

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated the SWMPC as an Economic Development District (EDD) serving Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. This funding covers coordinating regional and local business and industry planning processes, providing technical assistance, maintaining economic and demographic databases, and information dissemination.

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Building on goals of regional collaboration, entrepreneurialism and the links between education and economic development; SWMPC and our regional partners continued the work started in 2009 as part of the CEDS. The 2009-2011 document identified the need for a group to act as a regional steward of regional economic development. The existing **360 Group** has made strides to become that group. SWMPC utilized a **People and Land Institute Grant** to originate this concept group with the technical assistance of the **Land Information Access Association and the Michigan Association of Planning**. The 360 Group held five meetings throughout the year in a variety of locations. Topics ranged from agricultural entrepreneurialism to CEDS action plan prioritization of objectives. Three subcommittees focusing on agricultural innovation, regional economic vision, and entrepreneurial education have grown out of the 360 Group to sponsor specific interests in the region.

A 2010 update of the CEDS was completed and is available for viewing on the SWMPC website.

## Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum

SWMPC has been assisting with the development and promotion of Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum. Founded by a partnership of Indiana Michigan Power, Chemical Bank, Lake Michigan College, Michiana Recycling and Disposal Services, Reliable Disposal, Whirlpool Corporation, and Wightman & Associates, Inc. to promote environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic vitality. Sustainable businesses create profits for shareholders while protecting the environment and improving the lives affected by their activities. [www.mgssbf.org](http://www.mgssbf.org)



Throughout 2010, SWMPC partnered with Berrien County's Community Development Office, Cass County's Economic Development Corporation, Edward Lowe Foundation, and Van Buren County's Economic Development Corporation in the development of Venture Quest, Southwest Michigan's business plan competition. Organization of the contest has gone forward with the aim to reward business plans and new businesses located in Southwest Michigan that are poised for growth and job creation.

## Updated Grant Submission Process

The EDA provides funding for public works projects, economic development planning, technical assistance, and economic adjustment planning at the local and regional levels. In the past, the SWMPC has worked with the EDA's Chicago regional office to submit grant applications on a rolling basis. During 2010 a new framework was developed. Going forward, applicants will work with SWMPC staff to submit grant applications based around a quarterly schedule. The new process will provide continuous technical assistance and customer service; quarterly rounds of funding; and enhanced responsiveness within the EDA

## Facilitating Growth in 2010

SWMPC planners were involved in conferences and seminars to promote agribusiness and tourism, sustainable and livable communities, and development of a regional foodshed.

Staff monitored the US Census 2010 in anticipation of utilizing the new data to assist in future planning.

Projects to increase connectivity throughout the southwest Michigan region were researched.