

2.4.3. Continue to find ways to align veterans with regional employers, including leveraging EMCOG's RPI-5 grant program to support the Bay Veterans Foundation.

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INNOVATION

Goal 3. Leverage East Michigan's higher education institutions, major industries, medical complexes, and innovation assets to establish the region as a center for technology-based entrepreneurship and small business growth.

Strategy 3.1. Work collaboratively with lenders, angel investors, and venture capitalists to improve access to capital for small businesses, especially in rural and underserved communities. **January 2021-2022:** The City of Mt Pleasant's revolving fund (Managed by Northern Initiatives) is utilized to fill gaps in funding for new and existing businesses.

3.1.1. Urge traditional lenders to develop creative and flexible programs to increase lending to small businesses. **January 2021-2022:** The Huron EDC is working on the development of an investor based crowd funding program that meets SEC regulations.

3.1.2. Deepen relationships with angel investor networks outside of the EMCOG region, including other parts of Michigan and the Midwest.

3.1.3. Expand the EMCOG East Central Michigan Revolving Loan Fund to include all 14 counties in the EMCOG region. Encourage and promote the fund to small and rural businesses throughout the region, especially those owned by people of color.

Strategy 3.2. Encourage partnerships between the region's higher education institutions and the public and private sector to spur innovation (strategy 5.1.2).

3.2.1. Continue working with the region's major employers and medical complexes to attract R&D spending from other Michigan universities.

3.2.2. Promote and encourage companies to continue to utilize university services available to private businesses, such as SVSU's testing lab and prototype development programs. **January 2021-2022:** EMCOG created a 14 County CARES Act Revolving Loan Fund and secured a Loan Officer, posted promotional materials on the website and promoted through the RED Team and EMCOG Council and partners. To date 5 requests for information/applications have been received.

3.2.3. Support catalyst and transformative projects between the public and the private sectors, such as the infrastructure investments needed to bring the Central Michigan University College of Medicine to downtown Saginaw.

Strategy 3.3. Continue to support and invest in childhood (PreK-12) education, especially in rural and underserved communities. Build comprehensive programs around science, technology, engineering, arts, and math to ensure students are prepared for the jobs of the future.

3.3.1. Encourage career exploration in PreK-12 programs throughout the region in coordination with the private sector.

Strategy 3.4 Build on the region's entrepreneurship and innovation assets to support business growth across the region. Expand the region's toolkit to nurture and grow second-stage companies.

3.4.1. Cultivate industry niches and clusters throughout the region to promote economic diversification.

3.4.2. Create a regional entrepreneurship ecosystem map indicating various programs, initiatives, and assets to drive new business activity. Tailor resources specifically to the needs of traditionally underserved communities.

3.4.3. Encourage the development of shared facilities and resources, such as maker's spaces, tool libraries, and coworking spaces. Support free, highspeed Wi-Fi at these facilities to support entrepreneurs and develop a collaborative environment.

Strategy 3.5 Support and promote second-stage companies as they transition out of incubator and accelerator programs. Ensure entrepreneurs have the resources they need to grow their businesses as they transition technology out of universities (technology transfer).

3.5.2. Coordinate with universities to ensure seamless technology transfer and support entrepreneurs pursuing SBIR/STTR grant opportunities.

- Economic developers should be mindful of opportunities to connect entrepreneurs and emerging technology with existing businesses in the region. **January 2021-2022:** The Huron EDC is working on an agriculture and mobility initiative through their collaboration with the the Detroit Regional Partnership Foundation, which includes a portion of the EMCOG Region. This EDA Build Back Better Phase I grant application was selected for funding.

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PLACEMAKING

Goal 4. Embark on local and regional initiatives to strengthen the quality of place in each of East Michigan's communities to create an attractive environment for residents and tourists.

Strategy 4.1. Continue to invest, and encourage investment in, downtown and main street development, especially in small and rural communities throughout the region. **January 2021-2022:** A new \$18M mixed use investment in downtown Mt Pleasant (partnership with the City and a private developer) will be officially opening in February, 2022.

4.1.1. Explore urban infill development opportunities, whether for pocket parks, urban gardens, or new commercial or residential construction. Leverage regional Land Bank databases to identify vacant lots. **January 2021-2022:** City of Mt Pleasant: see 4.1 above.

4.1.2. Support cities that pursue the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Redevelopment Ready Communities program. Assist with capacity building to support small communities that lack staffing to complete the program.

- Promote the region's downtown and main streets through different campaigns and events to draw people downtown.

Strategy 4.2. Leverage the spectacular outdoor amenities in the region for to improve quality of life for residents and tourists, as well as for talent retention and recruitment. *Actions & Priorities: Identify the key current assets and understand their strengths & weaknesses. Identify & engage conservancies in each area who are already working on issues & access rights for land & water resources.* **January 2021-2022:** The Great Lakes Bay Visitors and Convention Bureau was awarded an EDA CARES Act grant to develop a regional tourism economic recovery strategy. This project was initiative in 2021 and will continue through 2022. EMCOG and many other stakeholders are on the steering committee for this project.

4.2.1. Support conservation efforts and the expansion of the rail trails network, river trails, and parks throughout the region (strategy 1.4.2).
 - Advocate and support the clean up waterways and recreational areas to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship.

4.2.2. Expand recreational access to Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron.

- Engage economic development partners, including nonprofits, from across the region to increase the number of water access points.

4.2.3. Leverage higher education and other public-private partnerships to increase awareness around the region's natural resources amenities (strategy 2.3).

Strategy 4.3. Convene regional partners working to address housing shortages throughout the region to understand community needs, inventory current initiatives, and share best practices (strategy 1.4.3). **January 2021-2022:** Huron County EDC is currently working with regional partners o a 3d printed house prototype.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 5. Grow East Michigan'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.

Strategy 5.1. Promote economic resiliency within the region by supporting and growing existing businesses, as well as industry cluster development. A strong, diversified economy will help the region withstand and recover from economic cycles.

January 2021-2022: Huron EDC is working on a regional History Trail effort covering 7 counties.

5.1.1. Ensure business support and cluster development is not limited to medium and large businesses. The East Michigan region has a number of cottage industries and small-scale businesses that are an essential component of the regional economy, especially in rural areas.

- Recognize the role these businesses play in the regional supply chain and promote the services and products they provide.

January 2021-2022: Huron EDC is working on options for the development of a mapping platform for local food and agriculture based supply changes.

5.1.2. Ensure business continuity and support the region's workforce during economic stabilization, recovery, and growth periods. Encourage business leaders to think creatively about product and service diversification and repurposing (strategy 3.2), workforce development and employee cross-training (strategy 2.2.1), and utilization of locally produced goods and services.

Strategy 5.2. Continue actively marketing to businesses for relocation or expansion to the region. Although business development activities should remain a core function of economic development, due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, business relocations and expansions are expected to slow during economic recovery and the region should set expectations and metrics accordingly.

January 2021-2022: The MEDC Region 5 Collaborative (an 8 county collaborative consisting of the Arenac County EDC, Bay Future Inc, Gladwin County EDC, Greater Gratiot Development Corp., Middle MI Development Corp., Midland Business Alliance, and Saginaw Future, Inc.) has initiated a business attraction plan to attract new businesses from out-of-region and out-of-state launching in the region through coordination with local partners.

Strategy 5.3. Ensure that economic, community, and workforce development organizations are diverse and representative of the region.

Strategy 5.4. Prioritize economic development initiatives and projects that are inclusive and serve the greater region, including rural and traditionally underserved areas.

Strategy 5.5. Improve on efficiencies within the economic development community by convening regularly to increase collaboration. The broad economic development should include, but not be limited to, workforce development, community development, destination marketing, and downtown and main street development organizations.

January 2021-2022: EMCOG held 6 region-wide meetings during calendar year 2021 which were attended by the RED Team and numerous other stakeholder representatives. The meetings included presentations on select topics of interest and relevance including funding initiatives, broadband, transportation and other infrastructure planning, etc. The attendance at these meetings totaled 222 or an average of 37 attendees per meeting (excluding EMCOG staff). All meetings were virtual during the year.

5.5.1. Support local jurisdictions and communities that do not have the capacity to implement local economic development programs, including goals outlined in this CEDS plan.

January 2021-2022: EMCOG provided assistance to local governments regarding information on EDA and other grant initiatives to support their economic development programs including development of strategies and implementation. Bridgeport Charter Township was successful in receiving EDA funding for a downtown development strategic plan in 2021.