

## Southcentral Michigan Planning Council

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### 2021 SMPC Annual Report

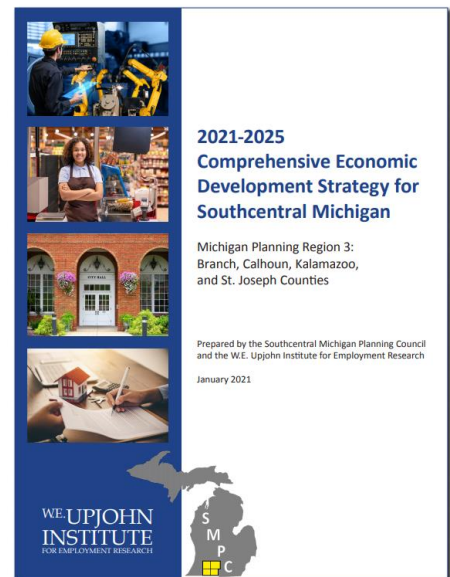
2021 continued to be a year of challenges and success for the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC). The pandemic continued to disrupt many of our personal and professional lives but SMPC continued to provide valuable services to the communities in Planning Region 3 (Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph counties). SMPC staff acclimated to working remotely in 2021 and productivity returned to a normal level. This return to productivity allowed SMPC staff to complete the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan, apply for and receive a Capacity-Building grant through the Economic Development Administration, assist local communities with land use plans and zoning ordinances, and complete a housing plan for St. Joseph County. Although SMPC's fiscal year coincides with the State's ending September 30, this annual report covers the calendar year of 2021.

#### 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

SMPC, with the assistance of a committed group of stakeholders, created a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Region 3 in 2021. The CEDS is an important document to the region as it is required to access much of the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding opportunities. The CEDS was approved in 2021 and will expire in 2025. The CEDS is available here: [www.smpcregion3.org/ceds](http://www.smpcregion3.org/ceds).

The CEDS outlines the economic conditions of the region, examines the impact of Covid on the regional economy, contains the results of a SWOT analysis of the regional economy, and outlines an action plan for the region. The Goal of the CEDS are:

1. Build on existing collaborative efforts to ensure that the regional economy is both resilient and inclusive.
2. Develop skills of the regional workforce to support workers' economic mobility and to meet the needs of employers in the region.
3. Increase the assets and prosperity of communities that have experienced historical disinvestment by improving their access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
4. Support the maintenance of existing housing assets and increase the available housing options that meet the needs of the region's current and future residents.
5. Strengthen infrastructure that is critical to the success of the region, particularly for transportation and broadband.
6. Retain and attract talent in the region by expanding local government's ability to support small businesses and enhance quality of life.



## **Housing Planning**

SMPC staff began offering housing planning services in 2020 but delivered its first housing plan in 2021. In 2020, SMPC staff built a housing toolkit ([plan4housing.org](http://plan4housing.org)); staff uses to the toolkit when creating housing plans. Two new housing plans were initiated but not finished in 2021, Kalamazoo County and Oshtemo Township. SMPC staff will have capacity to help create housing plans in 2022; if your community is interested in SMPC assistance in creating a housing plan, please contact Lee Adams or Emily Petz (contact information below).

## **Broadband Assistance**

SMPC received a grant through the EDA to assist local communities with broadband plans. SMPC staff assisted various community groups with the broadband planning process. Staff will continue to provide technical assistance as well as find and secure funding for broadband planning and installation.

## **Technical Assistance**

SMPC offers assistance to local groups who need to update or create land use or economic development plans or who have transportation needs. SMPC offers some services without cost to local governments. Large projects, such as master plans, zoning ordinance updates, or economic development plans, require SMPC to recoup its expenses through contracts. SMPC, through the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study, conducts regional transportation planning activities (asset management, Rural Planning, and Small Urban Planning) and planning work for individual municipalities; most of the transportation planning work is free to local communities. If you are in need of land use planning, economic development, or transportation assistance, contact Lee Adams for more information.

## **Workshops**

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to limit the educational and workshop offerings from SMPC. SMPC staff did help organize a workshop on American Rescue Plan Act funding in October 2021. This workshop outlined the sources and uses of local government assistance funding offered through ARPA. This workshop was hosted by SMPC, the Michigan Department of Treasury, and Michigan State University.

Traditionally, SMPC will offer local governments and nonprofits the opportunity to learn and share best practices on relevant topics two times each year. In the past, SMPC has offered workshops on alternative energy and its impact on land use, economic development, the Open Meetings Act and parliamentary procedure, marijuana regulations, and land use policy. As Covid wanes, SMPC will begin to offer in-person workshops again. If workshops are viable in 2022, SMPC will look to host a workshop on the economic impact of Covid-19 and how to best prepare for future economic shocks – the EDA provided SMPC with funding to study this topic.

## **SMPC Staff**

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