

Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative

March 5, 2015 Meeting Notes

Welcome and Introductions

Introductions of Committee members and regional partners in attendance were made. Peter Dams and Rebecca Harvey were reintroduced as professionals retained by Region 8 to assist the RPI Committee in their work slated for 2015 (Year 2: RPI Grant).

Summary Agenda for Year 2 (2015)

Lee Adams provided an overview of the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) and the work completed by the Region 8 RPI Committee in Year 1 (2014). He referenced the RPI Plan adopted by the Committee on September 22, 2014, highlighting the Vision Statement and the four (4) major goal themes of regional collaboration set forth in the Plan. The goal theme statements and the specific goals and opportunities identified within each goal area were reviewed.

It was noted that since the adoption of the RPI Plan in September, 2014, the Committee has moved forward with formalizing the Committee structure and developing project selection criteria, while staff has proceeded with an asset inventory for Region 8. This approach was structured in a way that would allow the Committee to begin the process of identifying projects that will implement the goals/opportunities set forth in the Plan, and essentially allow for the creation of Volume 2 of the RPI Plan.

The project identification/selection process will consist of a 2-meeting approach for each **goal theme**:

Meeting 1: A review of related regional assets and project brainstorming session with regional partners; and,

Meeting 2: Committee review/selection of proposed projects.

To facilitate this project identification/selection process, the following schedule has been developed:

March 5, 2015 – **Community Development** (*Meeting 1*)

April 2, 2015 – **Community Development** (*Meeting 2*)

May 7, 2015 – **Education** (*Meeting 1*)

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June 4, 2015 – **Education** (*Meeting 2*)

July 2, 2015 – **Infrastructure** (*Meeting 1*)

August 6, 2015 – **Infrastructure** (*Meeting 2*)

Region 8: Community Development

Lee Adams presented the results of the inventory of assets related to the subject of Community Development. The following assets were reviewed:

Regional Partners:

- 247 groups surveyed (36 responses =15% return rate)
- work efforts and money invested in current partner projects that are related to the Plan goals

Assets Related to Goal #1 – *Transportation:*

- transit service areas
- nonmotorized transportation systems

Assets Related to Goal #2 – *Recreation:*

- parks/recreation areas

Assets Related to Goal #3 – *Housing:*

- % rental units affordable to 80% HAMFI

Assets Related to Goal #4 – *Sustainable Development:*

- natural areas

The following observations/comments were provided by attendees:

- The transportation goal and related projects should have a regional focus.
- Are the ‘opportunities’ identified in the Plan too broad? Would the introduction of metrics have merit?

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- Identified projects should have a regional impact.
- The low response rate to the survey suggests a lack of understanding of the RPI; outreach is needed.
- The asset maps are helpful in identifying gaps and areas ripe for connection.
- Opportunities and related projects should be considered in terms of a quantifiable impact; they should be responding to a regionally significant issue.
- Region 8 should look at competitive areas to determine the metrics for ‘winning’ . . and not ‘losing’.
- Project decisions should also be guided by the market (i.e. craft beer; bike trails).

Dialogue on Community Development

Priorities that have not been reflected in the RPI Plan:

- Contaminated/blight property redevelopment; create redevelopment-ready property.

Potential projects for the RPI:

NEED FOR METRICS

- Are the ‘opportunities’ identified in the Plan too broad? Would the introduction of METRICS have merit?
- Opportunities and related projects should be considered in terms of a QUANTIFIABLE IMPACT; they should be responding to a regionally significant issue.
- Region 8 should look at competitive areas to determine the metrics for ‘winning’ . . and not ‘losing’.
- Identified projects should have a regional impact.
- The low response rate to the survey suggests a lack of understanding of the RPI; outreach is needed.
- The asset maps are helpful in identifying gaps and areas ripe for connection.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

- No common media system within the Region to COMMUNICATE arts/culture and recreation OPPORTUNITIES.

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HOUSING & PLACEMAKING

- Target Market Analysis' within the Region - - opportunities to include many communities within the Region in the TMA effort (in coordination with MSHDA) – tied to grant opportunities and placemaking objectives.
- Project decisions should also be guided by the market (ie. kraft beer; bike trails).
- Contaminated/blight property redevelopment; create redevelopment-ready property.
- Blight (see 'Priorities')
- Shared resources/shared planning documents/shared studies – to identify areas of potential reinvestment in conjunction with walkable urban areas (ie form-based codes, streamlined processes, efficient development approvals) - - Battle Creek – Kalamazoo Master Plan Process.
- Zoning Ordinance templates – region-wide approach to land use regulation (ie. uniform definitions; best practices).

TRAILS & CORRIDORS

- Connecting existing trails; contiguous natural corridors.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT

- Regional transportation authority.
- The TRANSPORTATION goal and related projects should have a regional focus.

GENERAL

- Identify driving forces for business location decisions;
- Downtown Kalamazoo is too small to attract the 25-34 year old age group . . . still a limitation for the Region.
- Incorporate MDARD town hall meeting information.

Next Steps

The RPI Committee is scheduled to meet on April 2, 2015 to consider the feedback provided and move toward the selection of 3-4 projects related to Community Development.

Adjournment