

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Economic Development District

The US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated SWMPC as an Economic Development District (EDD). A three-year renewable Partnership Planning Investment grant is utilized to implement this planning program. The 2012-2015 application process involved the annual update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

SWMPC participated in **Stronger Economies Together** (SET) a process led by US Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and Michigan State University. SET was devised to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to work together to develop and implement an economic development blueprint built on their regional economic strengths. SET hopes to build collaboration between communities in a region, provide economic analysis tailored to capture the region's comparative economic advantages. A Regional Economic Development Plan for Southwest Michigan, resulting from a planning process with active participation from business, civic, and community leaders, will serve as the roadmap for the future economic development efforts.

Connect Michigan is a state wide program in partnership with the Michigan Public Service Commission, working to ensure all can access the benefits of broadband technology. SWMPC drew Southwest Michigan stakeholders together with a series of meetings to explore steps to increase broadband Internet access in Southwest Michigan.

LOCAL PLANNING

Technical Assistance: South Haven, Economic Adjustment Assistance Program, and Andrews University Technology Park Partnership

Demographic data: South Haven, Three Oaks

Planning Commission Workshop: Vandalia

Benton Harbor area involvement: Consortium for Community Development, Downtown Development Authority, Community Partnership Coalition and Urban Core continued.

Mapping : Berrien Birding map completed

Work on a new edition of a **Data Extract** has been completed. Information from 2010 Census, American Community Survey, IRS, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan Department of Transportation, US Department of Agriculture, Center for Disease Control, and US Geological Survey sources were combined in an easily understandable format with visualizations and carefully selected comparisons.

As part of its overall economic development mission, SWMPC seeks to link business and civic efforts towards making healthy, affordable food a reality in each of the region's communities. The **Great Lakes Food Hub Network** (GLFHN) is a collaboration with these goals:

- A commitment to local sourcing
- IT platforms to create efficient communication
- Idea exchange to develop new business practices
- Investment opportunities and capital resources
- Shared branding and strong food safety protocols
- Business models that partner farmers, workers and communities

As a follow up to the April national gathering of food hub representatives held in Chicago, SWMPC invited a select group to visit our area to tour farms, food processors, and restaurants.

Food Innovation Network and **Michigan Food Hub Collaborative** are among other SWMPC activities promoting growth of regional food systems.

The Berrien County Health Department presented the **Berrien Friend of Public Health Award** to SWMPC noting that "the regional planning agency's area of expertise aligns with the mission of the Berrien County Health Department. The field of planning is concerned with optimizing community infrastructure and organization. SWMPC has risen to this challenge as demonstrated through thriving partnerships with the BCHD and others.

- Health Equity Alliance (HEAL)
- Building Healthy Communities Coalition
- Complete Streets Project
- BeHealthyBerrien county obesity reduction initiative
- Non-motorized Transportation efforts
- Community survey on septic systems
- Support of fixed route bus system
- Sharing community data "

SWMPC began to create websites to assist residents in finding fresh local food and recreational activities.