

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN PLANNING  
COMMISSION

# 2022 CEDS

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

## BERRIEN, CASS & VAN BUREN COUNTIES

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PLANNING GREAT COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee

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## Introduction

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is the designated Economic Development District for Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. It is the role of the SWMPC, with the help of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee, local government and members of the community to produce a region-wide approach to economic development. What makes this plan comprehensive is looking beyond traditional economic development by incorporating quality of place, sustainability, diversity, equity and inclusion.

The region continues to face a declining and aging population while struggling to attract young talent. To better understand why this is, SWMPC staff went to high schools throughout the region to see how students feel about the region and what improvements would be welcomed. This effort was well received with over 400 students participating in this discussion. SWMPC will continue this in future years to not only engage students but also to introduce them to the field of planning and public service.

An addition to the 2022 CEDS, there is an online interactive interface known as a StoryMap. This tool allows users to interact with up-to-date data specific to the area they wish to look at. Various performance measure dashboards will show trends and progress towards the goals outlined in this document.

This plan was produced with funding from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

## Executive Summary

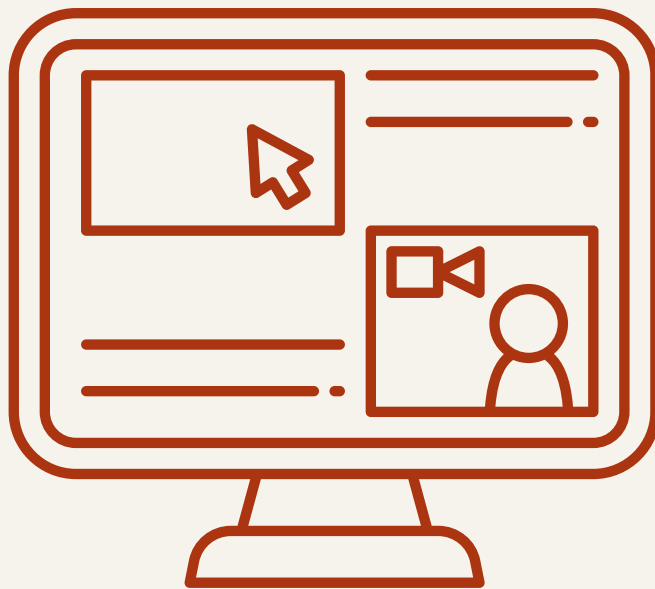
The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee has outlined six goals to work towards over the next five years. These goals aim to improve economic conditions for everyone working, living and visiting southwest Michigan. Socioeconomic data, a SWOT Analysis and public engagement informed the Committee on the priorities of the region.

### Goals



# Online CEDS

## Current & Interactive Data



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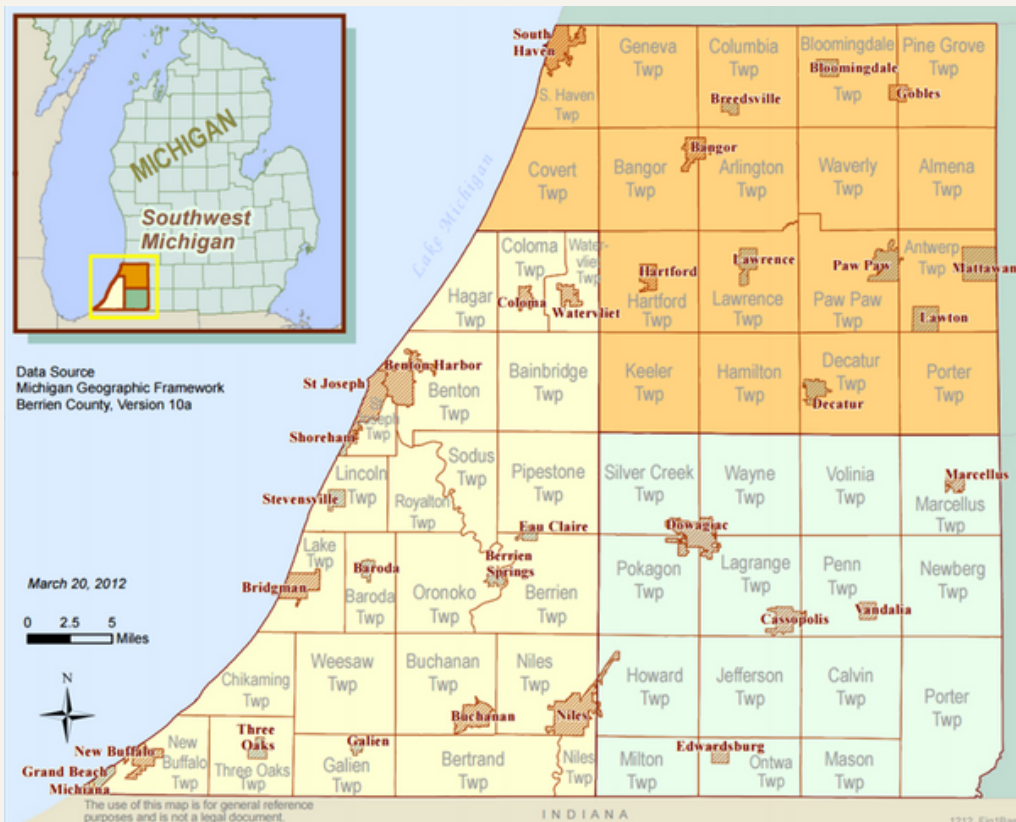
Data in this report, in addition to other economic data for the region, can be found online at [www.swmpc.org](http://www.swmpc.org). This report was produced in a StoryMap format to allow for an interactive user experience. Through the StoryMap, you are able to interact by clicking to see definitions, additional data, comparison data, and to enlarge, print or download. Many sources of data (US Census, Esri, FRED) will update automatically allowing for this report to stay relevant for years to come.

## Background & Data

Southwest Michigan continues to see a slight decline in population and increasing average age. The total number of households grew with an average household size of 2.42 (2020). This means that even though there is a decrease in overall population, there is a greater need for housing than prior years. Population forecasts for 2027 show the fastest growing population will be the Alpha generation (born 2010-2024) which will account for 12 percent of the region's population.

The region's unemployment rate in 2022 has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels at five percent. Manufacturing has remained the top sector in terms of employment, output and value added followed by administrative government.

The infographic report as seen on the next page can be viewed at the county, city, village or township level via the online StoryMap. Additional economic sector specific data can also be found on the StoryMap.






# Socioeconomic Data for Southwest Michigan

## KEY FACTS


279,598      139,237      167.9      46.8

2022 Total Population (Esri)      2022 Total Housing Units (Esri)      2022 Population Density (Pop per Square Mile) (Esri)      2022 Diversity Index (Esri)

### 2010-2020 Annual Growth Rate



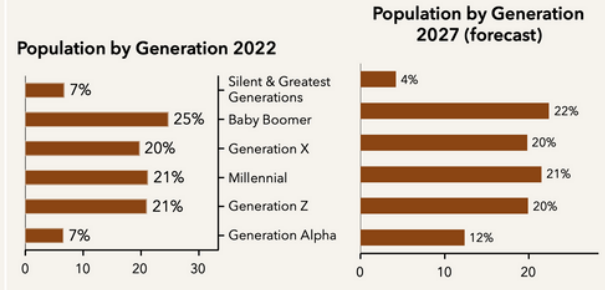
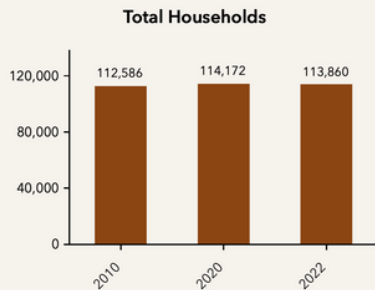
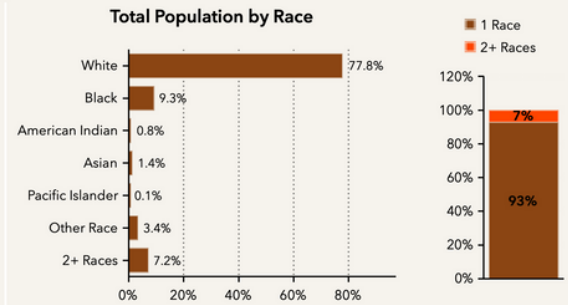
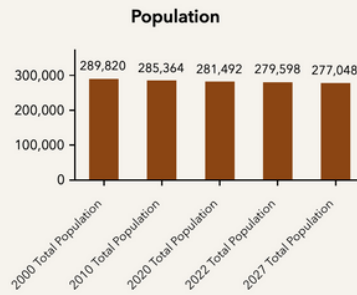
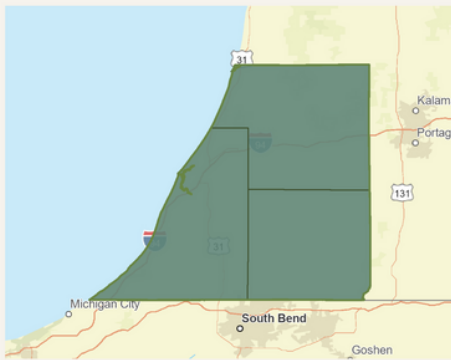
**-0.14%**  
Population



**0.14%**  
Households

Average Household Size for this area **2.42** which is less than the average for United States

Area	Value	0.00	4.00
United States	2.55		
Michigan	2.43		
This area	2.42		




### Households By Income

The largest group: \$50,000 - \$74,999 (17.5%)  
The smallest group: \$200,000+ (5.2%)

Indicator	Value	Diff
<\$15,000	8.5%	-0.1%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	9.5%	+1.7%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	9.4%	+0.4%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	15.5%	+2.8%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	17.5%	-1.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12.4%	-1.4%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	15.8%	-0.2%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	6.2%	-0.7%
\$200,000+	5.2%	-1.5%


Bars show deviation from Michigan



**\$57,821**  
2022 Median Household Income



**\$49,048**  
2022 Median Disposable Income



**\$172,041**  
2022 Median Net Worth



**15,189**  
2020 Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP (ACS 5-Yr)



**15,888**  
2020 Households Below the Poverty Level (ACS 5-Yr)

### Employment (2022)

White Collar: 58%  
Blue Collar: 30%  
Services: 13%


### Labor Force (2022)

Employed 16+: 95%  
Unemployed 16+: 5%


### Business (2022)

Total Businesses: 10,042  
Total Employees: 130,871


### Housing (2022)




**\$191,540**  
Median Home Value




**\$9,786**  
Average Mortgage Payment



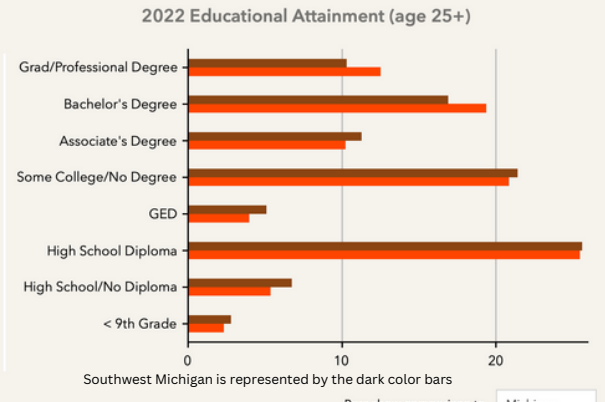
**24%**  
Renter Occupied Housing Units



**\$417,489,085**  
Annual Average Rent



**0.14%**  
2022-2027 Owner Occupied Housing Units: Compound Annual Growth Rate



Source: This infographic contains data provided by U.S. Census, Esri, ACS, Esri-U.S. BLS, Esri-Data Axle. The vintage of the data is 2020, 2022, 2000, 2010, 2027, 2016-2020.



## Measuring Economic 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.

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### Economic Distress Criteria

24-month Avg. BLS Unemployment Rate ending **July 2022**

**2020** Per Capita Personal Income (BEA PCPI)

**2020** Per Capita Money Income (ACS 5-year PCMI)

	24 Month Unemployment	Threshold Calculation	BEA PCPI	Threshold Calculation	ACS 5- Year PCMI	Threshold Calculation
Selected Region	5.69	0.43	\$50,263	84.5	\$30,651	86.6
U.S.	5.26	0.00	\$59,510	100.0	\$35,384	100.0
Berrien County, MI	5.77	0.51	\$52,395	88.0	\$30,839	87.2
Cass County, MI	5.14	-0.12	\$50,365	84.6	\$32,835	92.8
Van Buren County, MI	5.92	0.66	\$45,869	77.1	\$28,774	81.3



## Community Engagement

This year's CEDS included the largest effort taken by SWMPC staff to engage with the community regarding economic and workforce development. These efforts took the form of a survey (online & paper) and direct in-person discussion with local high school and community college students. Over 400 students and 40 adults participated in this outreach.



445 Students

46 Adults

Student outreach this year primarily occurred at Niles High School and Cassopolis Ross Beatty High School, though responses were received from schools in all three counties. SWMPC staff plans to engage high school and community college students at least yearly as the result of this successful engagement strategy. Several questions will remain the same to show trends while others will change to receive input from the variety of work taking place in the region.

Student Survey Responses

What events do you enjoy?



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What are some things you enjoy about the region?



Southwest Michigan has/is...

Quality health care, welcoming to diverse groups of people, quality schools, trade schools, higher education options.



## SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis is the product of community survey results, data analysis and input from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee.

### Strengths

Mix of both urban and rural with close proximity to larger urban areas: Mishawaka, Kalamazoo, and even Chicago and Detroit

Highways (I-94, US-31, US-12)

Amtrak/passenger rail

Hospitality/tourism

Manufacturing

Agricultural diversity/activity

Festivals such as Hunter Ice, Apple, Bluegrass

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4-H Fair, beaches, farmers' markets

Natural features/resources

Wineries and breweries

Cost of living

Health care systems

Community colleges

Nearby universities

K-12 education

### Weaknesses

Some individuals who lack respect for diverse groups of people

Areas with high rates of individuals/families in poverty or ALICE populations

Public transportation

Housing options

Brain drain

Labor shortages (skilled trades)

Employment barriers

Road conditions

## Opportunities

Increased connectivity to surrounding urban areas (e.g. Amtrak increased frequency)

Additional access to outdoor recreation activities

Downtown revitalization across region

Water transportation

Renewable/clean energy

Local coordination

Local retail

Climate change - more suitable region for people and agriculture

Asset management

Harbor redevelopment

Outdoor recreation activities & non-motorized trail expansion

Broadband connection

Skilled trades programs

Events and activities

## Threats

Crime rates (perceived and real)

Housing availability

Climate change

Road/bridge conditions

Reliance on manufacturing

Sprawl/population decline in urban areas

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Brain drain

Disregard for natural resources

Local policy not being inclusive or forward thinking

Teacher shortages

Employment barriers



## Goals

**DRAFT****Quality of Place**

The quality of place is the features of the natural and built environment as well as the human networks and systems that combine to make a location a healthy, desirable, competitive and economically viable place to live.

**Education and Workforce**

An educated and talented workforce is vital for the continued growth and development of the region's economy.

**Business Support**

Supporting local business – both large and small.

**Infrastructure**

Infrastructure includes many aspects of the built environment around us including roads, bridges, air, rail, utilities and broadband internet. These elements drive the economy forward.

**Economic and Environmental Sustainability**

Economic development should be conducted in a way that helps minimize the risk of future economic hardship and protects the environment for generations to come.

**Equity and Inclusion**

Economic prosperity should positively impact all members of the community and never should further disadvantage underserved populations.

## Quality of Place

The quality of place is the features of the natural and built environment as well as the human networks and systems that combine to make a location a healthy, desirable, competitive and economically viable place to live.

Objective	Partners	Timeframe
Expand mobility throughout the region (non-motorized, public transportation, water transportation, etc.)	SWMPC, Berrien County, Cass County, Van Buren County, Cornerstone Alliance, MDNR, MDOT, FTA	Long Range
Increase attainable housing and housing types for all	SWMPC, Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, SLC, UWSM, BCF, PF, private builders	Long Range
Harbor Redevelopment	SWMPC, Berrien County, EGLE, local municipalities, private business	Long Range
Leadership Development	SLC, UWSM, LMC, Wightman	Short Range, ongoing
Improvements to current amenities and additional amenities (natural resources, parks and recreation, etc.)	SWMPC, Cass County, Berrien County, Cornerstone Alliance, Wightman, Abonmarche, SMRC, MDRN	Intermediate, Long Range, ongoing

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), United Way of Southwest Michigan (UWSM), Berrien Community Foundation (BCF), Pokagon Fund (PF), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber (SMRC), Michigan's Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council (SLC)

## Learn More / Resources:

MEDC Community Development Programs, MSU Extension - Planning, EDA/USDA Rural Communities, WealthWorks, Michigan Municipal League, American Planning Association, Michigan Association of Planning

## Education and Workforce

An educated and talented workforce is vital for the continued growth and development of the region's economy.

Objective	Partners	Timeframe
Understand current and future labor trends	SLC, SWMPC, MEDC, EDA, Michigan Works!, local K-12, SMC, LMC, trade programs, Southwest Michigan Building Trades	Intermediate
Recruit and retain a skilled labor force to meet industry demand	Cornerstone Alliance, LMC, SMC Michigan Works!	Intermediate, ongoing
Reading and afterschool programs	Cass County, local libraries, K-12, LMC, SMC, UWSM	Long Range, ongoing
Training programs and apprenticeship opportunities	Michigan Works!, Kinexus, SMC, LMC, Southwest Michigan Building Trades	Intermediate, ongoing
Provide public transportation for vocational and continuing technical education	Berrien County, LMC, SWMPC, Michigan Works!	Intermediate, ongoing
Promote and provide quality adult education	UWSM, Cass County, Berrien County, Van Buren County	Intermediate, ongoing

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**Education and Workforce**

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Objective	Partners	Timeframe
<b>Expand workforce housing availability</b>	UWSM, Cass County, Berrien County, Van Buren County, Kinexus, SWMPC	Long Range
<b>Cultivate relationships between workforce development, local K-12 schools, community colleges, trade programs and local employers</b>	Kinexus, Michigan Works!, SWMPC, SLC, Berrien County, Cass County, Van Buren County, K-12, Cornerstone Alliance, Southwest Michigan Building Trades	Intermediate, ongoing

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), United Way of Southwest Michigan (UWSM), Berrien Community Foundation (BCF), Pokagon Fund (PF), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber (SMRC), Michigan's Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council (SLC), US Economic Development Administration (EDA), Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Lake Michigan College (LMC), Southwest Michigan College (SMC)

**Learn More / Resources:**

**EDA/USDA Rural Communities, WealthWorks, Michigan Municipal League, American Planning Association, Michigan Association of Planning**

## Business Support

Supporting local business – both large and small.

Objective	Partners	Timeframe
Provide the highest quality response to qualified new leads that generate new project opportunities	Cornerstone Alliance, Market Van Buren, Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber	Intermediate, ongoing
Develop and advocate for educational and financial resources needed by both large and small area business to ensure their longevity	Market Van Buren, Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber, Cornerstone Alliance, MEDC	Intermediate, ongoing
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	Cornerstone Alliance, Market Van Buren, Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber	Intermediate, ongoing
Identify, coordinate, or improve sites and buildings suitable for development	Market Van Buren, Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber, Cornerstone Alliance, MEDC	Intermediate, ongoing

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Objective	Partners	Timeframe
<p><b>Develop a business incubator to support entrepreneurship following the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant closure</b></p>	<p>Market Van Buren, EDA</p>	<p>Intermediate, ongoing</p>

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), United Way of Southwest Michigan (UWSM), Berrien Community Foundation (BCF), Pokagon Fund (PF), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber (SMRC), Michigan's Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council (SLC), US Economic Development Administration (EDA), Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Lake Michigan College (LMC), Southwest Michigan College (SMC)

## Learn More / Resources:

Small Business Administration, Michigan Economic Development Corporation



# Infrastructure

Infrastructure includes many aspects of the built environment around us including roads, bridges, air, rail, utilities and broadband internet. These elements drive the economy forward.

Objective	Partners	Timeframe
<p><b>Asset Management - ensures that investments are adequate to improve bridge and pavement conditions, keep transit fleet in a state of good repair, and maintain bicycle and pedestrian facilities</b></p>	<p>SWMPC, MDOT, local road agencies, public transit, NATS, TwinCATS, Berrien County, Cass County, Van Buren County</p>	<p>Long Range, ongoing</p>
<p><b>Complete Streets - ensuring access for everyone</b></p>	<p>SWMPC, MDOT, local road agencies, NATS, TwinCATS</p>	<p>Long Range, ongoing</p>
<p><b>Increase broadband internet access</b></p>	<p>SWMPC, Berrien &amp; Van Buren Counties, local municipalities, State of Michigan, Merit, ISPs</p>	<p>Intermediate, ongoing</p>
<p><b>Transportation of freight (highways, rail, air, and water)</b></p>	<p>SWMPC, MDOT, SLC</p>	<p>Long Range, ongoing</p>
<p><b>Increase renewable and other clean energy sources including solar, wind and nuclear</b></p>	<p>Indiana Michigan Power - AEP, Midwest Energy and Communications</p>	<p>Long Range, ongoing</p>

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**Infrastructure**

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<b>Objective</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Transportation of people (highways, streets/roads, passenger rail, passenger air, non-motorized, public transportation)</b>	SWMPC, MDOT, local road agencies, NATS, TwinCATS, public transit	Long Range, ongoing
<b>Promote, design, build, and maintain green infrastructure</b>	SWMPC, MDOT, local road agencies, public transit, NATS, TwinCATS, Berrien County, Cass County, Van Buren County	Long Range, ongoing
<b>Mitigation of the effects of climate change on infrastructure</b>	SWMPC, MDOT, local road agencies, public transit, NATS, TwinCATS, Berrien County, Cass County, Van Buren County	Long Range, ongoing

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), United Way of Southwest Michigan (UWSM), Berrien Community Foundation (BCF), Pokagon Fund (PF), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber (SMRC), Michigan's Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council (SLC), US Economic Development Administration (EDA), Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Lake Michigan College (LMC), Southwest Michigan College (SMC), Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS), Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS)

**Learn More / Resources:**

Michigan Municipal League, American Planning Association

## Economic and Environmental Sustainability

Economic development should be conducted in a way that helps minimize the risk of future economic hardship and protects the environment for generations to come.

Objective	Partners	Timeline
<b>Hazard Mitigation Planning</b>	SWMPC, Berrien County, Van Buren County, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi	Long Range, ongoing
<b>Avoid impacts to environmentally sensitive features, such as woodlands and wetlands, early in the planning process</b>	SWMPC, Abonmarche, Wightman, MDOT, EGLE, MDNR	Long Range, ongoing
<b>Promote ridesharing through the Go Rideshare program to reduce single occupancy trips</b>	SWMPC, MDOT	Long Range, ongoing
<b>Support green development standards (energy, water, wastewater conservation) in both new development and redevelopment</b>	SWMPC, Abonmarche, Wightman, MDOT, EGLE, MDNR	Long Range, ongoing
<b>Encourage non-motorized and public transportation</b>	SWMPC, public transit, Berrien County, Cass County, Van Buren County	Long Range, ongoing

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**Economic and Environmental Sustainability**

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Objective	Partners	Timeline
<p><b>Alternative Fuel Vehicles (electric, fuel cell, hybrid)</b></p>	<p>SWMPC, MDOT, DOT, State of Michigan</p>	<p>Intermediate, Long Range</p>
<p><b>Decrease the number of households who have incomes below the ALICE threshold through increased wages</b></p>	<p>UWSM, PF, BCF, SLC, LMC, SMC</p>	<p>Long Range</p>

**Learn More / Resources:**

MEDC Community Development Programs, MSU Extension - Planning, EDA/USDA Rural Communities, WealthWorks, Michigan Municipal League, American Planning Association, Michigan Association of Planning

## Equity and Inclusion

Economic prosperity should positively impact all members of the community and never should further disadvantage underserved populations.

Objective	Partners	Timeline
Public Outreach in schools, Turning Outward	SWMPC, UWSM	Ongoing
Increase last mile service transportation options to increase access to public transit for all users	SWMPC, FTA, MDOT, public transit	Long Range, ongoing
Increase the number of wide shoulders or bike lanes to improve conditions for commuting by bike	SWMPC, local road agencies, Berrien County	Long Range, ongoing
Explore the entire pipeline linking workers with jobs: individuals' skills and interests, available training, jobs reachable by transit, and employers interested in hiring workers for those jobs	SWMPC, SLC	Intermediate, ongoing
Decrease the number of households who have incomes below the ALICE threshold through increased wages	UWSM, PF, BCF, SLC, LMC, SMC	Long Range

### Learn More / Resources:

MEDC Community Development Programs, MSU Extension - Planning, EDA/USDA Rural Communities, WealthWorks, Michigan Municipal League, American Planning Association, Michigan Association of Planning

## Performance Measures

### Quality of Place

- Number of communities with a current master plan
- Population located within a food desert
- Average lifespan
- Broadband internet availability
- Average commute to employment
- Population changes

### Education and Workforce

- Educational attainment
- Labor Force Participation Rate
- Community college enrollment
- Career and technical education course offerings

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### Business Support

- Business start-ups
- Number and type of programs offered by local chambers

### Infrastructure

- PASER road ratings
- Miles of non-motorized infrastructure
- Passenger rail ridership
- Annual utility outages
- Annual incidents where flooding caused road closures



# Economic and Environmental Sustainability

- Percent of electric power coming from renewables or nuclear
- Number of Clean Air Action Days
- Diversification of economy

# Equity and Inclusion

- ALICE and poverty numbers
- Cost-burdened renters and owners
- Median household income
- Public outreach/engagement

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## Momentum

The CEDS process has brought individuals and organizations together to collectively define regional goals. It is vital to continue this momentum to now make progress and accomplish these goals.

In order to do this, the Southwest Michigan Economic Development District will:

- Meet informally quarterly to reconnect, learn from each other, understand where future partnerships might exist and celebrate success in our region.
- Meet formally twice yearly (and as needed) as public meetings to address new challenges, highlight successes and make necessary updates to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Focus on continuing education and participation in economic and community development best practices. Host workshops when appropriate for local community leaders.
- Invite community groups and local units of government to learn and participate in the goals and objectives outlined in this document.
- Continue to engage with members of the public.

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## Resiliency

In addition to the goal of economic and environmental sustainability, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission has produced an Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to play the lead role in the Palisades Economic Recovery Initiative.

## Project Endorsement

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Given the unique relationship between the Southwest Michigan Economic Development District and the US Economic Development Administration, an official endorsement can carry significant weight. Applicants seeking an endorsement should demonstrate how the proposed project helps “move the needle” in the desired direction for the above stated performance measures.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is able to review projects with potential applicants and help build a strong case for grant funding. Staff at SWMPC have a great understanding of EDA, MEDC, MDOT and other funding sources as well as the ability to connect applicants with additional state and federal agencies.

**Southwest Michigan Planning Commission**