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West Branch Community, Michigan I-75 Business Loop Market Strategy

The Report

Submitted to:

Land Information Access Association (LIAA)

for:

Growth Assessment Planners (GAP)

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Table of Contents

	Page
1.0 Executive Summary	1
2.0 Development Opportunity	5
3.0 Market Overview	14
4.0 Retail Supply and Demand	16
5.0 Funds, Resources and Assistance	21

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This document presents our analytic results, findings, conclusions and recommendations regarding the feasibility of developments along the I-75 Business Loop (hereinafter, “the Corridor”) in Ogemaw County, Michigan. The objective is the development of businesses, retail, services, professional space along the corridor, with direct benefits for the Ogemaw County, West Branch and Ogemaw Townships, the City of West Branch, its downtown merchants, and resident families.

1.2 The Regional Advantage

West Branch is ideally located at the gateway into Michigan’s north mainland, and is poised to benefit from visitor traffic from southeast Michigan along I-75, and from resident families throughout northeast Michigan that have limited shopping choices in their own relatively rural communities.

To the south, Midland-Saginaw-Bay City intercepts much of the commuter traffic, and to the north, Gaylord’s Swiss Village theme certainly draws a good mix of visitors and vacationing families. However, West Branch is the first significant destination for north-bound traffic along I-75 that offers an “up north” character, and is well-positioned between these two destinations. To demonstrate the point further, here is a summary of the leading retail destinations by geographic sector throughout Michigan:

Michigan - Regional Shopping Destinations

- West Upper Peninsula Marquette
- East Upper Peninsula Sault St. Marie
- Northcentral Mainland Gaylord
- Northwest Mainland Traverse City
- Northeast Mainland West Branch
- Southwest Mainland Grand Rapids
- Southcentral Mainland Lansing
- Southeast Mainland Detroit

1.3 Marketing Recommendation

It is paramount that West Branch capitalize on its geographic position as the “Gateway to the North,” and that this image be clearly conveyed in a community-wide marketing theme. This theme can easily translate across jurisdictions and can apply to all new development along the I-75 Business Corridor.

The Historic Victorian Village theme is an additional prestige title held by downtown West Branch, and could also be carried through to new development along the corridor. However, the “Gateway to the North” will be more transferable, easier to convey, easy to sell, easy to implement, and therefore easy to believe.

Pine trees and wooded parks may seem every-day to local residents, but hold a high appeal for visitors. DLZ Planning has appropriately noted that open, green and public spaces along the corridor should be capitalized to preserve the “Up North” character, and we recommend at least one public area with natural stands of pine trees and picnic areas along the corridor.

1.4 Development Phases

There is a clear opportunity for the development of retail, professional space and services along the I-75 Business Loop Corridor and in downtown West Branch. In conducting our assessment of the I-75 Business Loop, we studied a number of vacant and available parcels that generally represent opportunities within three geographic sectors of the corridor.

We then listed these sectors in order that they are most likely to be developed. To clarify, we are not presenting a case that any one sector is “more important” than another. However, from the perspective of strategic retail planning, retailers will naturally gravitate toward the interchanges first, to maximize visibility and access to visitors and destination shoppers from the surrounding rural communities (particularly to the north-east).

Priority Order: Development Sectors

1. Sector A - Exit 212
2. Sector E - Exit 215
3. Sector C - Downtown
4. Sector B - South Inboard
5. Sector D - North Inboard

While retailers are positioning themselves at the interchanges and negotiating with Ogemaw County and Ogemaw and West Branch Townships, the City of West Branch should also focus on creative solutions for expanding the downtown, in the following ways:

- a) Physically, by encouraging new development;
- b) Geographically, by improving linkages to adjacent areas;
- c) Horizontally, by maximizing the use of parcels at the very edges of the downtown;
- d) Vertically, by ensuring that all new buildings are at least three levels; and
- e) Internally, by ensuring that services do not occupy prime space or land better suited for traditional merchants.

1.5 Smart Planning

Infill along the corridor may develop last, but should be addressed immediately from a planning perspective. Along the entire corridor, it is essential that the communities collaborate on the preparation of a collective master plan under direction and guidance from GAP's consultants at the Land Information Access Association.

It is essential that infill areas, which may seem least likely to develop, receive the same planning effort as the interchanges and downtown district. Smart planning along the entire corridor will help mitigate fragmentation, sprawl, visual eyesores, and scattered or inconsistent uses. These problems tend to creep into a community over time, and can undermine the overall character. Mistakes can be very difficult (and sometimes even impossible) to 'undo.'

At a minimum, the corridor master plan must address the following elements:

- signage and wayfinding
- combining and/or burying utility lines
- separating storm and wastewater
- traffic and pedestrian access and safety
- use of modern form-based codes and/or land use ordinances
- preservation of open, public and green space
- parking ratios and building placement, minimal set-backs
- clustering and/or synergies of land uses, adjacencies

Ideally, the long-term plan will result in a well-planned community with clear districts for retail, entertainment venues, businesses and services, offices suites, residential units and open space. Here are some specific attributes that we are advocating:

- All streets should have sidewalks on both sides;
- New streets will follow a traditional grid pattern, and cul-du-sacs and dead-ends should be avoided at all cost;
- All wayfinding should be similar in size, font and theme;
- Buildings are built close to the road, with minimal set-backs and parking in the back rather than the front;
- Parcels share common access wherever possible, so vehicles can maneuver easily between businesses;
- Traffic-calming features should be incorporated, but not over-engineered or implemented to such an extreme that visitors find the corridor cumbersome;
- Building scales and heights should complement each other with adjacencies and across the streets; and
- New buildings will utilize high-quality materials, including natural woods, tile, brick and stone.

Any variety and number of additional guidelines may apply, as identified by the Land Information Access Association and DLZ Planning.

2.0 Development Opportunity

Based on the results of our retail supply-demand analysis we have formulated recommendations for national chain and brand stores that would be appropriate for the I-75 Business Loop and corridor, with consideration for the benefits of retail clustering and synergies, as well import and resident income profiles for the market.

At Anderson Economic Group, we are stout advocates for independent merchants, entrepreneurs and small businesses. In markets where retail and business opportunities are tight or limited, it is against our principles to recommend big-box retailers and national chain stores before addressing the needs of independents.

However, there are some exceptions in Michigan where both national chains and independents can thrive in harmony and actually benefit one another. This usually requires a combination of population and/or income growth, high import with excellent highway access and visibility, and a clear market gap in key categories. To-date, we have noted a number of unique markets that meet these requirements, including Traverse City, Howell / Brighton, Lansing...and West Branch.

We anticipate that the addition of new retailers along the I-75 Business Loop corridor will be catalyzed by the market entry of big-box - regardless of all commendable objectives to grow the downtown district first. According to local reports, the market has already been approached by Meijer and Menard's.

Over time, we would anticipate at least one discount or supercenter like Meijer and Target, one junior department store like Kohl's and Elder Beerman, one home improvement store like Menard's and/or a Do-It Center, and one membership warehouse like Sam's Club. It is reasonable to expect at least two of these brands to enter the market in the next 5 years. If the market can return to its past trend of favorable population growth, then up to 4 of these stores could open within 10 years.

Discount, junior department, membership warehouse and home improvement mega stores typically range between 90,000 and 200,000 square feet in size. For example, Kohl's and Elder Beerman may be 90,000 square feet and Target could be 120,000 square feet, whereas Menard's and Sam's could easily approach 200,000 square feet.

There is total market support for up to 430,000 square feet of retail along the entire Corridor, and a portion of this must be allocated to the big-boxes. However, big-box anchors are certain to generate interest from other brands in the 6,000 to 30,000 square foot size range. As interest continues, we recommend pursuit of non-apparel anchors first, with an emphasis on furniture, fabric and craft stores, hobby, sporting goods, books, pets, family fitness, entertainment venues and related categories.

Apparel stores will naturally follow behind the hard-line and general merchandise categories described above. Apparel stores are already well-represented in the market, with credit due to the Tanger Outlet Mall. However, with the addition of a few mid-size brands, additional apparel chains will tend to round out the mix.

To clarify further, we recommend deliberate recruitment of specific non-apparel brands like MC Sports, Petco, Powerhouse Gym, Borders Books, La-Z-Boy and Hobby Lobby. These will be followed by family (non-outlet) brands like Burlington Coat Factory, TJMaxx / Marshall's, and Ross Dress 4 Less. Here is a more complete list of potential brands:

<u>Brands Like...</u>	<u>Brands Like...</u>
5.7.9 Junior's Apparel	Hobby Lobby
Avenue Women's Apparel	JoAnn Fabric
Bath & Body Works	La-Z-Boy
Body Shop	Marshall's
Borders Outlet	MC Sports
Burlington Coat Factory	Meijer
Cache, Inc.	Men's Wearhouse
Cato Women's Apparel	Pet Supplies Plus
Chico's Women's Apparel	Petco
Deb Shops	PetsMart
Dots Women's Apparel	Powerhouse
Dunham's Sports	Ross Dress 4 Less
F.Y.E. - For Your Entertainment	Sam's Club
Gander Mountain	TJMaxx
Gart Sporting Goods	World Gym
Glik's Apparel	Z Gallerie
Gymboree	4-Plex Cinema

In addition, we recommend active recruitment of family fitness, entertainment and recreational venues that would appeal to both resident families and visiting vacationers. These venues will contribute to the regional draw of the retail district, and offers shoppers multiple reasons to complete an excursion that might occupy an afternoon, full day or weekend. Here are some specific targets that should be considered:

Bally Fitness / Gold's Gym	Entertainment	West
Batting Cages	Entertainment	West
Climbing Walls	Entertainment	West
Go Karts	Entertainment	West
Indoor Modern Skate Park	Entertainment	West
Indoor/Outdoor Water Park	Entertainment	West
YMCA	Entertainment	West

These aside, special consideration must still be made for downtown West Branch, which has a quality Victorian Village theme and a good mix of retailers, services and merchants. For this district, we recommend that the City of West Branch view the downtown district just like any other regional shopping destination.

Without exception, a shopping area that has a quality anchor with regional appeal will perform better than one that lacks an anchor. For downtown districts, anchors tend to be hardware, grocery, pharmacy, furniture and sporting goods stores. In other words, anything that a) fulfills weekly needs like groceries and pharmacies, and anything that fills hard-line categories like electronics, sporting goods, and furniture, would qualify.

Households have weekly needs in some very basic categories like clothing, food, medicine and housing. These should all be targeted for the downtown *before* chasing after gift and boutique stores that would have a limited geographic draw and cyclical sales during off-seasons and economic downturns.

Household Essentials

- Groceries and Pharmacies
- Hardware, Lumber, Plumbing, Heating / Cooling
- Family Apparel and Footwear
- Household Furniture, Small Electronics
- Moderate Restaurants
- Banks and Lending Institutions

Big-Ticket Hardline Categories

- Furniture and Home Furnishings
- Automotive Parts, like Napa
- Appliances, Larger Electronics, Vacuums
- Furniture Rental; Rent-to-Own
- Heavy Tools, Lawn Tools, Lumber

2.1 Downtown West Branch

A gift shop, consignment shop, and toy / hobby / collectible stores would also be excellent tenants in the downtown West Branch. However, valuable resources should not be diverted to these categories at the expense creating a regional draw and providing household basics in that district.

Downtown West Branch is geographically constrained in size, and has limited opportunities for physical expansion. Nevertheless, we highly recommend that the City test the limits of this notion, and strive to develop new buildings that will enlarge the district. With new space or refurbished buildings, we recommend that at least two and as many as five national brands be pursued, with preliminary ideas provided in the list below.

<u>Brands Like...</u>	<u>Merchants Like...</u>
FedEx / Kinko's	Aquariums and Birds
Footlocker	Beads & Baubles
GameStop/ EB Games	Comics and Sports Memorabilia
Mailboxes, Etc.	Orthopedic Shoes
Petland	Quilting, Knitting
Play it Again Sports	Tailor, Shoe Repair, Laundromat
Ritz / Wolf Camera	Trains, Planes, Hobby Shop
Sportsmart	
UPS	
Waldenbooks	

We absolutely are not recommending that national brand stores ‘replace’ or ‘displace’ local merchants and entrepreneurs. Rather, in a favorable retail market like Ogemaw County, traditional merchants will continue to be the mainstay of the downtown district, and will benefit by the additional shopper traffic generated by a few select brands that are unique to the market and that also fill obvious gaps.

Downtowns are ideal locations for traditional merchants and restaurants, and non-retail businesses are not recommended along the I-75 Business Loop corridor. Services should not be allowed to occupy valuable space that is better suited for traditional merchants. In fact, it is better to leave traditional retail space vacant than to allow services and non-retail businesses to fill the space. A retail space occupied by a title company is a lost opportunity for some future merchants.

Our study of downtown districts and communities throughout Michigan and the nation consistently points to the fact that “water sells.” Downtown West Branch is geographically bounded by the river to the east and north, the railroad to the west, and residential neighborhoods to the south, and that the downtown “spine” runs east-west between the river and railroad. This spine also runs along the I-75 Business Loop corridor, which is

an advantage that other communities do not share. (Consider Grayling for example, with a downtown spine that is perpendicular to the main road connector, with disadvantages for merchants with regard to visibility to traffic and potential customers.)

In terms of geographic space, it would seem that West Branch should expand to the northwest by raising existing properties to a higher and better use. However, parcels that are even one block removed from the downtown spine will be disadvantaged relative to visibility to traffic along the I-75 Business Loop Corridor.

In terms of “money best spent,” we recommend that future developments in the downtown district focus on properties with frontage on the spine, and particularly any parcels that are adjacent to the river. Again, “water sells.” With this deductive reasoning, a number of key parcels come into play on the north and south sides of the corridor, as depicted by parcel D-1 in the attached Appendix A.

2.2 Professionals and Services

In June 2006, the Michigan Future, Inc. released a state report titled: [A New Agenda for a New Michigan](#). Here are a few quotes from that report:

“The only reliable path to a high-prosperity Michigan is to be concentrated in knowledge-based enterprises. ...the most successful economies are those that are concentrated in high-pay, knowledge-based industries: information, financial services and insurance, professional and technical services, and management of companies.

In the past, Michigan was able to flourish with an economic base concentrated on factories, farming and tourism. No more. Michigan is lagging the nation mainly because of our slow growth in the dynamic, high-wage sectors of the knowledge economy. That, combined with astonishingly high dependence on the now uncompetitive domestic auto industry, means that we almost surely will continue to lag the nation for the next several years.”

For most counties throughout Michigan, we have been recommending a decisive economic program of diversification away from manufacturing-based industries and toward knowledge-based industries. As so eloquently described by Michigan Future, Inc., the greatest opportunity for economic growth in Michigan are in:

- Finance and Insurance
- Information
- Professional and Technical Services
- Management of Companies.

Ogemaw County already has a strength in the medical and health care professions, and we understand that there is some active interest in developing this industry sector further. In particular, there should be some real opportunities for medical professional space either near the existing hospital, or in Sector E and Sector F along the I-75 Business Loop corridor.

Medical Plaza / Health Care Professional Space for tenants Like:

- Family Mental Health Center
- Chiropractor, Orthopedic
- Dentist, Optician, Hearing Center
- Herbalist / Nutritionist / Dietician
- Physical Therapy / Sports Medicine

Medical professions and health care aside, West Branch's location offers the same locational advantages for business, entrepreneurs and professionals as it offers to retailers. Sectors E and F along the I-75 Business Loop corridor are particularly good locations for non-retail professional space, in the format of a small business campus.

If these businesses gravitate toward the downtown district, then we recommend that the City of West Branch continue guiding them toward perpendicular, tangential, secondary or adjacent streets and locations, and that they not be allowed to occupy space that is best suited for traditional retailers, merchants and discovery types of shops.

Professional Plaza / Office Suites for tenants Like:

- Accountants and Tax Advisors
- Title and Mortgage Companies
- Lawyers and Attorneys
- Visiting Nurse Dispatch Office
- Property Management Offices
- Staffing Solutions Agency, Kelly Services
- Surveying, Engineering and Architectural Firms
- Full Service Day Care and Learning Center
- Veterinarian and/or Pet Hospital with full Boarding
- Full-Service Pet Condominium and Retreat
- Culinary School, School of Cosmetology

2.3 Site Selection

For markets like Ogemaw County with retail growth potential, translating the ‘gap’ into an actionable ‘opportunity’ requires consideration for development site, parcels and real estate choices. For the I-75 Business Loop corridor, we have identified some of the more promising parcels that represent viable opportunities for retail, commercial space, office campuses and entertainment venues. Here is a summary of the properties, which are detailed in the attached Appendix A to this report:

A-1: Excellent high visibility, ideal for small non-retail business.

A-2: Excellent in-fill opportunity with visibility to customers already at Home Depot and Wal-Mart Supercenter.

A-3: Planned and parceled commercial space, ideal for small businesses or one significant chain or anchor store.

B-1: Large, level parcel ideal for big-box retailer similar in size to Home Depot or Wal-Mart Supercenter.

B-2: Good frontage along the business loop with opportunities for a mixed-use project with both retail and multi-family, owner-occupied condominiums or townhouses.

B-3, B-4: Good frontage on the business loop, would provide good balance for any development along frontage of B-2.

B-5: A link parcel that is essential for drawing visitors across the railroad tracks and north into the City of West Branch. A good location for a county-wide visitor’s center, dog-run, open public green space, etc.

B-6, B-7: Ideal opportunity to develop residential condominiums and townhouses that face each other north and south, with balanced scale and style on both sides of West Flowage Lake Road.

B-7, B-8, B-9: Ideal opportunity to develop a meaningful mixed-use project at the intersection of the I-75 Business Loop and County Route 76, to convey a “sense of having arrived somewhere” with a gateway entrance into the City of West Branch.

C-1: An ideal location directly across from Glen’s Grocery, Kmart and Tractor Supply Company. Also an ideal location at the juncture of the I-75 Business Loop corridor and Highway 55, connecting Tawas City residents to West Branch.

D-1: Optimal location for physical expansion of downtown by building out to the edges of the district and capitalizing on the natural resources linked to the river.

D-2: A secondary opportunity for improving public access to the river, adding open public green space. There may be additional opportunities for physical expansion into the northwest portion of the downtown, or directly west of this parcel.

E-1: Ideal opportunity for a City of West Branch business incubator project, and for improving linkages between the downtown retail located on the east and west sides of the railroad tracks.

E-2: An important corner parcel at the juncture of the I-75 Business Loop leading to the County Courthouse, and Highway 30 leading to the local medical and health care “campus.” Existing facility may be easily adapted for a small business.

E-3: Large in-fill parcel that would be ideal for a destination-oriented business campus with professional space.

F-1, F-2, F-3: Opportunity to complete three corners at a good intersection at the gateway into the community, and to convey a “sense of having arrived somewhere.” This is the first true intersection that visitors will see at this exit and when traveling toward the County Courthouse, medical campus and / or downtown district.

F-3: Ideal location for convenience retail, traveler accommodations, entertainment venue, with some visibility to traffic along I-75.

F-4: Excellent visibility to Interstate 75, and an ideal location for a mega-entertainment venue, such as a family fun center, cinema, hotel, arcade, petting zoo or other visitor attractions.

F-6: One of the largest development opportunities with good visibility to the interstate. A potential regional destination for big-box retailers that would help catalyze additional development within Sectors E and F.

2.4 Marketing Resources

In securing tenants for available commercial properties throughout Ogemaw County and within its various jurisdictions, we recommend that all of these facilities be posted on the Michigan Site Network website, at <http://www.misitenet.org>. We also recommend that Ogemaw County provide a direct link to the Michigan Site Network website, to help drive potential tenants to the location.



In addition, all of the available development parcels should be marketed on the county, township, city and chamber of commerce websites, with direct links to the real estate sales persons representing the sellers.

3.0 Market Overview

3.1 Introduction

The I-75 Business Loop corridor benefits from two interchanges onto Interstate 75 at exits 212 and 215, and is a gateway from southeast Michigan to vacation destinations in the northern mainland and Upper Peninsula. Its highway access has helped the region attract a significant medical center, traveler accommodations and shopping destinations like the Tanger Outlet Mall, Home Depot and Wal-Mart Supercenter.

3.2 Unemployment Rates

Unemployment rates are important measures of economic health and viability. In Ogemaw County, unemployment fluctuated seasonally between 5 and 7 percent, and very similar to Otsego (Gaylord) and Crawford (Grayling) Counties. This is an improvement over prior years, when unemployment was consistently higher. Unemployment for Ogemaw County was up in 2006, at 7.8 percent compared to 7.3 percent the prior year.

3.3 Employment by Industry Sector

An important step in our economic analysis for Ogemaw County involves a close look at employment trends by industry sector, with comparisons to the State of Michigan and other counties in the region. Charts 7a through 7c in the attached Appendix to our report depict the “Change in Share of Total Employment” for each industry sector and each county. The data is all indexed to 1990, which adjusts all of the counties to the same measure, and enables comparisons between geographies with different labor force sizes.

The results for the State of Michigan (Chart 7a) represent a blending of highs and lows across all counties in the state. Accordingly, we expect to see the least amount of variation over time and between industrial categories. There are some exceptions in industries that consistently up or down across most of the state. Notably and without surprise, manufacturing is an industry experiencing considerable decline in the state, whereas services have been steadily growing.

In comparison to the State of Michigan, the data for individual and unique counties should reveal more pronounced variation between industry sectors and over time. Comparisons between counties is the most useful way to identify any apparent anomalies in the data.

For Ogemaw County, it is clear that employment in Agriculture, Farming and Mining have been declining *as a share of total* since the early 1990s, and that employment in Manufacturing and in Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities and Information have also declined as a share of total since 2000. These industries generally follow similar patterns to other counties in the region.

More encouraging is the increase in employment in a) Retail Trade, Accommodations and Food, b) Services and c) Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (F.I.R.E.) as share of total. These increases are exemplary compared to other counties in the region, and position Ogemaw County very favorably for continued growth and economic diversification in these sectors.

4.0 Retail Supply and Demand

4.1 Retail Supply

Retail supply is measured from vendor data provided by ESRI, Inc. 2005, and updated during our field analysis and inventory of existing retailers throughout the market, conducted in during the peak retail season of late summer, 2006. We noted big-box retailers, apparel and boutique stores, home improvement, theaters and entertainment venues, downtown merchants, services (particularly personal care and health services).

Every household, regardless of its income, has basic needs for raising a family, including places to live and learn, but also stores to purchase household essentials like groceries, hardware, clothing, furniture and pharmaceuticals. In the City of West Branch and along the I-75 Business Loop corridor, there are three big-box retailers, including Kmart, Home Depot, and a relatively new Wal-Mart Supercenter.

For the market size and location, West Branch is already attracting interest from other big-box retailers like Menard's and Meijer. Based on the experience of other communities in Michigan, including Mt. Pleasant, Grayling, Clare, Gaylord and Midland (see Table 2 in the Appendix), we anticipate that other brands will follow soon behind, such as Kohl's Junior Department Store, Elder Beerman, Target Discount, Lowe's and / or Sam's Club.

We have also noted that a number of retail categories are saturated in the West Branch market, and particularly apparel (Table 3), limited service restaurants (Table 5), and salons and personal care (Table 6). Other categories like automotive service and supply (Table 8) and health care services (Table 9) are also well-represented, but may also have a larger geographic draw from resident families.

Meanwhile, we have also noted that a number of key categories are clearly under-represented in the market, and present important opportunities for new businesses. In particular, these include sporting goods, family fitness, pet care and books (Table 7).

A study of merchants and businesses in downtown West Branch indicates an under-representation of traditional and discovery-oriented shops compared to services, automotive service, health care, personal care and limited-service restaurants. There is a good collection of home improvement stores, electronics / music stores and gift / novelty shops, but there is a clear opportunity to broaden the mix and achieve more balance.

4.2 Demand: Population

Retail demand is measured on the basis of population, per capita income, total personal income, resident expenditure potential, transacted retail sales, and growth rates for those same variables. Population and income were addressed in the demographic section of our report, and the two are multiplied to derive total personal income.

We have compiled demographic and competitive data from the Population Census (www.census.gov) for 1990 and 2000, and updated utilizing the BEA, ESRI / Arcview and /or Claritas to aggregate the data for specific geographic areas, enabling us to present the data through maps. We then evaluated the results and refine projections of population, income, and expenditures where necessary.

Ogemaw County continues to gain population since 1990 - but at a decreasing rate. The County grew from 18,681 to 21,645 people from 1990 to 2000, but growth has all but stalled in recent years (see Table 1. Demographics). A comparison of growth over time to other counties in the region indicates that Ogemaw's slowed growth is not typical. In fact, if the county had been keeping pace, it should have been approach 25,000 residents by now. Instead, at its current rate of growth, it will not reach 22,000 until after the year 2010 (see Chart 1. Population Growth Trends).

4.3 Demand: Per Capita Income

Per Capita Income is an essential measure of a resident's capacity to afford quality housing and even purchase a home, have a vehicle to drive to work, pay for advanced education to compete for good jobs, purchase basic family needs like groceries and clothing, pay for services like medical care, and to pay for other family basics like medicine and clothing.

Ogemaw County has a moderate income profile compared to the State of Michigan and the region, and income is also increasing at a slower rate. Among the jurisdictions within Ogemaw County, Ogemaw Township has the highest income, at \$22,152 per capita in 2005. In comparison, the county overall had a per capita income of \$16,157 in that same year, compared to \$22,711 for the state average.

Although Ogemaw County is not keeping pace with the region on the basis of population growth, gains in per capita income are competitive (see Chart 2. Per Capita Income Growth Trend). Income is growing at about 2.6 percent annually, and is forecast to exceed \$20,000 per capita by 2010. However, this is still considerably below the forecasts for the State of Michigan, which will exceed \$30,000 per capita in that same year.

4.4 Demand: Expenditure Potential

Resident expenditure potential is simply the dollar amount that trade area residents are likely to spend each year on various retail categories. In general, the average person in the Nation spends about 10% of their income on GAFO categories, including General Merchandise, Apparel, Furniture and Other Miscellaneous items like sporting goods and books. However, expenditure patterns certainly vary between regions, states and counties, reflecting lifestyle preferences, cost of living measures, seasonality, ethnicity, household characteristics, and related socio-economic variables.

For Ogemaw County, we are able to calculate transacted retail sales as reported by the Economic Census, as a share of population. However, it is important to realize that transacted retail sales include expenditures by non-residents, including seasonal residents, tourists, visitors and others who may be passing through the area and stop and shop impulsively. This means that the results will be highest for markets with considerable import and a good selection of shopping choices.

A comparison of transacted retail sales among counties in Michigan's mainland clearly indicates that Ogemaw County is an import market (see Table 13 in the attached Appendix). For Michigan overall, the average resident spends 44.8 percent of their annual income on retail goods. In comparison, figure for Grand Traverse county is 94.4 percent. Obviously, residents are not really spending 94.4 percent of their income on retail, and most of the 'overage' is directly attributed to import. Otsego County (Gaylord) is also a high import market, followed closely by Ogemaw County.

Keeping the influence of import in mind, we then compare the expenditures 'per capita' among the top retail categories for Ogemaw County (see Table 14). Motor Vehicles and Parts Dealers take the lion's share, with annual expenditures of \$3,100 per capita when measured against the resident population. This is followed by Food and Beverage Stores (\$1,800 per capita), Gasoline Stations (\$1,500), Clothing and Accessories (\$1,200), and Food Services and Drinking Places (\$900).

Expenditures among retail categories will vary depending on income profiles, import, and choices. In other words, even if local incomes are high and a market benefits from high import, sales per capita will remain low if choices are limited. The inverse is also true, and the results for Ogemaw County, and support our observation that fast food restaurants are prevalent.

The data can be adjusted for the influences of income to partially ‘normalize’ the results. As shown in Table 15, expenditures as a share of resident income tops the list at 24.5 percent for Ogemaw County, but is still surpassed by Otsego County (29.1%). These results suggest that perhaps Food and Beverage Stores and Gasoline Stations are not really ‘over-stored’ in the market relative to other areas. In comparison, Clothing and Accessories; Health and Personal Care; and Limited Service Restaurants are certainly tipping the scales.

4.5 Retail Gap Analysis

In particular, these include the following, which all represent excellent opportunities anywhere along the I-75 Business Loop, and particularly for downtown West Branch.

- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music
- Electronics and Appliances
- Office Supplies, Stationary and Gifts
- Pets and Pet Supplies

To test these and other categories, we conducted a supply-demand analysis that carefully compares Ogemaw County to the other comparative geographies, and that accounts for the following factors:

- import and export
- population and growth
- per capita income and growth
- total personal income
- expenditures per capita
- expenditures as a share of income
- supply in square feet
- sales per establishment
- sales productivity (\$ per sq. ft.)

The results generally support our hypothesis, and point to clear opportunities in the expected retail categories. In total, there is a market ‘gap’ in the magnitude of 430,000 square feet, which is equivalent to half of a regional shopping center, or two Wal-Mart Supercenters.

In fact, if Meijer, Kohl’s, Elder Beerman, Menard’s, Lowe’s, Target, Sam’s Club or some other big-box retailer enters the market, then that new store must be taken out of the 430,000 square foot figure. Meijer could easily be 160,000 square feet, Kohl’s is usually 90,000 square feet, and Lowe’s and Sam’s Club could be as large as 200,000 square feet each.

We have also allocated about 40,000 square feet of the space to downtown West Branch (see Table 16 in the attached Appendix), including space in each category that would typically be served by a traditional merchant. Building Materials, Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers, Outdoor Power Equipment, Traveler Accommodations (Hotels and Motels), Services and Health Care are listed separately, in Table 17.

5.0 Funds, Resources and Assistance

5.1 Introduction

A variety of resources can be explored by Ogemaw County, Ogemaw and West Branch Townships, and the City of West Branch to help fund and guide economic growth initiatives. These can generally be distilled into five categories, as follows:

1. Term loans, line of credit, business credit cards give companies the full amount of the loan up front. The loan is repaid in pre-arranged monthly installments throughout the term, and gives businesses the option of borrowing as much money as they need, whenever they need it, up to a pre-arranged maximum amount. Business credit cards are a convenient means of financing for many businesses. SBA loans are loans that are either guaranteed by or are financed, in part, by the U.S. Small Business Administration.
2. Asset-based financing and factoring requires the use of hard assets for collateral to acquire a loan to finance operations. Lenders loan the money that customers owe a business (i.e., the amount of accounts receivable), in exchange for a share of those customer payments.
3. Commercial Real Estate Loans are for the purchase, new construction or refinancing of commercial, industrial or investment property. They are generally available for up to 75% of the property value and can be extended for up to 25 years. As with residential mortgages, commercial real estate loans can have fixed or adjustable interest rates.
4. Selling consumer debt. Consumer receivables are unpaid debts from individuals. If there is an extended revolving line of credit, which are now uncollectible, there is a possibility of selling the unpaid balances for pennies on the dollar.
5. Angel investors are private investors who often have non-monetary motives for investing, as well as, the usual financial ones. Angel Capital is considered to be start-up money provided to kitchen-table entrepreneurs by friends, family or wealthy individuals.

6. Venture capital is money from investment pools or firms that specialize in financing young company's growth, usually in return for stock. It may be used to pay back start-up funding from angels or credit cards. A Venture Capitalist is an investor who provides early financing to new ventures—often technology-based—with an innovative product and the prospect of rapid and profitable growth.

A significant and early challenge will be the recruitment of sponsors, partnerships, stakeholders, financial institutions, funding agencies and architects in the project. To aid jurisdictions along the I-75 Business Loop corridor, here are a number resources that should be considered for the project.

- United States Environmental Protection Agency
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- School of Natural Resources and Environment
- Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise
- Univ. of Mich. Center for Local, State and Urban Policy (CLOSUP)
- United States Green Building Council / LEED
- DWRP: Drinking Water Revolving Fund (Department of Environmental Quality)
- MSSTA: Michigan Sunrise Side Travel Association
- RD: Rural Development (Farmers Home Administration)
- Smart Communities Network
- Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth

Fund raising will be a critical component of success for Ogemaw County and its economic growth initiatives. This section of our report is intended to provide a summary of various funding sources; technical support; and federal, state and regional programs. These are intended to provide Ogemaw County with the contact information to further local investigation into various programs and resources available for economic and community development.

Success with these programs will depend on diligence from enthusiastic and empowered community leaders, including the Economic Development Director and Township Supervisors, plus state agencies like the NEMCOG, MSHDA, and MEDC.

5.2 Federal Programs and Funding

Empowerment Zones - A national, competitively awarded zone-based federal grant and employer tax credit program for distressed large cities and rural areas. The City of Detroit has Michigan's only Empowerment Zone, awarded in the first Round of Empowerment Zones. A similar program for smaller cities and rural areas, known as federal Enterprise Communities, is described below.

Enterprise Communities - Enterprise Communities are effectively Empowerment Zones for areas that did not meet Empowerment Zone population and geographic size requirements. Michigan has three urban Enterprise Communities (Clare County, City of Flint, and City of Muskegon Heights), and one rural (Lake County).

Foreign Trade Zones - Foreign Trade Zones allow private organizations to establish, with the cooperation of the local unit, designated areas or zones that are considered foreign soil for the purposes of the United States Department of Customs and Immigration. Foreign Trade Zones allow for value-added processing of certain raw or unfinished goods without paying customs import duty on them.

If the finished goods are to be imported into U.S. Customs territory for sale, the law allows the operator of the Foreign Trade Zone to choose between paying duty on the import of the unfinished goods to the zone, or paying duty on the finished goods entering customs territory, whichever is less. Michigan has six active Foreign Trade Zones, including 1) Battle Creek, 2) Detroit, 3) Flint, 4) Kent/Ottawa/Muskegon Counties, 5) Sault Ste. Marie, and St. Clair County. Bay County had the first FTZ in 1966, but relinquished its status in 1980.

Historically Underutilized Business Zones - A federal program that offers small business assistance by allowing qualified business in qualified HUBZones (Historically Underutilized Business Zones) preferential treatment in the federal government contracting process. The following counties are currently designated as HUBZones:

Alcona	Alpena	Antrim
Arenac	Baraga	Benzie
Cheboygan	Chippewa	Clare
Crawford	Delta	Emmet
Gladwin	Gogebic	Houghton
Iosco	Iron	Kalkaska
Keweenaw	Lake	Luce
Mackinac	Manistee	Mason
Menominee	Missaukee	Montcalm

Montmorency	Newaygo	Oceana
Ogemaw	Ontonagon	Osceola
Oscoda	Presque Isle	Roscommon
Sanilac	Schoolcraft	Wexford

*Source: Direct quotes from the Citizens Research Council of Michigan
(<http://www.crcmich.org>).*

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FUND

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

601 Thirteenth Street NW; Suite 200 South
Washington DC 20005
Phone: (202) 622-8662
Fax: (202) 622-7754



Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
The following two lines should be typed as one string for the website:
http://12.46.245.173/pls/portal30/CATALOG.FIND_ASSISTANCE_PROGRAM_DYN.show



Grants.gov Management Office
200 Independence Avenue, SW
HHH Building, Room 739F
Washington, DC 20201
(800) 518-4726
E-Mail: Support@Grants.gov
<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=CATSEARCH&fundActivity=CD>



Committed to the future
of rural communities.



<http://www.ezec.gov/toolbox/index.html>

Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program

US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development

Michigan Contact:

Bruce Huffman Rural Development

3001 Coolidge, Suite 200

East Lansing, MI 48823

phone: 517-324-5185

fax: 517-324-4224

E-mail: bruce.huffman@mi.usda.gov

5.3 Michigan Programs and Funding

The State of Michigan (<http://www.michigan.gov>) sponsors a wide range of other programs, including the Small Cities Program and the 21st Century Jobs Fund. The Small Cities Program includes a federal allotment of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars to “aid in the location of businesses in Michigan and small Cities, Villages and Townships.”



In 2005, the 21st Century Jobs Initiative program was created to invest in research of life sciences and automotive ventures, particularly in those fields being explored by researchers at State Universities. Alternative energy and homeland security are also targeted by the program, with an emphasis on diversifying the economy and facilitating the commercialization of research in which Universities are already engaged. Governor Granholm had projected that the new program would create 72,000 new jobs, but this figure has been heavily debated.

April 18, 2005 was the 10th anniversary of The Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA), a program that had been established by Michigan government with the mission of spurring in-state job creation and business investment. The MEDGA is the State of Michigan's agent for selecting firms to receive Single Business Tax credits in return for creating new facilities and jobs in Michigan. Applicants must certify that the project would not occur absent the MEGA grant. Here are additional guidelines:

“Businesses with an instate presence at the time of application must propose to create and retain at least 75 full-time, instate jobs over and above their instate pre-application employment level. Out-of-state businesses must create and retain 150 full-time, instate jobs over the term of the tax credit awarded by the MEGA. If the application proposes the construction or rehabilitation of a facility in a Neighborhood Enterprise Zone, Federal Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community, then the eligible business need only propose the creation and retention of 25 full-time jobs to be considered for the MEGA tax credit. High technology business investment need create just five jobs for MEGA consideration.

For MEGA grants predicated on job creation, the employees filling the new jobs must be employed no longer than 12 months after the creation of the new facility. Local financial commitment is also required, and is often demonstrated with the local unit grant of an Industrial Facilities Tax exemption (PA 198) for the project.”

Michigan Economic Growth Authority considers applications from business concerns in the following industries:

- Manufacturing
- Mining
- High-Technology, Research and Development (see Appendix E)
- Wholesale and Trade
- Office Operations



Michigan State Housing and Development Authority

735 E. Michigan Ave

Lansing, Michigan 48912

Phone: (517) 373-8370

Fax: (517) 335-4797

Tollfree: (800) 382-4568

<http://www.mshda.info.cci/tools/>

The Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA) sponsors the Cool Cities Initiative (CCI), which includes a resource toolbox with a wide variety of programs. Note that communities do not need to have a ‘Cool Cities’ designation to benefit from these programs. A small sample is provided below, and the complete list can be found at the website noted above. Detailed of many MEDC programs and funds can also be found on the Citizens Research Council of Michigan website, at <http://www.crc-mich.org>.

Selected Programs and Funds

(<http://www.mshda.info.cci/tools/>):

- Green Building Design
- Commercial Economic Development Fund
- Property Improvement Program
- Vision 2020
- Community Development Block Grant Program
- Brownfield Redevelopment Grants, Loans
- Michigan Main Street Program
- Blueprints for Michigan’s Downtowns
- Blueprints for Michigan’s Neighborhoods
- Urban Land Assembly
- Transportation Economic Development Fund
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- State and Community Traffic Safety Program
- Obsolete Property Tax Exemption
- Office of Services to the Aging
- Land Use Planning
- Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Tax Exemptions
- Collaborative Bargaining
- Michigan Regional Skills Alliances

Selected State Programs and Funds

(<http://www.crcmich.org/EDSurvey/toc.html>)

- Core Cities Fund
- Certified Business Parks
- Financing Programs and Tax Authorities
- Brownfield Authorities
- Business Improvement Districts
- Downtown Development Authorities
- Industrial Development Revenue Bonds
- Local Development Finance Authorities (including SmartZones)
- Tax Increment Finance Districts
- Taxable Bond Program
- Other Local Unit Economic Development Options
- Certification of Abandoned Property for Accelerated Foreclosure Act
- Certified Business Parks
- Conditional Land Transfers
- Economic Development Corporations Act
- Tax-Reverted Property and Emergency Disposal Act
- Waiver of Personal Property Tax

The MEDC is a subagency to MSHDA, and offers a wide range of services, including grants and Community Assistance Teams. Although some program schedules were interrupted in 2006 during a transition period (with the reassignment of MEDC to MSHDA), it will be business as usual in 2007. Statewide jurisdictions are encouraged to work the MEDC's new CAT Team Director to benefit from ongoing programs.



Mr. Joseph Borgstom
Director, Community Assistance Team
Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth
735 East Michigan Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 30044
Phone: (517) 241-2512
Fax: (517) 335-4797
<http://www.michigan.org/medc/>

Financing and Incentive Programs - MEDC

- Capital Access Program
- Charter One Job Creation Loan Program
- Community Development Block Grants
- Employee Stock Ownership Program
- Industrial Development Revenue Bond Program
- Infrastructure Programs for Economic & Community Dev.
- Michigan NextEnergy Program
- Property Tax Abatement Program
- Renaissance Zone Program
- Tool and Die Recovery Zone Program
- SBA 504 Loan Program
- Small Business Administration Loan Program
- Venture Michigan Fund
- 21st Century Investment Fund

Source: Michigan Economic Development Corporation

The MEDC also provide a Community Assistance Teams (CA Team) and five regional leaders to assist communities in their program search. The following cryptic website link provides a Community Guide with explanations of a number of the programs listed here: http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,1607,7-141-5564_40994_42112-146337--,00.html/.

CA Team Community Guide to State Programs

- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (Brownfield)
- Brownfield Single Business Tax Credit
- Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (Brownfield TIF)
- Business Improvement District / Principal Shopping District / Business Improvement Zone (BID/PSD/BIZ)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Conditional Land Use Transfer (PA 425)
- Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- Local Development Financing Authority (LDFA)
- Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ)
- Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act (OPRA)
- Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA)
- Urban Land Assembly Program (ULA)

As another resource, the Michigan Downtown Association encourages good development, redevelopment and improvement of communities throughout the State of Michigan, with special emphasis on downtown districts. MDA members can include any person, organization or government body within the State of Michigan that supports economic development including:

- Downtown Development Authorities
- Cities, Townships and Villages
- Tax Increment Finance Authorities
- Engineering and consulting firms

The MDA offers memberships at costs that are based on organizations' budgets. Membership benefits include educational seminars and programs, access to public forums, technical assistance (particularly with Tax Increment Financing - TIF), newsletters and networking opportunities.



Mr. Philip Hansen
Executive Director
108 West Saginaw Street
St. Louis, MI 48880
Phone: (989) 681.3017

Partnerships for Change is a new multi-jurisdictional planning assistance program developed to foster new and expanded cooperation between Cities, Townships and Villages, to develop and carry out local land use policies that contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural resources, while also encouraging urban redevelopment and discouraging sprawl.

- The Land Information Access Association (LIAA)
- Michigan Municipal League (MML)
- Michigan Townships Association (MTA)
- Michigan Association of Planning (MAP)
- Michigan State University Extension (MSUE)

A recent success story is underway with Growth Assessment Planners (GAP), a collaboration between the City of West Branch, Ogemaw County, West Branch Township and Ogemaw Township. We recommend that other jurisdictions in Northeast Michigan follow this success story and organize similar partnerships.



Land Information Access Association

Mr. Harry Burkholder
Community Planner
324 Munson Ave.

Traverse City, MI 49686

Phone: 231.929.3696

Fax: 231.929.3771

E-mail: info@liaa.org



Michigan Municipal League

1675 Green Road

Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Phone: 734-662-3246

Tollfree: 800-653-2483



MI-SBTDC State Headquarters

Grand Valley State University

Seidman College of Business

510 W. Fulton Street

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Phone: (616) 331.7480

Email: sbtdchq@gvsu.edu

<http://www.misbtdc.org/OnlineResources.asp>

MI-SBTDC Regional Office
Carl Bourdelais, Director
Alpena Community College
666 Johnson St.
Alpena, MI 49707
Phone: (989) 358-7383
Email: bourdelc@alpenacc.edu

CEED operates loan programs that extend credit to businesses that cannot obtain financing from conventional lending institutions. The funds may be used for business start-up or expansion, equipment purchases, job creation or working capital. CEED also offers online or classroom training to entrepreneurs who have started a business without a plan, or those who are beginning the decision-making process.



Center for Empowerment and Economic Development
2002 Hogback Road, Suite 12
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
phone: (734) 677-1400
fax: (734) 677-1465
E-Mail: info@miceed.org



Denise Hoffmeyer; Tammy Moore
Northeast Michigan Consortium
P.O. Box 711
Onaway, MI 49765
(989) 733-8548
(989) 733-8069 fax
Email:denise@miworks-nemc.gen.mi.us
Email:tammy@miworks-nemc.gen.mi.us

The Citizens Research Council of Michigan is a privately funded, not-for-profit public affairs research organization, and strives to provide factual, unbiased, independent information on significant issues concerning state and local governments. In 2001, the Citizens Research Council of Michigan conducted a Survey of Economic Development Programs in Michigan. This comprehensive and easy-to-read document is readily available on their website. Contact information for the Council is provided below.



Citizens Research Council of Michigan

Earl M. Ryan, President

124 West Allegan

Suite 1502

Lansing, MI 48933-1738

Phone: (517) 485-9444

Fax: (517) 485-0423

E-mail: eryan@crcmich.org

<http://www.crcmich.org/EDSurvey/index.html>

The Michigan Townships Association helps townships govern their communities efficiently, and offers seminars, publications and support for County chapters. MTA also promotes legislation favorable to its members and maintains communication with state and federal officials. Grand resources and responsibilities for Townships are also detailed on the MTA website.



512 Westshire Dr.

Lansing, MI 48917

Phone: (517) 321.6467

Fax: (517) 321.8908

<http://www.michigantownships.org>

<http://www.michigantownships.org/downloads/october02.pdf>

[http://www.michigantownships.org/downloads/
grant_resources_and_responsibilities_for_townships_october02.pdf](http://www.michigantownships.org/downloads/grant_resources_and_responsibilities_for_townships_october02.pdf)

There is also a Michigan Association of Township Supervisors (M.A.T.S.), which is an “independent, representative organization that provides education and facilitates networking on contemporary township issues, and serves as a legislative watchdog and lobbyist on issues of critical concern to supervisors.”



James Beelen, President
Allendale Township, Ottawa Co.
Phone: (616) 895-6295
<http://www.matsupervisors.com/>

Marie, Twite, Director for Region 2
Alpena Township, Alpena Co.
Phone: (989) 356-4024

Last but not least, Michigan has a number of regional governments and planning commissions that provide a wide range of services, counseling and training, technical assistance, networking opportunities and other resources. We encourage each Michigan community to become very familiar with the regional associations that govern or operate in their region, and to seek opportunities for collaboration with other communities (including Cities, Villages, Townships and Counties).



Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

SEMCOG . . . Local Governments Advancing Southeast Michigan



WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Southwestern Michigan Commission

east central michigan planning & development region



**WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL
PLANNING COMMISSION**



Michigan Association of Counties



Retaining and Creating Jobs in Antrim, Charlevoix and Emmet
Counties in Partnership with MSU Extension

5.4 Lending Institutions

Bring lenders and businesses together, and discuss partnerships for economic growth strategies. Approach lenders door-to-door, and request matching funds for businesses that use up to \$5,000 for business improvement - including campgrounds and establishments like Hinchman Acres.

Contact the Bank of America Corporation, which is recognized as a national leader in the community development industry, with a particular emphasis on the development of affordable housing and financing of small businesses. Although Bank of American has yet to assist the State of Michigan in these areas; we consider this to be an opportunity for both parties.



Bank of America Foundation

10 Light Street

19th Floor

MD4-302-19-02

Baltimore, MD 21201

(888) 488-9802

<http://www.bankofamerica.com/community/>

5.5 Foundations

The Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) is a membership association of more than 400 grant makers striving to strengthen, promote and increase philanthropy in Michigan. CMF helps foundations and corporations through networking, education, resources and advocacy.



Council of Michigan Foundations

One South Harbor Avenue, Suite 3

Grand Haven, MI 49417

Phone: (616) 842-7080

Fax: (616) 842-1760

Based on research by The Foundation Center, the top ranking foundation awards for community improvement and development within the state of Michigan (since 1998) have included the following:

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- The Kresge Foundation
- Whirlpool Foundation
- Ford Motor Company Fund
- Hudson-Webber Foundation
- DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund

There is also the Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan, with the following contact information:



Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan

111 Water Street, P.O. Box 495

Alpena, Michigan 49707

Phone: (989) 354-6881

Toll-free: (877) 354-6881

Fax: (989) 356-3319

<http://www.cfnem.org>



The Foundation Center

Cleveland Field Office

1422 Euclid Avenue, Suite 1600

Cleveland, OH 44115-2001

(216) 861-1934

http://fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat_community.jhtml

We also recommend additional reading provided by Prein&Newhof professional engineering firm of Grand Rapids, Michigan. This firm published A Guide to Michigan Financing Programs for Michigan Communities in 2006, and the full document is easily retrieved from the following internet link: http://www.preinnewhof.com/municipal/grants_loans_2006.pdf.

5.6 Next-Steps

The findings and recommendations of this research effort were based on the assumptions and expertise of Anderson Economic Group. We collected and utilized various data and resources, which we deem reliable. Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the referenced data reflect the most accurate and timely information possible. No warranty or representation is made by the consultants regarding the potential success of this project or any related project.

The recommendations in this report should not be used as the sole basis for real estate ventures, development, financing or leasing by Ogemaw County, its Economic Development Corporation, Township Commissioners, private developers, or prospective retail tenants and businesses within the area. Actual site, building, parking, utility, environmental, grading, civil engineering, architectural plans and construction documents are not included within the scope of this work.

The County should work closely with DLZ Planning and the Land Information Access Association (LIAA) to address these and all related planning considerations. DLZ can also assist with planning, engineering, landscape architecture and related professional services.

5.7 About Anderson Economic Group, LLC

At Anderson Economic Group, we specialize in providing consulting services in economics, geography and urban planning, public policy and finance. We develop economic growth strategies, and conduct real estate development research and feasibility studies for both public and private sector clients. Our clients typically include municipalities, jurisdictions, agencies, developers and professional planning firms. Since our founding in 1996, our analysis has helped publicly-held corporations, private businesses, governments, and non-profit organizations. Our work has included markets throughout the United States, including Alaska and Puerto Rico.

Our approach to work in these fields is based on our core principles of professionalism, integrity, and expertise. We insist on a high level of integrity in our analyses, together with technical expertise in the field. For these reasons, work by Anderson Economic Group is commonly used in legislative hearings, legal proceedings, and executive strategy discussions.

This concludes our analysis for the I-75 Business Loop corridor through Ogemaw County, the City of West Branch and Ogemaw and West Branch Townships. Questions regarding this document should be addressed to Ms. Sharon M. Vokes, Principal at Anderson Economic Group, LLC (<http://www.AndersonEconomicGroup.com>).

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