

Southwest Michigan Economic Development District

Serving Berrien, Cass, & Van Buren Counties

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018-2022



SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018-2022

Prepared by:
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
"Planning Great Communities Together"

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Left to right: B.H. BL-94 Charrette, B.H. Arts District mural, Kee-Boon-Mein-Kaa Pow Wow, S.H. Lighthouse, Bangor Amtrak Station, and Dowagiac Under the Harvest Moon Festival.

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Cover page images, left to right: Agritourism cherry picking; New Age/Landmark, South Haven; Niles Amtrak Station; Mosaic Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony, Benton Harbor; Pokégnek Édawat Groundbreaking, Hartford; Twin Cities Harbor; and K&M Machine Fabricating, Cassopolis.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Executive Summary

The 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southwest Michigan is the product of a team of local experts from a range of institutions both public and private. The team was lead through a facilitated process to engage them in meaningful discussion about where we currently are, where we have been historically, and the range of opportunities that lie ahead. The CEDS places a high priority on integrating and complementing the goals and objectives already in place among many of the institutions represented. It embodies the rare opportunity to take a regional, collective approach in establishing economic development priorities.

The Southwest Michigan economic identity has historically been found predominantly within manufacturing and agriculture. Manufacturing has seen the kind of downturn that is reflective of the change seen nationwide. But, since a low in 2009, the manufacturing sector has rebounded in terms of its share of employment and earnings to pre-2009 levels. The region is particularly well suited to produce an exceptional variety of produce at a very high quality. Nearly 49 percent of land in the region is devoted to agriculture. Cass County ranks second statewide in hog and pig production and second in snap beans. Berrien County is ranked number one in grapes, number four in apples, and number five in asparagus. Van Buren County is ranked number three in asparagus, number two in grapes, and number five in apples (based on 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture).

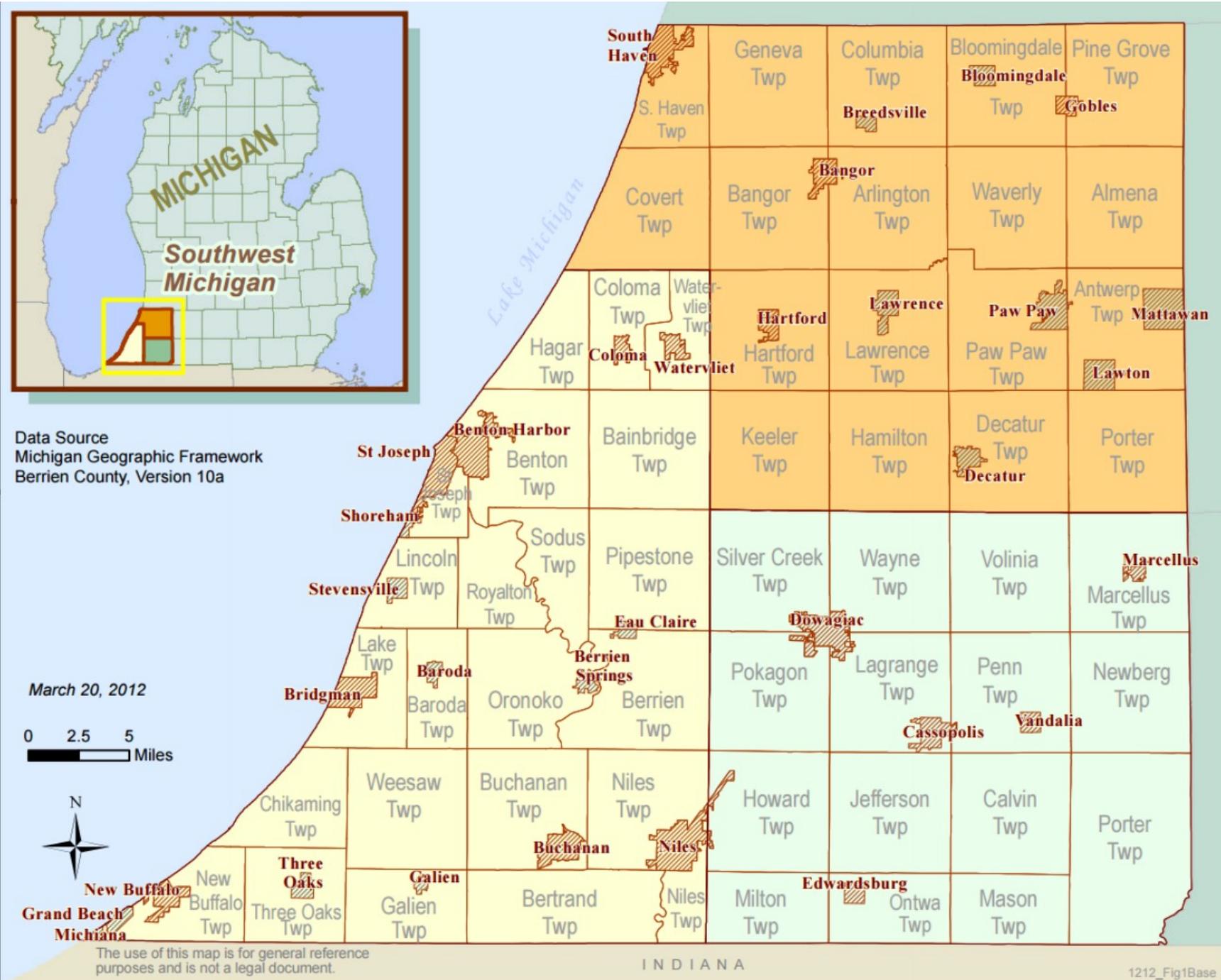
Over the last decade, the service sector has represented an increasingly strong portion of employment in the regional economy. However, the jobs in this sector do not represent high wage opportunity.

The region is challenged by its net loss in population. Driving a large portion of that net loss are the cohort of young and talented individuals between ages 20 and 39. A survey of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the region reveals that components within the region are beginning to build a case for retaining population. Particular strengths in agritourism, wineries and breweries, natural resources, hospitality and tourism, water recreation, and some K-12 schools all show promise as areas of the region to grow and promote.

Through a collaborative process in goal-setting, five comprehensive goals were established for building a more competitive and resilient economy for Southwest Michigan.

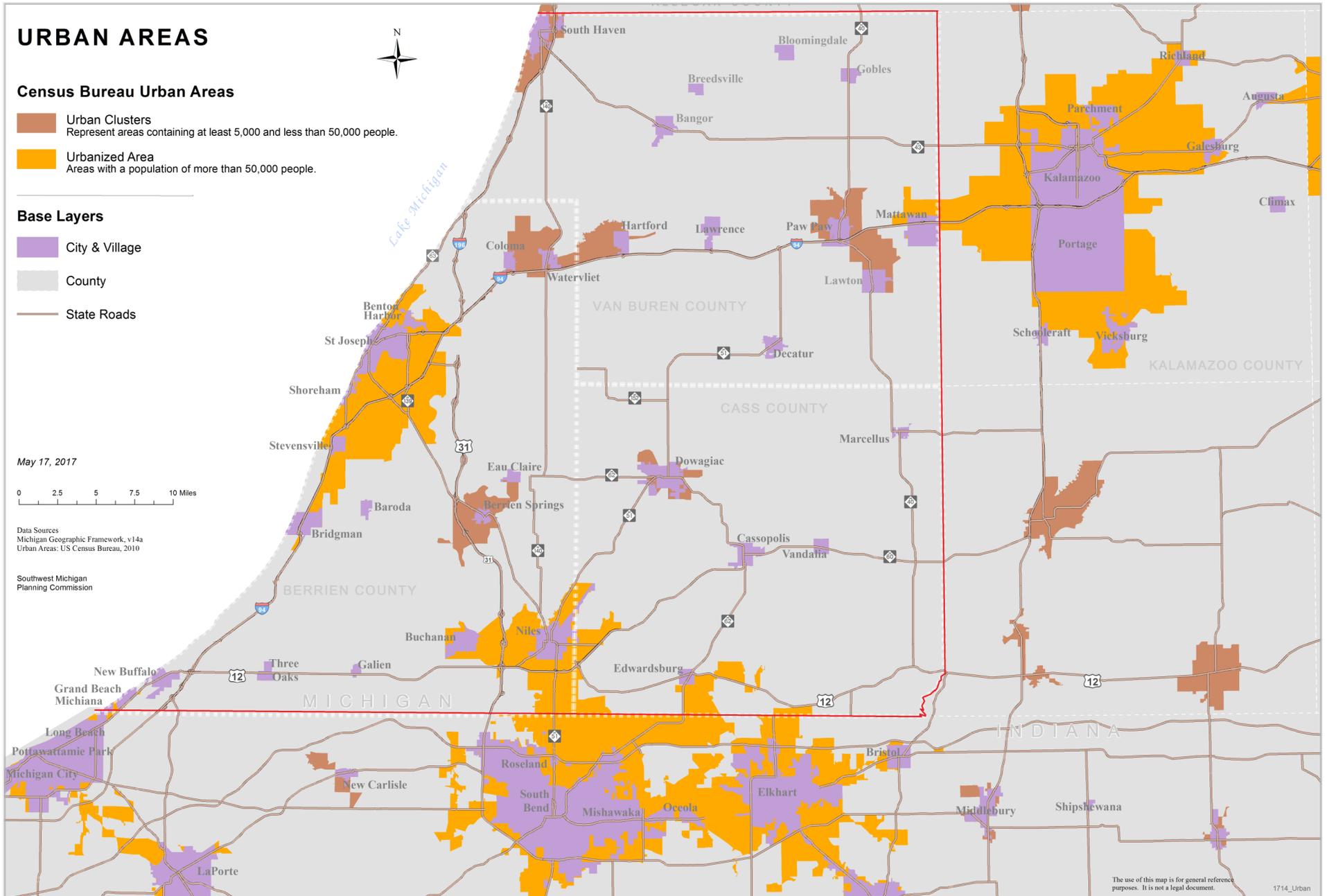
- **Livability for Talent Attraction** – Promote a diverse environment that creates an excellent quality of life for talent.
- **Education & Training** – Attract, retain, and develop a high-quality workforce.
- **Infrastructure** – Create, improve, and maintain services and infrastructure.
- **Support Business** – Support and meet the needs of current, new, and emerging businesses.
- **Coordination** – Promote better coordination among different economic development groups.

Map of Southwest Michigan — Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties

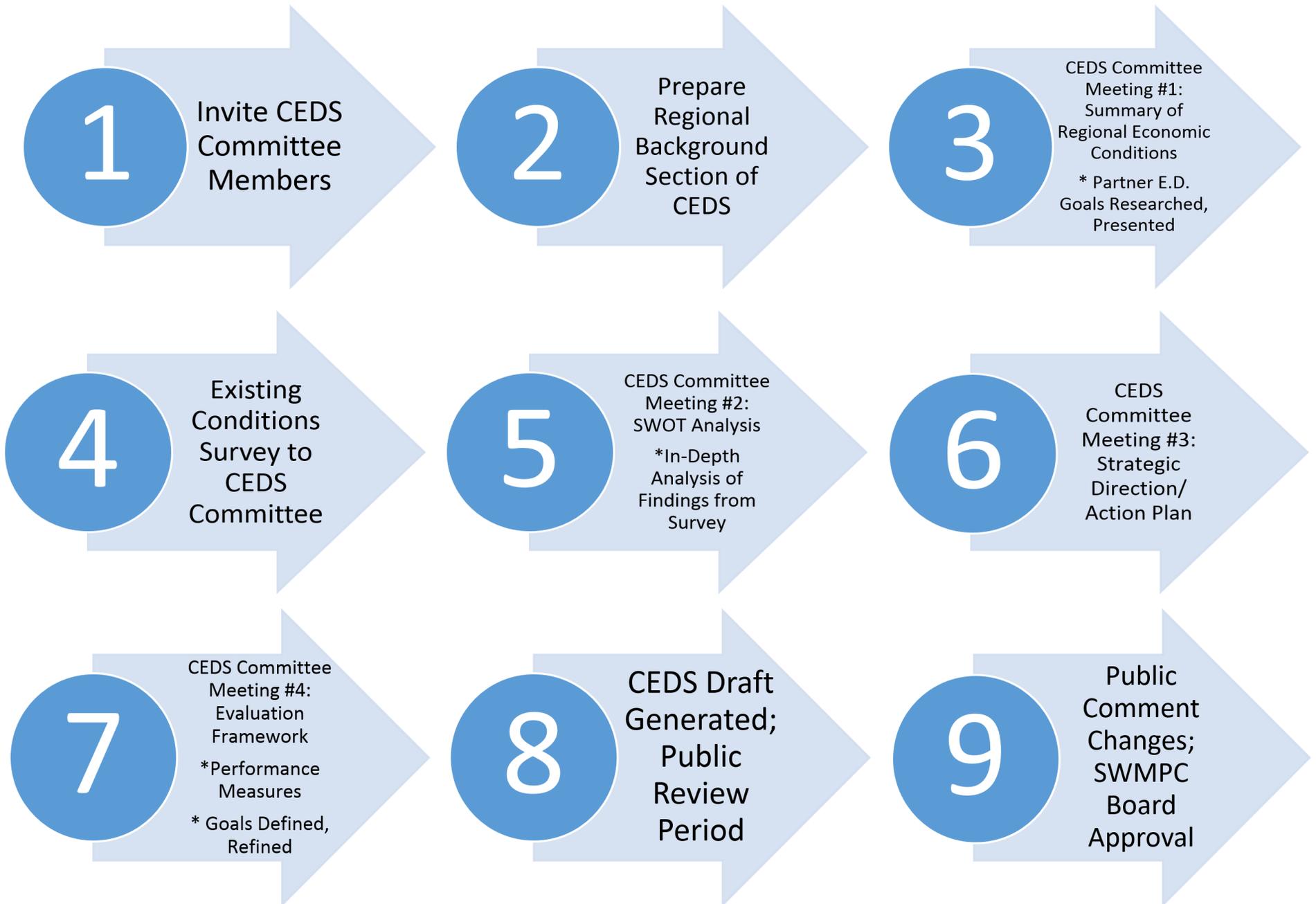


Map of Southwest Michigan Urban Areas

Southwest Michigan's three county region (Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties) is outlined with red. The Benton Harbor-St. Joseph urbanized area is at its core. Three other urbanized areas extend into this region: Kalamazoo area extends into Mattawan area; South Bend area extends into Niles area; and the Michigan City area extends into Grand Beach area.



1.2 Methodology



1.3 Overview

What is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

- Brings together the public and private sectors
- Creates economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economy
- Analyzes regional economy, is a guide for establishing regional goals, develops and implements a regional plan, and identifies investment priorities and funding sources
- Integrates a region's human and physical capital planning
- Integrates economic development planning to provide flexibility to adapt to global economic conditions and fully utilize the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting private investment that creates jobs for the region's residents



1.4 Strategic Partners

Creating a shared economic vision and strategy for the Southwest Michigan region requires engaging numerous strategic partner organizations. All of these partners share economic development responsibilities and talent in the region. Many strategic partner organizations were offered a membership on the CEDS Strategy Committee. (More on the CEDS Strategy Committee is found in the next section.) All of the groups noted below serve as strategic partners for this CEDS and the region.

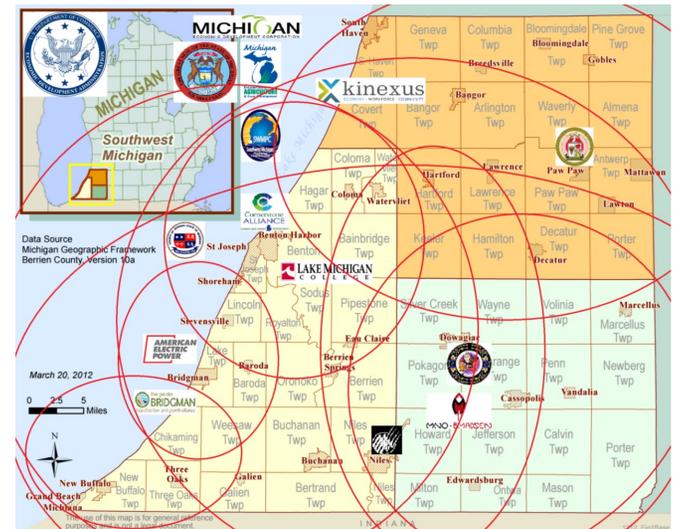
The Southwest Michigan Economic Development District is actively engaged with representatives from the United States federal government (e.g., EDA), the State of Michigan (e.g., Michigan Economic Development Corporation), and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi (including the Tribal Council and Mno-Bmadsen – the investment enterprise of the Pokagon Band).

Southwest Michigan is comprised of three counties: Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren, including a total of thirteen cities, twenty villages, and 55 townships. That is a total of ninety-one local units of government and a separate sovereign nation. Each county has its own economic development staff and body. Several other local units of government also have dedicated staff and bodies assigned economic development responsibilities.

Southwest Michigan is also served by several additional economic development organizations, variously providing advocacy, networking, legislative tracking, business and workforce development, site selection, capital acquisition, and brand development, such as: Cornerstone Alliance, Southwestern

Michigan Economic Growth Alliance (SMEGA), Kinexus (Michigan Works!), and Southwest Michigan First. Utilities such as Indiana Michigan Power also have economic development services.

Michigan's Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council was created in 2013, and chaired by the CEOs of Whirlpool and Lakeland HealthCare. It has assembled an ever-growing body of community, business, education, and organizational representatives working together to create a greater understanding of the region's critical issues, current competitive position, and the gap between where the community is today versus where we want to be in the future. The group identifies strategic priorities for job creation, talent development and strengthened delivery of government services against reality-based planning. Their vision: "Michigan's Great Southwest is a vibrant and prosperous region to live, learn, work, invest, grow, play and retire for everyone!"



The region has several overlapping strategic partners.

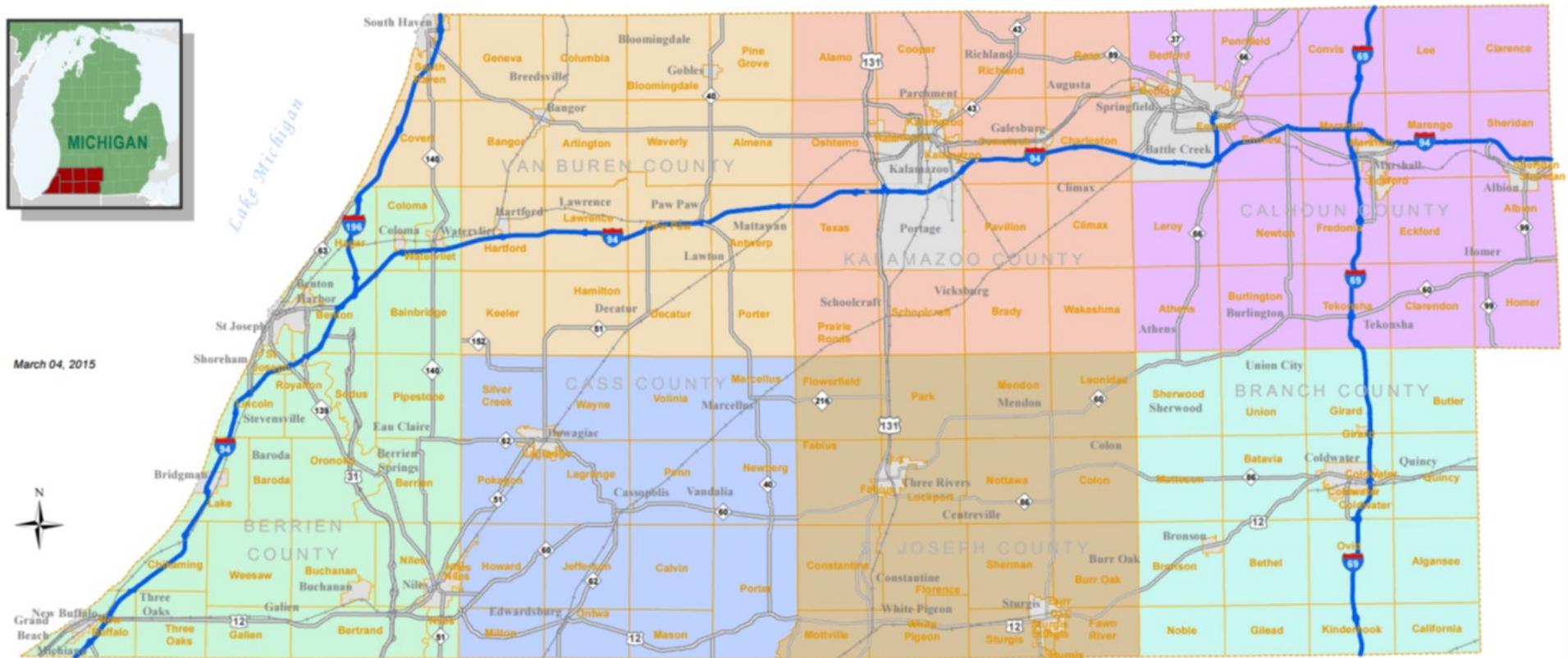
1.4 Strategic Partners (continued): Regional Prosperity Initiative – Region 8

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder created the Regional Prosperity Initiative to encourage regional private, public and non-profit partners to create vibrant regional economies. The Regional Prosperity Initiative created ten prosperity regions across the state.

The Regional Prosperity Initiative's Region 8 includes seven counties in Southwest Michigan — Berrien, Branch, Cass, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. However, this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy just focuses on Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.

In 2014 the Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Collaborative (SMRPC) Committee was formed with representation from regional private, public and non-profit partners in adult education, workforce development, economic development, transportation, and higher education organizations.

The SMRPC Committee created the [Southwest Michigan Prosperity Region 5-Year Prosperity Plan](#) as an economic development blueprint. And a year later they issued [Volume 2](#). The SMRPC Committee also established a [Regional Prosperity Dashboard](#).



1.5 CEDS Strategy Committee

The CEDS Strategic Committee held a series of four monthly meetings between May and August 2017 for developing the framework of a regional strategy for economic development in Southwest Michigan. This team was made up of public elected officials, public appointed officials, economic development organizations, workforce development, higher education, community leaders, private sector, finance, utilities, and minority leaders.



CEDS Strategy Committee Membership (2017)

Member	Title	Organization	Committee Member Role
Calli Berg	Executive Director	Greater Bridgman Chamber & Growth Alliance	Community leader; economic dev. org
Troy Clay	President and CEO	Mno-Bmadsen	Economic dev. org; minority
Matt Davis	President, P.E., LEED AP	Wightman & Associates, Inc.	Private sector
K. John Egelhaaf	Executive Director	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission	Economic development org
Dan Fette	Community Development Director	Berrien County	Economic development org
Karen Folks	County Administrator	Cass County	Public official
Barkley Garrett	Executive Director	Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance	Economic development org
Debbie Gillespie	Director, Workforce Outreach	Lake Michigan College	Higher education; workforce development
Jodi Gruner	Economic Development Specialist	Michigan Dept. of Agriculture & Rural Development	Economic development org
Shane Kissack	Business Development Manager	Cornerstone Alliance	Economic development org
Shelley Klug	Manager of Economic & Business Development	Indiana Michigan Power (AEP)	Economic development organization; utility
Zachary Morris	Economic Development Coordinator	Van Buren County/ Kinexus	Economic development org
Jeff Noel	VP Communications and Public Affairs	Whirlpool Corporation	Private sector
Mark Parrish	Tribal Council Member/ Secretary	Pokagon Band Tribal Council	Public elected official; minority
Gail Patterson-Gladney	County Commissioner	Van Buren County	Public elected official; minority
Dan Peat	Chief Strategy Officer	Kinexus (Michigan Works!)	Economic development org; workforce dev.
Emily Petz	Community Development Team	Michigan Economic Development Corporation	Economic development org
Linda Preston	Supervisor/ MTA Chair	Pokagon Twp/ SWMPC	Public elected official; economic dev. org
Kate Seaman	VP, Sr. Treasury Management Officer	Horizon Bank	Private sector; finance
Stephen Vicenzi	Chief Financial Officer	Van Buren County	Public official; finance
Bill Wolf	County Administrator	Berrien County	Public official
Gary Wood	Planning Commissioner	Chikaming Township Planning Commission	Community leader; public official

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 EDA Primary Criteria for Distress

The Economic Development Administration’s primary criteria for economic distress are the unemployment rate, per capita income (American Community Survey five-year average), and per capita personal income (from the Bureau of Economic Analysis). The two fundamental EDA requirements are that the 24-month unemployment rate be at least one point higher than the U.S. rate and that per capita income be 80 percent or less than the U.S. rate.

Table 1: Economic Distress Criteria — Primary Elements

	County Region	U.S.	Threshold Calculations
24-month Average Unemployment Rate (BLS) period ending August 2017	4.86	4.76	0.1
2015 Per Capita Money Income (5-year ACS)	\$24,303	\$28,930	84.01%
2015 Per Capita Personal Income (BEA)	\$40,117	\$48,112	83.38%

County Region and Report Area: Throughout this chapter the terms "County Region" and "Report Area" are used on tables, graphs, and charts to stand for the southwestern Michigan three-county region of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.

Table 2: Economic Distress Criteria — Geographic Components

	24 Month Unemp.	Threshold Calculation	BEA PCPI	Threshold Calculation	Census PCMI (2000)	Threshold Calculation	ACS 5-Year PCMI	Threshold Calculation
Berrien County	4.71	-0.05	\$41,939	87.2	\$19,952	92.4	\$25,241	87.2
Cass County	4.48	-0.28	\$38,838	80.7	\$19,474	90.2	\$24,314	84
Van Buren County	5.44	0.68	\$37,247	77.4	\$17,878	82.8	\$22,358	77.3

Sources: U.S. Bureaus of Census, Labor Statistics, and Economic Analysis; Calculations generated by StatsAmerica.

Table 3: Total Population, Total Income, and Per Capita Income

Report Area	Total Population	Total Income (\$)	Per Capita Income (\$)
Report Area	282,868	\$6,874,445,900	\$24,302
Berrien County, MI	155,565	\$3,926,612,200	\$25,240
Cass County, MI	51,952	\$1,263,172,800	\$24,314
Van Buren County, MI	75,351	\$1,684,660,900	\$22,357
Michigan	9,900,571	\$263,420,822,500	\$26,606
United States	316,515,021	\$9,156,731,836,300	\$28,929



Note: This indicator is compared with the state average.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2011-15. Source geography: Tract

Non-labor personal income within the three-county region show that across most indicators, the region is either on pace (dividends, interest, rent and other transfer payments), or outpacing the U.S. average. The areas where non-labor income outpace the U.S. average reinforce that the region’s population of individuals of retirement age is larger than the U.S. average.

Table 4: Percent Total Personal Income in Non-Labor Income, County Region vs. U.S., 2015

	Income Share	Location Quotient	Income Share	Location Quotient
	County Region	U.S.	County Region vs. U.S.	County Region vs. U.S.
Dividends, Interest, & Rent	16.7%	18.8%	0.9	
Age-Related Transfer Payments	14.9%	9.7%	1.5	
Hardship-Related Transfer Payments	7.6%	5.5%	1.4	
Other Transfer Payments	2.1%	2.1%	1.0	

• In 2015, age-related transfer payments had the highest location quotient score (1.5) and dividends, interest, & rent had the lowest (0.9).

■ County Region ■ U.S.

2.2 Population

The three-county regional population has experienced an overall drop of -1.54 percent or 4,456 residents. This rate of population loss over the decade between 2000-2010 is a percentage point greater than that of the State of Michigan, a population “donor” state. The population loss in the three-county region is constituted almost entirely within Berrien County. While Van Buren County has remained almost completely unchanged across the decade, and Cass County has gained some population, Berrien County has lost almost 3.5 percent of its residents.

Moreover, the average annual population change calculated from natural change and net migration shows a net loss of -8,656 for the period of 2000-2015 for the three-county region.

Table 5:

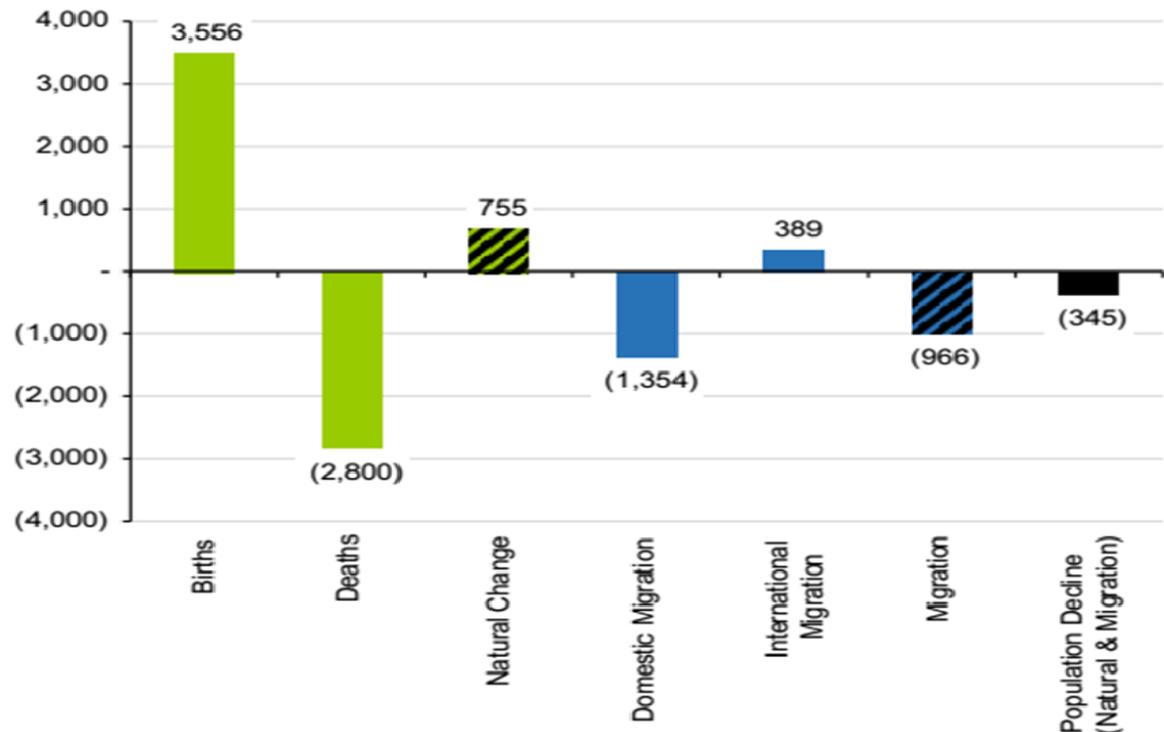
Change in Total Population

According to the United States Census Bureau Decennial Census, between 2000 and 2010 the population in the report area fell by 4,456 persons, a change of -1.54%. A significant positive or negative shift in total population over time impacts healthcare providers and the utilization of community resources.

Report Area	Total Population, 2000 Census	Total Population, 2010 Census	Total Population Change, 2000-2010	Percent Population Change, 2000-2010
Report Area	289,820	285,364	-4,456	-1.54%
Berrien County, MI	162,453	156,813	-5,640	-3.47%
Cass County, MI	51,104	52,293	1,189	2.33%
Van Buren County, MI	76,263	76,258	-5	-0.01%
Michigan	9,937,769	9,883,640	-54,129	-0.54%
United States	280,405,781	307,745,539	27,339,758	9.75%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [Decennial Census](#), 2000 - 2010. Source geography: Tract

Graph 1: Average Annual Components of Population Change, County Region, 2000-2015



2.3 Employment/Industrial Clusters

Employment in the three-county region of Southwest Michigan reflects the critical importance of manufacturing in the regional economy. Historical data shows generally how “non-service related” employment began to be eclipsed by service sector jobs within the regional economy in the late 1970s. Prior to that point, by itself, the manufacturing sector represented more jobs than the entire cluster of jobs classified by the Standard Industry Classification (SIC) as “service.”

By the mid-1990s more jobs were held in the service sector than the manufacturing sector. When the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) was implemented by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) in 2001, the service sector was more completely subdivided than within the SIC. With that finer-grained analysis (less clustering of multiple jobs into the “service” designation), it is possible to see that manufacturing held the preeminent place in the regional job market until the recession of 2008. At that point what had been a steady decline in manufacturing jobs became a precipitous drop.

Since 2009 manufacturing jobs have steadily and consistently been regaining the jobs lost in the early 2000s. Manufacturing remains a vital sector in the Southwest Michigan regional economy. The historical data on earnings by sector represents this fact. Even through its decline in jobs in the early 2000s it remained the highest performing sector in earnings. By 2015 the levels of earnings had returned to the level prior to the 2008 recession and were on the incline.

Other economic sectors that show strength in the region include: health care and social assistance; retail trade; accommodation and food; real estate, rental, and leasing; and administration and waste services. Of the above group, retail trade, and health care and social assistance occupy the greatest portion of the job market and earnings by sector.

- From 1970 to 2000, jobs in non-services related industries shrank from 51,967 to 43,033, a 17% decrease.
- From 1970 to 2000, jobs in services related industries grew from 40,513 to 76,530, a 89% increase.
- From 1970 to 2000, jobs in government grew from 12,636 to 17,257, a 37% increase.

- In 2000 the three industry sectors with the largest number of jobs were services (35,692 jobs), retail trade (23,876 jobs), and government (17,257 jobs).
- From 1970 to 2000, the three industry sectors that added the most new jobs were services (20,576 new jobs), retail trade (8,337 new jobs), and government (4,621 new jobs).

Chart 1: Employment by Major Industry Category, County Region

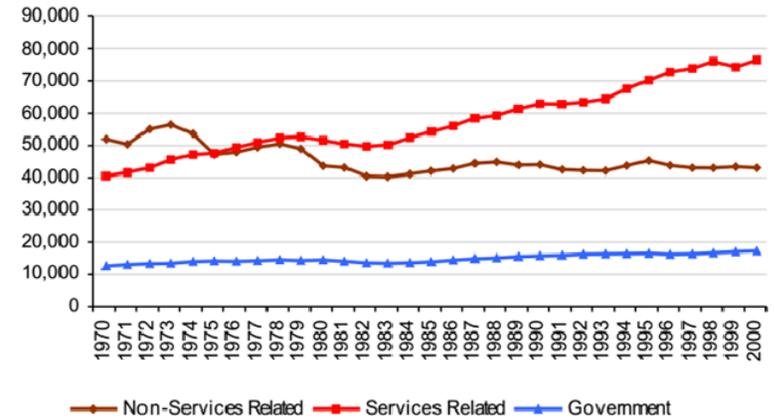
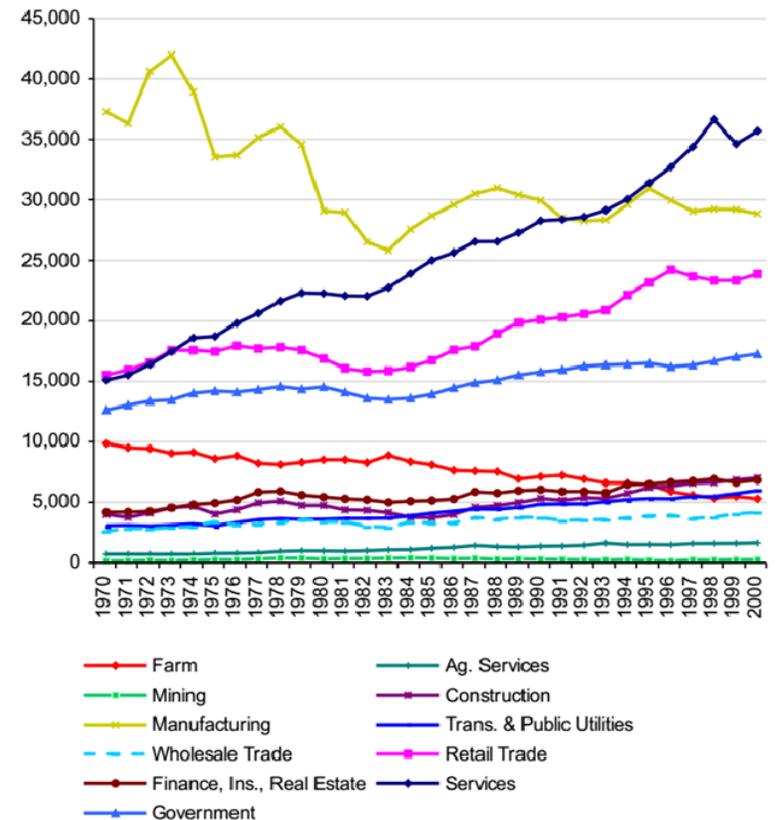


Chart 2: Employment by Industry, County Region



Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2016. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Accounts, Table CA25.

Chart 3: Employment by Major Industry Category, County Region

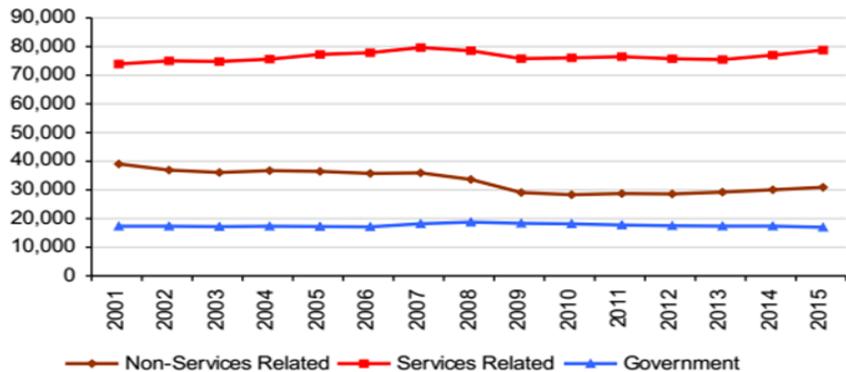


Chart 5: Earnings by Major Industry Category, County Region

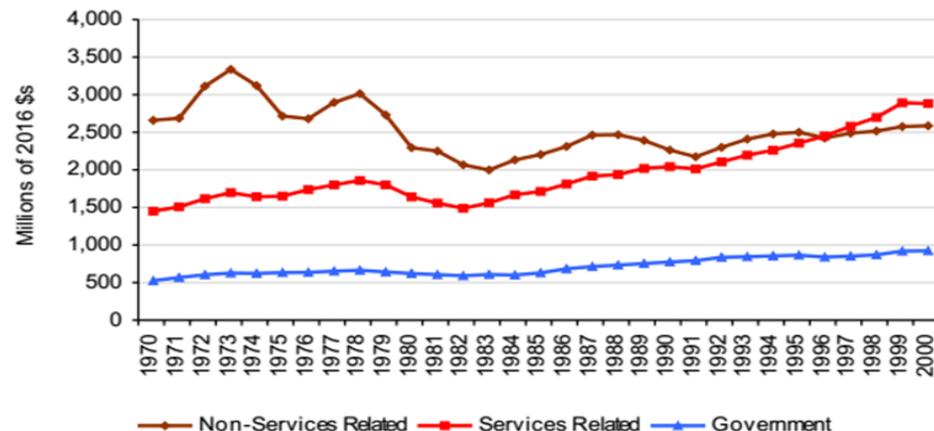


Chart 4: Employment by Industry, County Region

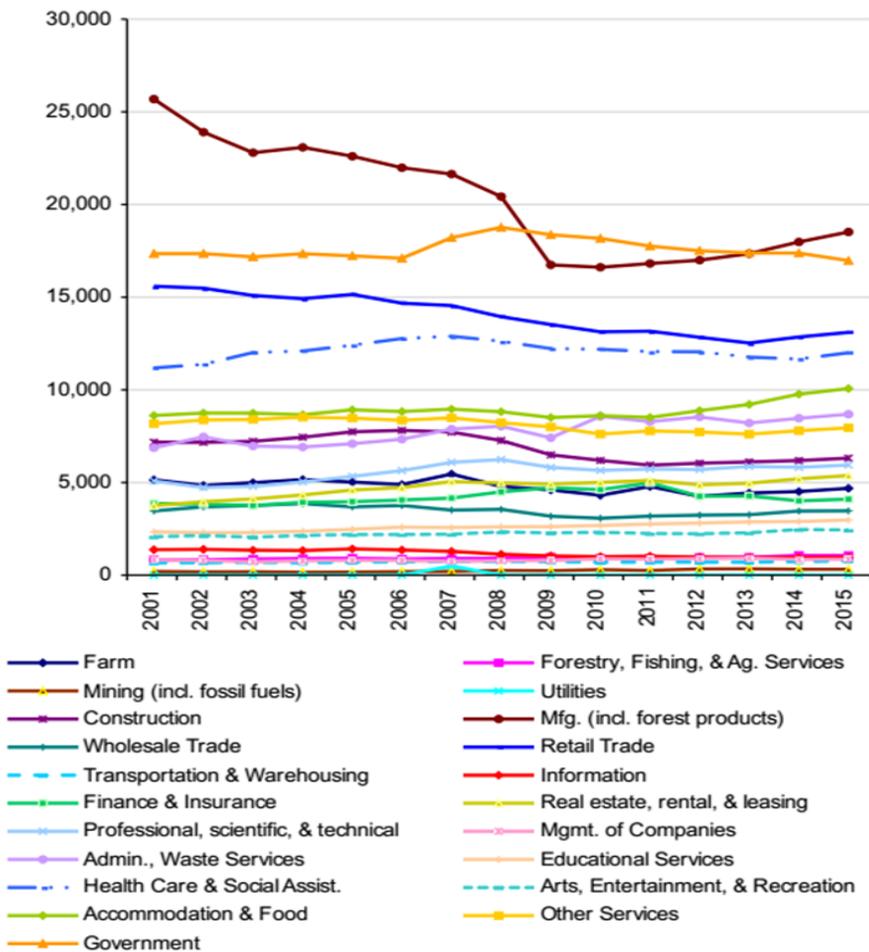


Chart 6: Earnings by Industry, County Region

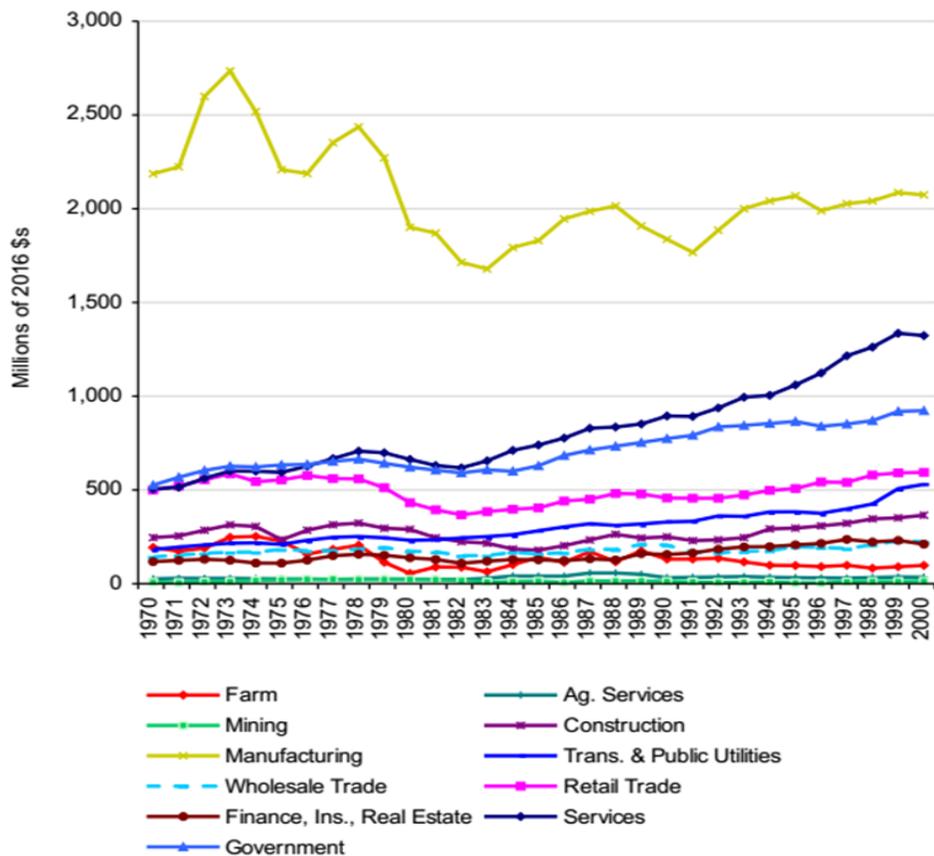


Chart 7: Earnings by Major Industry Category, County Region

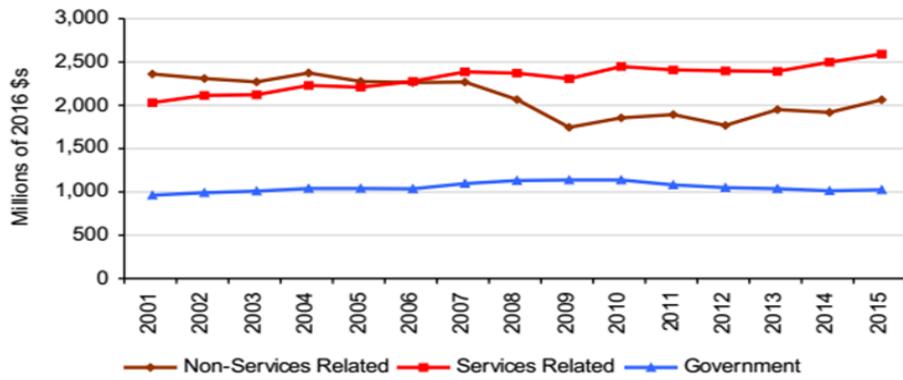
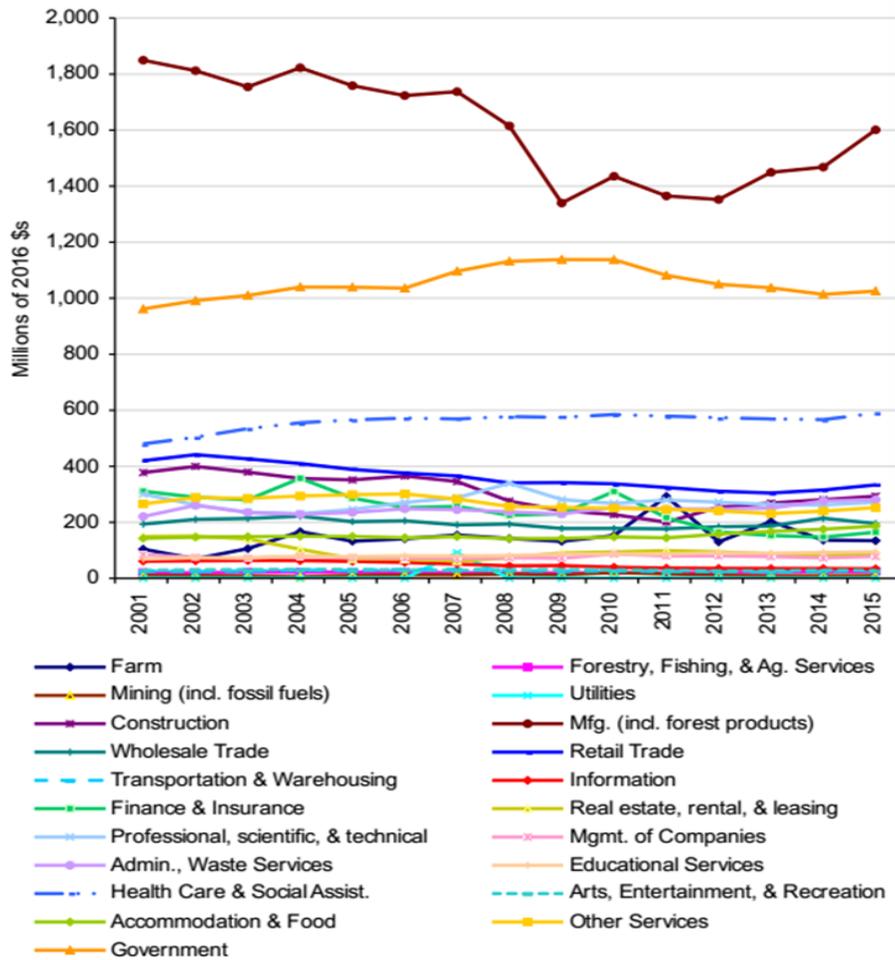
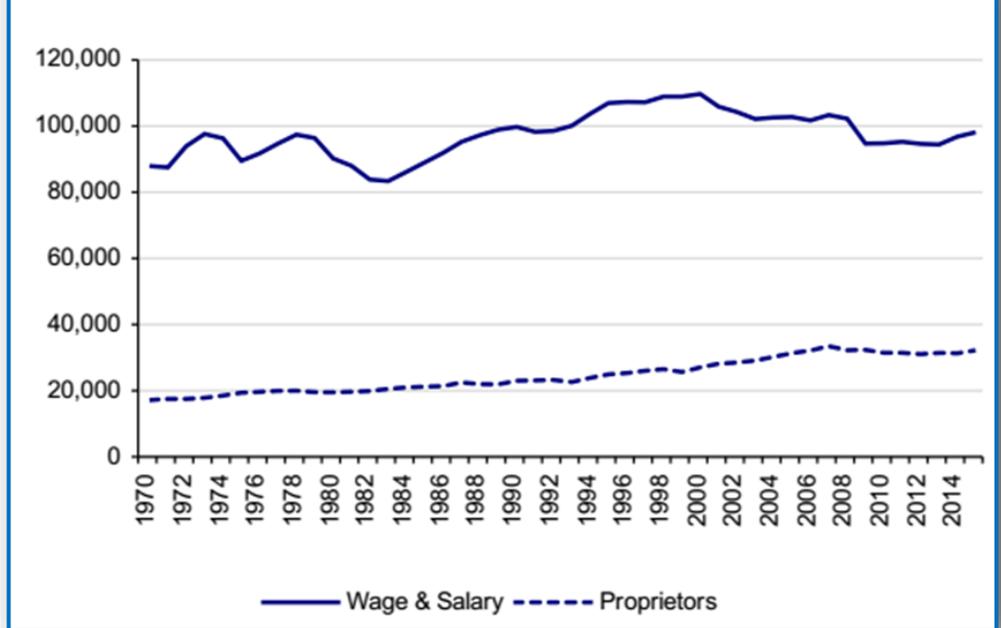


Chart 8: Earnings by Industry, County Region



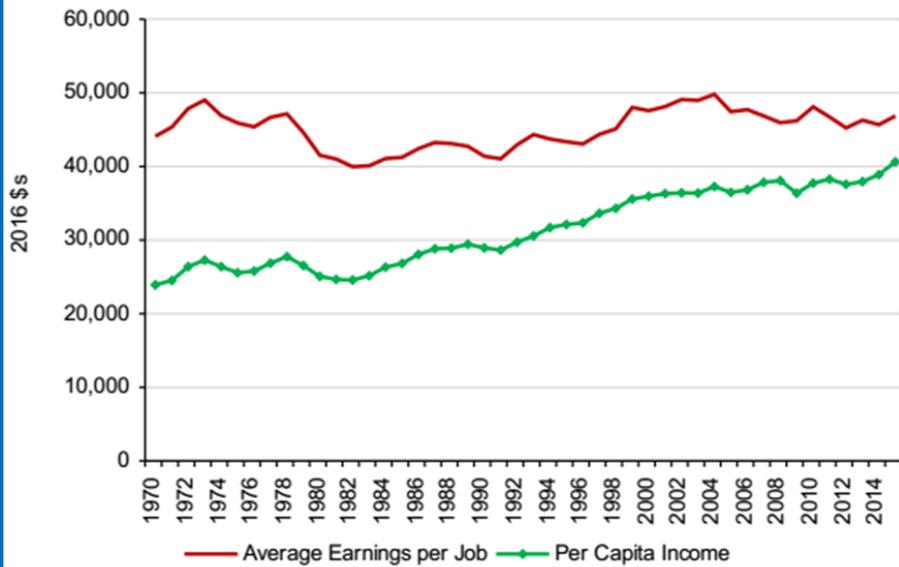
The historical trends for employment in wage and salary positions (full and part-time) showed general growth since 1970. However, since a peak in the late 1990s a general downward trend has been visible through 2015. The trend for proprietors (the self-employed) has been consistent increase in employment. From 1970 to 2015 the self-employed portion of employment grew 88 percent.

Chart 9: Components of Employment, County Region

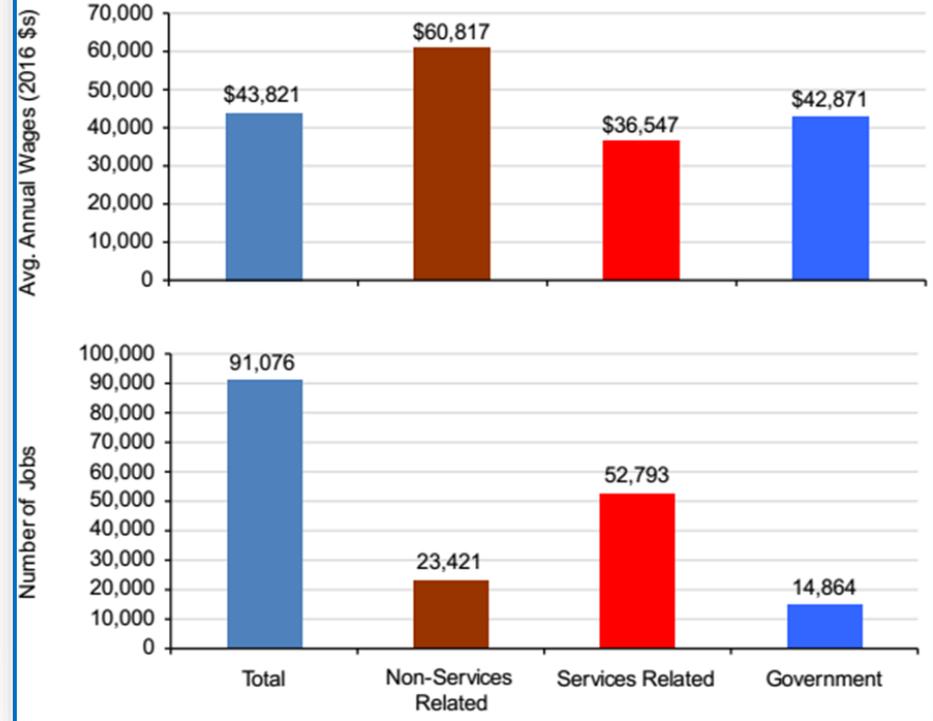


From 1970 through 2015 the earnings per job in the region increased in real terms from an average of \$44,102 to \$46,859. A modest decline had been experienced through 2015 since a thirty-year high in 2004. Per capita income has shown a more consistent and unabated increase since 1970. Aside from a dip during the 2008 recession, per capita income has grown 70 percent in real terms since 1970; from \$23,917 to \$40,639.

Chart 10: Average Earnings per Job & Per Capita Income, County Region



Graphs 2-3: Wages & Employment by Major Industry, County Region, 2015



Distribution of wages across major industries as of 2015 again demonstrates the significance of manufacturing jobs to the region. Though non-service jobs are outnumbered by more than 2:1 against those that are service related, average annual wages are 66 percent higher for non-service jobs. Non-service jobs pay wages that are 39 percent higher than the average in the region.

2.4 Agriculture

Counties within the region are well represented among the top five producers in Michigan in a variety of agricultural products according to the 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture (see table on the next page). As a testament to the unique growing conditions in Southwest Michigan, among the seven types of fruits and vegetables for which Michigan counties are ranked, Berrien County is in the top five in four of them. Van Buren County is ranked in three, while Cass County is ranked in two. No other Michigan county appears more than twice. Both Berrien and Van Buren counties appear in the top five for apple production (fourth and fifth respectively). Van Buren is the top blueberry producer in Michigan while Berrien is ranked fifth. Berrien and Van Buren are first and second in grape production respectively and Cass County is fifth. Van Buren is third and Berrien fifth in asparagus. Cass County is second in snap beans. For livestock, Cass County also appears as the second ranked producer of hogs and pigs.

Table 6: Principal counties for livestock ¹

Rank	January 1, 2015 Cattle and Calves	Hogs and pigs ²	January 1, 2015 Milk cows
1	Huron	Allegan	Huron
2	Sanilac	Cass	Clinton
3	Clinton	Ionia	Allegan
4	Allegan	Mecosta	Ionia
5	Ionia	Gratiot	Gratiot

¹ Based on number of head. ² Based on 2012 Census of Agriculture

From 1970 through 2015 regional farm employment shrank from 9,860 jobs to 4,690, a 52.4 percent decrease. During that same period net income shrank from \$89.2 million to \$32.9 million, a 63.1 percent decrease. These data represent a farm paradox in the region. The region is richly blessed with an abundance of prime, well-drained farm soils and unique microclimates that equate to remarkable agricultural potential. The potential resides in both the tremendous variety and quality of the products that are possible to grow. Moreover, the proximity of the region to major metropolitan centers (Chicago – 100 miles, Detroit – under 200 miles, Indianapolis – under 200 miles) means that markets for diverse and high quality produce are virtually at the region’s doorstep. Yet we see that historically the agricultural sector seems to represent a relatively small portion of the economy. Over the last five years, the value-added agriculture sector devoted specifically to the production of craft beverages has grown impressively. Many believe that it is within the production of value-added artisanal products where the greatest agricultural opportunities seem to lie for the foreseeable future.

Graph 3: Approximate Percent of Land Area in Farms, 2012

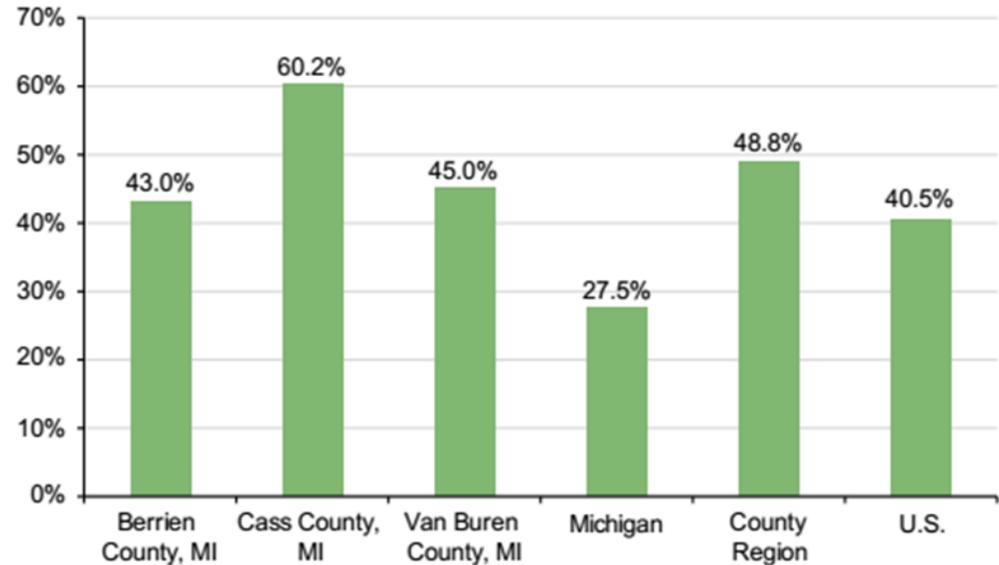
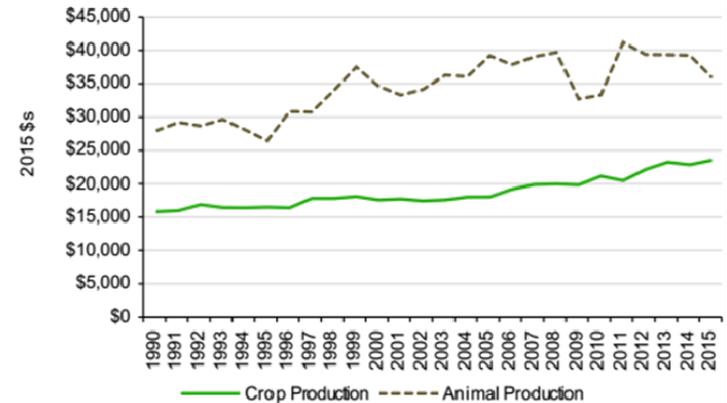


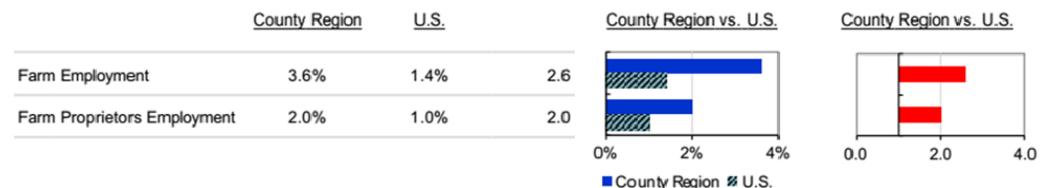
Chart 11: Avg. Annual Wages in Crop & Animal Production, County Region

- From 1990 to 2015, average annual wages in crop production grew from \$15,814 to \$23,542, a 48.9 percent increase.
- From 1990 to 2015, average annual wages in animal production grew from \$27,951 to \$35,868, a 28.3 percent increase.



Data Sources: U.S. Department of Labor. 2016. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Graph 4: Farm Equipment and Farm Proprietors Employment Comparison



- In 2015, farm employment had the highest location quotient score (2.6) and farm proprietors employment had the lowest (2).



Table 7: Principal counties for fruits and vegetables, 2012 ¹

Rank	Apples	Blueberries	Grapes	Tart Cherries	Asparagus	Cucumbers	Snap beans
1	Kent	Van Buren	Berrien	Oceana	Oceana	Saginaw	St. Joseph
2	Oceana	Ottawa	Van Buren	Leelanau	Mason	Bay	Cass
3	Ottawa	Allegan	Leelanau	Antrim	Van Buren	Gratiot	Kalamazoo
4	Berrien	Muskegon	Grand Traverse	Grand Traverse	Mecosta	Allegan	Branch
5	Van Buren	Berrien	Cass	Mason	Berrien	Tuscola	Mason

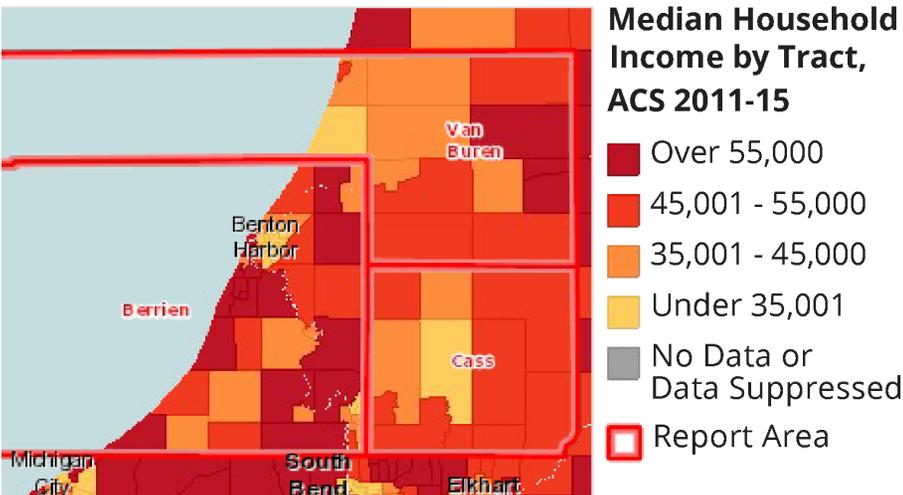
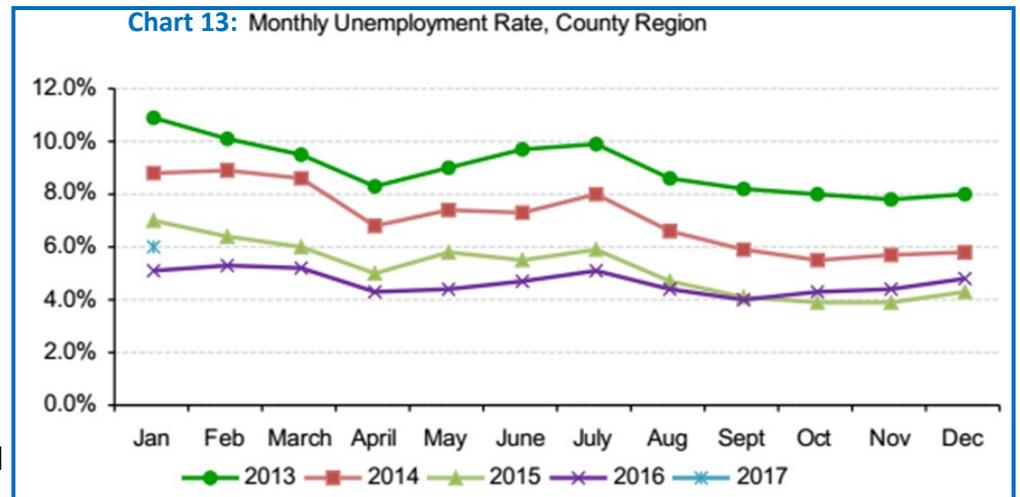
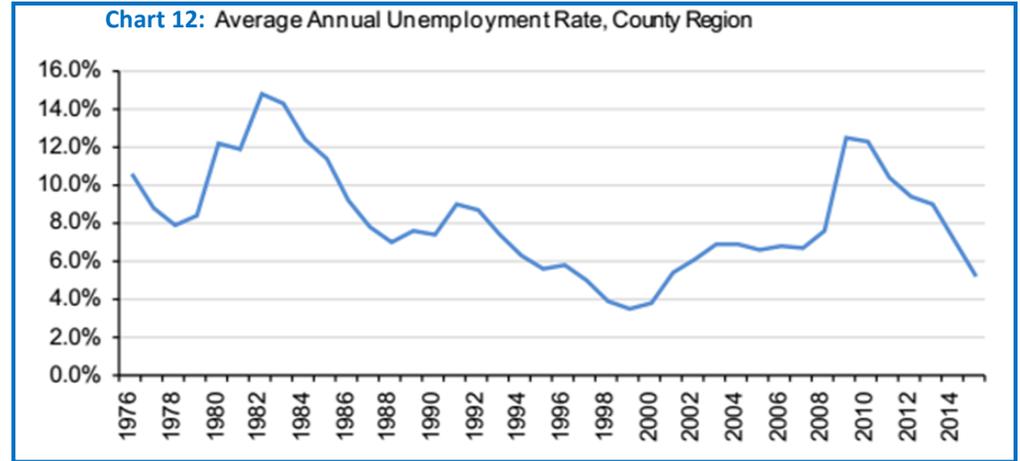
¹ Based on acres from 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Iconic: The collection above of seals, badges, icons, and symbols represents a sampling of the impact agriculture continues to have on Southwest Michigan, especially economically and culturally, such as festivals, farmers markets, farm stands, and value added agricultural products, from prepared foods to wineries and microbreweries, leading into agritourism.

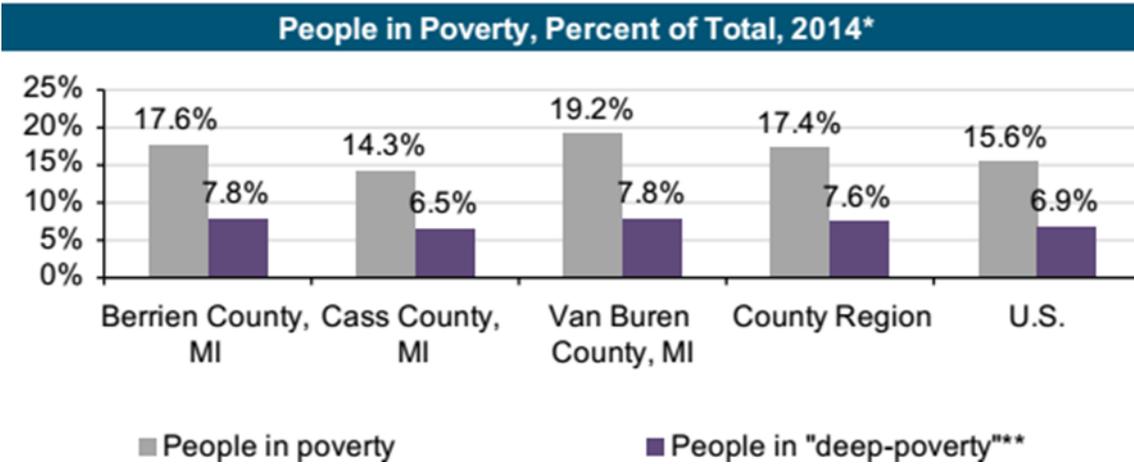
2.5 Unemployment

The unemployment rate for the region has been trending sharply downward since its most recent peak in 2010 (at over 12 percent). The regional average annual unemployment rate for 2015 was at its lowest since 2001. As of August 2017 the 24-month average for the region was 4.86 percent.

Naturally, there is fluctuation in the unemployment rate between the three counties of Southwest Michigan. Accordingly, the regional average masks pockets of deep unemployment and poverty throughout the three counties. In the City of Benton Harbor the U.S. Census reports that the median household income from 2011-2015 was \$18,085. The per capita income for the last 12 months was \$10,309 and 50.3 percent of the population was in poverty. In the City of Niles the median household income was \$33,651, per capita income was \$17,095, and 28.1 percent of the population was in poverty. Median income in the City of Buchanan was \$41,339, while 16.3 percent of the population was below poverty. The Michigan average for each of these metrics were: median household income \$49,576, per capita income \$26,607, and persons in poverty 15.0 percent.

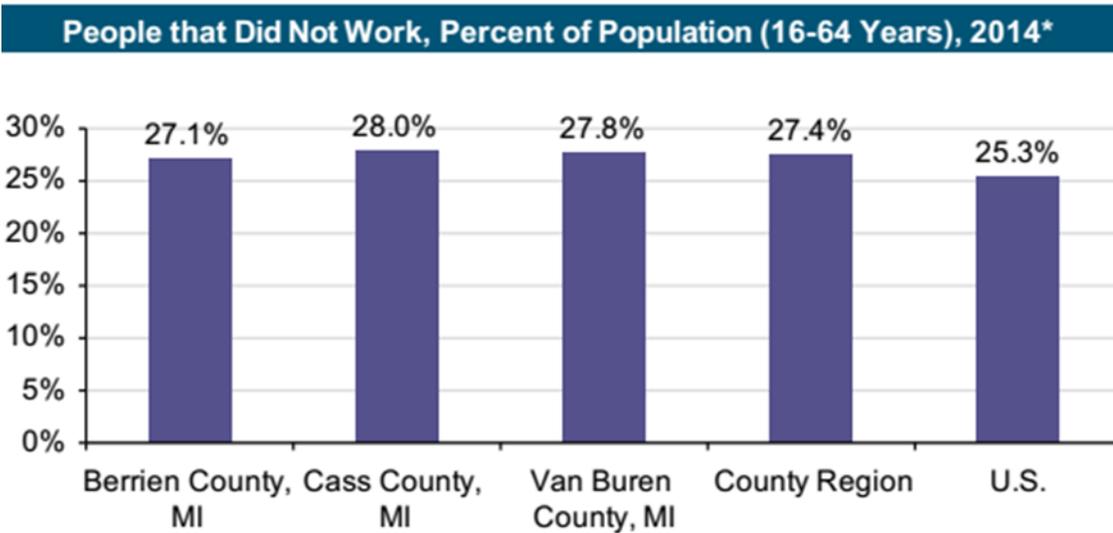


Graph 5:



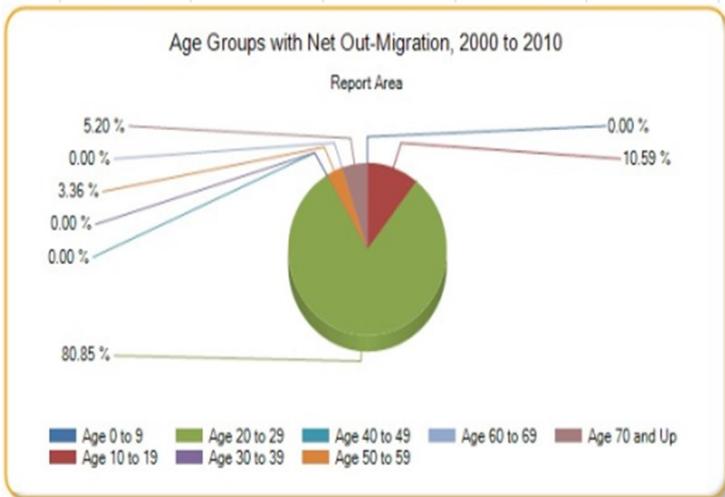
More than 27 percent of people in the region that are between the ages of 16 and 64 did not work in 2014. That is more than two percent higher than the U.S. average in a year when unemployment was below 6 percent.

Graph 6:



2.6 Migration

The region lost population between the previous U.S. Census (2000) and the most current (2010). Though the percentage of population lost during that period was similar to that of the State of Michigan; -4.28 percent in Southwest Michigan versus -4.45 percent statewide. The migration of young adults represented a very significant portion of the loss. Fifteen percent of the regional population between the ages of 20-39 were lost to migration. Statewide, the same cohort showed a negative migration of -9.63 percent while nationally there was a gain of 7.21 percent.



At 4.93 percent, the regional rate of population in-migration is slightly behind the rate for Michigan generally (5.69 percent) and the U.S. at 6.11 percent. This relatively small rate of in-migration does not balance the out-migration rate.

Table 8: Net Migration Rate

Report Area	Starting Population (2000)	Ending Population (2010)	Natural Change	Net Migration	Migration Rate
Report Area	276,260	285,097	21,580	-12,741	-4.28%
Berrien County, MI	155,251	156,742	11,777	-10,283	-6.16%
Cass County, MI	48,835	52,152	2,570	744	1.45%
Van Buren County, MI	72,174	76,203	7,233	-3,202	-4.03%
Michigan	9,439,059	9,881,652	902,849	-460,249	-4.45%
United States	267,981,052	309,745,042	30,987,709	10,776,072	3.6%

Note: This indicator is compared with the state average.

Data Source: [University of Wisconsin Net Migration Patterns for US Counties](#), 2000 to 2010. Source geography: County

Net Migration Rate, 2000 to 2010



Table 9:

Migration Patterns - Young Adult

This indicator reports the net migration rate of young adults (age 20-39) between 2000 and 2010. This indicator is important because Millennials now constitute the largest proportion of the workforce, and their migration patterns affect the viability of local economies across the United States.

Report Area	Starting Population (2000)	Ending Population (2010)	Natural Change	Net Migration	Migration Rate
Report Area	72,616	63,456	2,038	-11,195	-15%
Berrien County, MI	41,345	35,583	587	-6,347	-15.14%
Cass County, MI	12,381	10,808	206	-1,779	-14.13%
Van Buren County, MI	18,890	17,065	1,245	-3,069	-15.24%
Michigan	2,807,517	2,461,018	-84,240	-262,257	-9.63%
United States	82,285,240	83,662,776	-4,246,194	5,623,696	7.21%

Note: This indicator is compared with the state average.

Data Source: [University of Wisconsin Net Migration Patterns for US Counties](#), 2000 to 2010. Source geography: County

Net Migration Rate of Young Adults, 2000 to 2010

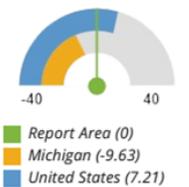


Table 10: Population and In-Migration

Report Area	Total Population	Population In-Migration	Percent Population In-Migration
Report Area	279,866	13,805	4.93%
Berrien County, MI	153,801	7,576	4.93%
Cass County, MI	51,412	2,747	5.34%
Van Buren County, MI	74,653	3,482	4.66%
Michigan	9,790,525	556,646	5.69%
United States	312,784,059	19,121,884	6.11%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2011-15. Source geography: Tract

2.7 Broadband Internet

Access to internet is an important metric by which to evaluate the environment for education and employment. The region's access to download (DL) speeds greater than 10 Mbps rates consistently high relative to the rates of access across the State of Michigan and the U.S. Availability of the fastest level of broadband (that exceeding 25 Mbps) is slightly below the state and U.S. averages.

Table 11: Broadband Access

Report Area	Total Population (2014)	Access to DL Speeds > 6MBPS	Access to DL Speeds > 10MBPS	Access to DL Speeds > 25MBPS
Report Area	282,251	99.91%	99.75%	80.17%
Berrien County, MI	155,299	100%	100%	87.4%
Cass County, MI	51,775	99.49%	98.61%	74.69%
Van Buren County, MI	75,177	100%	100%	69.02%
Michigan	9,916,306	99.68%	99.5%	89.12%
United States	322,610,903	99.42%	99.24%	86.71%

Note: This indicator is compared with the state average.

Data Source: [National Broadband Map](#), 2014. Source geography: County

Percentage of Population with Access to Broadband Internet (DL Speeds > 25MBPS)



■ Report Area (80.17%)
 ■ Michigan (89.12%)
 ■ United States (86.71%)

3.0 SWOT ANALYSIS

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted. Forty (40) responses were received and analyzed. Responses were categorized into four main topics:

- Transportation and Other Infrastructure
- Economy
- Quality of Life, Natural Resources, Environment, and Residents’ View of Region, and Public Policy
- Education and Workforce

These responses came from an online survey that was sent to the following community leaders:

- CEDS Strategy Committee members
- County elected and appointed officials/senior staff
- Municipal and township elected and appointed officials
- Chambers of commerce
- Michigan’s Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council members
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission staff

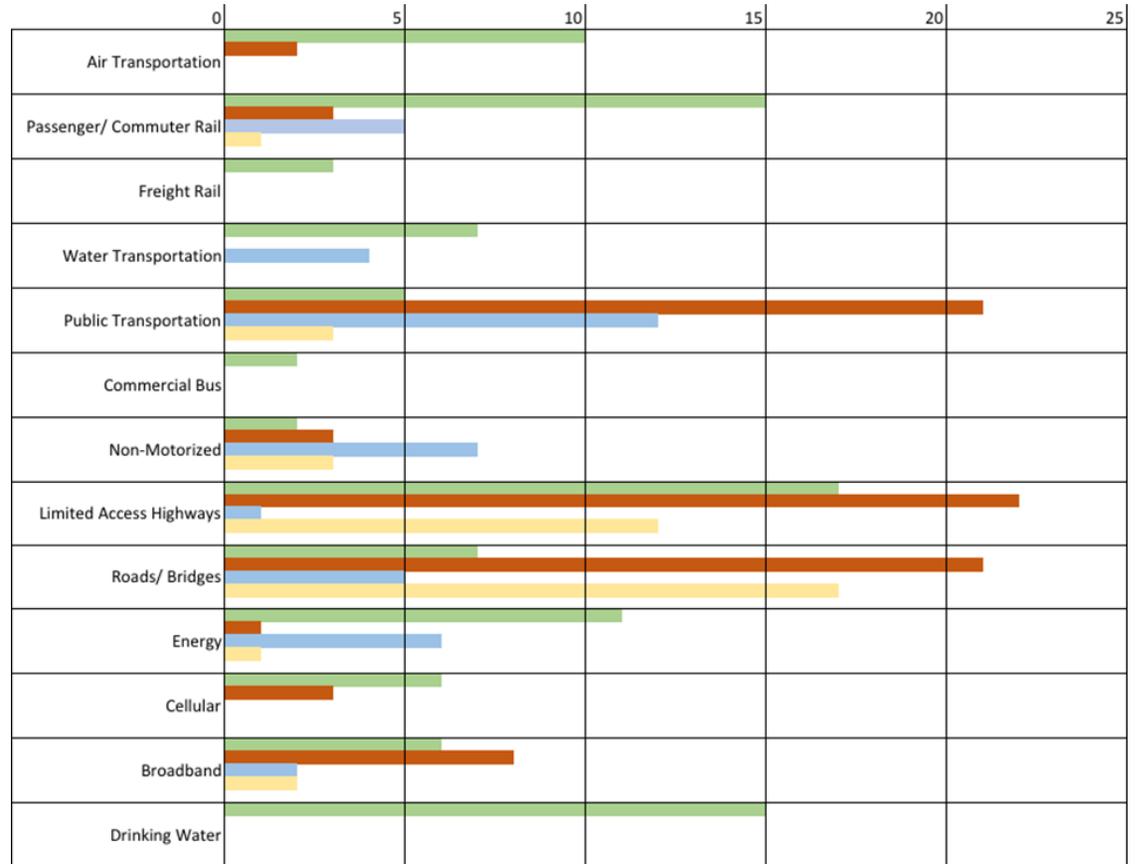
The CEDS Committee used the results of this SWOT analysis to create a shared regional vision, goals and objectives.

The bar graph to the right and those on the following pages show the number of responses in the SWOT survey that were identified as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



Each of the four main topic categories also has a “What people had to say” box with examples from the comments on those topics. A briefly analysis of the SWOT survey comments follow these boxes.

3.1 Transportation and Other Infrastructure



What people had to say:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
“DART bus system, some new bridges (Main Street in Niles) Amtrak station in Niles.”	“Serious lack of transportation for citizens without cars. Communication network not robust (slow or missing in areas).”	“Public transportation options especially high speed rail. Understanding that this is not just a regional but a statewide and national untapped transportation alternative. Alternative energy sources.”	“Lack of money to keep our roads in good condition.”

Air Transportation **S W**

The Southwest Michigan Regional Airport as well as the proximity to international airports provide easy access to other parts of the country and the world. Aging infrastructure, including the regional airport and surrounding airports, are viewed as a weakness.

Passenger/Commuter Rail **S W O T**

Many people in the region view Amtrak and the South Shore Line as a strength. Amtrak has a limited schedule for the area which could make traveling by train difficult. Increasing the number of scheduled trains and future investments in high speed corridors were seen as opportunities. A reduction in funding to Amtrak and aging infrastructure are weaknesses.

Freight Rail **S W**

Freight rail is a strength allowing goods to be shipped to and from the region. Aging infrastructure is seen as a weakness.

Water Transportation **S O**

Having an abundance of water, water transportation is considered a strength and an opportunity. The Twin Cities are an opportune location to start a water taxi.

Public Transportation **S W O T**

There are several public transportation service providers within the region. Public transit allows for individuals within the region to access work, shopping, services, entertainment, and health care. Several survey respondents commented on the lack of service in rural areas and a lack of dependability throughout the region. Strengthening service is a great opportunity for the region whereas continuing with the status quo is seen as a threat.

Non-Motorized **S W O T**

Non-motorized infrastructure has a growing demand in communities and therefore the region should continue to expand and develop new networks. Not considering the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and those with special mobility needs is a threat.



Limited Access Highways **S W O T**

A key strength to the region is the limited access highways that cut through and near the region. These include I-94, I-196, US-31, and nearby I-80/90. The condition of these highways are not ideal in several locations though continued efforts with MDOT can lead to improvements. Failure to maintain an adequate level of service for these limited access highways would threaten the region.

Roads/Bridges **S W O T**

Roads and bridges are vital in transporting people and goods from one point to another. While the region has a strong road network, many of these roads are in poor condition. Local road agencies working together with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and MDOT to prioritize road improvements would strengthen the road and bridge network in the region.

Energy **S W O T**

Many residents view nuclear energy as a safe, reliable, and affordable way to power their homes and businesses. The scheduled closure of Palisades Nuclear Plant, resulting in lost jobs will negatively affect the region. Investment in forms of alternative energy (wind, solar, etc.) is an opportunity. Aging power grid is a threat.

Cellular **S W**

Most urbanized areas within the region have satisfactory cellular service whereas locations that are more rural do not.

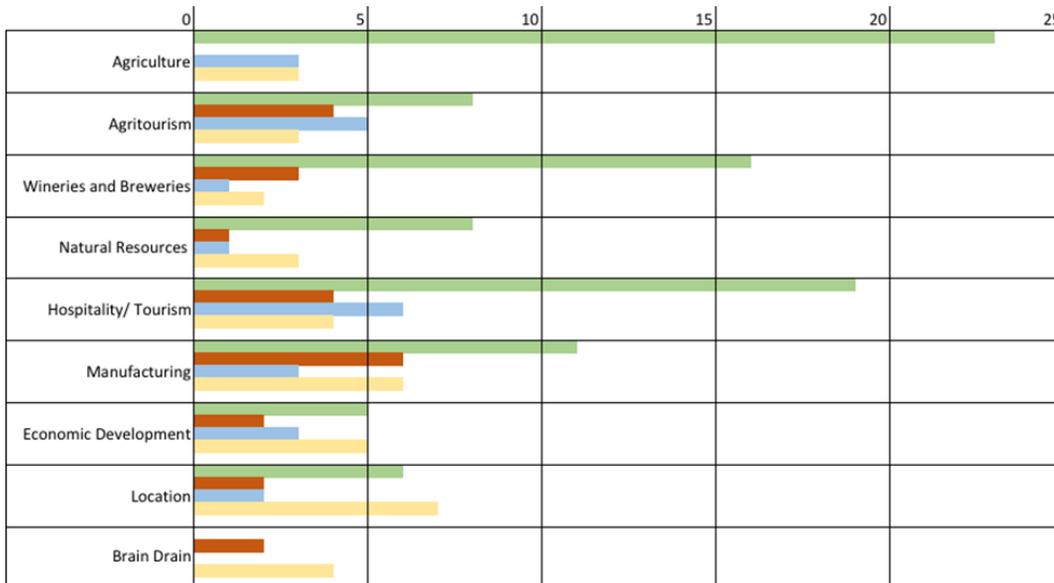
Broadband **S W O T**

Overall, broadband for urban residential areas is at a satisfactory level. However, basic broadband service is lacking in many rural areas. In addition, the quality of service is not always high enough for commercial use. Expanding broadband and strengthening the service would be beneficial to the region by both attracting residents and businesses. Not ensuring that all residents have access to broadband is a threat.

Drinking Water **S**

Clean and affordable drinking water is a strength for the Southwest Michigan.

3.2 Economy



What people had to say:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
“Fresh water, diverse climate, farming, tourism & light manufacturing, access to major regional economic centers.”	“Lack of coordination between units of government, an effective regional road improvement strategy and a robust common economic development vision.”	“Agricultural processing, local food, tourism, alternative energy.”	“By relying on employment that requires a large affluent customer base, like breweries and tourism we are highly susceptible to economic downturns.”

Agriculture S O T

Agriculture is seen as a great strength to the region with a variety of crops and livestock. Continuing to support and grow in this area has potential to benefit the local economy and its residents. Drought and a changing climate are threats to agriculture.

Agritourism S W O T

Agritourism brings residents and visitors alike to enjoy Southwest Michigan’s agriculture. This industry is highlighted throughout the summer months with less activity during the winter. Further investment in agritourism would continue to draw in tourists to the region. As agritourism is based on agriculture, drought and a changing climate would be cause for concern.

Wineries and Microbreweries S W O T

Southwest Michigan offers several wineries and microbreweries. While many locals and tourists can enjoy a pint or glass, there is concern that a potential saturation of the market may weaken the industry. Additional promotion of the area’s wineries and breweries as well as a greater selection of products could continue the growth of this sector.

Natural Resources S W O T

Southwest Michigan is rich in natural resources. Showcasing and caring for the natural wonders of the region could benefit the economy and residents. Pollution is a major threat (see “Pollution” in the next section).

Hospitality/Tourism S W O T

With many attractions in the region, our hospitality and tourism industry plays an important role in local economies. The main weakness to this industry is the fact that much of the tourism occurs during the summer months only. Awareness of this issue and the creation of a greater seasonal balance would strengthen hospitality and tourism. By relying too heavily on tourism, the region could be more susceptible to economic downturns.

Manufacturing S W O T

Manufacturing has been a key player in the three county region and continues to support the livelihoods of many. The manufacturing sector has decreased in size over the past few decades and more recently manufacturers have struggled finding skilled workers. Partnerships between local industry and schools could close the gap of skilled workers. Between automation, outsourcing, and lack of skilled labor, there are several threats to the region’s manufacturing.

Economic Development S W O T

Kinexus and Cornerstone Alliance are seen as strengths for economic development in Southwest Michigan. The tri-county lacks a strong shared economic development vision, which was ranked as the largest weakness and threat to the region by respondents. Economic development agencies in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties that work together to form a shared vision for sustainable economic growth would benefit Southwest Michigan.

Location S W O T

Southwest Michigan is on the shore of beautiful Lake Michigan. The proximity to large cities such as Chicago and Grand Rapids is also a strength. Location is also a weakness and a threat with negative perceptions of Benton Harbor and Detroit. Further promotion of tourism is an opportunity to strengthen the image of Southwest Michigan.

3.3 Quality of Life, Natural Resources, Environment, and Residents' View of Region & Public Policy



What people had to say:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>“Access to water recreation, agriculture, Lake Michigan, low cost of living, parks, public safety.”</p>	<p>“Pockets of poverty due to the lack of employment opportunities for those with few skills; ‘food deserts.’”</p>	<p>“We should consider container housing for low income/veteran/intern housing, business incubators and other applications. We should encourage neighborhood/community gardens to provide families with fresh produce in more populated city areas, with cooking classes and dietary and nutrition education for low-income families.”</p>	<p>“Sprawl is a concern. building more suburban style shopping while certain downtown areas deteriorate.”</p>



Water Recreation **S W O T**

Access to Lake Michigan, inland lakes, rivers, and streams are a strength to the region. Some issues include limited public access points to lakes and lack of proper care of the waterways. Increasing access points is an opportunity for water recreation whereas population is a major threat.

Non-Motorized **S W O T**

Some areas in the tri-county region benefit from non-motorized infrastructure while some areas are still lacking. There is a great opportunity to further connect communities with non-motorized facilities. The region is threatened by the continued reliance on cars and overall lack of connected non-motorized facilities.

Natural Resources/Environment **S W O T**

Southwest Michigan is rich in natural resources and a magnificent environment. Weaknesses include local individuals lacking concern for the region's natural resources, tree diseases, and pollution. Showcasing and caring for the natural wonders of the region could benefit the economy and residents. The major threat is continued pollution (see "Pollution" below).

Parks **S W O**

There are several local and state parks in the region that residents and visitors enjoy. Additional parks and better upkeep could make for a more pleasant experience.

Pollution **T**

A major threat to the region is local and greater regional (e.g. Chicago) pollution, including industrial, vehicle, and water.

Housing **S W O T**

While some communities do a good job in providing affordable and appropriate housing, many others do not. Determining future needs and catering to them may attract more residents to the area. Failure to cater to new trends may have the reverse effect.

Health Care **S W O T**

The region provides quality health care to many resident though it sometimes lacks specialists. Promoting healthy lifestyles will positively affect the area. There is concern of the uncertainty surrounding Medicaid and the health care system as a whole that could leave residents without care.

Cost of Living **S W O T**

Overall utility costs are reasonable, especially considering other parts of Michigan. Some areas lack affordable housing for low-income residents. The construction of new housing could help correct this issue. Low paying jobs are a threat.

Safety **S W T**

The majority of respondents stated that safety was a strength in the region though there still are pockets of crime. The current nation-wide drug epidemic is a threat.

Poverty **W T**

Poverty is a current issue for the region and continues to threaten the area.

Federal Policy **T**

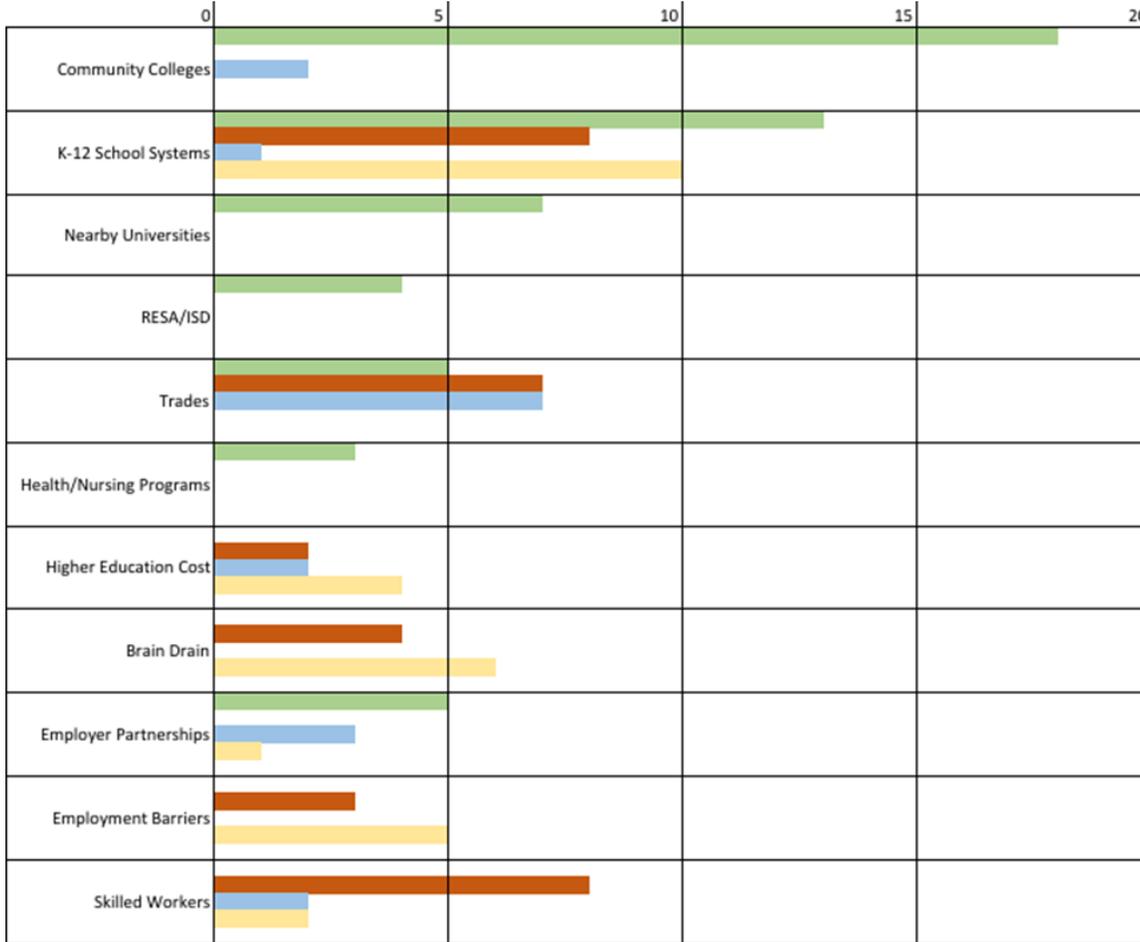
Current federal policy uncertainty is a threat to residents' way of life.

Local Policy **W O T**

Some feel that local policy makers are too focused on the past and unwilling to make changes. Policy changes that focus on the environment and economic competitiveness could benefit the region. Failure to make appropriate policy changes will limit the area to grow.



3.4 Education and Workforce



What people had to say:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
“We have some excellent schools, and I am encouraged by the recent emphasis upon technical/trades training.”	“Losing next generation to larger cities/warmer climates.”	“Better connections between those seeking jobs and those looking for skilled workers. Also, preparing students for the jobs of the future.”	“Cost of higher education is a threat. State and national policies that threaten public education are an even larger threat.”

Community Colleges **S O**

Regional community colleges are a great asset to Southwest Michigan. Expanding the programs these institutions offer could have a positive impact on the community.

K-12 School Systems **S W O T**

Many find the K-12 school systems in the region to be a strength though some still are lacking. Slow adoption of new curricula, state and federal funding cuts, and some students lacking interest in education are threats to the region.

Nearby Universities; RESA/ISD; Health/Nursing Programs **S**

Nearby universities, Berrien RESA, Van Buren ISD, and health/nursing programs were all identified as regional strengths.

Trades **S W O**

Some school systems in the region have solid trade programs, though others fall short. An overall increase in support of these programs could help equip students with the skills necessary for local jobs.

Higher Education Cost **W O T**

Throughout the nation higher education costs are of concern. Southwest Michigan is no different, with students finding it difficult to pay for college. Further cuts from state and federal governments may worsen the problem. An opportunity to help local students would be to increase local scholarships to further their education.

Brain Drain **W T**

The region faces a sizable number of local students leaving the area after graduation. This ongoing issue is a threat to the region.

Employer Partnerships **S O T**

Several businesses in the region have formed partnerships with local schools, community colleges, and other agencies to further train students for local jobs. Continuation and strengthening of these partnerships is an opportunity for the region.

Employment Barriers **W T**

Some employment barriers include access to affordable childcare, reliable transportation, and food security.

Skilled Workers **W O T**

The region lacks skilled workers in some sectors. While this provides the opportunity to attract skilled workers and to train local students, a continuation of the current system is a threat to the local economy.

4.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4.1 Vision

“To cultivate a resilient and competitive economy that supports an excellent quality of life and builds pathways to prosperity for all residents.”

During CEDS Strategic Committee meetings, CEDS related goals from the strategic plans of several Southwest Michigan economic development organizations were analyzed and distilled. Common themes between goal sets were clustered onto infographics (like the one shown to the right, and on the following pages). Economic development groups that shared their existing goals during the exercise included:

- Berrien County
- Cornerstone Alliance (CA)
- Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance (SMEGA)
- Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI R8)
- Michigan’s Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council (MGSSLC)

The CEDS Strategy Committee used the existing conditions analysis, the SWOT analysis, and analysis of the goals of these strategic plans to formulate the CEDS goals listed to the right, and detailed in the following pages. One important opportunity of the CEDS is the ability to synthesize the goals of various Southwest Michigan economic development groups and get everyone to share a vision. This CEDS, and the goals and objectives that follow focus on doing that.

4.2 Goals

Goal #1: Livability for Talent Attraction

Promote a diverse environment that creates an excellent quality of life for talent.

Goal #2: Education & Training

Attract, retain, and develop a high-quality workforce.

Goal #3: Infrastructure

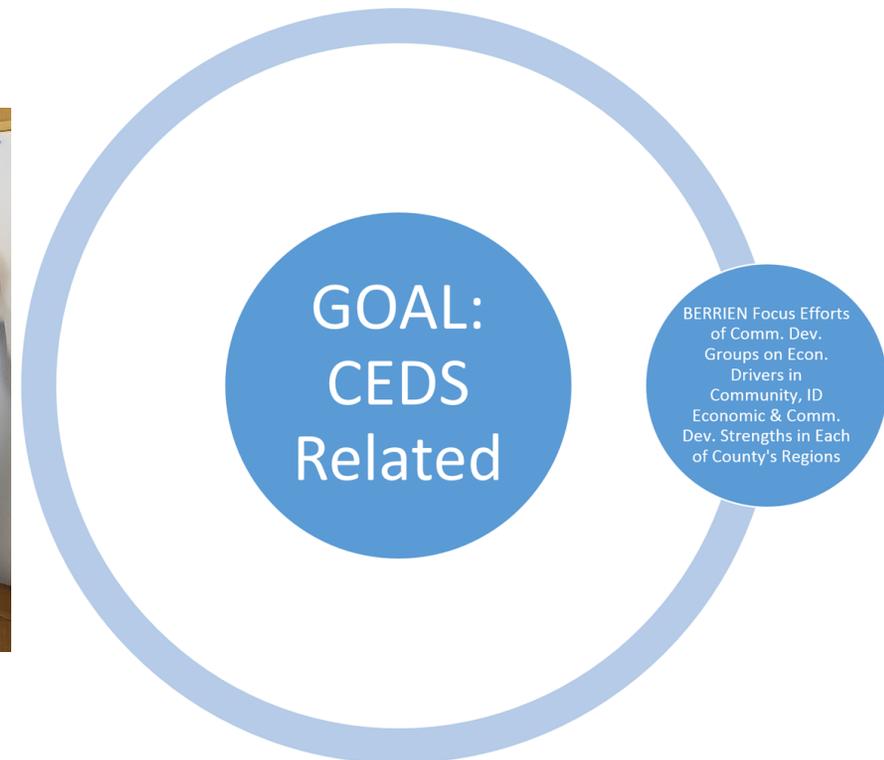
Create, improve, and maintain services and infrastructure.

Goal #4: Support Business

Support and meet the needs of current, new, and emerging businesses.

Goal #5: Coordination

Promote better coordination among different economic development groups.



Goal #1: Livability for Talent Attraction

Promote a diverse environment that creates an excellent quality of life for talent.

Objectives and Strategies (•)	Group
<p>1. Create a more diversified transportation system, integrated with community development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create walkable neighborhoods • Encourage new transportation patterns that support efficient multi-model transportation options • Support community development that is transit-oriented 	<p>Berrien, RPI R8, SWMPC</p>
<p>2. Encourage development of additional recreational opportunities and amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the development of additional public spaces in urban, suburban, and rural environments • Promote existing and support development of new trails and natural areas (e.g., parks, recreation areas, rivers, and lakes) 	<p>RPI R8, SWMPC</p>
<p>3. Support sustainable development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop infrastructure that can be sustained financially and environmentally over the long term • Maintain or improve environmental quality 	<p>RPI R8, SWMPC</p>
<p>4. Encourage increased access to housing options regarding density, cost, style, and location for existing residents and new talent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a region-wide Target Market Analysis to gain better data to support ‘missing middle’ housing development • Support education of developers and financiers regarding housing and demographic trends and community objectives • Support education of community leaders regarding redevelopment programs, land use and zoning techniques, and enforcement options to maintain housing stock 	<p>RPI R8, SMEGA</p>
<p>5. Execution of Core Projects that have a positive impact on the economic vitality of Berrien Co. by improving the quality of place.</p>	<p>CA</p>



Goal #2: Education & Training

Attract, retain, and develop a high-quality workforce.

Objectives and Strategies (•)	Group
1. Know, grow and market our existing workforce.	Cass
2. Cultivate the growth of Healthcare and Life Sciences industries by partnering with Kinexus and Lake Michigan College to recruit and retain a skilled workforce that will allow for greater access to healthcare professionals and a healthier Berrien Co. population.	CA
3. Programs and services offered by the College must respond to the needs of students and the communities, with constant review, analysis, research and action.	LMC
4. Educational attainment – HS graduation rates, BS and higher 25+, skill certifications, 11th grade math proficiency, literacy rates (11th grade reading proficiency).	MGSSLC
5. Parental engagement.	MGSSLC
6. Training programs with apprenticeships, internships, certifications, shadowing (partnership w/ business and schools).	MGSSLC
7. Promote accessibility and opportunities to participate in education and skilled training programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor programs to market demands 	RPI R8
8. Encourage a larger number of internships and apprenticeships across the region and across the continuum of learners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a regional clearinghouse and website that publicizes and provides links to internship/apprenticeship opportunities • Support the creation and maintenance of an inventory of internship/apprenticeship opportunities • Support programs that connect interns to job opportunities 	RPI R8
9. Encourage a culture of learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for all learners • Encourage, and promote the personal and regional economic benefits of, lifelong learning • Promote digital literacy 	RPI R8
10. Support work of existing organizations: adult education, credential acquisition, career exploration, functional literacy, skilled trades, and employers.	RPI R8
11. Increase the talent base for the benefit of regional business.	SMEGA



Goal #3: Infrastructure

Create, improve, and maintain services and infrastructure.

Objectives and Strategies (•)	Group
1. Improve infrastructure information.	Berrien
2. Encourage infrastructure development and interconnectivity to better support education, training, and employment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase mobility: transit and non-motorized • Increase access to technology: broadband and access to equipment 	RPI R8
3. Advance the effective and efficient transportation of goods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support regionally impactful infrastructure opportunities for the movement of freight (e.g., completion of US-31, US-131 BR/US-131 Interchange Upgrade, three lanes of traffic on I-94, through the region) • Recognize intermodal freight transportation opportunities (e.g., rail transportation, reliever port for Chicago and Detroit) • Promote maintenance and improvement of the freeway system and connecting roads • Promote maintenance and improvement of state and local roads • Encourage aviation to better support business • Take advantage of our existing water infrastructure along the Lake Michigan shoreline for the transportation of freight (e.g., freight harbors on Lake Michigan) 	RPI R8, SWMPC
4. Advance the effective and efficient transportation of people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote maintenance and improvement of the existing freeway system and connecting roads • Encourage passenger rail as a viable transportation option for inter and inner regional movement • Encourage aviation to better support passenger transportation • Promote coordination of regional mass transportation (e.g., use existing transportation asset inventory) • Promote non-motorized transportation options 	RPI R8, SWMPC
5. Assist in cultivating a comprehensive telecommunication system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote region-wide access to telecommunications (broadband, cellular) • Encourage improved speed and quality of telecommunications infrastructure 	RPI R8
6. Explore and promote a sustainable and economically competitive approach to energy supply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote competitive reliability and cost of energy • Promote a diversified and sustainable energy portfolio 	RPI R8
7. Facilitate a collaborative approach to municipal infrastructure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote coordinated administration of regional water and sewer infrastructure to achieve competitive rates • Encourage coordinated water and sewer infrastructure planning 	RPI R8



Goal #4: Support Business

Support and meet the needs of current, new, and emerging businesses.

Objectives	Group
1. Identify the economic and community development strengths inherent in each of the County's landscapes and geographic regions.	Berrien
2. Retain and assist existing companies in their growth efforts.	Cass
3. Lead the specialized aspects and advocacy efforts that attract 10 new businesses, expand 15 businesses and add \$100M in new capital investment.	CA
4. Provide the highest quality response to Qualified New Leads that generate New Project Opportunities.	CA
5. Provide resources and specialized assistance during proactive Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) calls to strengthen relationship building that lead to referrals and additional BRE assistance.	CA
6. Actively support and collaborate with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Southwest Michigan First to advance policies and initiatives while leveraging state, federal and local resources.	CA
7. Maximize Small Business Administration funding to assist in the creation of 50 small Business Starts while training and counseling 2,500 people	CA
8. Identify, control or improve sites and buildings suitable for development.	CA
9. Coordinate the development of spec buildings.	CA
10. Bring site consultants and company influencers to Familiarization Tours in Berrien County, highlighted by the 2018 and 2020 SPGA events.	CA
11. Encourage pro-growth citizen attitude through communications.	MGSSLC
12. Support the repurposing, readiness, and development of real estate capable of housing job creators in Michigan's Great Southwest.	MGSSLC
13. Retention and expansion of existing businesses in the Greater Niles/ Buchanan Region to increase tax base, wealth, and job creation.	SMEGA
14. Improve information flow between business and local government to reduce inefficient regulations that slow the economic expansion.	SMEGA
15. Develop marketing messages which illustrate the uniqueness of the region.	SMEGA
16. Increase awareness by involving experts in technology macro-environment dimension.	SMEGA
17. Increase economic activity with small business start-ups and second-stage companies.	SMEGA
18. Increase depth and breadth of leadership competencies across business, community, and education.	SMEGA



Goal #5: Partnering & Coordination

Promote better coordination among different economic development groups.



Objectives	Group
1. Eliminate duplicative Community Development Process.	Berrien
2. Focus efforts of Community Development Groups on the economic drivers in the community.	Berrien
3. Build and align economic development infrastructure systems and organizations that are critical to job growth in a common effort for Cass County.	Cass
4. Provide resources to and, when appropriate, lead the Downtown development efforts for municipal investment partners.	CA
5. Partner with our state, regional and utility Economic Development partners to participate in site location visits, company visits and tradeshow attendance.	CA
6. Increase the Cornerstone Alliance brand presence via digital, print and social media platforms.	CA
7. Diversify and create new revenue sources to lessen the dependency on investor support.	CA
8. Raise over \$6M in funding in five years to drive positive economic development outcomes.	CA
9. Retain all 200+ existing investors while recruiting more than 100 new investors.	CA
10. Grow the Cornerstone Alliance Endowment Fund in order to create sustainable economic development support into perpetuity	CA
11. One Stop approach to increase competitiveness for jobs attraction opportunities.	MGSSLC
12. Further RPI organizational development.	RPI R8
13. Encourage collaboration among public and nonprofit sectors.	RPI R8
14. Strengthen the interface between the Regional Prosperity Plan and local plans.	RPI R8
15. Reduce the competitive nature of the economic development industry in the region with new collaborative activity.	SMEGA



5.0 ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

5.1 Resilience Generally

It is becoming increasingly apparent that regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's economic resilience: the ability to adapt, avoid, withstand, and/or quickly recover from major disruptions to an economic base. Three ways in which disruptions of an economic base can occur include:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of a region's economic activity; and/or
- Other external shocks (natural or man-made disaster, exit of a major employer, impacts of climate change, etc.)

The CEDS process provides a critical mechanism to help identify regional vulnerabilities and prevent and/or respond to economic disruptions.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, as the region's EDA designated Economic Development District, is positioned to be both a source for information and a convener of regional stakeholders and encourage collaboration before, during, and after disruption occurs.

5.2 SAW Asset Management Planning

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) program promotes resiliency for the region's stormwater and wastewater assets. Several communities within Southwest Michigan, as well as the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, are engaged in this program.

Environmental resilience has important impacts on economic resilience. For example, Southwest Michigan's beach tourism is adversely affected by beach closures due to high *e. coli* counts. Better water management will lead to less closures. Also, bad stormwater management leads to sedimentation in the rivers, which leads to dredging costs to keep harbors open for boating in the Twin Cities, South Haven, and New Buffalo.



5.3 Hazard Mitigation Planning

The concept of economic resilience is closely related to the concept of hazard mitigation, which reduces or eliminates potential losses by breaking the cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.

Mitigation capabilities include, but are not limited to, community-wide risk reduction projects, efforts to improve the resilience of critical infrastructure and key resource lifelines, risk reduction for specific vulnerabilities from natural hazards and climate change, and initiatives to reduce future risks after a disaster has occurred.

Each county within the Southwest Michigan Economic Development District maintains a FEMA approved multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Future updates of Hazard Mitigation Plans (required every five years) should incorporate economic resilience as a part of the overall emergency management strategy.

6.0 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The evaluation framework serves as a tool to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the overall CEDS. It is an important element of the ongoing planning process and helps to answer the questions “How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?”

This CEDS will be reviewed annually to maximize its utility and relevance, and also to complete the CEDS Annual Performance Report, as required by EDA. Evaluation will include an assessment of progress towards the Objectives and Strategies. Evaluation will also include a review of the existing conditions data given earlier in this document.

In response to the findings of the evaluation, the CEDS may be adjusted by the Southwest Michigan EDD under the guidance of the CEDS Strategy Committee. This will allow the CEDS to be flexible and responsive to economic development needs of the district.