

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

## **REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE**

### **DDA Report, August 14, 2017**

Economic development is a key to the Village's immediate and long-term health, safety, and general welfare. To that end, the Village is pursuing a certification from the MEDC's statewide Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program. The RRC works with Michigan communities to establish economic goals and objectives, streamline and implement their development processes, and focus on predicable outcomes that move communities into the future.

The Village executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MEDC effective June 14, 2017. Under a strategic collaboration with MEDC, the MOU outlines the Village's responsibilities for achieving RRC certification. This fall the MEDC will issue a report of findings regarding the Village's *Self Assessment*, which will guide the Village toward meeting the RRC Best Practice requirements for certification.

#### **Status:**

The Village Manager and the Economic Development Coordinator have been active in exploring anticipated MEDC requirements. Among them have been a meeting with the mayor of a large city, the city manager of Grayling, and two conference calls with contractors regarding the update of the master plan and zoning ordinance. The following summarizes these activities:

- **Mayor of Westland, MI:** John Rosczyk, councilman Dan Scow, and Mr. Walling met with William Wild, Mayor, Westland, to discuss economic development and general RRC requirements. Mr. Wild is a summer-time neighbor to Mr. Walling. Conversations about the RRC piqued his interest and he wished to meet with the Village regarding its RRC pursuit, which his city is considering. Although not yet engaged in the RRC, Mayor Wild noted how Westland has generally dealt with the RRC's best practices categories. After gaining insight on the Village, he offered several suggestions for consideration by the Village. For example, the use contractors for both one-time services, such as the zoning ordinance re-write, and long-term services such as zoning administration and general marketing. He suggested that although the Village is small, planning and zoning contractors are readily available. He provided a reference to McKenna Associates, which is highlighted below under a separate bullet. The meeting lasted approximately two hours.
- **City of Grayling:** On July 20, 2017, at Village Manager's request, a meeting was convened and held at the city offices of Grayling, Michigan. Present from the city of Grayling were Doug Baum, City Manager; and Eric Podjaske, Zoning and Economic

Development Department Administrator. In addition to Mr. Rosczyk, present for Roscommon were Mark Walling, DDA, Economic Development Coordinator; and, Diane Love-Suvada, of the Sawmill Rural Business Center. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information about economic development initiatives that both Grayling and Roscommon are experiencing in pursuit of MEDC's RRC Certification.

Grayling received its RRC Evaluation of Findings Report from MEDC in October of 2016 indicating the city's compliance with the RRC six Best Practices.

Subsequently, Grayling has established a vibrant citizen participation network, holding numerous sessions and creating 10 subcommittees to address its RRC weaknesses and embellish its strengths. The city gave several examples of its committees as follows: transportation, housing, health care, recreation, child day-care, and online internet. Mr. Baum indicated that a favorable relationship with the City Council is, and has been, the principal key to advancing its RRC initiative.

Other economic development activities for Grayling were noted as follows:

- ❖ Rising Tide community selection: Grayling was among 10 communities from Michigan Prosperity Regions selected as Rising Tides communities. Selection was based on meta data such as population, poverty, unemployment, renter occupancy, and vacancy. The MEDC's Talent and Economic Development (TED) team commits assets to help these communities shape their economic potential. The TED team offers support and capacity assistance, and expertise from a team of consultants, as the participants implement an Action Strategy over the course of 9-12-month period. Mr. Baum indicated that Rising Tide efforts have been helpful in Grayling's pursuit its RRC designation;
- ❖ Engagement in the Regional Prosperity Initiative that, for example, brings the city and county together on such initiatives as the Four-Mile Road development, and other economic activities within Crawford and Roscommon County;
- ❖ Development of The Norther Farmers Market and business incubator project, a 501(C)(3) nonprofit, which will create a hub of food-related businesses, vendors, and educational-based opportunities for area- and region-wide businesses and residents;
- ❖ Attendance at conferences within the state and around the region to foster further collaborative relationships among Michigan communities.

Mr. Podjaske suggested that communities need to know their infrastructure – its capacity, where it is located, and where is it needed – to be responsive to developer inquiries. He indicated that interested businesses and developers have limited time for getting the answers they seek and that a community must be responsive accordingly. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rosczyk, Mr. Baum elaborated on

several administrative aspects of the city improved efficiencies regarding administrative and personnel relationships, and associations with the council, boards, and commissions. Mr. Baum indicated that a highly supportive council was key to achieving the city's objectives. He also noted that the city's change from elective positions to appointed positions for its treasurer and clerk positions has been most efficient. This change allowed the city find individuals with up-to-date skills sets in these two demanding positions. The city was successful in finding a one qualified individual to fill both positions. The creation of a zoning and economic development administrator position has also been key to the city's growing successes.

- **McKenna Associates.** A telephone conference was held on July 28, 2017, John Jackson, President; and Brian Kesey, AICP, of McKenna, a community planning and zoning contractor in southern Michigan. Participating for the Village was John Rosczyk, Nicole Crespo, and Mark Walling. McKenna is experienced in managing both Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance drafts and final documents. They initiate the concept with local government officials and residents, assist in establishing committees for developing and reviewing draft documents, and assist with the final draft and adoption by local legislators. Moreover, they remain engaged to assist in management of these dynamic documents. Estimated costs for a master plan is between \$15-17,500, over a period of 8 to 12 months. A zoning ordinance was estimated at \$10,000. McKenna provided several electronic examples of their work for the Village to review.
- **Ms. Denise Cline,** of the Northern Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG). A telephone conference was held on July 28, 2017, with Ms. Cline to discuss the possibility of engaging her services for re-writing the Village's Zoning Ordinance. The city of Grayling spoke highly of Ms. Cline who has just completed its zoning update. Ms. Cline has 14 years of experience and has worked for numerous northern Michigan communities, among them Emit County, Alpena, and Hillman. She initiates the concept with local government officials and residents, assists in establishing committees for developing and reviewing draft documents, and assists with the final draft and adoption by local legislators. Estimated costs for an updated zoning ordinance is between \$16-17,500, over a period of 12-18 months. Ms. Cline provided several electronic examples of her work for the Village to review.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Meet with RRC trained staff for Best Practices strategy discussion\*;
- A presentation by MEDC staff of the RRC process is scheduled to take place prior to the September 11, 2017, Council meeting. The presentation will proceed the regularly scheduled meeting by 30 minutes, beginning at 6:30 p.m.;
- The Village is awaiting the MEDC Report of Findings;
- Efforts to select and recommend a qualified contractor(s) for master plan and zoning updates will continue.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Walling, Economic Development Coordinator

\*Note: There are Six Best-Practice requirements for certification as follows:

1. Planning and Public Outreach – Identify stakeholders and leaders and engage them in economic development planning, that includes updating the following: (a) the master plan, (b) the capital improvements plan, and (c) the downtown development plan.
2. Zoning – Ensure the zoning ordinance supports and regulates the master plan goals.
3. Development Review Process – Refine development information, review policies and procedures, streamline project tracking, and create effective internal and external communications.
4. Recruitment and Education – Develop training procedures and policies to ensure the community recruits, orientates, trains and maintains skilled elected officials, board members, and staff.
5. Redevelopment Sites – Create a vision and marketing strategy that serves to identify the community as a RRC, with redevelopment-ready sites poised for investment.
6. Community Prosperity – Identify goals and actions that strengthen overall economic health, create community pride, and instill investor confidence via enhanced information and website content.