

Table of Contents

- Planning Process 4
- Economic Conditions 5
- SWOT Analysis 8
- Goals and Objectives 11
- Action Plan 11
- Implementation 16
- Redevelopment
Strategies..... 17
- Incentives 22

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PLANNING PROCESS

This economic development strategy for the City of Swartz Creek is a collaborative planning project between the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities program and the City of Swartz Creek. The result of this project will be an economic roadmap to assist with job creation, marketing and branding along with redevelopment and investment strategies for the community. These actions will both strengthen and diversify the local economy. The roadmap will also help guide the coordinated effort between the I-69 Thumb Region, Genesee County and the City of Swartz Creek to work in a cooperative manner that will integrate aspects of the regional economic development strategy with the local economic development effort.

When creating an economic development strategy, it is important to answer several questions.

1. Who are the largest employers in the community?
2. What drives the local economy?
3. What is the city's role in the larger region?
4. What are the strengths of the community and how can they contribute to growth?
5. What could be potential challenges to growth?
6. What overall image is the city working to create?
7. What strategies can be implemented to execute the end vision?

As part of the planning process, a local steering committee has been assembled comprised of local leaders, businesses and other key stakeholders with a direct interest in the economic success of the City of Swartz Creek. The steering committee will help guide the development of the overall strategy, as well as provide critical input on the future economic vision for the city. Lastly, the steering committee will assist with the identification of implementation projects throughout the community which can be benchmarked and monitored for success.

This report could not have been completed without the guidance and assistance of the members of the steering committee, the City of Swartz Creek and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Economic Landscape

The City of Swartz Creek is located in central-western Genesee County. The city is surrounded by Gaines, Flint and Clayton Townships. The current population of the City of Swartz Creek is 5,617 according to 2016 US Census estimates with 62.8% of the current population within the work age group between 16 and 65 years of age. Of that percentage, 55.1% are active in the labor force with 44.9% not currently active in the labor force for any number of reasons. Currently, the US labor participation rate is 62.7%, which Swartz Creek nearly mirrors.

Historically, labor participation rate has been a good indicator of the strength or weakness within a local labor market. The higher the rate, the greater the availability of quality employment opportunities.

Since the last recession, labor participation rates have generally been in decline, locally, regionally and nationally, but not because of reduced employment opportunities. To better understand the decline in labor participation, we need to look at the age distribution within the City of Swartz Creek and surrounding communities.

Figure 1

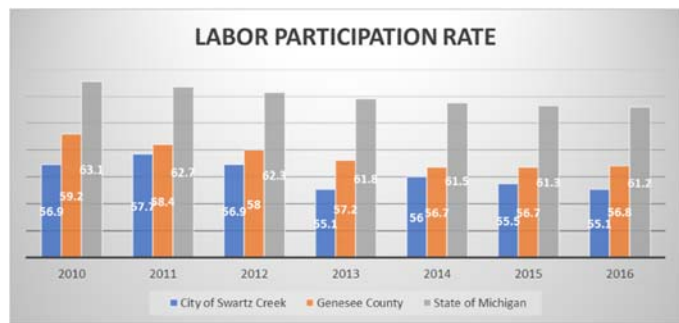


Figure 2

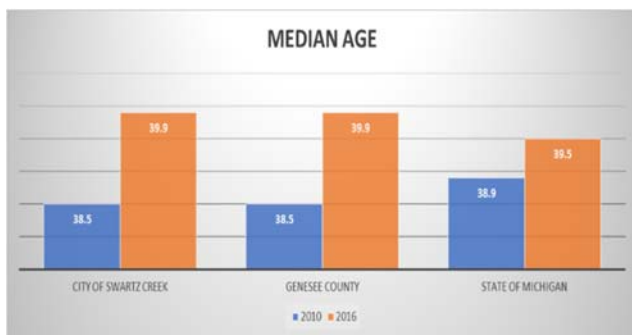
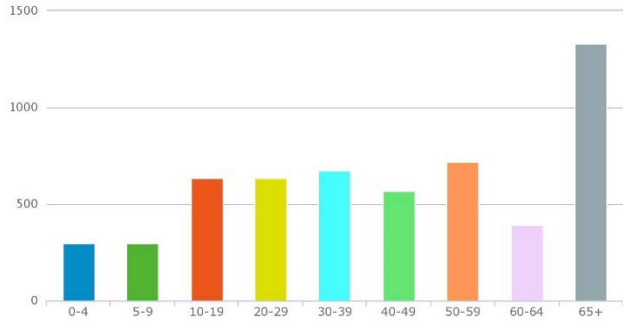


Figure 3: Age Distribution, City of Swartz Creek

At quick glance, it is easy to see that the population is aging, meaning a greater percentage of the workforce is nearing the age of retirement. During the recent recession, a considerable number of workers that became unemployed permanently left the labor force. As employment opportunities declined, it became more difficult for workers aged 55+ to find meaningful employment, so many either took part time work, worked off the record, signed up for permanent disability or simply retired.



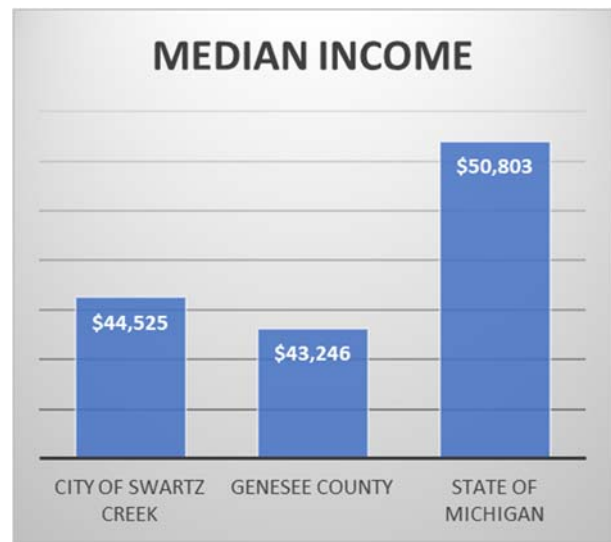
Income, Employment and Education

The median household income of the City of Swartz Creek is relatively strong compared to Genesee County and the State of Michigan at \$52,788. When you look deeper in to the income data, the median household income for families is \$59,643. Median non-family income is \$35,114 which would generally be a single income, head of household. This

again reinforces the idea that the City of Swartz Creek is a great community to raise a family.

The largest income cluster for the City of Swartz Creek is from \$35,000 to \$75,000, which according to PEW Research Center, is statistically the middle-class of the United States. Of the total households within the city, 51% fall within this income range. Given such a high percentage of the community is middle class or above, it is safe to assume that Swartz Creek is a bedroom community for employment centers such as Flint, Lansing, Owosso, Saginaw or other industry centers in southeast Michigan. Looking at the educational attainment of the City of Swartz Creek, a large percentage of the population is a high school graduate or equivalent or has completed some level of higher education.

Figure 3



When looking to grow the economy of any community, it is extremely important to have a highly skilled and educated workforce. This has been identified as the highest priority for employers when seeking to expand their operations. It has also been identified as a top priority by the Governor for the State of Michigan.

Figure 4

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2016 (US Census Estimate)			
	City of Swartz Creek		%
Population 25 Years and Over	4,073		100
Less than 9th grade	170		4.2
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	281		6.9
High school graduate or equivalent	1,407		34.5
Some college, no degree	1,067		26.2
Associate's degree	517		12.7
Bachelor's degree	375		9.2
Graduate or professional degree	256		6.3

The landscape of Genesee County is very diverse including thousands of acres of productive farmland, international transportation routes including I-69 along with several rail lines, revitalized urban areas and several vital smaller cities, townships and villages. Despite the county's diversity, its residents and businesses share many of the same opportunities, assets, and challenges that can be more effectively acted upon with a coordinated effort.

Figure 5

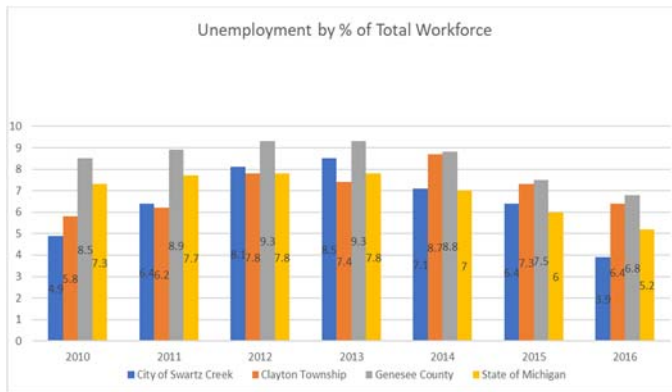


Figure 6

INDUSTRY OF EMPLOYED WORKERS (US Census 2016 Estimates)	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	2,355
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	0
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0
Construction	153
Manufacturing	461
Wholesale trade	26
Retail trade	300
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	91
Transportation and warehousing	75
Utilities	16
Information	82
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing:	42
Finance and insurance	42
Real estate and rental and leasing	0
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management	162
Professional, scientific, and technical services	49
Management of companies and enterprises	0
Administrative and support and waste management services	113
Educational services, and health care and social assistance:	593
Educational services	167
Health care and social assistance	426
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services:	218
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	54
Accommodation and food services	164
Other services, except public administration	125
Public administration	102

workers in the City of Swartz Creek, it is not indicative of the industries found within the City of Swartz Creek. In fact, much of the working population of Swartz Creek commute out of the city for daily work. The average commute time for workers living in the city of Swartz Creek is 26.8 minutes, indicating that many workers are traveling to larger metro areas for employment including Owosso, Durand, Lansing, Flint and other communities within a 30-minute drive where there are more options for employment opportunities.

Regional Economic Development

In 2013, the I-69 Thumb Region, also known as Prosperity Region 6 completed a 7-county economic development strategy called “Accelerate”. This plan is intended to find and promote economic development opportunities across the region as well as promoting the region for

The State of Michigan and many of its communities have been emerging from one of the most extensive economic recessions on record since the Great Depression. At its height, unemployment topped 16% across the I-69 Thumb Region. Locally, unemployment wasn’t nearly as high as seen in Figure 5, but the same pattern was present as identified regionally, across the state and across the nation.

Comparatively speaking, from a workforce perspective, the City of Swartz Creek and Clayton Township fared better than the rest of the State of Michigan along with the I-69 Thumb Region, but still felt the pinch of the recession.

Looking at the industry of the City of Swartz Creek, the largest employment base within the city is manufacturing. Of the civilian employed population aged 16 years or over, 461 of the total 2,335 are employed within that category. Other large employment categories of note include healthcare and social assistance (426), retail trade (300) and educational services (167).

It is important to note, that while figure 6 identifies the industries of employed

outside investment. Swartz Creek sits in a very strategic location within the region with its two exits onto I-69 and proximity to I-75, I-475, US-23. This positions Swartz Creek well for attracting regional investment projects near the GM Assembly facility, as well as becoming a hub for potential employees in the area due to having good housing options and a high-level school system.

SWOT Analysis

On July 31, 2018, the City of Swartz Creek Economic Development Steering Committee completed a SWOT Analysis as a way of obtaining perceptions of the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The intent of the sessions was to gain insight, but more importantly, to establish a community identity and how the city fits into the larger region.

The results of the analysis are listed below and are the basis for developing an economic vision for the community as well as economic development action items to be completed over the next several years.

Strengths

- People choose to live here
- Schools are improving
 - Can be a means to attract new businesses and residents
- Trending positively/Optimism in the community
- Community buy-in
- City has name recognition
- City has history
 - Active historical society
- High concentration of vets
- Historic Downtown
 - City Parks
 - Walkable community
 - Hometown Days
 - Local newspaper
- Room to grow
- Large sites available
- Open space for future growth
- Great location off of I-69/2 exits
- Location connects city to larger economy of Southeast Michigan
- Bishop Airport is nearby
- Talented core of new business owners
- New businesses investing in the community
- Community has a very low unemployment rate
- Improving tax base
- Shift in tax base off of industry
- Rebuilding infrastructure
 - Improved roads – Millage approved by residents

Weaknesses

- Small but vocal “status quo” group
- Resistance to losing history

- Racetrack ownership is absent/not engaged
- Dislocated property owners
- Certain businesses not cooperating with change
- Residents not fully aware of downtown amenities
- No marketing of note
- No singular brand entity
- Genesee Valley magnet/Miller Road effect (proximity to)
- Non-pedestrian oriented downtown
- Little to no destination businesses
- Proximity to Flint/National image of Flint
- I-69 is an easy pass-by opportunity for the city
- Genesee County taxes are very high
- Distrust toward leadership
 - Management is out to get us
 - Takes too much time to build trust
 - “Earn it” attitude
- Facades need to be upgraded
- City is used to not paying attention

Opportunities

- School Millage
 - \$48 million to facilities
 - Security Upgrade
 - Face lift to all buildings
 - Room to grow (82% capacity across district)
 - No bonded debt
 - Bottom 1/3 in Genesee County for school debt
- Communication
 - General – City never had a consistent message
 - Specific
 - Improve resident outreach
- Chamber
 - Need a higher level of service
 - Build better awareness of community
 - Build organization capacity
 - Work closer with regional entities
 - Work closer with local businesses
 - Build a new identity
- Spin-off from “Project Tim” if it moves forward
 - Housing
 - Supply chain
 - Business attraction
- Downtown

- Mixed use opportunities
 - Destination
 - Marketing and branding
 - City owned sites
 - Outdoor dining/shopping
- Growing artisan community
 - Can draw people downtown

Threats

- Fear of change
- Passiveness of community
- Gim'me expectations
- Small town mindset
 - Terrified of outsiders
- Less volunteers
 - Working parents
- Lack of cooperation with downtown businesses
- Blight
- Facades
- Age of buildings
- Corporations aren't local – lack of corporate citizenship
- Online shopping – Amazon effect
- Neighboring communities
- Not enough mixes of housing
- Lack of public transportation

Goals and Objectives

The goals identified in this plan were identified from the City of Swartz Creek Master Plan and relate directly to economic development within the city. Goals are high level policy statements that drive future decisions around projects and investment opportunities that can contribute to community growth.

Objectives are specific ideas, strategies, policy statements or projects that achieve goal results. The objectives identified in this plan will assist the City of Swartz Creek by providing measurable tasks that revolve around increasing economic activity within the city. Further these objectives will support other planning efforts in the city such as the Master Plan, the Swartz Creek DDA Community Improvement Objectives along with future capital improvement plans. Integrating all the above planning efforts with a committed leadership will be the most important driver of success for the community.

Goal 1: To provide attractive commercial areas that create a stable tax base and quality shopping and service uses for residents

Goal 2: To encourage the attraction of a variety and mix of new businesses to Swartz Creek

Action Table

For the City Economic Development Strategy to be an effective document for the next several years, steps must be identified to guide community leaders towards implementation. This chapter summarizes the goals and the recommendations described throughout the plan and serves as a quick reference for the City Leadership and others to monitor progress or serve as a checklist for implementing the plan.

The following table identifies major steps and projects designed to maintain and improve the City of Swartz Creek. Implementation of these items will have a positive impact on the character and vitality of the community. Many of the implementation recommendations presented herein will require the close cooperation of many bodies. The third column in the table indicates the primary group(s) responsible for implementation.



Objective	Action Item(s)	Responsible Entity	Time Frame
Dedicate new, expanded areas for a mixture of commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete zoning amendments to meet RRC Technical Review 	City Administration,	2019

<p>development, while supporting the success and improvement of existing business areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an internal business retention strategy to support existing base companies • Create downtown PUD District 	<p>City Council, Planning Commission</p>	
<p>Encourage the type and amount of business operation supported by market analysis, historical performance and consumer desires.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete target market analysis to identify potential industry markets to attract to Swartz Creek • Complete a consumer survey to identify shopping trends of Swartz Creek residents 	<p>DDA</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>Encourage the rehabilitation or replacement of obsolete commercial/office and industrial buildings and sites with viable business establishments or other appropriate uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update codes and penalties to strengthen blight enforcement efforts for buildings and properties in need of repair and upkeep • Identify additional resources, incentives and grants to assist with façade improvements • Identify additional resources, incentives and grants to assist with redevelopment of core downtown sites • Utilize TIF Funds to assist with downtown feasibility analyses as needed • Identify funding sources and grants to assist with environmental cleanup and restoration as needed. • Review and update DDA Development Plan to ensure a current project list and access to all tools available to the DDA 	<p>Staff, Metro PD, DDA</p>	<p>Short Term Ongoing</p>
<p>Promote the revitalization of downtown Swartz Creek through the attraction of businesses and other uses suited to that area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize Redevelopment Communities to develop promotional materials for key redevelopment sites downtown identified in this plan, the DDA Development Plan and the City Master Plan. This should include detailed concept plans for priority sites • Create city-wide promotional materials to reach specified target investment markets. These materials should focus on consumer spending patterns, educational attainment, wages, labor force and available redevelopment sites 	<p>Planning Commission, DDA, Staff, Chamber</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus efforts and resources when available on priority redevelopment sites identified within this plan 		
Encourage the retention of residential neighborhoods in the vicinity of downtown Swartz Creek as a source of customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look to identify areas within the core of the city to encourage new housing development, especially missing middle housing which can attract workforce and families to the city Identify opportunities to increase core residential density 	DDA, Planning Commission	Ongoing
Promote visual and physical links between the downtown and the Civic Center such as landscaped walkways, streetscape, and public art.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the city’s streetscape plan currently under development Work with local artisan groups such as the Greater Flint Arts Council or the Flint Institute of Arts to identify opportunities to include art into public spaces and pedestrian ways throughout the city Include artistic features such as murals or statues into downtown design guidelines Use vacant spaces or underutilized sites in downtown to host popup events such as farmers markets, art fairs, food truck festivals, movies or concerts featuring local artists to increase programming in the city and to drive visitors to the core of the downtown 	Council, DDA, Planning Commission	Ongoing
Continue to promote community events in the downtown and Civic Center areas as a way of attracting attention and customers to downtown businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the DDA and the Chamber to develop a promotional platform to highlight local events to residents of the city and potential outside markets to attract visitors. Various forms of media including print, social, radio and television should be utilized to maximize the extent of the message Develop a platform to highlight local businesses to residents Work with the Visitors and Convention Bureau of Genesee County to highlight local events and drive visitors to Swartz Creek 	DDA, Chamber	Ongoing

<p>Promote the development of a traditional mixed-use downtown corridor along Morrish Road, between the entrance into the Sports Creek racetrack and Civic Drive in accordance with the following standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit commercial uses such as small-scale retail stores; professional offices for physicians, optometrists, chiropractors, dentists, psychologists, and similar professions • Ensure businesses have frontage on Morrish Road and build to the right-of-way or agreed-upon short distance setback • Encourage or develop requirements for a second or third floor for residential dwellings • Allow the use of alleyways for rear parking and loading 	<p>Planning Commission, DDA</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Promote the development of the mixed-use area north of the Morrish Road/I-69 interchange for retail and other uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate any residential uses along or in proximity to Bristol Road or within the rears of the properties and locate commercial uses near I-69 and Morrish Road • Ensure that commercial uses are of a size, scale, and character consistent with other development in the area • Develop a gateway strategy to welcome shoppers and visitors to Swartz Creek • Enhance the entry way to Sports Creek as a prime destination site for the city should it be repurposed 	<p>Planning Commission, DDA</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Coordinate efforts to retain and attract industrial development and work with other groups that are involved in economic development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Flint & Genesee Chamber Economic Development team to ensure available properties in the city are listed on Zoom Prospector • Prepare a city-wide fact sheet identifying target industrial markets, properties available, proximity to major markets and industry sectors (auto, medical...), access to local workforce, tax incentives (if applicable) and any other asset (utilities) that could be used to attract new industry • Host regional and state economic developers at prime properties in the city to give them an on-the-ground feel for the site • Market sites available for advanced manufacturing in all industry sectors • Encourage General Motors to increase when feasible, its operations at the 	<p>Staff, Council, Chamber</p>	<p>Short Term – Mid Term</p>

	<p>Customer Care and Aftersales facility within the city</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Bishop Airport to solicit intermodal or other distribution industries to the city • There is a growth opportunity in manufacturing in Swartz Creek. The city will prioritize sites available for manufacturing growth and promote them to encourage business expansions within the city. 		
<p>Coordinate existing programs and provide information on small business development programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Flint & Genesee Chamber Economic Development Team to host local small businesses educational events in partnership with the Swartz Creek Chamber of Commerce • Host the Genesee County eTeam for small business education • Provide a small businesses resource kiosk at city hall to inform small businesses about assistance programs available locally and throughout the state 	Chamber, DDA	Short Term
<p>Work to grow the City of Swartz Creek Chamber of Commerce and its capacity to assist local companies, attract new companies and promote the City as a whole</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to increase capacity of the chamber to become the city's primary promotional entity • Focus membership growth on companies located within the City of Swartz Creek 	Chamber	Ongoing
<p>Implement the recently completed marketing and branding strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the DDA Development Plan, Master Plan and Economic Development Plan into a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote Swartz Creek • Develop a communications plan to ensure all targeted marketing is formatted to reflect the new marketing and branding strategy • Complete a brand kickoff and begin implementation of new logos and taglines 	Council, Staff, DDA, Chamber	Ongoing

Implementation

This plan serves as the policy guide for moving Swartz Creek forward, guiding decisions about future physical and economic development. Transforming the plan's goals into reality will require a long-term commitment and political consensus. The plan is designed to be a road map for action, incorporating strategies, specific projects, and programs that will achieve the desired results.

This chapter synthesizes the many plan recommendations and identifies the actions and timing needed to transform the plan's vision into reality.

Tenets of Successful Implementation

The input received through the master plan process provided a foundation to help achieve the city's vision, community support, commitment, and involvement must continue.

Commitment

Successful plan implementation will be directly related to a committed city leadership. While elected and appointed officials will have a strong leadership role, many others - city department directors, staff, and leaders from the community's many institutions and organizations - will also be instrumental in supporting the plan.

However, commitment reaches beyond just these individuals and includes the array of stakeholders. Citizens, landowners, developers, and business owners interested in how Swartz Creek develops must unite toward the plan's common vision.

Integrate with Project Design

City officials and departments must embrace the plan, applying its recommendations to help shape annual budgets, work programs, and the design of capital improvements. For example, the City's engineering practices can support implementation through infrastructure improvements, streets, and storm systems designed consistent with plan policies and recommendations. Each department, staff person, and elected official should find it a benefit, if not an obligation, to reference the plan when making decisions and setting priorities.

Guidance for Development Decisions

This plan is designed for routine use and should be consistently employed during any process affecting the community's future. Private investment decisions by developers, corporations, and land owners should consider the plan's direction as it is the guide for economic growth and stability of the community and supports the goals and objectives of the overall master plan.

Evaluation and Monitoring

This plan has been developed with a degree of flexibility, allowing nimble responses to emerging conditions, challenges, and opportunities. To help ensure the plan stays fresh and useful, periodic reviews and amendments may be required. This will ensure plan goals, objectives, and recommendations reflect changing community needs, expectations, and financial realities.

Redevelopment Strategies

How to Attract Developers?

Developers typically look for project locations where the potential for success is fairly certain and risks limited. This means that they are attracted to communities with strong markets where the infrastructure is in place, reasonably-priced, quality development sites are available, and the development review process is quick. They also look for opportunities to enter a market right before it “takes off” and capture the heavy demand and associated real estate price or rent increases.

Good developers are usually inundated with requests from municipalities and DDA’s to develop in their community, citing the advantages they can offer. Yet only a small percentage of communities provide the information necessary to interest developers. There is specific information they look for that will minimize the amount of time it takes to make a go- no-go decision. For example, is there a market for the type of development being sought by the community? What is the role of the community within the region (i.e. bedroom community, employment destination, transportation hub, etc.)? Are reasonably priced sites available for development or redevelopment? Is necessary infrastructure in place or will this be needed and add to the cost of the project? How accessible is the development location and how large a market area can they draw from?

These are all vital questions that can be partly answered by the community, making it easier to pique the interest of a developer. Time is money and the less time developers have to commit to looking at a project/community, the more likely they are to dig deeper and hopefully show interest in moving forward. Some of this information might already be available while additional work is needed to gather the remaining data. It is up to the City, DDA, business leaders, and civic associations to work together to assemble developer information and then actively recruit developers and businesses.

Why Swartz Creek?

Since developers look for strong or emerging markets, Swartz Creek must prove that it fits into this classification and may have just been overlooked. What are the positives with Swartz Creek that have created unmet demand for housing, commercial, office or industrial uses? This is information that must be gathered and uncovered to create the “elevator speech” for developers: meaning why invest in Swartz Creek as opposed to all the other communities that contact you? Also, what has changed in recent years causing the private sector to overlook the

City as a place to develop? A one-page handout summarizing this key information will be a good start. After that, a separate sheet can be created for each marketing item like housing, retail, office, hospitality, etc.

Understand the Market

Developers may not take the time to fully understand the dynamics of the local market and especially not unmet demand. The City can prepare a fact sheet for different market segments, working with local real estate professionals and companies. For example, some compelling information might be increased housing prices and vacancy rates; potential demand for certain types of housing using the Target Market Analysis; voids in the retail market that could be served by local businesses, etc.

Developer Matchmaking

Once the above information is collected and organized, invite developers to come in and learn about available sites and why they should consider Swartz Creek for their next project. It would be best to invite them individually and be concise, enthusiastic, and to the point with what you would like them to consider. Be sure to share success stories from other companies and developments so they can see that others have already tested the market. It is equally important to have as much information available regarding property availability, price, rental rates, recent purchase prices, traffic volumes, etc. This will provide a positive impression regarding the recruitment effort and limit the number of items that need follow-up.

DDA/City Property Acquisition

Property acquisition will be a necessary part of implementing the development projects contained herein, particularly for site development and redevelopment. By purchasing property in an area identified for new development, the DDA or the City will have an added tool to attract developers and build the desired project. For example, to develop new housing, the DDA or City can acquire several of the vacant lots and can contribute them to the project. This will provide an incentive to lower the cost, and minimize the risk, for the developer. Should the first phase be successful, the developer will more than likely undertake construction of additional units without any form of subsidy. The goal is to use tax increment financing to attract developers by minimizing risk, leverage private investment and eventually eliminate the need for financial assistance.

Gap Funding

Some projects may need financial assistance to kick-start the development. The City may, at its own discretion, commit project-specific future tax increment capture back to private projects for a specified period of time. The goal is to provide funding to close the “gap” that prevents the project from becoming a reality due to financial feasibility. There are many additional incentives that can also be utilized to support “gap” funding.

Business Retention

Business Development/Retention Program – Develop a program to take and keep the pulse of the local business community. Regular touches, or retention visits will begin to engage the business community beyond traditional networking opportunities. Typical discussions during retention visits include business growth plans, marketing, employment and obstacles that can hinder growth. There are many resources available to the business community for finding, hiring and retaining employees, obtaining financial support, learning about import and export programs and government contracting opportunities. Having a strong business retention program can be one of the most successful tools for supporting the local business community.

Business Attraction

Now that the City of Swartz Creek has completed a Marketing and Branding Strategy, it will be important to engage fully with the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce as well as the MEDC to implement a business attraction strategy that works for the community based on the outcome of the Master Plan, land available for growth and target sectors the city is looking to attract.

It will be equally important for the city to develop an attraction strategy for general retail and specialty businesses the city would like to attract to the downtown. The MEDC RRC program may assist with this as well as working with local commercial property brokers.

Marketing and Branding

The City of Swartz Creek has actively promoted specific economic development projects. For example, the Holland Square Project fundamentally encourages downtown reinvestment by redeveloping a former gas station into a new public pavilion for community events. Increasingly, communities around Michigan (and nationally) are taking similar steps to both stimulate development through actions that make surrounding property more appealing, and steps to become directly engaged in seeking development proposals for key property.

Frequently, a tool known as the Developer RFQ is used to obtain development proposals for key property. A key property might be a vacant lot, or an underutilized building in a prominent location. Typically, a community, or development organization secures site control for a key property, defines a range of development possibilities, and then offers the opportunity to offer a development proposal given incentives and parameters defined in the RFP. In this way, the community assumes a proactive role in the development process and begins to think as a developer might. This connects to marketing and branding as communities need to build a business case for a development project and provide compelling reasons to invest in the community (compared with a growing number of options elsewhere).

Swartz Creek should continue to try to set itself apart from other places and strive to offer a unique identity and brand. This can be supported by drawing attention to considerations such as city rankings, local awards, walkscores, and favorable statistics.

Increasingly, communities are also preparing optional concept plans and offering third party feasibility studies to draw a clearer picture of development potential. (see

<https://www.miplace.org/globalassets/media-documents/rrc/rrc-guide---developer-rfq.pdf> for more information on developer RFQ).

Additionally, efforts to build a compelling argument for local investment can be supported by crafting a succinct, clear and focused municipal “elevator speech.” An elevator speech is a short (minute or less) statement designed to grab attention. The word elevator is tied to the time it takes for a typical elevator ride. The following material was generated as a starting point for more local consideration and refinement, but it is grounded in what residents offered when asked had to offer three words that best describe Swartz Creek and the top strengths of Swartz Creek.

DRAFT - SWARTZ CREEK ELEVATOR SPEECH

Swartz Creek celebrates a hometown spirit like few other places. Our friendships with each other are lasting and our residents work hard to build the kind of community people care deeply about. We welcome those who share our love for small town charm, local pride, family, safety, friendliness and fun. Swartz Creek is loaded with opportunity for those who want to be successful here. This opportunity flows from unique community attributes and, most importantly, from the people of Swartz Creek who support and encourage each other - because that is what friends do.

Redevelopment Ready Sites

The City of Swartz Creek has identified the following sites as priorities for future redevelopment projects.

Sports Creek Raceway

The Sports Creek Raceway is a former horse racing facility located at the intersection of Morrish Road and I-69. While there are plans taking shape to reopen the facility as a race track in 2019, this site has the potential to provide the greatest economic return to the City of Swartz Creek, either as a tourist destination, or as a repurposed site for future industrial/commercial/mixed use development in the future.

The existing site is nearly 100 acres fully served by infrastructure. If the site is reopened as a race track, it will be imperative to focus development efforts along the Morrish Road Corridor to Downtown. Further, it will be important to work with MDOT to potentially widen the Morrish/I-



69 overpass to ensure traffic capacity is met given new commercial developments at that intersection. Additionally, the city should work with a hospitality consultant to determine the feasibility of a potential hotel to be located at that intersection if the demand is present. Lastly, if the track is reopened, the city will want to engage the Flint & Genesee Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop a destination marketing plan to support the track.

If the facility is not reopened as a track, the site should be repurposed into a mixed-use business park that could include a mix of industrial, office and commercial uses to increase the much-needed supply of industrial facilities within Genesee County. With access to I-69 and the I-69 International Trade Corridor, this site could be a prime destination for key industrial suppliers with both local and international clients.

Mary Crapo School

The former Mary Crapo School is located just west of Downtown Swartz Creek and is a prime property for redevelopment into high density residential housing. This would also add new tax revenues to the city's tax roll as this site was formerly owned by the Swartz Creek Community Schools and was not taxed, creating a net win for the city.

Family Worship Center

This site is a former church located on the western side of Morrish Road just north of Miller Road near downtown. This site is ideal for repurposing as a destination hospitality/dining establishment, craft brewery/distillery or other type of establishment given the close proximity to I-69 and downtown. This site could become an anchor establishment similar to the Clarkston Union or Fenton Fire Hall and could serve both the local population as well as capture a share of the ever-growing craft food and beverage industry throughout Michigan.

8057 Miller Road

This site was the home of Assenmacher Bicycle Company, now located on Hill Road in Mundy Township. This site is perfectly located on the south side of Miller Road, downtown Swartz Creek and is adjacent to the west of city-owned property that will be redeveloped in the near future.



Ideally, this site will be repurposed with a restaurant or some type of specialty retail. The goal is to preserve the building to the extent possible, but this would also make a prime site for a two to three-story mixed-use building if the right opportunity presents itself.

5203 Morrish Road

This is the site of the Swartz Creek Grain Elevator which is a non-designated historic site on the south side of the City. This site offers a prime opportunity for future mixed-use development. The site has been a host to a number of businesses over the years and is in need of improvements. This site could also be an extension of the industrial uses located to the west on Morrish Road.

Incentives Available to Assist Development

As soon as possible, the City of Swartz Creek should develop incentive guidelines to help determine when incentives are appropriate and how much incentive to offer. With any State of Michigan Incentive Program, a local contribution will need to be included. This can be in the form of cash, in-kind support, tax abatements, Tax Increment Finance or other.

The following programs are a sampling of incentives available to both local communities and developers to assist with redevelopment projects.

Business Development Program – The MiBDP is an incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic Fund, in cooperation with the MEDC. The program is designed to provide grants, loans or other economic assistance to businesses for highly competitive projects in Michigan that create jobs and/or provide investment.

PA 198 Industrial Facilities Exemption – Industrial property tax abatements provide incentives for eligible businesses to make new investments in Michigan. These abatements encourage Michigan manufacturers to build new plants, expand existing plants, renovate aging plants, or add new machinery and equipment. High technology operations are also available for the abatement. Depending on the scope and type of project, real property taxes can be abated up to 50% for a period not to exceed 12 years for new construction. Further, the 6-mil SET may be abated up to 100% with approval from the MEDC.

In the case of a rehabilitation, the current assessed value of the property prior to improvement is frozen. This results in a 100% exemption from property tax on the value of the improvements.

Commercial Rehabilitation Abatement – Encourages the rehabilitation of commercial property by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 10 years. Commercial property is qualified facility that includes a building or group of contiguous building of commercial property that is 15 years or older, of which the primary purpose is the operation of a commercial business enterprise or multi-family residential. The CRA freezes the taxable value of the building and exempts the new investment from local taxes.

Community Revitalization Program - The Michigan Community Revitalization Program (MCRP) is an incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF), in cooperation with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), designed to promote community revitalization that will accelerate private investment in areas of historical disinvestment; contribute to Michigan’s reinvention as a vital, job generating state; foster redevelopment of functionally obsolete or historic properties; reduce blight; and protect the natural resources of this state. The program is designed to provide grants, loans, or other economic assistance for eligible investment projects in Michigan.

New Market Tax Credits - Historically, low-income communities experience a lack of investment, as evidenced by vacant commercial properties, outdated manufacturing facilities, and inadequate access to education and healthcare service providers. The New Market Tax Credit Program (NMTC Program) aims to break this cycle of disinvestment by attracting the private investment necessary to reinvigorate struggling local economies.

The NMTC Program attracts private capital into low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their federal income tax in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries called Community Development Entities (CDEs). The credit totals 39 percent of the original investment amount and is claimed over a period of seven years.

Brownfield - The Brownfield Program uses tax increment financing (TIF) to reimburse brownfield related costs incurred while redeveloping contaminated, functionally obsolete, blighted or historic properties. It is also responsible for managing the Single Business Tax and Michigan Business Tax Brownfield Credit legacy programs (SBT/MBT Brownfield Credits). The Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) with assistance from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), administers the reimbursement of costs using state school taxes (School Operating and State Education Tax) for nonenvironmental eligible activities that support redevelopment, revitalization and reuse of eligible property. The MEDC also manages amendments to SBT/MBT Brownfield Credit projects approved by MSF. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) administers the reimbursement of environmental response costs using state school taxes for environmental activities, and local units of government sometimes use only local taxes to reimburse for eligible activities (i.e., “local-only” plans).

Michigan Transportation Economic Development Fund - The mission of the Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) is to enhance the ability of the state to compete in an international economy, to serve as a catalyst for economic growth of the state, and to improve the quality of life in the state. The funds are available to state, county, and city road agencies for immediate highway needs relating to a variety of economic development issues.

City Properties and Utilities – The City can negotiate both property costs and utility/development fees for city owned property. The city would require a developer to submit a development proposal which would be reviewed internally for economic impacts. If the economic impacts are high for the city, fees may be potentially reduced to support the project.

Using this Plan

This Economic Development Strategy is a key piece of the development puzzle for the City of Swartz Creek. This plan should be seen as a living document and constantly reviewed and refined as projects are completed. Further, this plan should serve as a link between the City’s Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Marketing and Branding Strategy and other tools developed through the Redevelopment Ready Communities program.

Additionally, economic development requires a team effort. The City of Swartz Creek has done a good job of developing a strong network of support to assist with economic development within the city. Efforts will need to be made to strengthen and enhance this network while building new partnerships. This would include adding capacity to the Swartz Creek Chamber of Commerce to assist with local promotions of events, hosting business to business events and working to promote Swartz Creek as a great place to live, do business and grow business.

Finally, the city should be utilizing all available resources to assist with promotion of the community. Some of these resources include

1. Travel Michigan – This is the tourism arm for the State of Michigan. As noted in the marketing and brand strategy, the city should be registered with Travel Michigan to promote tourism opportunities, especially when the race track comes back online.
2. MEDC – Continue to work with the RRC development team to promote development/redevelopment opportunities within the city.
3. Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce – Work with the Economic Development team to provide resources to local companies as well as to build a business attraction plan for the city
4. Genesee County Visitor and Convention Bureau – Work with the CVB to promote local events and tourism opportunities within the community.