



CHEBOYGAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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Cheboygan County Economic Development Corporation STRATEGIC PLANNING Session #2 Summary

**February 24, 2009
7:00 PM to 9:30 PM**

Facilitated by Dave Ivan, MSU Extension

Agenda

1. Review Mission/Vision statement draft
2. Summary of current services by county organizations (NLEA, County)
3. Review of Economic Development Hallmarks
4. Create Goals and Objectives

REVIEW VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

A draft mission and vision statement was reviewed. The vision gives an idea of where we want to be in 2015 – what do we want to look like. The mission is the means of achieving that vision. The mission will briefly describe the role of the county in achieving that vision. The comments received indicate that the mission statement had some redundancies and should be streamlined. Measurable outcomes will be described later in this meeting and at later meetings. The revised mission and vision statements will be distributed prior to the next meeting.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HALLMARKS

What are the community hallmarks of Cheboygan County? What do we stand for? From an economic development standpoint, what do we want to be recognized for? This will serve as our foundation from which to build some specific goals and objectives. There were 5 economic development hallmarks identified.

Economic Development Hallmarks

1. Establish Cheboygan County as a distinctive, recognizable tourist destination
2. Implement Green Energy in a distinctive way
3. Facilitate Business Development (Enterprise Facilitation)
4. Create a Sustainable Healthy Community
5. Create an Educated and Prepared Workforce

What do each of these mean?

1. Tourist Destination

We need to do regional collaboration and work with others in our region to promote ourselves. It was mentioned that few people know about what Cheboygan has to offer. We need to let people know about Cheboygan County. We need to let not only visitors know about what Cheboygan County has to offer, we need to let each other know what is happening here. From the lifelong residents and business owners to the summer student working in the restaurant or retail - everyone should be able to tell others the great resources that we have to offer. This is a friendly town that works well together. We have to look at collaborating at a regional level and get the many existing tourists in the *region* to stop in Cheboygan, too.

Through regional collaboration we will have more resources to call upon, including marketing savvy. Together we can better promote our area since those who are downstate don't care if it's Cheboygan, Emmet, Mackinaw, or Mackinac.

We need to create a sense of place so that visitors know the significance of the place they are visiting. This includes creating a beautiful place not only in our wilderness areas but also there is a need to beautify our built environments (downtowns, residential areas) through better streetscapes and blight reduction.

Sense of place is enhanced by encouraging promotion of our niche recreational opportunities, such as the inland waterways, new recreational trail linking historic towns, arts/culture, and artisan communities to name a few. An art trail or artisan mall would highlight these assets. Northern Michigan as a sportsman's paradise is also an important recreational opportunities. It was pointed out that the average bird hunter spends \$500 each day bear hunters spend \$400 each day.

2. Green Energy

We would like to be energy independent and even export energy from the area. We would like to be "The Greenest County in Michigan". Improve support for energy related businesses. There are many agricultural assets in our area that can produce fuel for renewable energy systems. We need to collaborate with other businesses with green energy potential in the region, through Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, to create an economy of scale for green businesses to locate in our area and best utilize our resources. If we're going to talk the talk, we need to walk the walk. We need to make our own businesses and buildings as energy efficient as possible through the LEED certification process. Along with this we need to train our work force through a renewable energy/energy efficiency vocational training system.

3. Facilitate Enterprise Development

We need to create opportunities for living wage jobs. Coordination was again the theme of this discussion. Local government can coordinate permitting processes with the other governmental entities to create a one-stop permitting shop or front door. The many

jurisdictions' permits that must be obtained are confusing. County government can coordinate these permits and make it easier for the customer. This "front door" would be a full-service toolbox of assistance for the business owner. While providing this one-stop shop service, government will need to be pro-business.

Included in this toolbox available to everyone are connections to business coaches/mentors for any new business owner, financing assistance either through connections with local financing or other types of grants/alternative financing. Local schools, both secondary and post-secondary can offer entrepreneurship training. There are many potential entrepreneurs and the new business owner can feel lonely. Support early on will encourage people to start businesses and make them more successful. We need to create networking opportunities for these business owners. All businesses will benefit from a coordinated regional marketing effort. Once businesses are started, we need to support them and celebrate their successes. For agriculture, this includes supporting local food systems.

4. Sustainable Healthy Community

We need to create a sustainable community, which ensures that future generations will have the same opportunities that we have today. Impacts on future generations guides our decision making today. What does this mean for Cheboygan County?

Attendees mentioned that a sustainable healthy community means that the community is safe, the natural resources are protected as well as utilized for living wage jobs, there is a high quality of life, and healthy lifestyles are promoted for people of all ages.

The County must become elder friendly. The average age of our population is older than in years past. Our older residents are interested in remaining more involved in the local economy than past generations. They are also more active and want recreational amenities to take advantage of.

Safety is a major concern and we need to work toward the elimination of the drug problem and reduce crime.

A healthy sustainable community uses its own resources as best as possible for its own population. Local food systems eliminate the financial and environmental costs of importing food. This also supports local farmers who support local businesses, creating an economic multiplier from each new job created.

5. Educated and Prepared Workforce

An educated and prepared workforce is essential to the vitality of our local economy. It will also ensure that we stem the brain drain that occurs in our area. We need to work with our secondary/post-secondary institutions to create a system that recognize trends and the corresponding need for education.

We must be open to non-traditional types of jobs to create opportunities for local students when they graduate from high school. Cutting edge education opportunities must be available to our youth and those who are retraining after job losses. Internships will also be important for our youth and to attract other youth for summer job positions. There is strong research that shows a person who has a meaningful internship or summer work experience is exponentially more likely to migrate back to that same area. Culinary education is an example of the type of education that would meet a local demand in the tourism industry and support local businesses.

Connectivity to broadband is essential to our economic health. Connectivity would allow our residents to utilize the expansive online college educational opportunities.

CREATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Note: We began the process of creating goals and objectives for our 5 economic development hallmarks. At this meeting we discussed only the Tourism hallmark. We will continue with the other 4 at the next meeting on March 26th.

➤ **Tourism**

Goal

To become a unique tourist destination that offers a suite of recreational opportunities.

Objectives

- Coordinate county-wide/regional tourism strategies
- Enhance natural assets
- Promote proper conservation
- Improve appearance of commercial areas

Short Term Challenges / Opportunities

- It will be a challenge to get community buy in.
- We will need to decide who will take the lead in economic development efforts.
- The Michigan economic conditions are not favorable.
- We need to instill a willingness to change.
- There will need to be community-wide commitments (government/citizens).
- Turf issues will need to be overcome.
- There are packaging opportunities for our tourism businesses.
- There is an opportunity for government agencies to streamline the permitting processes and provide guidance for entrepreneurs.
- Identify the “sacred places” in Cheboygan County, which are the areas that must be protected as well as celebrated.
- We must decide who will pay for these economic development efforts.

Long Term Challenges / Opportunities

- Success alters natural resource opportunities – prepare for long term success

- We must protect the goose that laid the golden egg.
- Continuously update and promote County plans, such as the Master Plan, Recreation Plan, EDC Strategic Plan. These plans can be part of a marketing effort.
- We must keep communities safe, ensure low crime.
- Prioritization process - make sure we keep focused on the current trends that will bring living wage jobs.
- We must keep the attractions fresh, keep up with tourism trends, keep activities and tour packages aligned with current trends
- There needs to be a local understanding of the regional assets and we need to present a positive attitude toward the county when talking with visitors. Make sure that the locals understand the benefits and can sell the County's great assets. It is the person in the store and on the street that will best promote the County.

Actions In Progress

- E-chamber / E-culture / Northern Michigan Tourist Association(NMTA)/Travelnorth.org/Events Calendar
- Mackinaw City Visitors Bureau
- Chambers
- County Commercials, Indian River music video promotional
- Downtown Cheboygan activities
- Mill Creek
- Bike paths
- Snowmobile Trails
- Arts Trails

Challenges

- We need to find out who will take the lead on the tourism promotion.
- There is no clear leader at the county level who should be the lead organization.
- Our current economic condition is a challenge.

FOR NEXT TIME:

Action items proposed at this meeting, to be incorporated in Session 3 discussion:

- Promote cultural assets for the tourists
- Wayfinding
- Where do I find who does fly fishing lessons
- Create a front door to help with permitting (DNR, etc.) who can help a tourist oriented business expand, provide new services
- Educate the public so that they know how to best manage the resources that are the great attraction