

2014

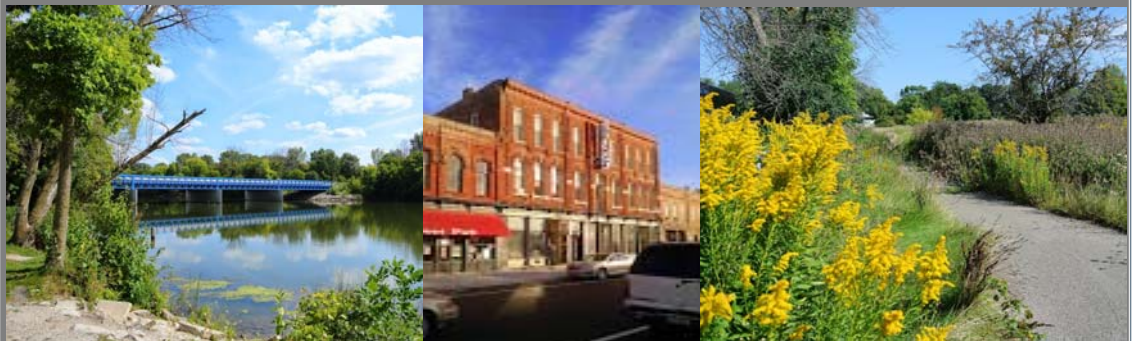


# Gateway Community Livability Assessment & Recommendations Report

Shiawassee National  
Wildlife Refuge  
Saginaw, Michigan &  
Surrounding Communities

This report prepared by  
The Conservation Fund in  
collaboration with the  
Federal Highway  
Administration.

THE  
CONSERVATION FUND



Federal Lands Livability Initiative

## REPORT PREPARED BY:

# THE CONSERVATION FUND

## CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP NETWORK

The Conservation Fund (TCF) is a national non-profit environmental organization that has protected over 7 million acres of land and water in all 50 states. Working with community, government and business partners, TCF strives to balance economic and environmental goals.

TCF's **Conservation Leadership Network** is a team of experts that brings diverse professionals together to forge conservation solutions. The Conservation Leadership Network assists communities plan for the future, connects regions, develops leaders, and provides innovative resources to balance nature and commerce.

## IN COLLABORATION WITH:



The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides stewardship over the construction, maintenance and preservation of the Nation's highways, bridges and tunnels. FHWA also conducts research and provides technical assistance to state and local agencies in an effort to improve safety, mobility, and livability and encourage innovation.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2009, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development created the Partnership for Sustainable Communities “to help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment in communities nationwide” (<http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov>). Through the goals of this partnership, the federal government has developed six guiding principles and committed significant resources and attention to implementing livability in state and local governments.

The Federal Lands Livability Initiative, a research project led by the Federal Highway Administration’s Federal Lands Highway Program, is an extension of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and provides an opportunity to direct attention to livability beyond urban areas and focus on America’s gateway communities—communities that exist in close proximity to public land. Gateway communities are often affected by decisions made by managers of the surrounding public lands. The decisions of leaders of gateway communities similarly may affect the management of resources on adjacent public lands. Gateway communities also often support public lands by offering unique recreational and cultural heritage experiences and providing food, lodging, and other essential services for visitors. Transportation access between gateway communities and their neighboring public lands is integral to the health and viability of each. Hence, special emphasis is made on transportation in the Federal Lands Livability Initiative.

Livability in gateway communities relies heavily on the coordinated decision-making and partnership between these communities and public land managers. This Livability Assessment and Recommendations Report is the result of an evaluation of the natural, cultural, physical (infrastructure), commercial, and economic health of the gateway community and surrounding landscape as it relates to the six principles of livability adapted for gateway communities for this initiative:

1. Provide more transportation choices for residents, workers, and visitors.
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing and lodging choices that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors.
3. Enhance economic competitiveness by valuing the public lands and natural, cultural, recreational, and environmental assets associated with the gateway community.
4. Support existing gateway communities and sustain their unique character.
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investments within the community and between the gateway community and public lands.
6. Value communities, neighborhoods and landscapes, and the area’s natural, cultural heritage, and recreational assets that foster social, economic, and public health.

A Livability Assessment Team comprised of representatives of The Conservation Fund gathered information from background materials, community leaders, stakeholders, and site visits to provide this assessment as a tool to assist Saginaw, Michigan, its surrounding communities, and its U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) partners in supporting and enhancing livability in their region. This report summarizes information about the region as well as the observations and recommendations of this team.

## **SAGINAW, MICHIGAN & SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES— GATEWAY TO SHIAWASSEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

The Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and its surrounding gateway communities of Saginaw City and Spaulding and James Townships were selected from the pool of applicants due to the diverse socioeconomic and demographics that surround the refuge and the demonstrated partnership of the public land managers and communities to further integrate the refuge into the fabric of the community and as an asset for sustainable economic development.

Shiawassee NWR is a 9,427 acre refuge managed by the USFWS. This refuge contributes to one of the largest and most productive wetland ecosystems in Michigan where four rivers—the Tittabawassee, Flint, Cass, and Shiawassee—converge on the refuge to form the Saginaw River. The refuge is home to over 265 species of birds and is designated a National Audubon Society State Important Bird Area and a significant stop for many migratory waterfowl.

The refuge is located approximately 25 miles south of the Saginaw Bay in Lake Huron in Michigan. It is just southwest of the city of Saginaw, with newly acquired land within city limits, and surrounded by the rural townships of Spaulding and James. Access to the refuge and gateway communities is generally made by US Highway 46 from the east and west and along US Highway 52 and Highway 23/I-75 from the north and south. From each major highway, rural roads take you to the refuge headquarters and the auto tour, the only major access point into the refuge, in Spaulding Township. In 2013, the refuge acquired the Germania Golf Course property, a private golf course purchased in partnership by Dow Chemical and The Nature Conservancy and donated to the refuge. Through this property, direct access to the refuge can be made from the city of Saginaw to the Germania property as well as the adjacent Green Point Learning Center, an environmental education center managed by the refuge.

The large demand for lumber as the United States expanded westward caused the founding of Saginaw and the surrounding townships in the late 1800s. The Saginaw River and its tributaries provided convenient transport of lumber as logs were floated down the rivers to sawmills located in Saginaw. The boom of the timber industry led to a massive expansion in population and economic activity with Saginaw developing on the east and west sides of the Saginaw River, quickly becoming a hub for railroad transportation as well as ships on the river.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lumber production had all but disappeared in the region. Surrounding townships turned to agricultural industries and Saginaw saw growth in

manufacturing. General Motors and other manufacturers established foundries and other automobile-related manufacturing facilities in Saginaw. Through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, manufacturing related to the automotive industry dominated the economy, however by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century industry was in steady decline. By the late 1990s manufacturing declined dramatically, leading to high unemployment in the city as well as a decrease of nearly ten thousand people in Saginaw proper from 2000 to 2010. Today, the population of Saginaw proper is about half of its peak population of 100,000 in 1960.

The 2007 global financial crisis further compounded the loss of industry, unemployment, and resulting social issues related to poverty. As a result, Saginaw's crime rate soared, declining property values placed pressure on government budgets to provide services, and population loss led to a rise in blight as homes were abandoned.

In recent years, Saginaw progress in combating blight with the use of a \$100 million grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, with \$11.2 million set aside for Saginaw to purchase and tear down blighted properties.

The surrounding townships of James and Spaulding continue to be dominated by agriculture in a rural setting. The majority of the land in these townships is in the floodplain which limits development but provides fertile land for farming.

Shiawassee NWR is a major natural resource hub for the region, with close proximity to Saginaw and within James and Spaulding Townships; these gateway communities are recognizing the importance of this asset as a constant as a result of the impacts of an ever fluctuating local, regional, and global economy.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

Over the course of the three-day assessment in Saginaw and surrounding communities, the Livability Assessment Team made the following observations of key opportunities and challenges associated with livability:

- Transportation access between the refuge and Saginaw and surrounding townships is in good condition, but there is a need to better target community investments to improve multi-modal connections, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and bus service.
- Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, state lands, and local parks, as well as the many rivers are real assets to the region. These assets are special to Saginaw and the surrounding townships and can serve as an economic driver for a sustainable local economy.
- Social issues such as drug use, crime, and violence, as well as poverty and unemployment are major concerns for Saginaw. Combating these issues are necessary to support livability enhancements across the region.



- The city and county of Saginaw, James and Spaulding Townships, towns such as Birch Run, St. Charles, Frankenmuth, and Chesaning, are unique communities surrounding the refuge and rivers of the region. Partnerships and communication between each is imperative to enhancing livability, especially for the enhancement of access and connections to natural resources and recreation.

## PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these observations, the Livability Assessment Team offers the following priority recommendations. The body of this report expands upon these and other recommendations.

- **Raise awareness of the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding rivers as an environmental and economic asset.** The conservation of the natural landscape is important to preserving a unique defining element of the Saginaw region. It is important that the city and surrounding communities recognize the economic value of their natural landscape—refuges, rivers, and parks—as the foundation for active, healthy lifestyles that attract residents and employers as well as the development of sustainable tourism and a sustainable natural resource-based industry. The Saginaw River has played a foundational role in the history of Saginaw and surrounding region, and the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge preserves the confluence of many significant rivers on their way to the Saginaw. It is important for the regional communities to reflect this importance in the cultivation of community character in city and town downtowns, neighborhoods, and across the region.
- **Take a regional approach.** Regional approaches and partnerships are critical for the city of Saginaw and surrounding townships and towns to succeed in improved livability. As advised in an African proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Working together and following an “all boats rise” approach will enable the region to leverage internal resources and attract outside support. Existing partnerships and collaboration among the city of Saginaw and surrounding towns and townships should continue; expanded regional collaboration is recommended for the area to achieve far-reaching livability goals.
- **Develop safe, convenient access between natural resources, including the rivers, and downtowns and neighborhoods.** Historically, the natural resources of the region—timber, rivers, and farmland—have been used as part of the industrialization of the area. The cities and towns were founded on these industries and saw the rivers and resources as only a mere piece of the economy, providing transport or products. As those industries have declined, the region can turn back towards the river and the surrounding natural resources, not as a cog in the machine, but as an asset for recreation and the enjoyment of the outdoors to improve the quality of life of the region. Decision makers should identify key target priorities to develop safe and

convenient multi-modal access to natural areas and the use of the river across the region.

- **Invest in existing infrastructure and downtowns.** The economic reliance on manufacturing over the past century created an infrastructure that caters to the production and transport of related goods and services. With that reliance no longer being the case, the city of Saginaw should evaluate options for repurposing existing community infrastructure (vacant mill properties, downtown buildings, roads, blighted properties, etc.) to meet the current and future needs of residents, workers, and visitors in a way that develops community character as well as a sense of place.
- **Make improving the quality of life for residents a priority.** Community planning and development should focus on improving the quality of life for residents. Tourism is one tool to drive economic development and can be successful in the Saginaw area by improving the visitor experience, but the region should not pursue tourism for only to increase visitation with the “heads in beds” approach. Rather, the community should identify priorities that will support livability improvements in transportation, access to jobs, affordable housing, and access to education and public services that will help to meet the day-to-day needs of residents and enhance the community's attractiveness for outsiders.





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# INTRODUCTION

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## ABOUT LIVABILITY—PRINCIPLES FOR GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) defines achieving improved livability in communities as tying the quality and location of transportation facilities to broader opportunities such as access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safe streets.

In 2009, the DOT, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) created the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. This partnership developed six Principles of Livability.<sup>1</sup> While substantial work is being done to support, promote, and implement livability nationally, the Federal Lands Livability Initiative focuses on what *livability* means and how it is measured in gateway communities.

For the purposes of this Federal Lands Livability Initiative report, livability in gateway communities is defined as using existing natural and physical assets and ongoing investments to sustain and enhance community health and well-being (including economic resiliency, ecological functionality, and social health) for both residents and visitors. One of the common characteristics of gateway communities is that they provide essential services, such as food and lodging, to visitors of our nation's federal lands. Gateway communities attract both visitors and residents who are seeking unique recreational and cultural heritage experiences. Gateway communities face distinctive challenges and must work in a symbiotic relationship with their federal land partners to overcome these challenges. As such, we propose using an adapted version of the six Principles of Livability, as follows (adapted text is italicized):

1. Provide more transportation choices *for residents, workers, and visitors.*
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing *and lodging choices that meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors.*
3. Enhance economic competitiveness *by valuing the public lands and natural, cultural, recreational, and environmental assets associated with the gateway community.*
4. Support existing *gateway communities and sustain their unique character.*
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investments *within the community and between the gateway community and public lands.*
6. Value communities and neighborhoods, *as well as landscapes and the area's natural, cultural heritage, and recreational assets that foster social, economic, and public health.*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/economic\\_resilience/Six\\_Livability\\_Principles](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/economic_resilience/Six_Livability_Principles)

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In September of 2012, The Conservation Fund (TCF) in collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal Lands Highway Program and a steering committee comprised of representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) commenced a multi-year Federal Lands Livability Initiative. Central to this initiative was strengthening livability capacity in selected gateway communities and their neighboring public lands, with particular emphasis on improving transportation access and options in ways that would support livability.

Selected communities receive technical assistance in the form of a livability assessment and a subsequent action-planning workshop. This two-step process is designed to help communities identify potential projects to improve livability and plan for project implementation. The livability assessment can be used as a baseline for enhancing or improving existing conditions, while communities and public land partners use the workshop to spur implementation of on-the-ground livability improvement projects.

The livability assessment involves reviewing and evaluating the characteristics of a gateway community and its nearby public lands and then summarizing observations and recommendations in a written report. The Assessment Team (consisting of TCF and FHWA representatives) evaluates the natural, cultural, physical infrastructure, commercial, and economic health of the community and surrounding landscape, with a focus on how these factors relate to the six principles of livability.

The assessment process consists of a site visit; interviews with key stakeholders; and a review of reports, brochures, plans, websites, news articles, and other relevant materials. The assessment looks at attractions; visitor services; physical infrastructure; organizational capacity and partnerships; the condition and preservation of resources; economic development; public support for sustainable tourism and livability; and education, outreach, and marketing.

This report is the result of these efforts. In addition to summarizing findings, the report provides specific recommendations for planning and implementing livability improvements, with an emphasis on the challenges and opportunities that are unique to gateway communities and their nearby federal lands.

### Criteria for Selection of Communities

The Federal Lands Livability Initiative announced a nationwide request for applications to federal land managers with the USFWS, NPS, USFS, USACE, and BLM. To evaluate applicants and determine appropriate candidates for the initiative, the Livability Initiative Steering Committee used four main criteria:

1. The selected community must be a gateway community, that is, a community directly adjacent to or near public lands managed by a federal agency that actively provides services to public land visitors. Ideally, the community identifies itself as a “gateway

community,” willingly associates itself with the public land, and views the public land as a destination and asset for tourists and residents alike.

2. Leaders from the selected community and public land must demonstrate evidence of an existing collaborative partnership.
3. The selected communities and associated public lands will represent (as a group) a mix of community types with diverse geographies, community size, and socioeconomic characteristics.
4. Leaders from the selected gateway community and associated public lands will demonstrate a level of readiness to engage in this initiative, including participation in the assessment and subsequent community action planning workshop.

On the basis of these criteria, the committee selected Saginaw, Michigan, its surrounding communities, and the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge to be part of the Federal Lands Livability Initiative.

### Saginaw Area Assessment Process

The Livability Assessment Team, composed of TCF and FHWA staff, conducted its assessment visit to Saginaw from September 9 to 11, 2014. The local assessment design team, composed of USFWS staff, gateway community representatives, and local livability stakeholders, developed the itinerary, which involved visiting the downtown and neighborhoods of Saginaw, Spaulding and James Townships, and the surrounding communities of St. Charles, Chesaning, Birch Run, and Frankenmuth, surrounding public lands, major transportation routes, and other destinations of importance to livability in and around the city. The Livability Assessment Team also talked with community and public land stakeholders to gather information about the unique character of this gateway community, livability challenges and opportunities, access to public lands and other public services, and other related issues. The assessment design team provided current studies, plans, and other materials to familiarize the Assessment Team with the area's resources and trends in livability. (See the appendix for a copy of the itinerary.)

The Livability Assessment Team worked with the local assessment planning team to customize the initiative to meet the community's specific needs and objectives. To this end, the Livability Assessment Team discussed with the local planning team members their goals for participating in the Livability Initiative. The three goals identified by the Saginaw planning team are shown below:

#### SAGINAW GATEWAY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GOALS

- To maximize the potential of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge as a community asset within the bounds of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission.
- Improve access to the refuge and other public lands and raise awareness of their value among the many public audiences of the region—from inner-city Saginaw to rural towns to visitors outside the region.
- Strike a balance between asset promotion and preservation of natural and ecological health and character.



## ASSESSMENT AREA BACKGROUND

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Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is a 9,427 acre refuge managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This refuge contributes to one of the largest, and most productive wetland ecosystems in Michigan where four rivers—the Tittabawassee, Flint, Cass, and Shiawassee—converge on the refuge to form the Saginaw River. The refuge is home to over 265 species of birds and is designated a United States Important Bird Area and a significant stop for many migratory waterfowl.

The refuge is located approximately 25 miles south of the Saginaw Bay in Lake Huron in Michigan. It is just southwest of the city of Saginaw, with newly acquired land within city limits, and surrounded by the rural townships of Spaulding and James. Access to the refuge and gateway communities is generally made by US Highway 46 from the east and west and along US Highway 52 and Highway 23/I-75 from the north and south. From each major highway, rural roads take you to the refuge headquarters and the auto tour, the only major access point into the refuge, in Spaulding Township. In 2013, the refuge acquired property from the city of Saginaw where the Germania Golf Course once existed. Now direct access to the refuge can be made from the city of Saginaw to the Germania property as well as the adjacent Green Point Learning Center, an environmental education center managed by the refuge.

The city of Saginaw was once a thriving timber town; founded along the Saginaw River in the 1800s, its population expanded and the city soon became a transportation hub for the region. As the U.S. economy shifted in the early 1900s, Saginaw once again thrived as a automotive manufacturing city. However, with the decline of that industry in recent decades, Saginaw is now faced with high unemployment, population loss, and poverty. In recent years, revitalization of Saginaw has been a priority for decision makers and has led to improvements in the downtown.

The surrounding townships of James and Spaulding continue to be dominated by agriculture in a rural setting. The majority of the land in these townships is in the floodplain, which limits development but provides fertile land for farming. Birch Run and Frankenmuth have taken advantage of their proximity of the interstate to draw in traffic to their outlet malls and downtowns. The town of St. Charles provides direct access to the Shiawassee Flats State Game area and is a welcomed stop for hunters to the area.

In recent years, Saginaw, which has seen its population decline from a high of 100,000 in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to about 50,000 today, has made strives to combat blight with the use of \$100 million grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, with \$11.2 million set aside for Saginaw to purchase and tear down blighted properties. As a result, civic leaders have targeted key assets along both sides of the river from I-675 to Michigan Highway 46 for revitalization efforts as well as neighborhoods that include some of the city's most important assets such Covenant Medical Center, the Temple Theater, The Dow Event Center, YMCA of Saginaw, The Saginaw Art Museum, the Children's Zoo at Celebration Square, and the Old Town

District. New development, such as the new Central Michigan University medical campus and new downtown mixed-use building complexes, are major steps toward economic stability in Saginaw.

Throughout the region, recreational assets continue to be identified, enhanced, and developed by local communities and volunteer organizations into major destinations for hiking, bicycling, fishing, birding, and hunting, and many other activities. For instance, efforts by the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Committee have been successful in developing trails in and around the Saginaw area to create an extensive trail network across the region. A dam removal project in Frankenmuth, made possible by the town of Frankenmuth, USACE, the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, and many other organizations, will open the walleye habitat to areas along the Cass River where the fish could not access before, increasing opportunities for fishing that has not existed in more than 150 years. The continued investment in recreation in the region is growing, which signals a great opportunity to bring more awareness to the importance of public lands, such as the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, as major economic drivers for local economies and contributors to improved quality of life for residents.



# SAGINAW COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

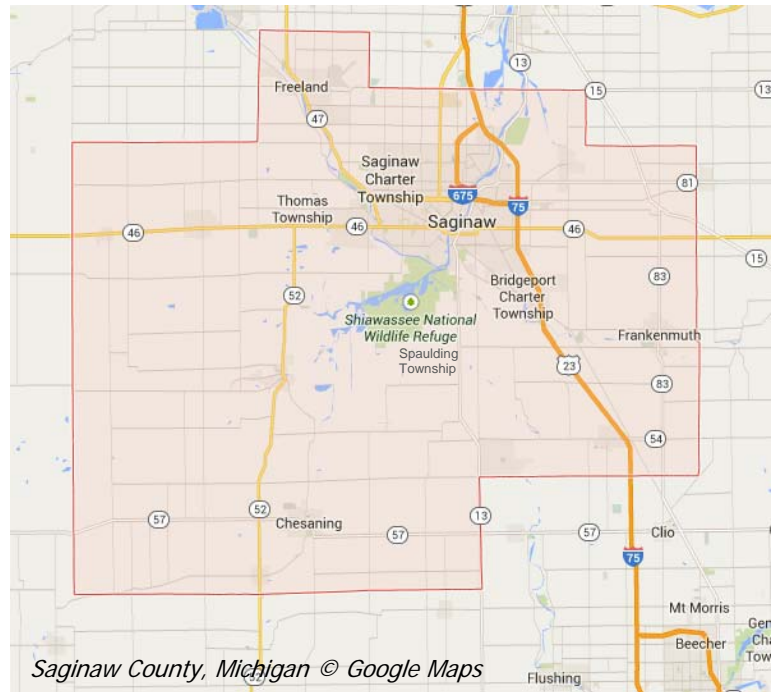
Saginaw County encompasses Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding gateway communities. Below are U.S. Census statistics of the socio-economic demographics of the county.

**Population (2013):** 196,542

**Population Growth (2010-2013):**  
-1.8%

**Racial Composition (2010):**

- 76.8% White
- 8.0% Hispanic/Latino
- 2.0% Two or more races
- 0.5% American Indian
- 1.2% Asian
- 19.3% Black/African American



**Median Age (2010):** 39.5

**Median Household Income (2013):** \$42,331

**Residents Living in Poverty (2013):** All residents, 19.2%; Children, 29.2%

**Unemployment (2013):** 13.4%

**Educational Attainment (2010):** High School Diploma, 36.2%; Bachelor's Degree, 10.5%; Graduate or Professional Degree, 5.3%

**Top Employers (2013):**

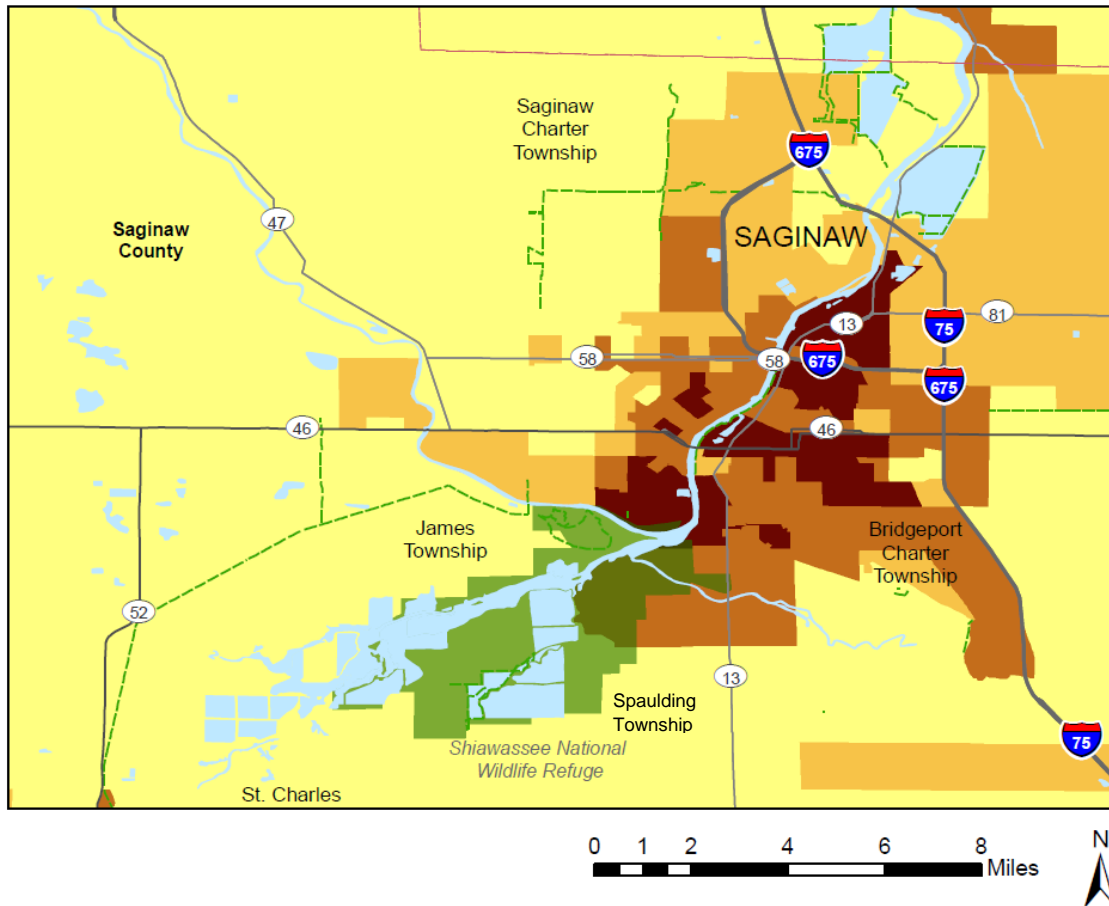
1. Education, health, and social services
2. Manufacturing
3. Retail trade
4. Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services.

**Commuting:** Mean travel time to work, 21.6 minutes; personal vehicle, 94%; public transit, 0.7%; walked, 1.6%; bicycle, 0.5%; work within the county, 79.4%

**Housing (2010):** Total housing units, 86,844; occupied, 79,011; vacant, 7,833; homeownership rate, 72.7%; owner occupied, 57,087; renter occupied, 21,924

The U.S. DOT John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, which the USFWS invited to be a member of the Livability Assessment Team, provided the following maps portraying an analysis of socio-economic demographics surrounding Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

### Saginaw Area: Households Receiving Food Stamps



#### Key

- Trail
- Highway
- Major Road
- Water
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- County Boundary

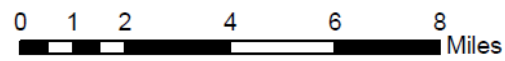
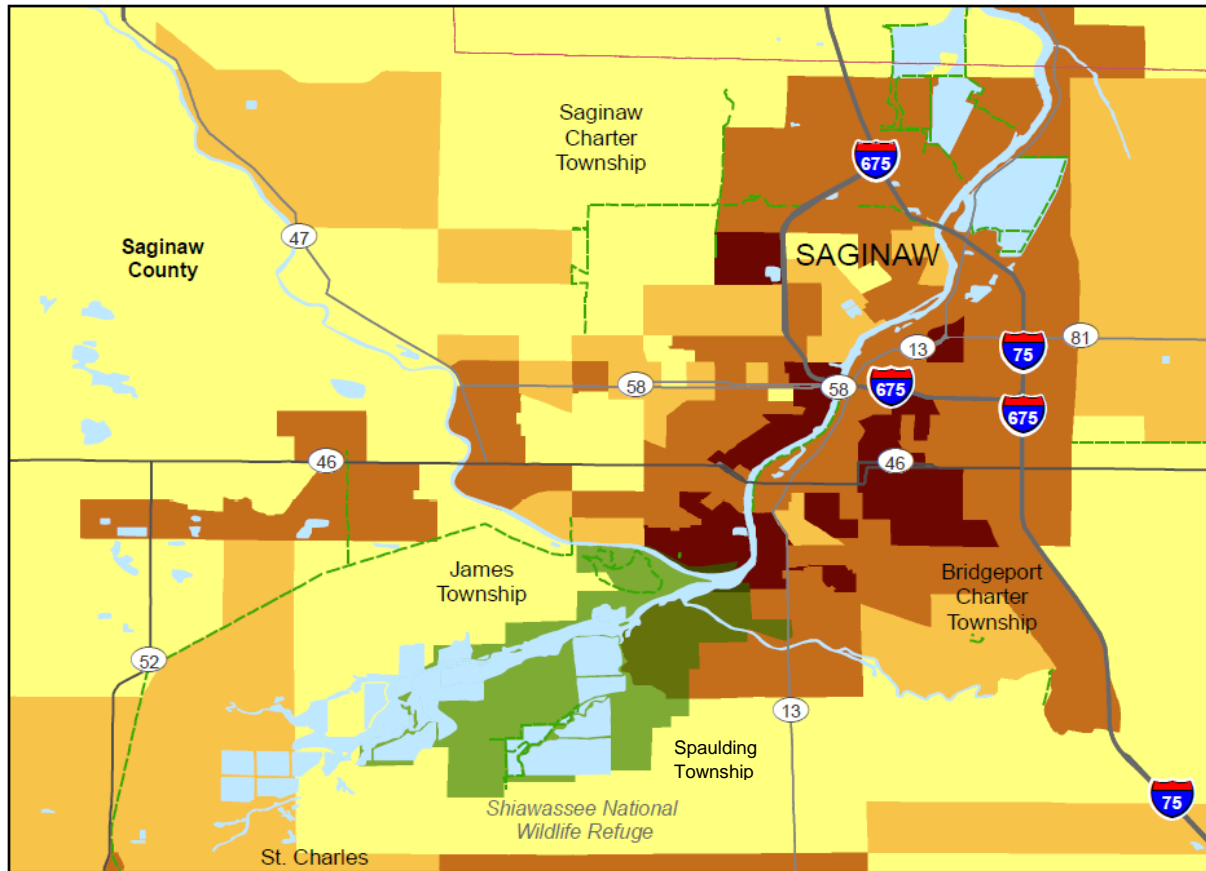
#### Households Receiving Food Stamps

- 0 - 12%
- 12.1 - 27%
- 27.1 - 47%
- 47.1 - 100%

This map utilizes Jenks natural breaks, a classification method that clusters data into classes in order to minimize average deviation within each class and maximize average deviation between classes. These Jenks natural breaks classifications were calculated based on the 2012 American Community Survey data for food stamp usage for the state of Michigan.

Data sources: American Community Survey, 2012, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ESRI

## Saginaw Area: Median Household Income



### Key

- Trail
- Highway
- Major Road
- Water
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- County Boundary

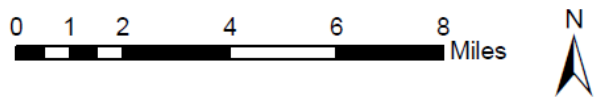
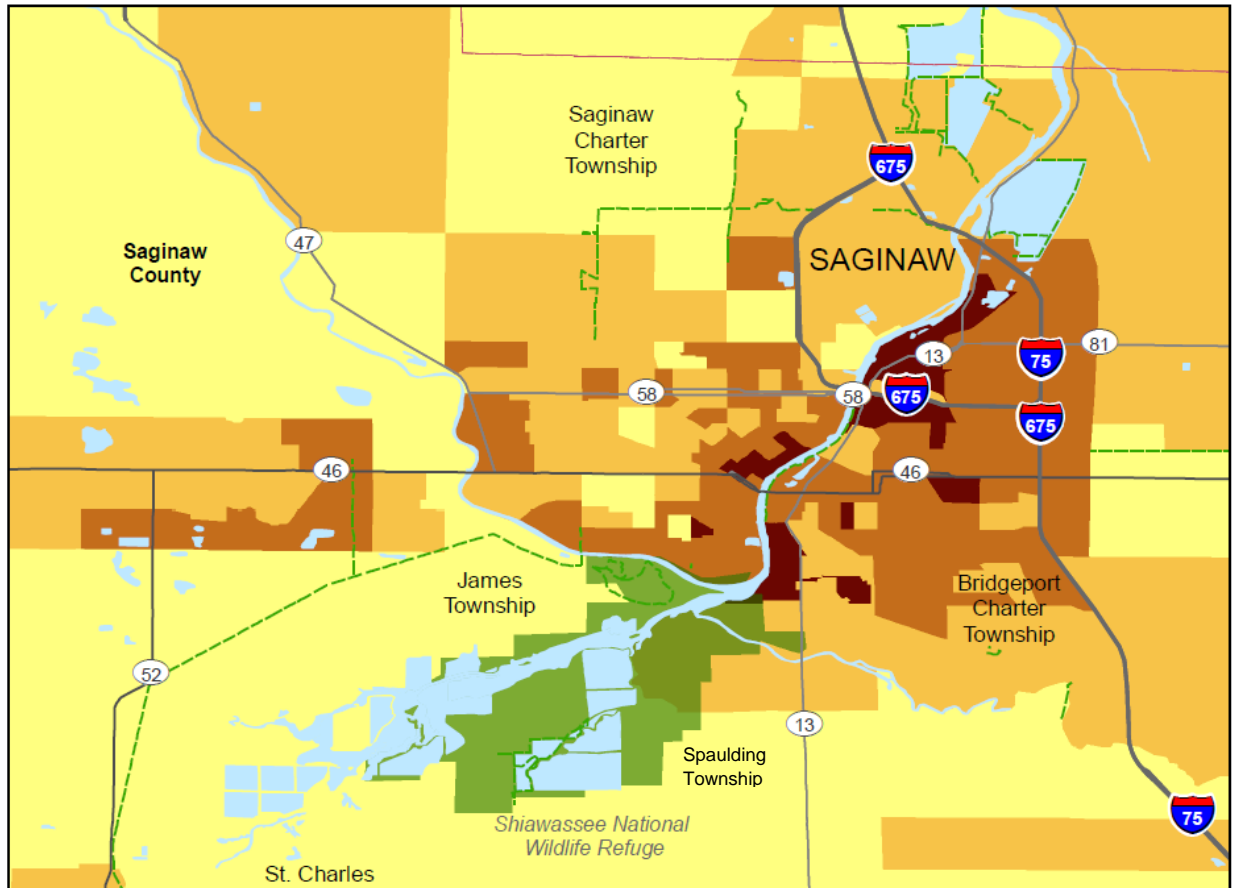
### Median Household Income

- More than \$53,046
- \$42,438 - \$53,046
- \$22,350 - \$42,437
- Less than \$22,350

Median Household Income population segments are based on the following thresholds:  
 \$22,350, the 2011 National Poverty Level for a family of four;  
 \$42,437, 80% of the 2008-2012 U.S. Median Household Income;  
 And \$53,046, the 2008-2012 U.S. Median Household Income.

Data sources: American Community Survey, 2012, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ESRI

# Saginaw Area: Vehicle Ownership



## Key

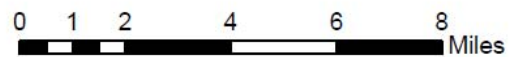
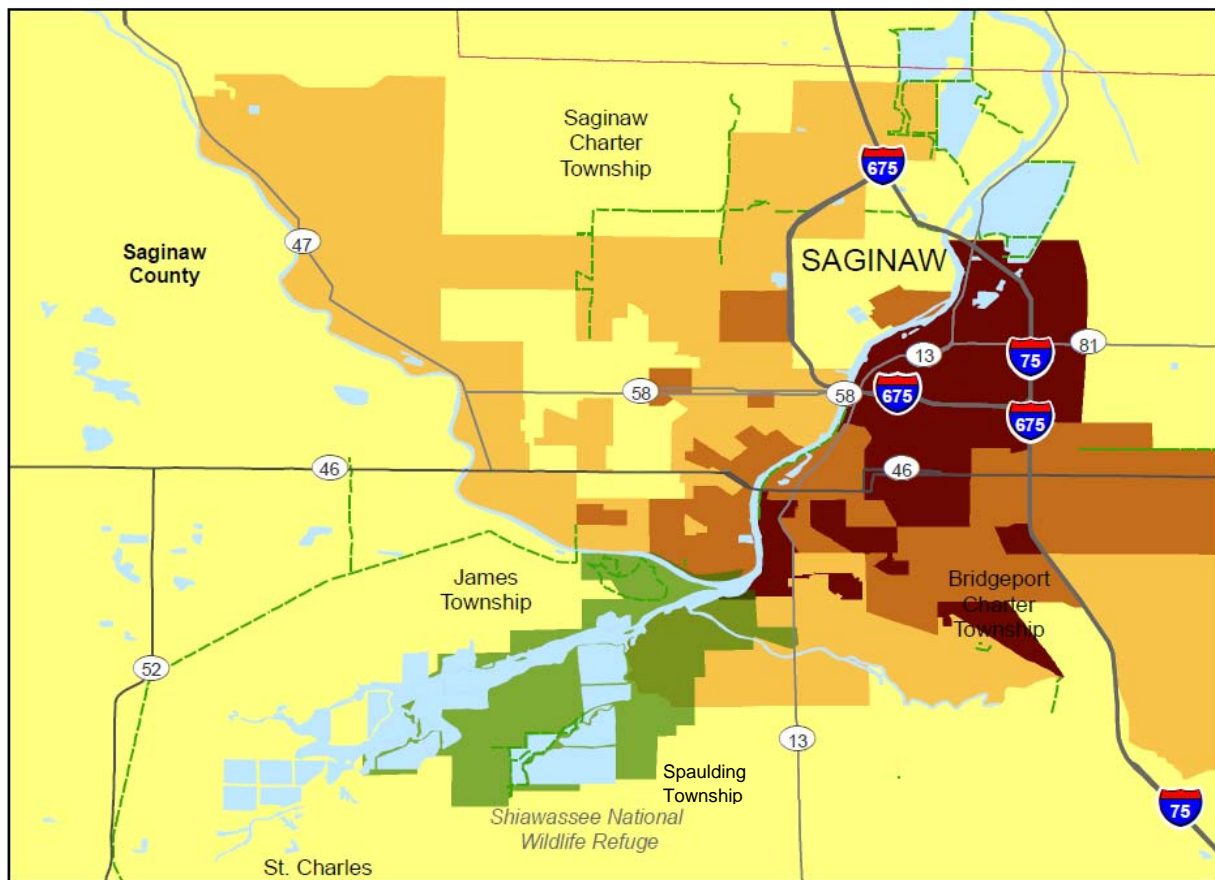
- Trail
- Highway
- Major Road
- Water
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- County Boundary

## Vehicles Per Household

- More than 2
- 1.5 - 2
- 1 - 1.5
- Less than 1

Data sources: American Community Survey, 2012, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ESRI

## Saginaw Area: Non-White Population Rates



### Key

- Trail
- Highway
- Major Road
- Water
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- County Boundary

### Non-White Population Rate

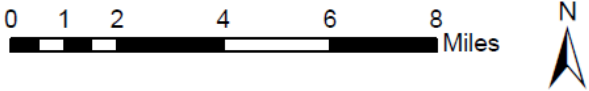
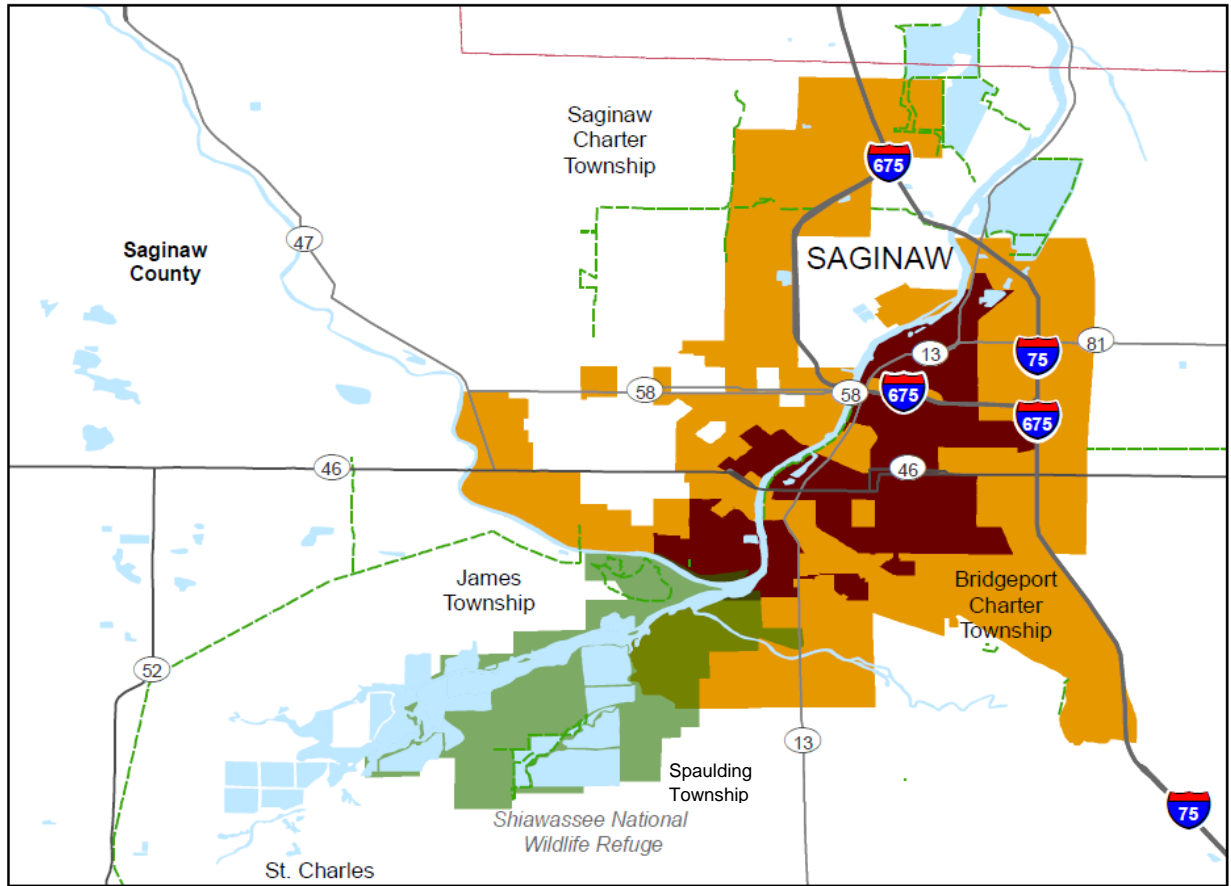
- 0 - 13.7%
- 13.7 - 37.3%
- 37.3 - 72.5%
- 72.5 - 100%

This map utilizes Jenks natural breaks, a classification method that clusters data into classes in order to minimize average deviation within each class and maximize average deviation between classes. These Jenks natural breaks classifications were calculated based on the 2012 American Community Survey data for race for the state of Michigan.

Data sources: American Community Survey, 2012, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ESRI



# Saginaw Area: High Focus Areas



## Key

- Trail
- Highway
- Major Road
- Water
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- County Boundary

- ### High Focus Areas
- Focus Index 2.1 - 3
  - Focus Index 3.1 - 4

The high focus areas shown in this map represent areas with a combination of low median household income, low vehicle ownership, high percentage nonwhite population, and/or high food stamp use. To calculate the focus index, all four indicators were weighted equally to create a composite score on a scale from 1 (low focus) to 4 (high focus).

Data sources: American Community Survey, 2012, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ESRI

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Federal Lands Livability Assessment Team would like to thank the assessment design team and all community stakeholders who assisted with the planning, site visits, tours, lodging, meals, and valuable insights into their outstanding community, specifically:

Doug Bell, *Metropolitan Planning Organization/Saginaw County*  
Joanne Boehler, *James Township*  
Dennis Borchard, *Saginaw Road Commission*  
Cameron Brady, *Shiawassee Habitat for Humanity*  
Zachary Branigan, *Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy*  
Tim Braun, *Saginaw Township*  
JoAnn Crary, *Saginaw Future*  
Michael Decker, *St. Charles Schools*  
Dave Favero, *RACER Trust*  
Rebecca Fedewa, *Flint River Watershed Organization*  
Jane Fitzpatrick, *East Michigan Council of Government*  
Jamie Furbursh, *Frankenmuth Chamber of Commerce*  
Edward Hak, *James Township*  
Lisa Hitchcock, *Chesaning Village Administrator*  
Jack Hofweber, *Michigan Department of Transportation*  
Wilfrid Hufton, *Johnny Panther Quests Adventure Trips*  
Renee Johnston, *Saginaw Community Foundation*  
Brandon Jutz, *USFWS*  
Steve Kahl, *USFWS-Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge*  
Phil Karwat, *Saginaw DPS*  
Mike Kelly, *The Conservation Fund*  
Trevor Keyes, *Bay Future*  
Marci King, *Chesaning Chamber of Commerce*  
Jim Koenig, *Michigan Department of Transportation*  
Richard Leach, *Spaulding Township*  
Rose Licht, *Bridgeport Township*  
Sandra Lindsey, *Saginaw Mental Health*  
Jeff Martin, *Dow Chemical*  
Tom Miller, *Saginaw Future*  
Tim Morales, *Saginaw City Manager*  
Chuck Nelson, *Michigan State University/Friends of Shiawassee*  
Tim Novak, *Saginaw County Land Bank Authority*  
Dwayne Parker, *Buena Vista Township*  
Sylvester Payne, *Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services*  
Andy Pickard, *Federal Highway Administration*

Ben Rasmussen, *U.S. Department of Transportation Volpe Center*  
Joseph Robinson, *Michigan Department of Natural Resources*  
Annette Rummel, *Great Lakes Bay Regional Conventions and Visitors' Bureau*  
Mark Seaman, *Michigan State University Cooperative Extension*  
Brian Sees, *Shiawassee Flats Citizens and Hunters Gaming Association*  
Mike Seward, *Bay Area Chamber of Commerce*  
Sheila Stamiris, *Frankenmuth Downtown Development Authority*  
John Stemple, *City of Saginaw*  
Mike Szukhent, *Birch Run Chamber of Commerce*  
Augie Tausend, *Bridgeport Township*  
Rich Tuzinsky, *The Nature Conservancy*  
Scott Walker, *Midland Tomorrow*  
Vic Weigold, *Michigan Department of Natural Resources*  
Brad Wendling, *Saginaw Department of Public Works*



# LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 1:

Provide more transportation choices for residents, workers, & visitors





# PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES FOR RESIDENTS, WORKERS, & VISITORS

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Historically, the city of Saginaw developed around the Saginaw River, the major transportation route for timber, and later grew as a rail hub for manufacturing.
- The Saginaw Valley Rail Trail covers 9.6 miles of abandoned rail corridor in Saginaw County connecting St. Charles to Saginaw.
- Currently, there are no connected sidewalks outside of Saginaw city proper.
- The Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services (STARS) provides public transportation for the Saginaw area, servicing 2,700 people each day.
- Interstate 75 is a major north/south interstate passing along the eastern side of Saginaw through the Buena Vista Charter Township. Interstate 675 provides a short freeway loop through downtown Saginaw and back to I-75 through the Saginaw Charter Township, a major entranceway to the city of Saginaw.
- Michigan State Road 13 runs from I-69 through downtown Saginaw and south towards Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, a major transportation connection to the visitor center and refuge auto tour.
- The USFWS acquired the Germania Golf Course, a private golf club, with assistance from Dow Chemical and The Nature Conservancy for purchase and donation to the refuge. The property that sits along ½ mile of the Tittabawassee River and will be restored for habitat conservation and recreation. The Germania property abuts a low income, high poverty neighborhood.

Transportation infrastructure is a fundamental part of any community because it provides people with access to jobs, education, goods and services, and recreational activities of all kinds. In gateway communities, transportation contributes to livability through investments that enhance access and connections to services for residents and visitors, while providing connections that highlight the character of the community as an entrance to our nation's natural treasures. Transportation investments can mean safer highways and intersections, context-sensitive roadway design, and multi-purpose trails, as well as downtown enhancements that encourage walking and bicycling, which in turn provide health benefits, social interaction, and access to local businesses, services, and recreational attractions.



FHWA's Livability Initiative promotes strategies to encourage transportation choices and connections into rural and gateway area transportation networks at the local and regional level. To read more about FHWA and Livability visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/>.

FHWA has identified the following strategies for rural livability:

- Add sidewalks, curb extensions, crosswalks, parking, and landscaping to make small towns more walkable and economically viable.
- Build and connect bicycling and trail networks.
- Link ridesharing, rural on-demand transit vans, and commuter buses to regional employment centers and services.
- Improve connections between neighborhoods and Main Streets, schools and parks, and housing and services.
- Coordinate town and county plans and infrastructure investments with a regional vision for growth and resource protection.
- Incorporate community design and land use planning, mobility and accessibility, public health, environmental protection, and economic development.<sup>1</sup>

As gateway communities providing direct access to Shiawassee NWR, the city of Saginaw, Spaulding Township, and St. Charles must work with federal land managers and transportation agencies to ensure safe connections and access through a mix of transportation modes between the communities and the area's natural amenities. The major highway infrastructure in and around the Saginaw area is in relatively good condition. Access to the Refuge is also in generally good condition on rural roads; however, seasonal access is affected by weather. The Refuge, in partnership with the USFWS Regional Transportation Program continues to make strides to improve access to Shiawassee NWR and meet mobility and access needs of the surrounding communities. The Assessment Team observed several areas where transportation investments could enhance livability for residents and improve the visitor experience. The Assessment Team recommends several general and site-specific improvement projects that would facilitate access between Shiawassee NWR and surrounding communities and would contribute to walkable community neighborhoods.

This section includes a set of priority recommendations to enhance transportation access and choices related to the following:

- Creating public awareness of access to the refuge
- Improving physical access to the refuge for underserved populations
- Engaging gateway communities in the Refuge Roads Program planning process
- Developing regional transportation improvement priorities for livability
- Improving access points to public lands
- Prioritizing development of a regional trail system
- Expanding bicycling and walking opportunities for recreation and health

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, Livability Initiative, "Transportation and Rural Livability," [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/fact\\_sheet/transandrurallivability.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/fact_sheet/transandrurallivability.cfm).

- Adopting a complete streets policy
- Using local transit to enhance livability

## CREATE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ACCESS TO REFUGE

The mission of the USFWS is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants for the continuing benefit of the American people. Under this directive, access to lands for recreation is not the priority as it is for other agencies such as the National Park Service. However, many refuges, including Shiawassee NWR do provide access for hiking, fishing, birding, and many other outdoor recreational activities in designated areas that are free and open to the public. This access provides awareness and the opportunity to experience and enjoy nature, whether it is in one's backyard or hundreds of miles away. In the Saginaw area, Shiawassee NWR is an underutilized asset for recreation and education right next door. The importance in visiting the NWR is not in increasing visitation numbers; it is in creating a public awareness of this asset, the habitats that are being protected, and the critical need to instill an environmental stewardship ethic in future generations for ongoing protection of natural resources.

### Recommendations

- **Improve regional wayfinding for motorists, walkers, and bicyclists.** Physical awareness of access to the refuge is important and can facilitate residents' understanding of where and how they relate to nearby public lands. Wayfinding is knowing where you are in an environment, knowing where your desired location is, and knowing how to get there from your present location. The Assessment Team recommends that the NWR and Regional Transportation Program coordinator and the surrounding gateway communities, local and regional transportation agencies, and economic development and tourism groups work together to develop a strategic wayfinding plan to bring awareness to the location of access points to Shiawassee NWR as well as other regional recreational, cultural, and historical assets. Signage should be integrated into communities and designed to help people near the highways and downtowns easily find access to the refuge and other areas of interest.

### CASE STUDY: U.S. Forest Service & Unicoi County, Tennessee

As the U.S. Forest Service prepared to replace its brown directional signs in Unicoi County, local leaders had a request for the Cherokee National Forest. The county asked that the Forest Service use the signs to route people from Interstate 26 through the downtown areas rather than via back roads. By doing so, this increased business in downtown areas and provided the visitors to recreational lands with services such as food and shops. With minimal public investment, the county and its communities gained an economic win, and the USFS benefitted from community goodwill.

## CASE STUDY: Yadkin Valley, North Carolina

Four counties in northwest North Carolina banded together to create the Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor Partnership. Under this partnership, each county placed “Welcome to Yadkin Valley” and wayfinding signs across the area to lead visitors to cultural, recreational, agribusiness, and heritage sites of interest. The signs are among efforts to market the upper Yadkin Valley as a destination. Funding came predominantly from a National Scenic Byway grant with a 20 percent match from the local governments within the four counties. See <http://www.goyadkinvalley.com/content/news-item-three#.UyBqdz9dVNO>.



- **Develop regional maps.** Wayfinding often starts during the trip planning phase. It is important that regional maps on the web and for printed distribution include Shiawassee NWR, highlight access points, and include many of the other important recreational lands in the region including the Game Area, river access points, trails, and transportation routes. The Assessment Team recommends that organizations who have maps of the region on their websites and/or for print work together to update the maps to include access to public lands.
- **Focus on the amenities available at the refuge.** Shiawassee NWR is protected for the conservation of precious habitats, and to uphold that mission, public access needs to be managed or sometimes not permitted. However, Shiawassee NWR has many amenities that are available for public use such as the auto tour, hiking trails, fishing, and world-class birding. Knowing the distinction of what is permitted, rather than placing the emphasis on what is not, will bring awareness to how to enjoy the refuge, and visitors will be prepared on what to expect. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS work with local economic development and tourism groups, as well as community organizations interested in recreation (youth, senior citizens) to better understand these recreational activities and access to their designated areas. This information should be used in promotional materials, wayfinding, and any other information distributed to the public about the refuge.

## FUNDING RESOURCE: Federal Lands Access Program

The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) provides funds for planning for or conducting work on public highways, roads, bridges, trails, and transit systems that are located on, are adjacent to, or provide access to Federal Lands. These facilities must be owned or maintained by a state, county, town, township, tribe, municipality, or local government. This program, newly created under Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), emphasizes projects that provide access to high-use recreation sites or Federal economic generators.

The Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD) works with the states under its jurisdiction to develop each state's Programming Decisions Committee (PDC). The PDC is responsible for prioritizing the slate of projects for each state's Access Program. The PDC establishes project selection criteria and administers calls for projects. For more information, see <http://www.efl.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/federal-lands-access.aspx>.

## IMPROVE PHYSICAL ACCESS TO THE REFUGE FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Federal public lands such as national parks, forests, and refuges are often thought of as far-off destinations reserved for special vacation trips; however that is not true for thousands of communities—from urban to rural—that are able call these places their backyard. In Saginaw, the latter is true and presents a major opportunity to connect to underserved neighborhoods that may not have had access to nature and recreation in the past. With the recent acquisition of the Germania Golf Course, the Shiawassee NWR now provides an outdoor recreation area to improve the quality of life of a neighborhood that has a high unemployment and poverty rate. There are many creative outreach strategies that the USFWS and other community organizations can take to better connect these neighborhoods with nature that are addressed under Principle 6. In addition, transportation is often a barrier to recreation when transportation costs are too high or the household lacks access to a personal vehicle. Improving access to alternative means for mobility, such as public transportation, walking, and bicycling, can overcome the transportation barrier to make access to Shiawassee NWR more convenient and safe from surrounding neighborhoods.

### Recommendations

- **Support bicycling and walking facilities in and around the Germania property and the Green Point Environmental Learning Center.** Shiawassee NWR received grant money through the Federal Lands Access Program to install sidewalks and bike lanes along Gabriel Road to the Green Point Environmental Learning Center (GPELC). This improvement will provide safe walking and bicycling to the GPELC and the acquired Germania property. The Assessment Team recommends that USFWS, surrounding neighborhood organizations, and the city continue to discuss improvements to bicycling and walking facilities extending into other nearby priority areas to further connect the GPELC and Germania property to surrounding neighborhoods. See additional

recommendations for walking and bicycling below and in the Resources and Case Studies section.

- **Extend STARS service to Green Point Environmental Learning Center.** In 2010, the USFWS assessed access to USFWS refuges across the country for the potential to benefit from enhanced transit connections. From their study, Shiawassee NWR ranked first out of the assessed refuges, due to the proximity of a Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services (STARS) bus route that runs every 40 minutes, six days per week only 0.9 miles from the GPELC. As recommended in this study, partnership efforts with the city, community organizations, and the USFWS are essential to accustom local residents to use transit to access the refuge, as well as an awareness of the recreational opportunities available once off the bus. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS, the Friends of Shiawassee NWR (a group of active volunteer citizens that work to support the refuge), the Refuge Road Program, STARS, and the city discuss the feasibility of extending service to the GPELC. The extension could be a pilot project in partnership with additional organizations or made available on a trial basis on weekends.

### RESOURCE: Transit and Trail Connections: Assessment of Visitor Access to National Wildlife Refuges

The purpose of this study is to characterize the use of transit and non-motorized transportation modes for visitor access to NWRs, as well as identify opportunities for and constraints to alternative transportation access. For more information and report findings, see [http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Transit\\_Trails\\_Layout\\_Final\\_123010.pdf](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Transit_Trails_Layout_Final_123010.pdf).

- **Consider shuttle service for youth, seniors, and/or disabled citizens to Green Point Environmental Learning Center and other refuge access points.** To continue to expand awareness of the refuge, educate visitors, and provide experiences in nature, the refuge and Friends of Shiawassee NWR should explore opportunities to create transportation options for youth, seniors, and disabled citizens. The refuge should actively engage community organizations in Saginaw and the surrounding region that may be interested in visiting the refuge via shuttle or van service for educational and recreational outings.

### CASE STUDY: Rydell National Wildlife Refuge—Erskine, Minnesota

Rydell NWR has over seven miles of trails, of which five miles are paved. Five roofed shelters, numerous benches, and two portable restrooms are located along the trails. Four electric golf carts are available for tours for the elderly and people with disabilities by prior arrangement. Qualifying family groups of up to seven can be accommodated on one cart. Larger carts can accommodate groups of up to 16. All carts are operated by designated volunteers or refuge staff.



### **CASE STUDY: Blue Goose Bus Fund—Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

The Minnesota Valley NWR initiated an environmental education model that emphasizes long-term learning for students and their teachers. The Refuge Partner Schools Program is an approach that provides teachers and students with multidisciplinary, standard-based curriculum that includes hands-on, real life experiences with plants and wildlife as well as recreational opportunities to immerse students in nature throughout the seasons.

The primary teacher-identified limitation to this program is the transportation costs to the refuge and Partner School program events. Despite the fact that Minnesota Valley NWR does not charge any participation fees, school budgets have left many schools unable to absorb busing costs. In response, the Refuge Friends, Inc., a non-profit organization, has established the Blue Goose Bus Fund. Schools that join the Refuge Partner Schools Program are eligible to apply for partial or total busing scholarships. For more information, see <http://refugefriendsinc.org/blue-goose-bus-fund/>.

### **CASE STUDY: Yellow School Bus Field Trip Transportation Fund—San Francisco, California**

The Yellow School Bus Field Trip Transportation Fund was started with funding from the FWS's Connecting People with Nature Program. The San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society provided additional funding and administers the program with the FWS.

The fund was created to help Title 1 schools access the Wetland Round-Up and Living Wetlands Field Trip Programs at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR Environmental Education Center in Alviso and the Newark Slough Learning Center in Fremont.

The San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society will pay up to \$700 for transportation for a field trip. If a recipient is awarded funding for a bus, the recipient will be expected to hire a bus and mail a copy of the invoice to the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society. Once they receive the invoice they will send a check for up to \$450 either to the bus vendor directly (school district or local vendor) or to the school/school district for the reimbursement, whichever method is preferred by the school. For more information, see [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/don\\_edwards\\_san\\_francisco\\_bay/for\\_educators/yellow\\_bus\\_fund.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/don_edwards_san_francisco_bay/for_educators/yellow_bus_fund.html).

### **RESOURCE: CAR-LESS California**

CAR-LESS stands for California Alternative Transportation for Recreation—Leisure for Everyone that is Seamless and Sustainable. The Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service received a planning grant from the Federal Transit Administration under the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks (TRIP) Program to begin planning for alternative transportation in California. This project was initiated to make sure that collective efforts in California not only move toward conserving precious public land resources but also address the barriers that California's underserved populations face in pursuing their outdoor-recreation preferences. The project documentation could be useful in Saginaw. For more information, see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r5/workingtogether/?cid=stelprdb5373419>.

- **Address safety concerns for the Germania property.** Prior to acquisition by the USFWS, the Germania Golf Course was a private club, only open to members. Now that land is open and available for neighbors to walk, recreate, and enjoy nature. However, new opportunities present the need to educate and make people aware of the proper use of land. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS work with local community organizations, the city, neighboring residents, and local police to address any existing or potential safety and security issues. It is important that residents and visitors feel safe enjoying the nature, and any proactive planning to ensure that every experience is positive will ensure continual enjoyment of the refuge.
- **Discuss with neighboring communities additional needs or opportunities for access.** Engaging neighboring stakeholders in the planning and decision making of access improvements at the Germania property and other areas of the refuge will help better inform how neighbors would like to see the property used and allow the asset to become more of a part of their community fabric.

## ENGAGE GATEWAY COMMUNITIES IN THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS

The USFWS Regional Transportation Program (RTP) provides funding for the design, construction, reconstruction, maintenance, or improvement of refuge roads and bridges that provide access to or are within a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Shiawassee NWR has taken advantage of the RTP by receiving program funding for the construction of the refuge's auto tour. Learn more about the RTP here: <http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/rr/>.

### Recommendations

- **Discuss future regional planning.** Surrounding gateway communities should look at their own transportation priorities and planning timelines to assess how and when to engage the RRP. Surrounding townships and the city of Saginaw have roads managed by the county or city that provide direct access to the refuge. These roads are eligible to receive funding from RRP.
- **Inform the Friends of Shiawassee NWR of their role in transportation planning.** Friends groups play a critical role in advocating for refuge improvements, fundraising, and implementing improvement plans. USFWS staff should discuss with the Friends of Shiawassee NWR potential projects, partnerships, and other opportunities with the Refuge Roads Program while understanding:
  - Friends groups can play an important role by informing their Congressional delegations of refuge road needs.
  - The program is important to refuges to meet their own internal goals. It helps reduce refuge maintenance backlogs, which consist largely of road and trail projects.

- Refuge Roads money can be used as matching money to obtain other funding. This requires planning to get projects on the five-year Refuge Roads priority list at the time the list is being developed.
- Refuge Roads will pay for road enhancement projects and could fund a road or trail-side interpretive kiosk.

## FUNDING RESOURCE: Maintaining Roads and Trails—Regional Transportation Program

The Regional Transportation Program is a partnership between the USFWS and FHWA's Federal Lands Highways Program and is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of public use roads and trails in national wildlife refuges and hatcheries.

Refuge Roads projects begin as proposals submitted by refuge managers. From those proposals, refuge road coordinators from each of the Refuge System's eight regions draw up lists of priority road and trail projects. Refuge supervisors and regional refuge chiefs use the lists to decide which ones will be funded. In accordance with FHWA guidelines, they make their selections once every five years.

Key points to remember about the RRP:

- Requires long-term planning because of the five-year timeline
- Only covers maintenance of public use roads and trails
- Five percent may be used for interpretive or road enhancement
- Money may be used as matching money
- Money is given directly to the Refuge System with no matching requirements

For more information, see <http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/rr/>.

## DEVELOP REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES FOR LIVABILITY

Implementing transportation projects on the ground can take years, require significant local investment dollars, and involve a rigorous evaluation process before the shovel hits the ground. A clear planning process, a set of priorities, and collaboration can help communities navigate the complex implementation process in an efficient and effective manner.

### Recommendations

- **Prioritize transportation projects.** The Assessment Team recommends that the city of Saginaw engage transportation planners from Saginaw County and surrounding counties, the state of Michigan, and federal agencies to discuss roles, planning processes, short- and long-term priorities, and how best to get agreed-upon priorities

funded. Priorities should focus on the big picture—those projects that improve access for the greatest number of people, are environmentally sustainable, and will positively impact economic growth. The Assessment Team recommends prioritizing projects that improve multimodal connections between Saginaw and public lands and that enhance public safety. For more information about setting priorities, see the National Association of Development Organizations' "Transportation Project Prioritization and Performance-based Planning Efforts in Rural and Small Metropolitan Regions" at <http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/RPOprioritization.pdf>.

- **Develop a network of transportation stakeholders for livability.** The trend for federal transportation funding is for projects that demonstrate a broadening of silos; that is, that include diverse programs and stakeholders that support the objectives and goals of potential projects. In setting priorities, the Team recommends that the city coordinate transportation planning efforts for Saginaw and surrounding townships by involving city officials, federal land managers, regional planning organizations, and nontraditional partners from housing, education, environmental, and public health organizations. Maintaining open communication with state and federal transportation representatives will also better inform the decision-making process while potentially opening discussion for new projects that can align with future initiatives or strategic transportation priorities. One such priority would be possible bicycle and pedestrian demonstration projects that mesh with the state's work to improve roadways for all users as part of their Complete Streets Policy. Be persistent about relationships.

In Saginaw County, the Saginaw Metropolitan Area Transportation Study serves as the entity responsible for planning and funding transportation projects in the Saginaw Metropolitan Area. For more information about the Transportation Improvement Program (the region's five-year plan) in Saginaw and Saginaw County's projects included in Michigan's Priority Roads Investment Program, see <http://www.saginawcounty.com/Planning/Default.aspx>.

- **Collect user data.** Data gathering is especially important to inform the funding process. The Saginaw region should collect detailed traffic counts, accident reports or other indications of safety issues, and the number of pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, cars, and other types of vehicles that travel on the roads in and around the city. This quantitative data can be used to demonstrate and support the need for improvements and to better position funding applications. Data also should include visitor surveys that

### RESOURCE: Banking on Nature

Recreational visits to national wildlife refuges generate substantial economic activity. According to the USFWS Report, "Banking on Nature", in 2011, 46.5 million people visited refuges and generated over \$2.4 billion in sales in regional economies. The value of refuges goes beyond resource management to support jobs and livability in local economies. For more information on recreational spending and the contribution to the industry by the NWR system, see <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/about/refugereports/pdfs/BankingOnNature2013.pdf>.

document travelers' starting points, the activities in which they are participating, where they are staying, and how long they are visiting. Additionally, economic statistics can demonstrate the overall impact that businesses, visitors, and specific recreational users have on the local, county, and regional levels—further making the case for transportation projects that can improve economic resiliency. Counting transportation and recreational users and tracking use patterns over time can demonstrate demand for specific transportation improvements and indicate the importance of continued maintenance and management of existing roads and trails.

Some of these data can be obtained by local and regional transportation organizations, but others may need to be collected through area outfitters, visitor centers, recreation clubs or groups, or volunteers who compile user data for key intersections, trailheads, and other destinations.

- **Consider a transportation study.** Currently, Shiawassee NWR has a comprehensive conservation plan that will be updated to include more information specifically related to transportation on the refuge. That plan can be found here, <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/shiawasse/index.html>. To inform updates to the comprehensive conservation plan, Shiawassee NWR should consider a transportation study or Volpe Transportation Observations and Recommendations report provided by the Interagency Transportation Assistance Group (or TAG Report). A TAG report is prepared subsequent to a site visit and document review of the conditions, issues and considerations for improvement to develop priorities for improvement. To learn more about TAG reports and the planning and analysis for public lands led by Volpe, see <http://www.volpe.dot.gov/transportation-planning/public-lands/public-lands-team-projects>.
- **Think creatively about transportation.** Transportation is not limited to roads. Transportation and its associated costs influences housing affordability, economic development, and access to public services. Federal and state transportation agencies and other entities recognize this relationship and work to provide opportunities to support multiple modes by improving trails, sidewalks, and bicycle safety, as well as opportunities to revitalize downtowns and neighborhoods. Being able to demonstrate demand, priorities, and quantitative impacts and communicating openly with transportation representatives will help the community find the right programs for its needs.

### FUNDING RESOURCE: FHWA's Transportation Alternatives Program

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities; environmental mitigation; recreational trail projects, and safe routes to school projects. To learn more about FHWA's Federal Aid programs, see <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/essentials.cfm>. This program is administered state by state, for more information about Michigan's TAP program, see [http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621\\_17216\\_18231---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621_17216_18231---,00.html).



*Example of an all abilities accessible boat launch in Midland; a project sponsored by the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network.*

## IMPROVE ACCESS POINTS TO PUBLIC LANDS

During the assessment, the Assessment Team surveyed several key access points where improvement could mean safer, more convenient access to outdoor recreation and enjoyment of natural resources. The following are several site-specific areas for improvement consideration.

### Recommendations

- **Make installing or improving sidewalk and bicycle lanes to the refuge, state game area, trails, and other recreational amenities a priority.** Main roads into the refuge and connecting roads to trailheads and other recreational amenities should be assessed for installing or improving sidewalk and bicycle lanes. The USFWS, FHWA, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and local transportation representatives should evaluate how to improve connections to the refuge and other public lands via walking and/or bicycling. Specific roads for targeted evaluation include Gabriel Road and Curtis Road.
- **Assess opportunities to access the river.** The rivers in the Saginaw area are major recreational destinations for wildlife viewing, fishing, and paddle sports. Opportunities throughout the region to access the river are limited, such as in James Township where there is no access. The USFWS, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), watershed councils, river users and conservation groups, and others who have local knowledge of the rivers should assess where there can be safe, convenient access to the river and connections made to area trail networks, the refuge, and other public lands.
- **Assess opportunities to improve the safety, conditions, and facilities of roads surrounding the refuge.** The USFWS and surrounding townships and counties should discuss needs and priority opportunities to improve road conditions, safety improvements, and access. Such priorities should be integrated into both refuge and local transportation planning efforts where resources can be leveraged to make improvements. Specific roads assessed for improvement include:
  - Hart Road is in need of surface improvements; it provides direct access to the refuge and may qualify for Federal Land Access Program funding for ongoing maintenance and sidewalk installation.
  - Washington Road is in need of increased surface maintenance due to flooding and winter road damage.



- Wall Road, Prior Road, and Miller Road in St. Charles are in need of increased surface maintenance due to flooding and winter road damage to improve access to the Shiawassee Flats Game Area and the refuge.
- The I-75 exits at Birch Run and Bridgeport have safety and access issues for pedestrians looking to walk to nearby towns. There is the potential to create safer connections to the refuge at this intersection with Curtis Road.
- Opportunities exist throughout townships and counties for a “complete streets” approach that makes safe connections to the refuge, parks, trails, and other recreational amenities from residential neighborhoods, downtowns, and other destinations.



## PRIORITIZE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

Michigan is one of the nation’s leaders in regional trail systems with over 2,600 miles of multi-use trail on the ground. In the Saginaw area, the Great Lake Bay Regional Trail Committee (GLBRTC) is making great

strides to achieve their goal of connecting existing rail trails in Bay, Midland, and Saginaw counties to create a nearly 100-mile long trail loop for bicycling, running, and walking. In December 2014, the first section of the regional trail connecting Bay County to Saginaw County received funding from the MDNR to implement the connection. Regional trails are community amenities that encourage physical activity, preserve natural assets, and improve quality of life. Additionally, trails can unify the role of recreation and transportation and provide ways for people to commute to work, access services, and enjoy downtowns. In the Saginaw area, the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail, Cass River Trail, and Woodland Trail are already recreational amenities. Making better connections to and between these trails to tap into larger networks will create more opportunities for recreation and healthy living to Saginaw area residents. The refuge and gateway communities should continue to support the implementation of the regional



trail system by the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Committee as a priority and consider the following recommendations to enhance connections and access to local amenities. For more information about the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail, see

<http://www.greatlakesbaytrails.com/>.

*Bicyclist on the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail*

## Recommendations

- **Emphasize connections to downtowns where possible.** Trail planning and trail extensions should consider connections to downtowns as a priority. Access to trails via sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-use paths from downtown areas provides opportunities to bring trail users into business districts, restaurants, lodging, and other services, and to contribute to healthy lifestyles for residents and employees as a recreational amenity. The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw work with GLBRTC to extend the trail to connect to Shiawassee NWR and facilitate better connections to the city.
- **Emphasize connections to public lands.** The public land resources in the Saginaw area—from the refuge and state game area to neighborhood parks, such as Wickes Park—are recreational gems in the community. Where possible, connections to these resources should be made a priority part of regional trail planning efforts.

### **CASE STUDY: Kalamazoo River Valley Trail—Kalamazoo, Michigan**

The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT) is developing into a 35-mile multi-purpose trail for non-motorized transportation and recreation throughout Kalamazoo County connecting Battle Creek to Lake Michigan. The existing trail and planned trails in nearby counties will link more than 140 miles of trail.

The KRVT is funded by private donations, local public support, and non-motorized transportation enhancement grants from the MDOT. In 2006, the Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo County received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to increase awareness and encourage usage on the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail. In total there were 220 separate programs/events in 2013 on the trail, and over 180,000 visitors, a major increase from 50,000 in 2010.

To raise the visibility of the trail, community events and programs have attracted over 4,700 participants and 2,000 volunteers. As managers of the trail, the Kalamazoo Parks Department's mission for the trail is to create community benefits around health and fitness, tourism, economic development, recreation, transportation, education, quality of life, and environmental/land preservation. For more information, see <https://www.krvtrail.com>.

### **RESOURCE: Rails-To-Trails Conservancy**

Rails-To-Trails Conservancy (RTC) provides a wealth of ideas and resources for trail projects. While RTC does not directly finance trail projects, it is a great resource for information about how to acquire land, construct trails, and manage trails over time. The RTC website includes federal and state funding sources, as well as private foundations, local government tools, and nontraditional funding sources such as voluntary contributions and fundraising music festivals. For more information, see

[http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/trailbuilding/toolbox/informationsummaries/fuinging\\_financing.html](http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/trailbuilding/toolbox/informationsummaries/fuinging_financing.html).



## CASE STUDY: The Virginia Creeper Trail—Abingdon to Damascus, Virginia

The Virginia Creeper Trail stretches 34 miles from Abingdon to Damascus, Virginia. The trail follows along the Whitetop Laurel River up to its highest point near the North Carolina state line at Whitetop Station, Virginia. The trail is open to hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. In response to demand for visitor services generated by the trail, nearby towns offer bike rentals, shuttle services, food, lodging, and specialty shops. The towns also market fly fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and other recreational activities on the trail. In 2004, USDA estimated that the Virginia Creeper Trail generated \$1.59 million in annual revenue and supported 27 new full-time jobs.

For more information, see Rails-To-Trails Conservancy, *From Trail Towns to TrOD: Trails and Economic Development*, August 2007.

- **Enhance public knowledge of trail planning efforts and demonstrate the economic benefits of trails.** With so many recreational opportunities in the region, the Saginaw area has the opportunity to capitalize on their existing trails and trail planning by promoting them to the public. Trail-user groups, the city, the USFWS, and other community organizations should look for opportunities to engage the community in programs and events along the trail, provide information about recreation opportunities that are easily accessible from the downtown, and develop information with directions to access trails from area destinations. The creation of maps, websites, mobile wayfinding applications, and events that coordinate walks and rides in downtown Saginaw and on area trails can help raise local awareness of recreational amenities. The GLBRTC should work closely with the USFWS to better expose refuge and trail visitors to the many recreational opportunities in the area and track the economic benefits as a result.

## EXPAND BICYCLING AND WALKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND HEALTH

Bicycling and walking are not only environmentally friendly transportation alternatives to driving, they are also popular and healthy recreational activities that enhance people's quality of life and connections to the environment. There can also be economic impacts; evidence from the Alliance for Bicycling and Walking shows that bicycling and walking projects create 11 to 14 jobs per \$1 million spent, compared to just 7 jobs created per \$1 million spent on highway

projects.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the bicycle industry supported an estimated 1.4 million jobs; generated over \$25 billion in federal, state, and local taxes; and contributed \$81 billion to the U.S. economy.<sup>3</sup> These economic benefits extend to other industries as well. Bicycling is characterized as a “gateway activity,” since 80 percent of bicyclists participate in one or more other outdoor activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and camping<sup>4</sup>—many of the activities that the Saginaw region has to offer.

The Saginaw region is a prime location for bicycle facilities that can attract and enable bicyclists of all types—from long-distance road tourists, to mountain bicyclists, to family excursionists—to enjoy the area’s many amenities. Establishing and maintaining the requisite facilities for bicyclists and runners can generate local tax revenues, create local jobs, and increase revenues in recreational and service industries.

### Recommendations

- **Improve walking and bicycling infrastructure.** To increase accessibility and connections to natural resources and downtown amenities, the town should consider developing a bicycle and pedestrian mobility plan that can be integrated into regional planning frameworks and revitalization efforts. In addition, the city should prioritize investments that improve roadway and sidewalk connections to area trailheads for hikers and bicyclists.
- **Capitalize on running and bicycling events.** Trends in outdoor recreation demonstrate that people want more distance races and nontraditional running and bicycling events, such as mud runs and obstacle courses. Marathons, triathlons, and other races could be tied to existing events in Saginaw. In addition to pursuing opportunities to attract running and bicycling events, the city should explore potential opportunities to provide bicycle storage, public restrooms, and bicycle racks as support

### **CASE STUDY: Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning—Village of Altamont, New York**

Altamont, a rural community northwest of Albany with a population of..., developed a bicycle and pedestrian master plan that includes priority enhancements to three state roads that run through the community to provide more non-motorized activity and transportation in the area, along with connections to regional trails and local destinations. For more information, see [http://www.altaprojects.net/altamont/Altamont\\_Final\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.altaprojects.net/altamont/Altamont_Final_Plan.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Biking and Walking, *Bicycling and Walking the United States: 2012 Benchmarking report*. [http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/memberservices/2012\\_benchmarking\\_report/](http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/memberservices/2012_benchmarking_report/).

<sup>3</sup> Outdoor Industry Foundation, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*, 2012. [http://outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA\\_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf](http://outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> The Outdoor Foundation. *Outdoor Recreation Participation Report*, 2012. [http://outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA\\_OutdoorRecreationParticipationReport2012.pdf?170](http://outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA_OutdoorRecreationParticipationReport2012.pdf?170).

infrastructure for bicyclists. This can help to make the Saginaw region a welcoming destination for touring bicyclists. Shiawassee NWR should also explore opportunities to loosen restrictions related to compatible uses to be able to connect with communities and be involved in these events.

- **Partner with public health organizations and healthcare providers.** Trails and greenways create healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, and accessible places to bike, walk, hike, and jog. In doing so, they make it easier for people to engage in physical activity and reduce the potential for developing serious health conditions such as obesity or suffering the effects of a sedentary lifestyle. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS, the city, and trail organizations reach out to area health organizations, area hospitals and doctors, and healthcare providers to support, develop programs, and engage patients and communities in using trails, bikeways, and recreational amenities as steps towards a healthier lifestyle. (See Resources and Case Studies for more information about trails and health.) Examples of national and place-based partnerships between health and recreation organizations include:
  - **Walk with Ease:** The Arthritis Foundation has developed a six-week Walk with Ease Program to help those in need of relief from arthritis pain to include physical activity as part of daily routines. Its community program has provided grants to 28 parks and recreation agencies across the country to implement the program. (<http://www.arthritistoday.org/tools-and-resources/walk-with-ease-program/program.php>)
  - **Park Prescriptions:** The National Recreation and Parks Association is collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to create a national agenda for implementing park prescriptions. Park prescriptions are physical fitness programs in outdoor settings prescribed by doctors. These programs have demonstrated more patient commitment and health improvements compared to gym and indoor workouts. Case studies of five local park and recreation agencies implementing park prescription programs can be found here: [http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Grants\\_and\\_Partners/Health\\_and\\_Livability/FINAL%20Prescribing%20Parks%20for%20Better%20Health%20Success%20Stories.pdf](http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Grants_and_Partners/Health_and_Livability/FINAL%20Prescribing%20Parks%20for%20Better%20Health%20Success%20Stories.pdf).
  - **Active Living by Design:** Active Living by Design partners with nonprofits, local leaders, and funders to create healthy communities by providing strategic consultation, technical assistance, and grant funding. (<http://activelivingbydesign.org/>)
  - **Nice Ride Minnesota:** The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota's Center for Prevention is the title sponsor of Minneapolis' bike share system that includes



over 1,500 bicycles, 170 stations, and 1.3 million rides. The National Park Service's alternative transportation grant program was used to gain funding for its expansion. Their Community Partner Program took hundreds of people on rides and partnered with Target to provide 800 free memberships to the bike share program that were distributed with partner organizations like the Northpoint Health and Wellness Center, the Indian Health Board, and Minneapolis Community Technical College. (<https://www.niceridemn.org/>)

- **River Bluff Trail, Cass County, Indiana:** Recognizing the impact of unhealthy lifestyles among county residents, Logansport Memorial Hospital decided to give a gift to the community coinciding with its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The hospital issued a challenge: for every dollar contributed by hospital employees, the hospital would match another dollar up to \$100,000. Combining donations from local businesses, physicians, and citizens, the hospital campaign raised more than \$700,000. The money went towards the acquisition and development of the River Bluff Trail and was able to leverage additional FHWA funding. The hospital measured the health impact of the public fitness trail system on trail users and saw a 30% improvement in endurance, 27% improvement in blood pressure, and 27% improvement in cholesterol measurements. (<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/logansport-IN.html>)

### RESOURCE: Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA) is the statewide voice for non-motorized trail users, helping people build, connect, and promote trails for a healthier and more prosperous Michigan. The Alliance is actively working to make Michigan known as the #1 Trails State in America with over 2,629 miles of multi-use trails on the ground. Their big picture projects include:

- Coordinating efforts to build a central electronic trail map and database for all Michigan trails.
- Initiating work on the Governor's Showcase Trail from Detroit to Wisconsin.
- Leading trail initiatives as part of the Michigan Tourism Industry Strategic Plan.
- Training communities on Complete Streets and encouraging local implementation to help connect people with trails across Michigan.

For more information and resources from MTGA, see <http://www.michigantrails.org>.

### RESOURCE: Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Measures

The Federal Highway Administration provides a number of resources for ensuring safer transportation for all users and specific measures for improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety, including pedestrian islands, beacons, and road diets. For more information, see [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/).



## RESOURCE: Active Transportation in Small Communities

A 2012 report documents the importance of biking and walking for rural communities. Bicycling accounts for 12 percent of all trips taken in the United States. In rural communities, that number ranges between 6.9 and 9.6 percent, depending on the size and geography of the community. Nationwide, commuting by bicycle has risen 40 percent in the past decade. Active transportation facilities cost a tiny fraction of roadways and, given the pent-up demand for safe and convenient bicycling and walking networks, investments in active transportation offer taxpayers a far greater return compared to road investments. Biking and walking projects also create more jobs per dollar than large highway projects, and the money stays closer to home in small, local businesses.

(Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, *Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers: Walking and Bicycling in Small Towns and Rural America*, 2012)

## CASE STUDY: Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning—Lower Savannah Council of Governments, South Carolina

The Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG) Bicycle and Pedestrian Regional Plan uses a holistic approach to address infrastructure, policies, and programs that affect bicycling and walking activity rather than conventional methods that consider infrastructure alone. The program's strategic plan includes a review of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and recommendations for infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements.

The main source of funding for the plan and implementation was the SCDOT's surface transportation program, Guideshare, which programmed \$350,000 for the entire project. The projects are expected to deliver economic benefits to community residents and businesses in the form of cheaper means of transportation and the encouragement of tourism, health, and livability benefits. For more information, see <http://www.lscog.org/common/content.asp?page=396>.

## ADOPT A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

The number of people using non-motorized or public transport can be a good indicator of a community's livability; a factor that has a profound impact on attracting businesses and workers as well as tourism. However, to increase the number of people walking and bicycling in communities, the infrastructure must allow for safe and convenient mobility between destinations. The downtown of Saginaw provides many amenities such as shops, restaurants, and services. The close proximity of these amenities to the city center allows for access from adjacent neighborhoods by bus, foot, or bicycle; however, the infrastructure may not ensure mobility for all residents.

The city should investigate the mobility needs of seniors, families, and disabled populations to identify barriers and areas for improvement for walkers, bicyclists, wheelchairs, transit, and personal vehicles. A Complete Streets policy can assist future road infrastructure planning decisions to look for street connection and street design that provides safe access for all users.

A Complete Streets policy can also be extended into the surrounding rural communities and townships, involving all communities and making potential street linkages that will ensure a broad network of safe non-motorized access for residents, workers, and visitors to many destinations throughout the area. (See Resources and Case Studies for more additional resources for implementing a complete streets policy.)

### Recommendations

- **Engage with MDOT.** MDOT is required by law to formalize collaboration between transportation agencies to address non-motorized and Complete Streets issues as part of a broader Context Sensitive Solutions initiative. The refuge and surrounding communities including Saginaw, and MDOT's complete street planners should engage to discuss developing a local complete streets policy that will include an inventory and assessment of gaps and opportunities to improve multi-modal access. For more information about MDOT's Complete Street Policy and Context Sensitive Solutions, see [http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9621\\_41446---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9621_41446---,00.html).
- **Engage with the Michigan Complete Street Coalition.** The Michigan Complete Streets Coalition began in 2009 as a way to connect grassroots Complete Streets movements across the state. Today, the Coalition represents over 100 organizations, businesses, and individuals. It is led by the League of Michigan Bicyclists, the Michigan Environmental Council, and AARP Michigan. It is recommended that Saginaw area communities engage with the Michigan Complete Street Coalition to discuss developing a complete street plan for the area, specifically enhancing connections to public recreation.
- **Explore a peer exchange with Midland.** In 2010, the City of Midland adopted a Complete Streets program as part of their Master Street Plan to develop a network of streets with design features that will accommodate pedestrians and vehicular movement, and defined trails, bike lanes, and bike routes. The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw area communities engage in a peer exchange with Midland to discuss their process of developing a complete streets policy and implemented projects.

## CASE STUDY: Complete Streets—Basalt, Colorado

Creating Complete Streets requires transportation agencies to change their approach to community roads. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. Every transportation project is designed to make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making the town a better place to live. For more information, visit the National Complete Streets Coalition (<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>).

Basalt, Colorado, a town of 2,500 located about 25 miles from Aspen, adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2005 and created a Complete Streets design manual outlining overall street design requirements. The design manual aims to provide a comprehensive toolkit for the creation of safe, pleasant, efficient, interesting, and active mobility corridors. The 34-page design manual classifies street types, functions, and design criteria for historic, bicycle, pedestrian, lighting, and infrastructure facilities. (<http://www.basalt.net/planningpdf/streetsfinal.pdf>)

### USE LOCAL TRANSIT TO ENHANCE LIVABILITY IN RURAL AREAS

Local bus, paratransit, and medical and service-oriented transport play increasingly vital roles for people in rural communities. In recent decades, rural demographics have skewed towards an increase in older populations and lower-income citizens—the populations that directly benefit most from viable public transportation options. Federal and state funding programs for rural transit currently favor projects that improve economic efficiency and reduce inequalities and, as a result, make communities more livable. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) supports the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and is committed to improving livability in rural communities through the support of transportation agencies and public transit investments. To learn more, visit <http://www.fta.dot.gov/about/13747.html>.

The Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services (STARS) provides public transportation for the Urbanized Saginaw Area and for over 3,400 people each day on 11 routes. Annually, over 48,000 senior citizens and persons with disabilities utilize the LIFT service, a door to door dial-a-ride service, for their transportation needs. About 53% of LIFT participants are outside the city of Saginaw. Unfortunately, Route 83 servicing the surrounding rural towns of Frankenmuth and Birch Run was cancelled in January 2014. The following are recommendations related to transit that can assist transit planners and communities in exploring opportunities to ensure transit access for all residents and employees in the Saginaw area.

#### Recommendations

- **Build awareness of public transit among recreation users.** Public transit in the urban areas of Saginaw is an effective and well-used service. With public lands within a short distance from existing STARS routes, service expansion to support recreational users is an opportunity to increase transit ridership and bring more awareness to the surrounding recreational amenities in and around Saginaw. STARS, MDNR, and the USFWS should explore opportunities to provide residents and visitors with safe and

convenient transit to access public lands to enjoy outdoor recreation. Target recreational transit users may include visitors to downtown Saginaw, students at new medical campuses, local senior citizens, and hospital visitors. Cyclists may appreciate a shuttle that could pick them up at neighboring towns after a long bike ride and transport them back to their hotel in Saginaw with their bikes. STARS should investigate the market for and feasibility of the following opportunities:

- Assessment Team “Support and gear” (SAG) wagon service for bicyclists and river paddlers in and around Saginaw with connections to the refuge, river access, and other public lands.
  - Partnerships with USFWS and MDNR to provide public transportation for special events and tours on public lands or explore weekend service to recreation destinations outside of the STARS urban routes.
  - Shuttle service providing pick-up/drop-off at popular trailheads along linear hiking routes and/or boat launches for paddlers.
- **Enhance regional partnerships for rural public transit.** STARS’ LIFT program provides a majority of its rides to senior citizens outside of the urban downtown. Unfortunately, STARS had to cancel its daily route through surrounding rural communities, which may impact those who were accessing transit daily and looking for alternatives. To ensure that there are transportation options to all surrounding populations that do not rely only on personal vehicles, the Assessment Team recommends that gateway townships, the City of Saginaw, STARS, and other regional partners engage the FTA for assistance in assessing opportunities for sustainable transit service to surrounding rural communities. (See Resources and Case Studies for more information on funding opportunities).

The following advice from AARP may be useful to decision makers in the rural communities surrounding Saginaw:

- **Explore a mix of funding options.** Rural public transit, more than other settings, is assembled through a mix of funding resources. As public transportation expands in the region, so should the sources of funding expand to include more partners.
- **State and local funding is critical.** Although federal funding is available, many funding opportunities require a local match. It is critical for rural public transportation networks to leverage funds at the city, county, and state levels to meet these funding requirements.
- **Endorse the use of human services funding.** Rural public transportation is particularly important for human service clientele and destinations operated by

social service agencies. It is critical for a regional transit network to tap into funding sources from human services agencies. In many states, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Medicaid, Title XIX of the Social Security Act, is a major funding source for nonemergency medical transportation. Although rules of its use vary widely, in some states, transportation benefits accrue to the public transit provider on a trip-by-trip basis.

- **Promote support for public transit as part of rural investment.** In considering other rural investments related to roads, land use, and other infrastructure issues, be sure to include support for public transit, including various transportation options (dial-a-ride, car-sharing, etc.).
- **Encourage local transit providers to compete for discretionary funding.** Since significant rural transit funding is available through competitive opportunities, it is important that rural transit providers are encouraged and supported in submitting grants for special funds.
- **Promote capacity building/training for rural transit providers.** Rural transit providers have limited staff who wear many hats. Training, conferences, workshops, and other capacity-building opportunities are very valuable to small operators.<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>5</sup> AARP. *Meeting Older Adult's Mobility Needs: Funding Rural Public Transit*, 2012. <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/act/transportation/funding-rural-public-transit-aarp.pdf>.



## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 2:

Promote equitable, affordable housing & lodging choices that meet the needs of residents, workers, & visitors





# PROMOTE EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING & LODGING CHOICES THAT MEET THE NEEDS FOR RESIDENTS, WORKERS, & VISITORS

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- Population has decreased 50,000 to 1960s numbers due to out migration, I-675 bypass around central business area, and increased crime.
- James Township and other flood-prone areas surrounding the refuge face high costs of flood insurance for homeowners that raise the cost of living and affordability of housing.
- Unemployment in neighborhoods surrounding the refuge is estimated to range from 35 to 70%.
- Homeownership in Saginaw City is estimated at 60% and city economic development staff estimates it will decline to 40% by 2025.
- Developers are building new condominiums and apartments with first-floor retail in downtown Saginaw.
- Saginaw/Saginaw County have been awarded three rounds of Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding totaling over \$20 million to address blight as a result of the housing crisis that occurred over the past few years. The grants are administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).
- The State of Michigan awarded the Saginaw County Land Bank a \$1.8 million Blight Elimination grant.
- The Cathedral District, Covenant Hospital Neighborhood, and Green Zone have been targeted by the city of Saginaw as areas in most need of funds to combat blight.
- The Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau is active in lodging recruitment and expansion of visitors in the region.

Communities that offer a wide variety of housing types—single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes, and apartments in varying price ranges—are best positioned to serve, attract, and retain residents at all phases of life. Housing situated near schools, jobs, shopping, and services reduces household transportation costs, which improves livability and housing affordability. Some communities are integrating housing into existing commercial areas and/or creating new mixed-use developments by putting apartments over first-floor retail stores and offices. This not only makes housing more affordable and convenient for residents by reducing transportation costs, it also provides a local consumer base for businesses.

Gateway communities often face several challenges in providing equitable options for housing. As popular destinations set close to natural resources, gateway communities are often highly desirable locations to live. A thriving second homeowner market often exists driving home prices upward and make it difficult for year-round residents to find affordable options close to jobs, schools, shops, outdoor recreation, the downtown, and other desired amenities. However, these issues are not present in the gateway communities of Shiawassee NWR; Saginaw has other housing challenges.

A March 2014 national study by the Urban Institute documents the housing gap for extremely low-income (ELI) renter households. The study indicates that Saginaw County has only 41 affordable and available rental units for every 100 such households. In total, the county has 6,710 ELI renter households and provides 2,723 affordable and available rental units for a total gap between ELI households and affordable and available rental units of 3,987. More information is available at <http://www.urban.org/housingaffordability>. Single-family detached homes comprise the majority



*Single-family home in Saginaw.*

of the housing stock in the Saginaw area. Unfortunately, due to lack of employment opportunities and the steep decline in property value as a negative ramification of the recent housing crisis and sub-prime mortgage lending, many residents have defaulted on mortgages, left the area, and abandoned their homes. This has contributed to the rise of vacant and blighted neighborhood blocks, a high rate in rental properties that are not affordable for ELI renter households or have become inefficient, unmaintained, and overcrowded. These are serious housing issues that the city of Saginaw and the state of Michigan are addressing, in part, by investing over \$20 million

### RESOURCE: HUD's Office of Economic Resilience

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) supports the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The mission of its Office of Economic Resilience is to create diverse, prosperous, and resilient economies by enhancing quality of place; advancing effective job creation strategies; reducing housing, transportation, and energy consumption costs; promoting clean energy solutions; and creating economic opportunities for all. For more information see [portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/economic\\_resilience](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/economic_resilience).

in grant funds to combat a continued decline in the city's housing stock.



*The Bancroft Apartments in downtown Saginaw. © Bancroft Apartments*

Many serious social and economic issues need to be combatted to restore growth in the housing market. The city of Saginaw has seen movement toward downtown revitalization with the Bancroft-Eddy project, which involved the transformation of two historic buildings in the heart of downtown

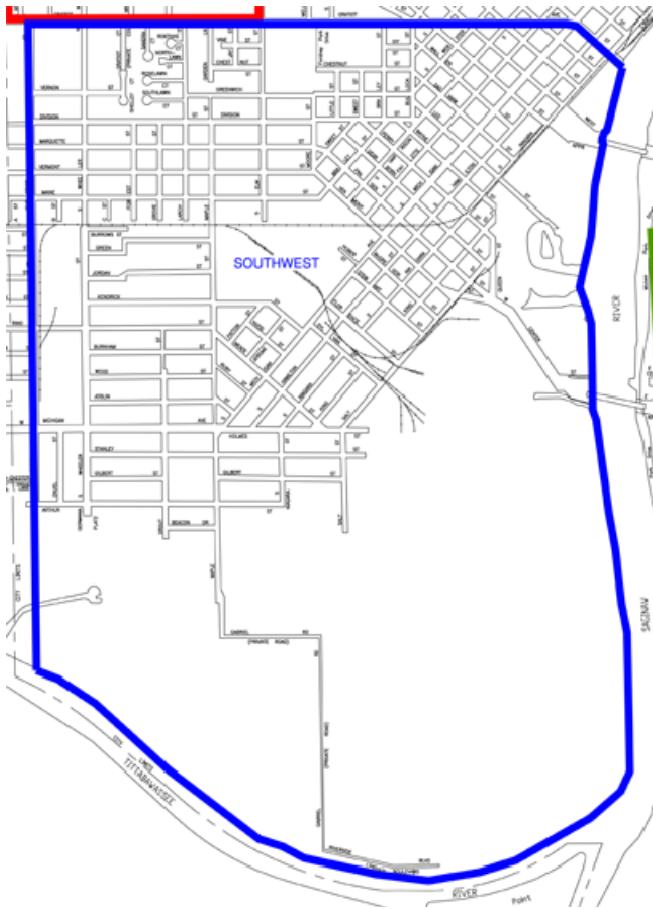
into luxury apartments with ground-level commercial space. Additionally, the construction of The Dow Event Center, an outdoor event venue on the site of the demolished Saginaw Centre mall, and news that Central Michigan University College of Medicine will develop medical school campuses in partnership with Saginaw's St. Mary's Hospital and Covenant Healthcare could create a market for more downtown lodging.

The ongoing work of the city of Saginaw, state of Michigan, and the many local community organizations to combat the housing blight in the area is commendable. For purposes of this report, the following section provides targeted recommendations for those neighborhoods that are directly adjacent to Shiawassee NWR, in particular the community abutting the Germania property in Saginaw.

## **RECONSTRUCT COMMUNITY NETWORKS IN BLIGHTED NEIGHBORHOODS**

Currently, the city of Saginaw is targeting the Cathedral District, Covenant Hospital Neighborhood, and Green Zone in Saginaw as areas in need of the most funds to combat blight due to high vacancy rates and social instability as well as the presence of community anchors such as churches, schools, and other community structures that promote community building and interaction. The Assessment Team recommends that the city evaluate the opportunity to include the southwest neighborhoods that are adjacent to Shiawassee NWR. With the acquisition of the Germania property in Saginaw, Shiawassee NWR has the potential to become an anchor for neighboring communities, specifically the Southwest neighborhood, that abuts boundaries with the city of Saginaw. Targeted planning, reinvestment, and partnership is necessary to reconstruct community networks, weave the refuge into the community fabric, and develop new relationships with residents, community leaders, and non-traditional partners such as the USFWS.

## Recommendations



Southwest Neighborhood Association boundaries as found on the Saginaw's city website (<http://www.saginaw-mi.com/residents/neighborhoodassociations/>).

- **Sponsor community forums and workshops on grant-making and coalition-building.** During the time of the assessment, there were no known block clubs or organized neighborhood groups for the residences abutting the refuge. On the city's list of neighborhood associations, the Southwest Neighborhood Association is listed for the area abutting the Germania property. The Assessment Team recommends that the city, USFWS, and community organizations partner to explore opportunities that provide resources to the neighborhoods for grant-making and coalition-building through forums, workshops, informal meetings, and other outreach measures to create partnerships and formalize a community group of neighborhood leaders.

### RESOURCE: Building Blocks, Building Community: Getting Started with Block Organizing in Milwaukee

Safe & Sound, a community-based, anti-crime strategy designed to reduce crime and violence in Milwaukee, developed a community organizing manual to broaden the impact of groups collaborating to improve neighborhoods and provide information for neighborhoods that seek to build community and reduce crime. For more information, see <http://www.safesound.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Block-Organizing-Startup-Manualx.pdf>.

- **Create a volunteer “housing specialist” position.** The Assessment Team recommends that the city of Saginaw explore partnerships between neighborhood groups to recruit volunteer “housing specialists” similar to those used in Atlanta (see below). The specialists could work in coordination with the City’s neighborhood building code representatives to assist with tracking code violations, notifying owners, and providing information to property owners about bringing properties into compliance. This volunteer program would solicit input of residents in the neighborhoods abutting the refuge where blight investment should be targeted and inform planning decisions.

### **CASE STUDY: Neighborhood Deputies Program—Atlanta, Georgia**

In Atlanta, the City trains volunteer “neighborhood deputies” who patrol the neighborhood and send notices of potential code violations to property owners and occupants. The goals of the program are to educate residents about code and zoning violations and involve residents in the enforcement process. Additionally, the program assists the city in identifying priorities for governmental resources to help in maintaining or revitalizing their neighborhoods and to develop leadership in communities for implementing volunteer clean-up programs. Over 200 volunteers have been part of the program, and the city-wide program cost the city \$80,000 to run.

- **Sponsor a roundtable meeting with the community.** The Assessment Team recommends that the city, the USFWS, and neighborhood groups explore opportunities to engage technical assistance providers, such as The Center for Community Progress (<http://www.communityprogress.net/>), the only national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to turning vacant, abandoned and problem properties into vibrant places. Their national experts can discuss with residents and community leaders current barriers to revitalization and develop a community plan of action.

### **RESOURCE: Restoring Properties, Rebuilding Communities: Transforming Vacant Properties in Today’s America**

This report from The Center for Community Progress offers a systematic look at the problem and evaluates actions that can be taken by federal, state, and local governments, as well as community organizations, private foundations, and real estate developers to stem the tide of increasing vacancy rates and meet the challenges presented by already vacant properties. For the report, see [http://www.communityprogress.net/filebin/pdf/RestoringProperties\\_Final.pdf](http://www.communityprogress.net/filebin/pdf/RestoringProperties_Final.pdf).



- **Target connections between neighborhoods and recreation and outdoor education.** Although Shiawassee NWR is not formally recognized as an urban refuge in this initiative, the USFWS's Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative (<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/vision/urbanwildliferefugeinitiative.html>) provides a framework for creating new refuge partnerships and implementing a refuge presence in varied cities that Shiawassee NWR can use to connect Saginaw neighborhoods to outdoor recreation and education. The Assessment Team recommends that USFWS staff at Shiawassee NWR explore models for engagement and partnership in this program that can be replicated with its gateway communities.



*Young people involved in a planting project on the Patapsco River outside of Baltimore. © USFWS*

#### **CASE STUDY: Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Partnership—Baltimore, Maryland**

A cooperative partnership between the Chesapeake Bay Ecological Services office and the USFWS's Patuxent Research Refuge opened the Masonville Cove Nature Area on the restored Maryland Port Authority site on the Patapsco River. The surrounding community has a high poverty and crime rate, with low high school graduation rates among neighborhood youth. The Living Classroom Foundation is working with the USFWS to provide curriculum development at the site, the BayBrook program is helping to create internships and mentors from the Maryland Community Naturalist Network, and the National Aquarium is assisting in outreach to students and creating restoration opportunities. To learn more about the partnership, see <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/vision/pdfs/MasonvilleCove.pdf>.

- **Work with community to develop crime prevention strategies.** One of the biggest threats to community revitalization is crime; communities will not value assets when they feel unsafe in their neighborhoods. USFWS staff and law enforcement, Saginaw police, and community members should explore opportunities to implement crime prevention strategies in neighborhoods, in public access areas on the refuge, and along access routes to and from the refuge and Green Point Environmental Learning Center.

### RESOURCE: Saginaw Township Crime Free Multi-Housing Program

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is a state-of-the-art crime prevention initiative developed to reduce criminal and drug activity within apartment communities. This program began at the Mesa, Arizona, Police Department in 1992 and has spread to over 2,000 communities across the U.S. and was adopted by the Saginaw Township in 2000. The program has been successful in Saginaw Township by reducing the number of calls for officer assistance and maintaining a tenant-friendly approach that emphasizes partnership with housing managers, landlords, and owners to reduce criminal activity, the perception of crime, and enhance livability of all residents. For more information, see

[http://saginawtownshippolice.com/divisions/investigations/cpu/cfmh/cfmh\\_index.html](http://saginawtownshippolice.com/divisions/investigations/cpu/cfmh/cfmh_index.html).

### RESOURCE: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) includes strategies implemented to directly modify the environment by taking advantage of pre-existing environmental assets or changing the design features and condition of particular targets (e.g., store fronts, parking garages, and abandoned buildings) or areas in an effort to reduce crime. CPTED's goal is to prevent crime by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior. The theory is based on four principles: natural access control, natural surveillance, territoriality, and maintenance. For more information, see <http://www.ncpc.org/training/training-topics/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-cpted-> and <http://www.popcenter.org/tools/pdfs/cpted.pdf>.

- **Explore opportunities for student leadership and public service projects.** Youth engagement projects can make great strides towards neighborhood revitalizations. From street clean-ups with residents to home rehabilitation with organizations like Habitat for Humanity, there are many opportunities to invite area youth to take part in positive changes in communities. The city, community organizations, law enforcement, and the USFWS should discuss opportunities to explore student leadership projects targeted towards revitalization of gateway neighborhoods as well as community connections to public lands.



*Chicagoans learn about birding at the Cook County Forest Preserve. © Jennifer Johnson*

### Case Study: Forest Preserves of Cook County Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership—Cook County, Illinois

This partnership project creates a ladder of nature learning and engagement opportunities for Cook County youth that start with events and service-learning projects in urban neighborhoods and expands to work on the nearby forest preserves, and ultimately, onto wildlife refuges. Events and projects range from bird and habitat-restoration presentations, guided nature walks, field trips, and other outdoor activities. The goal is to instill resource management skills in the children over time so they can be hired as interns by public land managers and partner organizations to conduct outreach and restoration activities. Partners include Audubon Chicago Region, Chicago Cultural Alliance, Fuller Park Community Development, and the Student Conservation Association. For more information about this partnership and others, see <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/news/8UrbanWildlifeRefugePartnerships.html>.

- **Explore opportunities for public art projects.** Community-based arts and neighborhood development have complementary and intertwined missions. By thinking creatively about public arts projects and culture in communities, there can be investment that spurs development. Arts and culture provides a framework for flexible investment and funding that supports and contributes to urban revitalization. The Assessment Team recommends that the city of Saginaw, community groups, and Shiawassee NWR discuss opportunities to integrate the arts into neighboring communities, especially thinking creatively about weaving in natural resource themes to acknowledge ties to the river and refuge.

### RESOURCE: The Reinvestment Fund

The Reinvestment Fund is a Community Development Financial Institution that manages capital for community investments. Their financing assistance provides resources for real estate development, housing, education, food, health, community assets, and energy efficiency. For more information, see <http://www.trfund.com/>.

## CASE STUDY: Youth Engagement Program to Fight Graffiti—South Bend, Indiana

The South Bend Weed & Seed Alliance had great success with their engagement program with selected middle schools, a high school, and local church groups. The engagement program works with volunteers to paint community murals over sites that were repeat victims of graffiti. The youth participants take pledges to stand against graffiti, paint the community murals, and compete to win saving bonds and have their works displayed on billboards. The efforts of the alliance have resulted in a 60% decrease in graffiti and 80 sites remain graffiti free.

## STREAMLINE THE RESTORATION AND REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Capturing data, assessing existing conditions, and creating a plan for restoration and redevelopment are key for those neighborhoods surrounding the refuge. In all planning, the USFWS should be engaged to provide support for decisions and better inform how the refuge can be integrated into the neighborhood landscapes. The refuge is a recreational destination and anchor for surrounding gateway neighborhoods. As a neighborhood and regional amenity, the refuge should be considered in revitalization and redevelopment efforts, particularly with regard to determining how best to highlight and protect the refuge in revitalization and redevelopment efforts.

### Recommendations

- **Explore opportunities to create a neighborhood revitalization plan.** A neighborhood revitalization plan crafts a vision for a defined geographic area that provides a new path to improved quality of life for existing and new stakeholders. Currently the Cathedral District and Covenant Hospital Neighborhoods in Saginaw have neighborhood plans. The neighborhood surrounding the newly acquired Germania property by the USFWS could be another targeted neighborhood for neighborhood planning that connects the community to natural resources.

## RESOURCE: Responsible Approaches to Neighborhood Stabilization

NeighborWorks America and the Annie E. Casey Foundation partnered in an effort to develop a more holistic understanding of the elements involved in community renewal. This report provides an overview of keys to success, lessons learned, and resources available for community revitalization in a series of case studies from across the country. For more information, see <http://www.stablecommunities.org/sites/all/files/library/1164/responsible-approaches-neighborhood-stabilization-case-studies-action.pdf>.

- **Explore opportunities to revitalize vacant properties into urban farms or Farmer’s Markets.** Urban agriculture can provide multiple benefits in connecting communities and empowering civic participation in the beautification of neighborhoods. Beyond food production, opportunities to build green jobs and provide science and environmental education learning can engage youth and adults. Additionally improvements in open spaces can increase property values, contribute to safer streets, and off-set environmental impacts from abandoned urban terrain.

### Case Study: Cultivating the Commons—Oakland, California

In 2009, an inventory of open space identified the potential for agriculture production on land both owned by public agencies and within the city limits of Oakland, California. This effort was part of an ongoing initiative to develop a more resilient, sustainable, and just food system in Oakland. The assessment is being used to inform policy decisions that concern Oakland’s food, health, and environmental quality, as well as by non-profit organizations and city officials as a tool to identify potential sites for urban agriculture programs. For more information, see [http://www.victorygardenfoundation.org/Cultivating\\_the\\_Commons\\_COMPLETE%20oaklandca%20food.pdf](http://www.victorygardenfoundation.org/Cultivating_the_Commons_COMPLETE%20oaklandca%20food.pdf).

### RESOURCE: The MiNeighborhood Program

The MiNeighborhood Program, led by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, works with neighborhood, local, and statewide organizations to identify and address neighborhood needs based on the premise of the Main Street Four-Point Approach. The program connects existing and emerging opportunities to leverage resources in support of neighborhood revitalization. The program provides technical assistance and resources to support:

- 1) organization of neighborhood stakeholders;
- 2) planning of events and marketing to create a positive image of the neighborhood;
- 3) neighborhood design and improvement strategies; and
- 4) reinvestment opportunities that support affordable housing and quality of life.

For more information, see <http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141--293688--,00.html>.

## INCREASE EFFICIENCY OF EXISTING HOUSING AND LODGING

Given the range of efficiency and structural integrity of housing and business infrastructure, housing rehabilitation and energy retrofits should be a priority for all gateway communities. As infrastructure ages, the costs incurred to home and business owners to heat, cool, light, and provide water and sewage can impact affordability. Energy efficiency and sustainable design challenge local officials, planners, developers, and architects to examine the connections between their buildings, the environment, and communities. By promoting energy efficiency, the communities in the Saginaw area can help reduce energy consumption, thereby saving money for owners and renters and, in the process, minimizing the impacts on natural resources. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities has compiled resources, funding opportunities, and technical assistance programs for local governments and others to promote energy efficiency at <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html>.

### Recommendations

- **Connect neighboring communities to resources.** Saginaw County and area partners have put together collaborative efforts to reduce energy consumption at the municipal level, as well as assist residents in making their homes more energy efficient. The Assessment Team recommends that the county, city of Saginaw, and surrounding neighborhoods continue to make residential energy efficiency a priority to reduce energy consumption as well as energy costs for the homeowner and contribute to housing affordability.
- **Look to private, as well as public, funding opportunities.** Access to affordable housing is a major focus for many private entities across the country. Targeted neighborhoods for affordable housing, in partnership with housing and public service organizations, should investigate opportunities with private charitable entities to provide funding for housing projects. (See Case Studies and Resources for additional resources)

### FUNDING RESOURCE: Bank of America Charitable Foundation

Access to affordable, stable housing continues to be a struggle for many families in communities large and small across the country. Yet, stable housing equals better family health, better educational outcomes, and economic progress and financial stability for families. To this end, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation funds programs focused on creating and preserving affordable housing and homeownership opportunities, foreclosure counseling and mitigation, real-estate owned disposition, and programs that help individuals and families create better money habits and become more financially capable. In recognition of the fact that art, culture, and hospitals often serve as economic drivers, provide employment, and contribute to the overall vitality of the community, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation also funds these types of institutions to help enrich the community and advance overall community revitalization.

For more information, see <http://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=Mw1tdCTLm2>.



## RESOURCE: Saginaw County Community Action Committee, Inc.

Saginaw County Community Action Committee provides a Weatherization Assistance Program to help low-income families manage high energy costs by making their homes more energy efficient and comfortable using weatherization measures such as insulating, air sealing, and repairing or replacing appliances that do not work properly with more energy-efficient upgrades. For more information, see <http://www.saginawcac.org/weather.html>.

## RESOURCE: Saginaw County Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Strategy

The development of the Saginaw County Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Strategy is a key part of the County's planning efforts to reduce overall energy consumption and promote the use of renewable energy sources in the county for the next five to ten years. For more information, see <http://www.saginawcounty.com/Docs/Controller/Great%20Lakes%20Bay%20Regional%20Energy%20Strategy/Saginaw%20County%20Energy%20Strategy%20Final.pdf>.

## RESOURCES: Housing, Lodging, and Energy Efficiency

### The Partnership for Sustainable Communities

(<http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html>)

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities has compiled resources, funding opportunities, and technical assistance programs for local governments and others to promote energy efficiency.

### EnergyStar

([http://www.energystar.gov/buildings/facility-owners-and-managers/small-biz?c=small\\_business.sb\\_index](http://www.energystar.gov/buildings/facility-owners-and-managers/small-biz?c=small_business.sb_index))

Hotels and other lodging facilities benefit from energy efficiency. EnergyStar provides resources for small businesses, specifically for the hospitality industry.

### Small Business Administration

(<http://www.sba.gov/content/energy-efficiency-lodging>)

The Small Business Administration provides additional ideas and links to resources for lodging and energy efficiency.

### DSIRE: The Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency

(<http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/index.cfm?re=0&ee=0&spv=0&st=0&srp=1&state=OR>)

The DSIRE database provides state-based listings of resources, policies, incentives, and programs for energy efficiency.



## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 3:

Enhance economic competitiveness by valuing the public lands & natural, cultural, recreational, & environmental assets associated with the gateway community



# ENHANCE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS BY VALUING THE PUBLIC LANDS & NATURAL, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL, & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GATEWAY COMMUNITY

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- Saginaw has seen the boom and bust of traditional “rust belt” communities which have lost thousands of jobs in manufacturing in recent decades.
- Agriculture is the main industry of surrounding communities.
- Frankenmuth has over 3 million visitors annually and sustains itself on the local tourism economy.
- A 2006 study “Banking on Nature” from the USFWS estimates that visitors to Shiawassee NWR (both residents and non-residents) spend over \$1 million in recreation expenditures each year. The local economic effects associated with these recreation visits total 15 jobs, over \$427,000 in employment income, and \$140,800 in total tax revenue.
- A 2006 study a recreational value of each acre of the Saginaw Bay coastal marshes at \$1,870.
- Saginaw has seen recent growth in the health industry and the expansion of a medical campus facility in Saginaw’s downtown.
- The rural and suburban communities of St. Charles and Birch Run provide welcoming street signage. St. Charles has waterfowl themed signs distinguishing their connection as a gateway community to Shiawassee NWR.
- The village of Chesaning is a graduate of the Michigan Main Streets program.

Economic competitiveness is a main tenet of livability. Investments in livability often create strong local economies. This symbiotic relationship is stronger in rural and gateway communities where the recruitment of traditional businesses is not always the best or most appropriate economic development strategy. For many businesses today, locating near major transportation routes is less important than in the past, and new businesses are increasingly

choosing to locate in communities that offer a high quality of life. An increasing number of businesses consider cultural offerings, scenic areas, and recreational opportunities as major draws for attracting and maintaining employees. This section will focus on the rural gateway communities surrounding Shiawassee NWR, providing recommendations and resources for these communities to develop strong local economies that capitalize on their surrounding natural, cultural, and historic assets while also becoming a destination as part of a larger regional identity.

Communities that combine investments in accessible transportation, housing choices, good schools, and community gathering places will be more attractive to residents and thus to relocating or expanding businesses. Potential new businesses that may be attracted to a gateway community range from sustainable tourism entrepreneurs who want to capitalize on the abundant nearby natural and recreational resources to technology-based or creative companies that can locate anywhere that offers a reliable Internet connection and a good quality of life. Gateway communities can also attract residents who seek recreational thrills, a second career with new views following retirement, or a unique sense of place.

Saginaw and the surrounding communities are in a position to prioritize investments in community livability and capitalize on surrounding natural amenities, proximity to transportation connections, and relationships with other towns across the region that can foster sustainable economic growth. Communicating these opportunities can help to attract new businesses, residents, and community partners.

The USFWS is a major partner in spurring economic competitiveness and resiliency in the Saginaw area. Since its mission is to protect fish and wildlife, the agency might not think of their role in this way. However, public land agencies and resource management organizations provide jobs and job training (internships, service learning opportunities, etc.), attract visitors, and serve as stewards of the natural landscape, creating an invaluable link between natural resources and economic development for the surrounding Saginaw area. USFS, MDNR and other resource agencies and organizations should therefore be included in discussions regarding economic development in Saginaw and the broader region.

This section includes a set of priority recommendations to enhance economic competitiveness that include:

- Identifying and capitalizing on regional assets and trends
- Capitalizing on recreational niche markets
- Developing unique sustainable tourism products and destinations
- Incubating arts and culture
- Fostering new and diverse business opportunities
- Improving communication and marketing of regional assets



## IDENTIFY AND CAPITALIZE ON REGIONAL ASSETS AND TRENDS

The many unique recreational, cultural, and heritage amenities of Saginaw and the surrounding region provide a base for developing a sustainable tourism identity and industry. The area is poised to capitalize on the interest in sustainable tourism by incorporating the great diversity of historical sites and stories, outdoor recreation opportunities, and cultural heritage experiences of the region to provide unique, authentic experiences for visitors.

### Recommendations:

- **Inventory regional assets.** Building an extensive inventory of assets across many different areas helps the local leaders better understand the opportunities and needs for building a sustainable tourism effort. Inventories provide a basis for understanding all that is available in the area for residents and visitors and can contribute to developing a sustainable tourism industry. Local leaders, tourism organizations, public land managers, cultural and heritage organizations, local arts groups, and additional stakeholders should assess the quality of area assets related to history, culture, arts, growing industries, human capital, infrastructure, and recreation for enhancement and improvement. Additionally, an assessment effort should identify support services for these assets such as lodging, food, gas, supplies, and additional visitor needs and should assess gaps and opportunities to connect services to assets.



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### CASE STUDY: Cherry Springs State Park, Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) manages Cherry Springs State Park, a park nearly as remote and wild as it was two centuries ago. In 2007, the International Dark-Sky Association named it the second “International Dark Sky Park”. Now the 82-acre park receives thousands of astronomers, from novice to professional, each year and hold dark sky related events year-round. PA DCNR creatively pursued the dark skies of this remote location as a local and regional asset. Due to these exceptionally dark skies, Cherry Spring State Park is one of the best places on the eastern coast for stargazing and the science of astronomy.

(<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/cherrysprings>)

- **Consider outdoor recreation as an economic driver.** Outdoor recreation is big business! Outdoor recreation is the third largest economic driver in the United States (behind financial services and insurance and outpatient health care). More than six



million Americans depend on outdoor recreation for their livelihoods.<sup>1</sup> Residents need to understand how sustainable tourism can be an economic driver for their community while also protecting the assets they enjoy most. To this end, leaders of the city of Saginaw, surrounding communities, surrounding public lands, Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), recreation and environmental groups, and

businesses should work collaboratively to educate the community about sustainable tourism and its benefits, with a particular focus on the outdoor recreation needs and opportunities identified in an inventory and assessment. Outreach to the community can be accomplished through a range of efforts, such as workshops, speaking engagements, community events and celebrations, and engagement with the local media.

- **Look for opportunities to expand industry.** Outdoor recreation can open up new markets within the community, spawn businesses related to equipment and outfitting, and support existing local recreation businesses. Recreation also provides outlets to demonstrate to prospective business owners the excellent quality of life that the area offers for residents. The natural and recreational resources may help attract new businesses looking for a new location and existing businesses that want to relocate, particularly as business owners increasingly consider natural amenities a potential benefit for employees. Community leaders should communicate these benefits to residents to help them understand the connection between outdoor recreation and economic growth, as well as the community's potential for future growth.
- **Capitalize on trends in expanding medical industry.** The Great Lakes Bay Regional CVB is already experimenting with attracting and developing “medical tourism” in the Saginaw area. Saginaw’s hospitals are becoming some of the most sought-after medical centers in Michigan and are expanding with the opening of the Central Michigan University’s medical campus in Saginaw. Medical tourism is a growing international trend where millions of patients are travelling out of the country to get the best medical procedures. Saginaw has all the right tools to become a medical tourism destination in the U.S. for those who are in need of critical care to elective surgeries. When people travel to get medical attention, they also support the local economy. Patients and their families spend money on healthcare, but also may enjoy walking and biking, tours, and lodging in hotels, shopping, and visiting restaurants. Saginaw, the CVB, and healthcare

## RESOURCE: The Outdoor Recreation Economy

In Michigan, outdoor recreation generates:

- \$18.7 billion in consumer spending
- 194,000 direct jobs
- \$5.5 billion in wages and salaries
- \$1.4 billion in state and local tax revenue

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<sup>1</sup> Outdoor Industry Association, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy: Michigan*, 2012.  
[https://outdoorindustry.org/images/ore\\_reports/MI-michigan-outdoorrecreationeconomy-oia.pdf](https://outdoorindustry.org/images/ore_reports/MI-michigan-outdoorrecreationeconomy-oia.pdf)

providers should continue to partner to explore opportunities to provide the best experiences to medical patients.

### **RESOURCE: Sustainable Tourism New Initiative: National Travel and Tourism Strategy**

In 2012, President Obama unveiled the National Travel and Tourism Strategy (NTTS), which seeks to attract 100 million new tourists to the United States by 2021. These visitors are expected to spend \$250 billion, thus generating three million jobs in rural and urban places across America.

The NTTS calls for more public/private partnerships within the tourism community. In service to that, the federal tourism team showcased public lands at the U.S. Travel Association's IPW, America's premier international travel trade show, where a majority of international bookings to the United States are decided. The goal of the NTTS was to raise awareness of the depth and breadth of authentic experiences available in public lands and work more collaboratively across federal agencies. One key outcome of this collaboration was the joint promotion, with 30 gateway communities, of U.S. World Heritage sites.

The National Park Service (NPS) Office of Sustainable Tourism's (OST) strategic plan incorporates the NTTS goals as well as emphasizes increased engagement with gateway communities. By facilitating information exchange between the NPS and tourism communities and leveraging resources, the OST seeks to expand the communications capacity of parks and partners. See <http://www.nps.gov/tourism/nationalstrategictourismplan.html>.

### **CAPITALIZE ON RECREATIONAL NICHE MARKETS**

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is recognized for its global significance as a migratory bird habitat and Audubon's #1 destination in the Midwest. As such, birders from across the world head to Shiawassee NWR to view the array of birds, as individuals or as part of groups such as the Midwest Birders Symposium, which will be held at Shiawassee NWR in 2015. Additionally, hunting is a major niche group on MDNR land and private hunting clubs. St. Charles sees over 20,000 visitors each year from hunters accessing hunting lands. Bicycling, running events, and paddle sports are growing recreational activities across the country, all of which have abundant possibilities in the Saginaw region. User groups such as these have varying needs and preferences from activity to activity. The city, in partnership with federal land managers, chambers, and CVBs, should look for opportunities to cater to popular outdoor user groups as well as tap into new markets.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Market to specific user groups.** The city and public land managers should collaborate to develop niche marketing materials such as "Top Ten" lists of where to see birds and/or other wildlife; where to find guide books; and how to access maps for biking, hiking, or running. Materials should be distributed to local, regional, and state

outdoor recreation organizations and local businesses, as well as posted on relevant Internet sites. The Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy has developed a birding trail and map (<http://www.saginawbaybirding.org/birding-trail.html>) that is a great example of the information that needs to be shared with niche groups. Additional material about river access for paddlesports, bicycle routes, and area services should be developed and distributed.

### CASE STUDY: Oakridge, Oregon

In 2009, Oakridge, Oregon was one of the first communities to benefit from Travel Oregon's Rural Tourism Assessment. Oakridge is a rural community that was transitioning from a resource-extraction-based economy to a more diverse economy that included sustainable tourism. An important element of this transition has been the town's "We Speak" program, which shares local knowledge with staff who routinely interact with visitors. In the "We Speak Oregon" training programs, local residents with expertise in particular areas make presentations to staff from local businesses about activities in the region. Spring trainings have covered birding, wildflowers, mountain biking, road biking, hiking and camping. Winter trainings have included such topics as skiing, snowshoeing and craft beer. In addition, the International Mountain Biking Association's (IMBA) Trail Solutions team developed and led a two-day bicycle tourism workshop for local businesses and federal land managers seeking to increase bicycle-based visitation in Oakridge, Oregon.

For more information, view an online video summarizing the effort at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXRJkpAAJBI> or review an assessment of the Rural Tourism initiative at <http://industry.traveloregon.com/industry-resources/destination-development/rural-tourism-studio/rural-tourism-studio-evaluation-reports/>. For more information about We Speak, visit <http://industry.traveloregon.com/industry-resources/destination-development/we-speak-program/>; for information about IMBA's involvement, visit <https://www.imba.com/trail-solutions/projects/travel-oregon-oakridge-rural-tourism-studio>.



- **Conduct a needs assessment of service providers and user groups.** A needs assessment moves one step beyond the inventory of assets to determine opportunities and needs for outdoor recreation resources and service providers in the area in relation to popular and growing recreational markets. By identifying their needs, targeted efforts can better align with the services provided to user groups. Through communication with local hunt clubs, fishing tournament organizers, college and university outdoor programs, birdwatching clubs, biking and hiking groups, and other outdoor recreation



### CASE STUDY: Sunfish Park, Ramsey, Minnesota

Meeting the needs of residents and visitors of Sunfish Park in Ramsey, Minnesota, the city set up a complimentary canoe and kayak “share” program. The city of Ramsey, in conjunction with a \$12,000 grant from the Anoka County State Health Improvement Program, installed a self-service canoe and kayak kiosk at Sunfish Lake. The kiosk holds two single-person sit-in kayaks and two three-person canoes. Paddles and life vests are also provided. There is no charge for use, but use requires a swipe card authorizing access to the watercraft. The card can be obtained at the Ramsey City Hall along with guidance to ensure all users are aware of the terms of usage. To date, over 500 people have taken advantage of the program and are enjoying paddling on Sunfish Lake for free. (<http://www.cityoframsey.com/sunfish-park-canoes>)

enthusiasts, local officials can learn more about which groups use amenities in Saginaw and each surrounding community, when and how they access these amenities, what services or outfitters they use, what needs they have that are not currently being met, and the degree of interest in new types of recreation such as stand-up paddling or geocaching.

- **Explore “give back” opportunities with user groups.** The city and public land managers should look for opportunities to invite niche outdoor recreation user groups, such as hiking clubs, birders, and cyclists, to give back to the community and protect natural resources through cleanups, trail-building days, and other volunteer events. The community can engage outdoor recreation organizations to sponsor such events, as well as to organize volunteers and/or promote the events sponsored by other organizations.

### CASE STUDY: Allegheny River Cleanup

Allegheny Outfitters, a family-run canoe and kayak livery and outdoor gear store located along the National Wild & Scenic Allegheny River in Warren County, is a long-time participant of the International Coastal Cleanup. In 2009, owner Piper Van Ord founded a five-day river cleanup to remove garbage from 31 miles of the river and to highlight the Allegheny as an important recreational, ecological, and economic resource in the Pennsylvania Wilds region. The cleanup has attracted hundreds of volunteers and sponsors, who over the last four years have pulled from the river more than 34,000 pounds of metal, 1,500 tires, and hundreds of pounds of trash. Allegheny Outfitters provides free boats to encourage participation. To learn more, visit [www.alleghenyoutfitters.com](http://www.alleghenyoutfitters.com) and <http://www.keeppabeautiful.org/Portals/0/PDFs/beautiful/beautifulspring2013.pdf>.

## DEVELOP UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND DESTINATIONS

The Saginaw region has a significant role in the history of the U.S. from Native American heritage to the industrialization of the country, but there has been little attention on how to portray the city to visitors and thus, the area lacks a cohesive approach to maintaining, marketing, and providing access to its most valued amenities. The Assessment Team recommends a strategy that focuses first on improving the product and then marketing it (“product first, then promotion”) to create successful sustainable tourism in the region. Once product development is in place, Saginaw and surrounding communities can implement marketing and outreach strategies to effectively promote the community within and beyond the region.

One benefit of product development of sustainable tourism and cultural heritage assets is that it provides visitors with multiple experiences, allowing individuals and groups to pursue multiple interests and shape an agenda featuring a wealth of things to do—paddling on Saginaw River one day, learning about Saginaw as a thriving timber and logging town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the next, shopping for locally made treasures downtown, and so forth. In addition, each day can be capped off with dinner at a downtown restaurant and an overnight stay at a local lodging provider. Guiding principles for developing sustainable tourism and cultural heritage products and destinations follow.

### Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is an ever-changing industry and spans many experiences. Today's emphasis on sustainable tourism provides opportunities for communities to expand their tourism base by focusing on exceptional experiences in unique and authentic places while protecting the qualities that make the area special and contribute to a high quality of life for residents. Sustainable tourism encompasses many categories, including cultural heritage, nature based, community based, outdoor recreation, agritourism, and “voluntourism,” or vacation-based philanthropy. In contrast to mass-market tourism, such as cruise ships and theme parks, sustainable tourism stresses quality over quantity, favors unique experiences based on a location's resources (such as distinctive destinations, unspoiled landscapes, and/or historic sites), and relies on locally owned businesses.

Preserving access to outdoor recreation protects and supports local businesses and the economy. Outdoor recreation also provides health benefits. According to the Outdoor Foundation's 2014 *Outdoor Participation Report*, the most popular outdoor activities in the United States are running, biking, fishing, camping, and hiking.<sup>2</sup> The fastest-growing outdoor activities by participation are nontraditional (off-road) triathlons, adventure races, telemarking, freestyle skiing, and traditional triathlons. New markets also are emerging for stand-up paddling, kayaking, and rafting. Saginaw and the surrounding public lands offer access to many

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<sup>2</sup> Outdoor Foundation, *Outdoor Participation Report*, (Boulder, CO: Outdoor Foundation, 2014). <http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2014.pdf>.



of these activities, plus many others, positioning the city as a year-round playground for outdoor recreation.

Ecotourism development expert Ed McMahon, the founder of Scenic America and past vice president of The Conservation Fund, emphasizes the importance of providing authentic experiences. In *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*, authors Jim Howe, Ed McMahon, and Luther Propst provide a chapter for each step that successful gateway communities take to achieve this end:

- Develop a widely shared vision
- Create an inventory of local resources
- Build on local assets
- Use education, voluntary initiatives and incentives, as well as regulations
- Meet the needs of both landowners and communities
- Partner with public land managers
- Recognize the role of nongovernmental organizations
- Provide opportunities for leaders to step forward
- Pay attention to aesthetics.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the Rural Ecotourism Assessment Project by Gail Y.B. Lash and Alison Austin lists as the three components of a community-based tourism strategy:

- Understand and meet the needs of the community
- Realistically deliver a long-term quality tourism product
- Make specific efforts to connect these products to international and local markets.<sup>4</sup>

Sustainable tourism is particularly attractive for communities interested in maintaining or enhancing their unique local character and sense of place. In addition to economic development and job creation, sustainable tourism increases the area's attractiveness to outside industries and people seeking to relocate to locales rich in natural amenities, which increases civic pride. In the end, residents have more shops, activities, and entertainment offerings than the local market alone might support.

### Cultural Heritage Tourism

The recent economic recession has had a significant impact on the travel industry. However, studies suggest that cultural heritage travel has continued to be strong even at the height of the recession. The 2013 Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report indicates that 76 percent of U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. This translates to 129.6 million adults each year. According to the study, 87 percent of cultural heritage

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<sup>3</sup> Jim Howe, Edward T. McMahon, and Luther Propst, *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Gail Y. B. Lash and Alison D. Austin. *Rural Ecotourism Assessment Program (REAP): A Guide to Community Assessment of Ecotourism as a Tool for Sustainable Development* (Burlington, VT: EplerWood International, 2003): 8.

## RESOURCE: Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers Report—Bicycling and Walking Good for Business

A US Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service study indicates that rural counties that attract “creative class” businesses enjoy job-growth rates that are higher than metropolitan counties. Two qualities sought by creative-class workers are active street scenes and outdoor recreation opportunities. Bicycling and walking infrastructure and facilities contribute to these outcomes. In the words of Norman Whitaker, executive director of South Carolina’s Central Midlands Council of Governments, “The creative class is attracted to bicycle/pedestrian travel as modes of transportation and recreation.”

Investments in bicycling and walking facilities can lead to more income and jobs from increased tourism and resident choices. But bicycle/pedestrian choices go beyond tourism. Places like Billings, Montana, have realized that some visitors become residents and business owners. At a 2011 U.S. Congressional briefing, Billings Chamber of Commerce CEO John Brewer opined, “In Billings—and I think throughout the country—there has been a paradigm shift. Trails are no longer viewed as community amenities; they’re viewed as essential infrastructure for business recruitment. Talented people move to Billings in large part because of our trail system that creates the quality of life they are expecting. A healthy trail system is vital to a healthy community.” Brewer points out that *Fortune* magazine recently named Billings as “the number one small city in attracting business.” Brewer concluded, “Federally funded investment in our non-motorized transportation sparks private investment in trails and trail projects, which lures companies, increases residential quality of life, and retains a qualified workforce. Trails are vital to the business and the economy and jobs in Billings.” See *Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2012,* <http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/ourWork/reports/BeyondUrbanCentersReport.pdf>.

travelers say they want travel experiences that have a combination of a wide variety of activities, such as culture, shopping, nature, exercise, and dining. Additionally, 72 percent seek travel experiences where the destination, its buildings, and its surroundings have retained their character. And 66 percent want travel to be educational; these tourists make an effort to explore and learn about local arts, culture, environment, and history. Cultural heritage travelers spend more per trip than other leisure travelers (an average of \$1,319 per trip compared to \$1,198), making this a highly desirable segment of the tourism industry.<sup>5</sup>

### Principles of Successful and Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism

Through its work with communities across the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Heritage Tourism Program has developed five principles to help guide successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism development:

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<sup>5</sup> *The 2013 Cultural and Heritage Traveler Report* (Mandala Research, 2013). <http://mandalaresearch.com/>.

1. **Collaborate.** By its very nature, cultural heritage tourism requires effective partnerships. Much more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone.
2. **Find the fit between the community and tourism.** Cultural heritage tourism should make a community a better place to live as well as a better place to visit. Respect carrying capacity so everyone benefits.
3. **Make sites and programs come alive.** Look for ways to make visitor experiences exciting, engaging, and interactive.
4. **Focus on quality and authenticity.** Today's cultural heritage traveler is sophisticated and expects a high level of quality and an authentic experience.
5. **Preserve and protect resources.** Many of your community's cultural, historic, and natural resources are irreplaceable. Take good care of them; if they are lost you can never get them back.

For more information, visit <http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/economics-of-revitalization/heritage-tourism/#.Us7IF8RDseg>.

### Recommendations:

- **Develop unique experiences, especially highlighting the rivers.** The rivers in the Saginaw area are the backbone of the ecosystems, history, and heritage of what makes the area so unique. The city, tourism organizations, schools, USFWS, and other groups should work together to develop experiences on and about the river as a destination. Examples include walleye celebrations that raise awareness of the watershed and need for protection; that capitalize on efforts such as the Frankenmuth fish passage that will support walleye habitat. Other opportunities include the development of paddling outings with the USFWS staff providing fish and wildlife habitat interpretation and better mapping of river access points and river trails.
- **Expand opportunities related to key travel trends that benefit from a regional approach.** Examples include:
  - Staycations: The scenic areas surrounding the Shiawassee NWR are destinations close to populated areas. It is possible that residents in the region have not spent much time at the refuge or the smaller surrounding communities. Matt Wixon, author of *The Great American Staycation*, defines a staycation as "a vacation in which the vacationer stays at home or near home while creating the environment of a traditional vacation."<sup>6</sup> The trend of "staycations" and "one-tank [of gas] destinations" provides Saginaw with an opportunity to capitalize on a

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<sup>6</sup> Matt Wixon. *The Great American Staycation: How to Make a Vacation at Home Fun for the Whole Family (and Your Wallet)*. Adams Media, 2009.

## CASE STUDY: Lansing, Michigan—Be a Tourist in Your Own Town

One of the longest running “staycation” programs in the United States, Lansing’s “Be a Tourist in Your Own Town” takes place on a single summer day, attracting 12,000–15,000 people annually. A one-dollar passport grants free admission to more than 60 local attractions and businesses. People can also take advantage of discounted bus routes to most of the attractions.

<http://www.lansing.org/events/batyot/> and [www.livability.com/best-places-blog/tourist-in-your-own-town-programs-create-city-ambassadors-build-community-pride/](http://www.livability.com/best-places-blog/tourist-in-your-own-town-programs-create-city-ambassadors-build-community-pride/).

regional market. Campaigns often use themes such as “Be a Tourist in Your Own Town” and offer special events, tours, or activities for residents in the community, region, or state.

- Baby Boomer Travel: Retirement communities in surrounding towns may be looking for educational, social, recreational, and heritage experiences designed for an older population. With 78 million baby boomers (defined as people born between 1946 and 1964) entering retirement in the coming years, this population segment is increasingly important to the travel industry. Studies show that today’s retirees seek to travel and explore new destinations and that most take at least two trips each year. As Saginaw and surrounding communities expand their sustainable tourism strategies, leaders should make sure to address the needs of this demographic by providing accessibility to downtown shops, restaurants, and amenities. Forging partnerships with historical and cultural heritage destinations in nearby communities, on surrounding public lands, and within Saginaw itself will help attract visitors of all ages.
- Volunteer vacations: More travelers are giving back to destinations they visit by donating time, money, talent, and repeat business to protect and positively impact the culture and environment. Websites such as [www.voluntourism.org](http://www.voluntourism.org) help travelers find volunteer opportunities that they can combine with a unique vacation experience. The diverse ecology and abundant natural resources around the Shiawassee NWR and the rivers provide ample opportunities to build volunteer vacation programs with public land managers, conservation organizations, and outdoor recreation groups to address some of their resource management needs, such as stream and lake cleanups, trail maintenance and construction, or invasive species removal. Partnerships with the USFWS and MDNR and the local parks may help identify potential projects that would be well suited for volunteerism.



## Northern Forest Canoe River Trail— Volunteer Vacation

The mission of the nonprofit Northern Forest Canoe River Trail (NFCT), created in 2000, is to connect people to the natural environment, human heritage, and contemporary communities along the 740-mile inland paddling trail, which traces historic travel routes across New York, Vermont, Québec, New Hampshire, and Maine. To meet the mission of stewardship and offer an opportunity to visitors who want to combine a little work with their vacation, NFCT created Waterway Work Trips. NFCT selects sites along the route that are in need of work and designs three-day trips that include trail maintenance along with paddling gear. Interns prep the site and are on hand to supervise participants' work. For more information, see [www.northernforestcanoetrail.org](http://www.northernforestcanoetrail.org).

## INCUBATE ARTS AND CULTURE

The Saginaw region has not only a diverse landscape, but also a rich history stemming from its Native American heritage and its background in the logging industry. A focus on the city's heritage and natural resources can create outlets for artisans to tap inspiration from the land to create paintings, music, crafts, and other media to express connection to the area. Arts and culture can breathe new life into communities and spur new business opportunities for resident artisans and represent the uniqueness of Saginaw region.

### Recommendations:

- **Identify local crafts and talents for cultural heritage tourism and city history.** Local residents who make a product as a hobby may be interested in an outlet to share—and sell—their work. Locally made products could be sold at area restaurants, shops, USFWS visitor centers, the city hall, library, or other public or private locations. The city also could support cottage industry by providing or coordinating free workspace at community centers or schools, hosting events that allow for local artisans and crafters to display and sell their work, or holding workshops on how to create and market their products.



- **Develop partnerships with the arts community.** The city, chamber of commerce, and the USFWS should work together to identify creative opportunities that go beyond large annual event productions to include a calendar of more informal arts and music events across the city and in recreation areas. It's important to showcase local music, dance, foods, culture, and other arts-related activities to create vibrancy and pride throughout communities. Events could include informal "jam sessions" set on porches, small parks, or restaurants. Youth jam sessions or concerts should be encouraged to engage the youngest residents of Saginaw.

### CASE STUDY: Floyd Country Store, Floyd, Virginia

In Floyd, Virginia, a weekly jamboree is held every Friday night at the Floyd Country Store. These events are worthy tributes to old-time and bluegrass music and to mountain dance. The Friday evening jam sessions begin with an hour of gospel music performed by a group of local old-timers. Then various bands take turns playing onstage. On summer nights, musicians often jam in the parking lot and the audience flows over into the street. Snacks, soft drinks, and ice cream are available at the store; local eateries also benefit from the customers lured out for a night of fun.



- **Capitalize on existing revitalization efforts.** Like many communities across the country, the city of Saginaw is already participating in a long-term effort to revitalize the downtown and restore blighted areas. Ideas from other areas can generate new energy in community efforts. For example, The Arts in Rural Storefronts, a public program of The Arts Center in Corvallis, Oregon, is an example of an organization that builds community engagement by turning vacant storefronts into vibrant sites where residents and visitors can experience contemporary art 24/7. The city and the Chamber of Commerce should look for opportunities to build from this effort by identifying vacant store fronts that can be used as art displays or artisan cooperatives. Artists and artisans should be encouraged to develop work that is aligned with the community's history and culture, focusing on such themes as the beauty of the rivers, its Native American heritage, or its logging and agricultural past.
- **Capture "drive-through" traffic in Saginaw and surrounding towns.** Art and cultural events are great ways to attract people who are visiting the refuge or other public lands to downtowns. Art walks, "First Friday" events (consistent community events the first Friday or similar monthly date), live music, and other family-fun events can be held at minimal costs to the city or a private sponsor. The city should partner with private entities and public land managers to advertise and market new events that

would attract visitors to the community and enhance the experience of visitors to recreational facilities on public lands.

### **CASE STUDY: City of New Haven, Connecticut—An Our Town Grant Success Story**

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town Grant

The NEA awards grants from \$25,000 to \$200,000 to organizations for the implementation of creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core. For more information about Our Town and other grants from the NEA, see <http://arts.gov/grants>.

City of New Haven, Connecticut, Project Storefronts

In 2010, the city of New Haven, Connecticut, launched an innovative pilot program called Project Storefronts. In cooperation with business counselors and property owners, the program enables individual artists, not-for-profits, or teams of creative workers to set up 90-day businesses in vacant storefronts in New Haven's Ninth Square Historic District.

In 2011, the city was awarded a \$100,000 Our Town grant from the NEA to help expand the award-winning program to provide artists and arts organizations with financial and business counseling to help launch or expand creative businesses in the retail-deprived Ninth Square. Meanwhile, artist programming and events raise the profile of these creative businesses, attract new visitors to the Ninth Square Historic District, increase foot traffic in the neighborhood, attract new residents, and help to grow the local economy.



## FOSTER NEW AND DIVERSE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

As Saginaw and surrounding communities look to build a resilient and diverse local economy, they will need attract and nurture new and diverse businesses. Entrepreneurial and new local business opportunities should be targeted not only to a wide range of visitors, but to residents as well. The city should think creatively about strategies that can incubate the entrepreneurial spirit, capitalize on the existing workforce, and build niche industries that are compatible with Saginaw's unique qualities and characteristics. Saginaw and the state of Michigan already have many resources available to those looking to start their own businesses; those resources can be found in the Case Studies & Resources Section. The following are recommendations to specifically target new, diverse, and creative business and job opportunities and training that could thrive in the Saginaw region.

### Recommendations:

- **Support entrepreneurs.** Entrepreneurial spirit is an important component of thriving rural communities. Local businesses such as Wally's Old-fashioned Sandwich Shop, visited by the Assessment Team, in downtown Saginaw have a vested interest in seeing the community thrive. The city of Saginaw, in partnership with Saginaw County, East Michigan COG, and area chambers of commerce should look for opportunities to provide technical assistance, financing support, or even networking opportunities to cultivate additional small businesses and entrepreneurs. (See Case Studies & Resources for a list of potential resources to connect to existing and potential small business owners.)

### CASE STUDY: Miner County, South Dakota—Diversifying Economies

Miner County, South Dakota, created a clear vision that has helped direct the community's approach to development. Instead of spending limited resources trying to attract a major corporation to locate a plant or a store in Miner County or to attract new residents, citizens concentrated on building upon their town's existing assets and focused on creating more and better jobs for the people still there.

Miner County began by creating a Rural Resource Center at the local high school. Funding was obtained from the Annenburg Rural Challenge, which focuses on connecting schools and their communities. Students conducted a community cash-flow study that found that half of the county's residents shopped outside Miner County and that if all residents spent just 10 percent more of their disposable income within the county, it would add more than \$7 million to the local economy. In the year after the survey, Miner County's taxable sales increased by more than 40 percent.

The success of the study prompted Randy Parry, a former business and economics teacher and executive director of Miner County Community Revitalization, to form a committee to bring residents together to renew the county's economy. Using grant money and volunteer labor, participants pulled tree stumps from the downtown of one town and restored houses in another. They also conducted seminars for farmers on emerging markets for deer, elk, and organic beef and converted a vacant slaughterhouse into a processing location for local organic beef. The center and the town of Howard bought wind turbines from a local machine shop, which has since become Energy Maintenance Services of Gary, South Dakota, lowering local electricity rates.

- Market business opportunities to visitors.** Visitors to Saginaw, the surrounding communities, and Shiawassee NWR are prospective business owners and residents. Thus, the city should promote to all visitors the assets of the community and the opportunities of relocating. The city should also be prepared to facilitate their move. In its recent *Outdoor Recreation Economy* report, the Outdoor Industry Association acknowledged this impact and noted that rural communities are increasingly recognizing that “outdoor recreation and open spaces are key ingredients of healthy communities, contribute to a high quality of life and, most importantly, attract and sustain businesses and families.”<sup>7</sup> The city of Saginaw and surrounding communities should develop a new business guide to welcome and facilitate relocation and highlight the assets of the region. (See the information on Traverse City, Michigan, see below.)

### CASE STUDY: Traverse City, Michigan

Traverse City, Michigan discovered the power of tourists. Not only did visitors spend money and boost the local economy, but a study revealed that most leads for new businesses and relocation of talent were the result of people who visited the region and decided that that they wanted to live there. The city launched an outreach and marketing campaign to capitalize on that trend and make it easier for visitors to fulfill the dream of living in Traverse City. For more information, see <http://tcchamber.org/economic-development/relocating-your-business/>.



- Train hospitality and service employees.** Frontline employees in the hospitality and service sectors are the first to meet and greet visitors to the area. It is important that they are well versed and knowledgeable of the assets and amenities of the region for a variety of experiences. Their assistance will help set the tone for visitors’ experiences in the area, help support local businesses with recommendations and directions, and generate return visitation. The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw and surrounding communities, in partnership with the USFWS, MDNR, tourism and visitor

<sup>7</sup> Outdoor Industry Association. *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*, 2012, p 13. [http://outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA\\_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf](http://outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf).



groups, and chambers of commerce work together to develop hospitality training events that help grow existing businesses, cultivate new businesses, and strengthen informed customer service. Over time, the groups may want to hold more targeted business development, akin to the Cashing in on Geocaching forum held in Emporium, Pennsylvania, or the Tourism Hospitality and Small Business Training convened in Calhoun Falls, SC.

## TOURISM HOSPITALITY & SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING

Friday, March 28, 2014  
 (Tourism) 10am-1:30pm & (Small Business) 12:30pm-4pm  
 Lunch is 12:30pm - 1:30pm and FREE for everyone.

Walk away with the tools you need to grow your business by being a part of your community's destination brand. The goal is to provide the highest quality southern hospitality to the visitor leading to memorable experiences and return business!

**Speaker:**  
**Dr. Simon Hudson**  
 Director, Center of Economic Excellence in Tourism and Economic Development  
 University of South Carolina



TOWN OF CALHOUN FALLS  
 401 NORTH WASHINGTON ST.  
 CALHOUN FALLS, SC 29628  
 RSVP TO TUCKHANNA@WCTEL.NET  
 OR CALL (864)-391-1149



## Pennsylvania Wilds "Cashing-In on Geocaching" Conference



**Friday**  
**November 5, 2010**  
 Emporium Country Club  
 Route 120  
 Emporium, PA  
 Registration begins at 9:30 am  
**Cost \$ 20.00**  
 (checks payable to Lumber Heritage Region)  
 Includes continental breakfast & lunch  
 RSVP on or before  
 October 27th to Val Shelley at  
 (814) 486-0213  
 vshelley@lumberheritage.org

Seating limited to first 100 paid RSVP's

The Pennsylvania Wilds "Cashing-In on Geocaching" Conference is for tourism business owners, trail groups, community leaders and individuals interested in learning more about this high tech scavenger hunt. Explore the connection between tourism, technology and nature.

**Conference begins at 10:00 am and will include the following topics:**

- Impact geocaching is having in our region
- Demonstration of geocaching
- Panel discussion about the economic benefits of geocaching
- Information about geocaching on public lands
- Rules governing the activity
- Real life insights from groups and businesses that have started their own trails
- GeoWoodstock 2011—Warren, PA

**Geocaching:**  
 "The use of billion dollar satellite technology to find junk in the woods"





- **Explore economic cluster models.** Saginaw and surrounding communities should seek to connect business and industry opportunities to tourism, thereby creating a stronger sustainable tourism “cluster”. In Northern Michigan, two brothers fell in love with the M-22 highway and the associated bays, beaches, bonfires, vineyards, and cottages. In 2003, the brothers began producing t-shirts and stickers with just the M-22 road signs and since then they expanded their brand and sparked passion in others with an apparel product line and company store in downtown Traverse City. See [www.m22.com](http://www.m22.com) for their products. In the Pennsylvania Wilds, residents and visitors take to the slopes on locally manufactured Homewood snowboards. Saginaw and surrounding communities could develop a sustainable tourism cluster from its logging heritage or connections to the natural landscape, enabling small businesses to think creatively about products that are inspired by the area.

This economic cluster approach would enable Saginaw and surrounding communities to capture greater local economic impact and create a more diversified economy by providing products through more economic sectors. As a result, the local economy could capture not just revenue from the spending of visitors to the natural assets, such as the refuge and rivers, but also by providing lodging, meals, and products that are manufactured locally sold at the retail and wholesale levels. Services would also be an integral part of the economy, in the form of leading tours, renting equipment, and outfitting tourists.



### **CASE STUDY: Cherry Republic, Glen Arbor, Michigan**

Cherry Republic started over 25 years ago as a T-shirt sold out of the trunk of a car. Since then, the company has grown to sell over 175 different cherry products. Cherry Republic now has four stores, a large catalog and Internet business, and they sell their products to 450 other stores in the Midwest. Located in Glen Arbor, the company's main campus is home to the Grand Café, featuring an everything cherry bakery, ice creamery, and sandwich counter; the Stomphouse Winery, which offers cherry wine and soda pop tasting for all ages; and finally, the Great Hall, a sampling and gifting cathedral to everything cherry. During the holidays, the company employs 265 people.

## RESOURCE: USDA's Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)

The purpose of RMAP is to support the development and ongoing success of rural microentrepreneurs and microenterprises. Direct loans and grants are made to selected Microenterprise Development Organizations. RMAP funding may be used to provide fixed interest rate microloans for working capital, purchase of office infrastructure or real estate, debt refinancing and business acquisitions. Technical assistance-only grants are also available to provide education, guidance, or instruction to one or more rural microentrepreneurs. For more information, see [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP\\_rmap.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_rmap.html).

- **Develop opportunities for the local workforce.** Another major element for attracting new businesses is ensuring that the local workforce is able to meet the needs of potential new businesses, especially businesses that are focused on new technologies. Saginaw's manufacturing history has resulted in a workforce of skilled laborers who have experience with manufacturing equipment, large machines and vehicles, and working with industrial materials. Saginaw should look for opportunities to "repurpose" these skills for other expanding markets, such as technology manufacturing, furniture and other locally made products using local materials, watershed restoration, recreational outfitting, and boat and auto repair.

## RESOURCE: Delta College, University Center, MI

Career retraining. Retooling. Starting over. Whatever you call it, many adults are going back to school to get the skills and knowledge they need for a new or improved career. Delta is geared to students wanting to upgrade skills for advancement, get a degree to match experience, or assist in switching careers altogether. At Delta, 21 percent of Delta students are 30 or older, providing a learning environment that is geared toward developing skills to use in the workforce. As a resource, the Saginaw area should capitalize on the services Delta Community College offers to align with the opportunities and needs in the communities for workforce education.

(<http://www.delta.edu/audiencepaths/careerretraining.aspx>)

- **Capitalize on place-based manufacturing.** Building off of recommendations for developing the local workforce, Saginaw should also think creatively about how to draw on its logging and manufacturing past for economic opportunity. While the community is rightly focused on the future, the area should analyze the capacity for economic opportunities based on its manufacturing heritage and the potential for new creative design and manufacturing, perhaps at a smaller or more specialized scale. Some examples from other communities include:
  - **Reinvention of automotive manufacturing sector by cultivating local expertise:** Manufacturing industries like automotive, textile, and lumber cultivate knowledgeable workers with skills that can be transferred into very diverse and interesting new ways. Opportunity Threads, a new textile company in Burke County, North Carolina, may serve as example of reinvention using the

existing skilled labor force. This cooperative, focused on organic fibers, upcycled materials, and sustainable production methods, has drawn on the textile heritage of the region, as well as the idle textile infrastructure and experienced machine operators. The company's production partners range from small entrepreneurs to growing mid-size firms to large fashion apparel and accessory companies that want to move production back to the United States. Opportunity Threads has formed a partnership with Catawba Valley Community College's Manufacturing Solutions Center and Catawba County's economic development organization, Burke Development, Inc. to create the Carolina Textile District. See <http://wealthworks.org/sites/default/files/storypdfs/CarolinaTC10-19-13.pdf>.

- **Adaptive reuse of factory and plant buildings:** Factory and manufacturing plant buildings provide opportunities for creative new uses, honoring the manufacturing past but looking to future needs for housing, lodging, commercial, institutional, or civic uses. Examples abound of creative reuse of plants, factories, and dealerships. In Flint, Michigan, investment in the redevelopment of brownfields from the automotive industry led to new forays into medical technology, pharmaceuticals, and the creation of an automotive technical college campus. Flint's diversification into new economic sectors also includes the launch of Swedish Biogas International's new renewable-energy biogas plant at the city's municipal wastewater plant. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden attended the groundbreaking for the Flint biogas facility, which will use human waste and food waste to create biogas to fuel the metropolitan bus system and other large vehicles. A partnership with Kettering University and a state-sponsored Center for Energy Excellence expanded the economic development impact of this pilot project. The biogas company announced plans to invest another \$3 million at its Flint site. See more examples in EPA's *Roadmap for Auto Community Revitalization*, <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/pdfs/draft-roadmap-toolkit.pdf>.

## IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING OF REGIONAL ASSETS

Branding and marketing are key strategies for successfully attracting new and diverse residents, businesses, and visitors. To be stronger as a destination and unite the region, the communities surrounding the refuge should work together to develop a coordinated effort to market regional assets, build awareness of all the unique features of the area among residents and visitors, and develop an identity using branding tools and communication around themes such as culture, heritage, and recreation.

### Recommendations:

- **Develop a coordinated regional identity.** Saginaw, in partnership with the USFWS and MDNR, should collaborate with the surrounding communities to develop a

coordinated regional partnership and identity. A regional approach to sustainable tourism can showcase the best of each town and provide complementary opportunities for recreation and cultural heritage tourism activities that extend visitor stays. In the short term, regional itineraries, walking and driving tours, and visitor maps should be developed to begin connecting and promoting the region as a single destination.

- **Improve communication between communities of the region.** During the assessment, community stakeholders noted a lack of understanding of the visitor resources available at Shiawassee NWR and the Shiawassee Flats State Game Area. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS and MDNR work with surrounding communities to develop a communications plan to inform stakeholders of the surrounding natural resources. A plan should focus on how to build a coordinated effort to bring widespread awareness of recreational amenities in the area; how to access public areas; how to plan experiences, trips, and outings to these destinations; and how to share current, up-to-date events and programs.
  
- **Consider additional web-based resources.** Web and mobile trip-planning resources are popular among travelers. The visitors' bureau and other tourism organizations, in collaboration with economic development leadership, should look for opportunities to create accurate, creative, and attractive visitor resources to better inform visitors of what the Saginaw region has to offer and to help them plan their stay and expand information to include all communities surrounding public lands and regional amenities. Web-based resources could include:
  - Theme-based guides, focused specifically on hiking, local restaurants and food, timber heritage, etc. Visitors generally prefer theme-based guides to more general guides.
  - Mini-guides that offer quick trips and provide essential information on particular destinations. Mini-guides have fewer pages and are smaller for easy travel. These can be created in sets available for download on the web.

### **CASE STUDY: The Pennsylvania Wilds—Building the Business Case for Outdoor Recreation**

The PA Wilds, a 12-county area in north-central Pennsylvania, has found that outdoor recreation can be part of bringing back the area's manufacturing and supporting long-time businesses. Following an almost decade-long deliberate initiative to build off the existing assets of the region, the Pennsylvania Wilds is now known for its outdoor recreation. A spin-off of those efforts has attracted residents to return to the area and start up new businesses, including wilderness outfitting and tours, letterpress printing, and a new local snowboard manufacturer using the PA Wilds brand. In addition, other local businesses bring visitors and prospective employees to visit the area's attractions, which include paddling on the Clarion River, viewing wildlife, and learning about elk at the Elk Country Visitor Center, which opened in 2010. See <http://www.pawildsresources.org/>.

- E-Guides used as exclusive online information hubs that provide updates via email news alerts.
- Top-ten lists and “best of” roundups that provide shortcuts to the ultimate travel experiences.
- **Create “ask a local” features.** Engaging residents in promoting Saginaw and the surrounding region offers an opportunity to create advocates for the community and the local tourism industry. Residents can be invited to share what they love about their town, the refuge, or what makes their home special to them. Their stories can be shared through written testimonies or video. As new stories are created, they can be promoted through social media and other venues with links directing readers to trip-planning information. As an example, the Lake Champlain’s National Scenic Byway website has a creative “Ask a Local” section that includes topics on hiking, biking, farms, wineries, winter sports, culture, architecture, and museums. Each “local favorite” feature discusses places to experience the activity and offers recommendations on how to have the best experience when visiting. (See the Lake Champlain Byway site at [http://www.lakechamplainbyway.com/.](http://www.lakechamplainbyway.com/))
- **Take advantage of resources available from Pure Michigan.** Michigan communities have the unique opportunity to access sophisticated resources and assistance provided by Pure Michigan, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) that is the state’s marketing arm and lead advocate for business development, talent and jobs, tourism, arts and cultural grants, and overall economic growth. Saginaw and its surrounding communities, local economic development partners, and business organizations should look to match economic development priorities with potential grant and assistance programs provided by Pure Michigan. Additionally, each community should make sure they are represented in Pure Michigan campaigns and their destinations are found on their maps. Several of its community resources include:
  - Community Development Guidance: The MEDC has community development incentives that focus on creating vibrant, sustainable, and unique places by providing economic development services and programs that attract and retain talent for Michigan communities. For more information, see [http://www.michiganbusiness.org/cm/Files/Community\\_Development/2014-Community-Incentive-Guidance.pdf](http://www.michiganbusiness.org/cm/Files/Community_Development/2014-Community-Incentive-Guidance.pdf)



## CASE STUDY: Killington, Vermont—Marketing & Branding

Killington, Vermont, (population 811) has an asset-based economic development strategy that goes beyond building their well-known identity as a ski resort town. Recognizing its wealth in natural amenities and recreational opportunities, the town set out to bolster its tourism-based economy. In 2008, Killington established an Office of Economic Development and Tourism (EDT), funded by a one-percent tax on food, beverages, retail, and lodging. The goal of the EDT was to “sustain and enhance” tourism activities through events and marketing. In 2011, the town pursued an aggressive branding and marketing strategy to promote their year-round “big-mountain fee” and a positive reputation for the town as a tourist destination.

The town formed new marketing partnerships with media outlets throughout New England and nationwide to widely promote events. These partnerships have helped the town to leverage marketing investments and expand its marketing reach to new audiences. Killington also began to invest more in online marketing, including websites and social media, because research shows that over 75 percent of travelers book at least one component of their travel online. In addition, online marketing allows ads to be tailored to the specific interests of a consumer, whether those are skiing, hiking, rafting, or something else entirely, which helps efforts to build a brand as a four-season destination. Finally, impressions from online marketing are both much easier to track, so the EDT is able to see whether its marketing campaigns are having the desired effect more quickly and can redirect funds to the online marketing strategies that are proving the most effective. For more information, see <http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Asset-Based-Economic-Development-Part-2.pdf>.

- Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) Grants: MCACA coordinates grants to arts and culture organizations, cities and municipalities, and other nonprofit organizations to encourage, develop, and facilitate an enriched environment of artistic, creative, and cultural activity in Michigan. Their grants range from supporting the operation of organizations to providing funding for underserved counties in Michigan to deliver quality arts and cultural programs. For grant opportunities, see <http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#mcaca-grants>.
- Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan: The Michigan Travel Commission adopted a strategic plan to lay the foundation for continued growth of tourism in Michigan and contribute to the overall economic development of the state. For more information, see <http://www.michigan.org/industry/michigan-tourism-strategic-plan/>.

## RESOURCE: USDA’s Stronger Economies Together (SET)

SET represents an exciting initiative launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the four Regional Rural Development Centers and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of SET is to strengthen the capacity of communities and counties in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. For more information, see <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/CEDP-Regionalism-SET.html>.

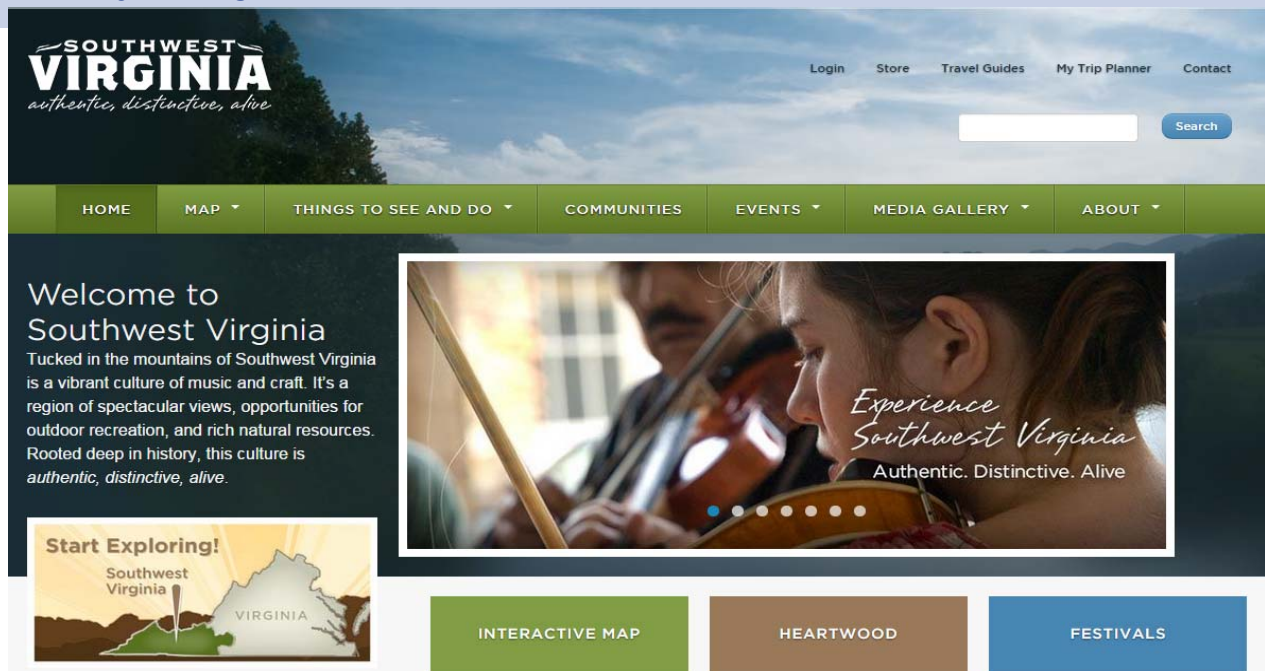
## CASE STUDY: Southwest Virginia—A Regional Identity

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission, established in 2008 by the Virginia General Assembly, took the lead in developing a creative economy in Southwest Virginia. In 2011, the Commission became the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, a self-sustaining community-development nonprofit. With the support of the Friends of Southwest Virginia, businesses and individuals help mobilize artists, craftspeople, localities, nonprofit organizations, and entrepreneurs.

A multifaceted plan is used to identify the cultural and natural assets of the region and to coordinate initiatives, organizations, and venues that are engaged in cultural and natural heritage to ensure efficient operations for all. The effort also develops a comprehensive strategy and capital improvements plan to maximize the impact of state investments in the restructuring effort. Key initiatives include:

- Branding and marketing Southwest Virginia as a distinct culture and destination
- Developing and sustaining Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway
- Developing and maintaining the Southwest Virginia website, and integrating with the websites of the Crooked Road and 'Round The Mountain as the overall storyboard and trip planner for the region, its communities, and its assets
- Planning and implementing downtown revitalization throughout the region to instill a high quality of life within the communities and to promote them for a broad spectrum of economic development opportunities.

By capitalizing on the region's unique qualities, the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission has helped to build a comprehensive, long-term, sustainable economy. In addition to trails that capitalize on the unique cultural and natural assets, heritage organizations and other interested parties have worked together to promote entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. Partners include the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Tourism Corporation, and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Resources. Funding partners include the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission and the Appalachian Regional Commission. See [www.myswva.org](http://www.myswva.org).



## CASE STUDY: Flint Hills Region, Kansas—Marketing and Interpretation

Fermata, Inc. provided the Flint Hills of Kansas with a marketing and interpretation strategy plan highlighting the remarkable, unknown assets that exist among the tallgrass prairies. The plan is intended to increase nature-based tourism in the Flint Hills Region of Kansas by promoting the region's stories across marketing media. The interpretive theme, "Tallgrass Prairies in Motion," is depicted through eight stories across a series of 32 interpretive signs that inform and educate travelers about the nature and culture of the region that can be used in conjunction with print and web guides. For more information, see <http://www.fermatainc.com>.

**For more information about us in the Flint Hills Region, please contact us in the following visitor information centers:**

- Eastern Department of Commerce**  
Lead & T. Johnson  
200 E. 10th, Johnson, Kansas 67301  
Phone: 620-272-1324  
www.eastkans.com  
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
- Midwest Department of Commerce**  
211 19th St., Topeka, Kansas 66606  
Phone: 785-233-2222  
www.midwestkans.com
- Northwest Department of Commerce**  
201 E. 10th, Lawrence, Kansas 66044  
Phone: 785-843-2222  
www.northwestkans.com
- Southwest Department of Commerce**  
201 E. 10th, Wichita, Kansas 67202  
Phone: 316-261-2222  
www.southwestkans.com

# Flint Hills Heritage Guide



**Great Plains' Imagination and Experience**

**World Above, World Below**  
240 million years ago, shallow sea deposited layers of limestone and mudstone to create Kansas' Paleozoic and the abundant life found in its massive layers, forming prehistoric prairie. In its relatively pristine land, visitors gazed through its fossil bones. Discover and marvel the prairie life and geology important to the world economy.



**Sun, Wind, Fire, and Rain**  
It arrives in the prairie in many guises with extremes. Temperature ranges from -20° to 120° F. Perpetual wind sculpts fields, and plants hold their moisture from the prairie. Lightning ignites dried grass, prompting vigorous new growth.



**Nomadic Peoples**  
For 10,000 years, humans have inhabited this region, ranging the prairie's abundance. Early humans hunted mammals and fished and gathered seeds, roots, and fruits. Around 1300 A.D., Pawnee and Wichita Indians migrated here, planting gardens and hunting bison. Two hundred years ago, Cheyenne and Kiowa Indians arrived, followed a century later by the first Europeans.



**Meats, Flocks, and Cattle**  
Like the rest of the prairie grass, humans and wildlife naturally move over the landscape. Immense herds of bison roamed the land like shifting dunes. Farmers passed through on the Oregon and Santa Fe trails. Hundreds of wild species migrated and through their gradual arrival.



**From sand to land**  
In the mid-1300s, Spanish explorers sought gold and other in the region. Spanish explorers sought for gold, and by the 1800s, more than 100,000 cattle had been. After the Civil War thousands of freed slaves made new homes in Kansas. Since then, immigrants from Europe, Africa, and Mexico have diverse found a fresh start here.



**Cowboy Country**  
Once known as the Wild West, the prairie is roughly a million years old and ancient. In the late 1800s cowboy areas called along the Chisholm Trail from Texas, including the many hundreds of the job, from lightning strikes to flood-mountain rivers.



**Prance and Flow to go**  
As spring arrives across the tallgrass prairie, a succession of prairie flowers begins. From the first bloom of Prairie Pink to the last Red Blown of Prairie Dogflowers, abundant near water the prairie, a palette of 150 wildflower species. Edible and medicinal plants abound—prairie and over 200 native plants for healing.



**KANSAS**  
1-800-2KANSAS  
www.1746HILLS.com

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LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 4:

Support existing gateway communities & sustain their unique character



# SUPPORT EXISTING GATEWAY COMMUNITIES & SUSTAIN THEIR UNIQUE CHARACTER

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- Over the last 40 years, the population of Saginaw has declined by almost 50%, contributing to neighborhood disinvestment and abandonment.
- In 2014, nearly 5,500 properties in Saginaw City were defined as unused and unmaintained; nearly 25% of the city is physically empty or on the verge of demolition.
- Townships surrounding Shiawassee NWR are rural in character, with agriculture dominating the landscape. Spaulding Township is estimated to be over 70% rural.
- Due to floodplain restrictions in many of the rural areas surrounding Shiawassee NWR, development is limited.
- The General Motors Malleable Foundry closed in 2005 and is now under the management of the RACER Trust. The site is a prime candidate for restoration to green space and public access to over a half mile of river frontage.
- Surrounding towns such as Frankenmuth, Birch Run, and St. Charles have invested in beautification and community character capitalizing on their history, heritage, and roles as gateway communities and destinations.

Reinvestment is an important component of livability. In gateway communities, reinvestment should be targeted to encourage more efficient use of existing infrastructure, protection of forests and open space, and neighborhood revitalization. Such investment expands preserves what makes the community unique, minimizes sprawl by maximizing use of infrastructure that is in downtown core areas and accessible by pedestrians, and ultimately improves quality of life for residents.

The communities surrounding Shiawassee NWR are each unique; ranging from the rural township of Spaulding, to the urban Saginaw city, and to the city of Frankenmuth, which is full of the character and culture of Bavaria. All the communities in the area, however, have something in common—connections to the rivers that flow through them, the lands that provide food, and opportunities to enjoy natural wildlife habitats. The Shiawassee NWR and the Shiawassee Flats State Game Area are anchoring public spaces that contribute to the character of each of these gateway communities.



Continued investment in the existing communities is important and should be a priority. Each gateway community should take stock of the unique features of their downtowns, neighborhoods, and natural landscapes, with particular emphasis on supporting a variety of housing, transportation, employment, and recreational opportunities to meet livability goals. The following section provides priority recommendations related to:

- Prioritizing investment for revitalization of downtowns and brownfields
- Engaging business owners in revitalization
- Engaging the community in the revitalization of downtowns
- Opportunities for strategic conservation planning to protect unique character

## **PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT FOR REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWNS AND BROWNFIELDS**

The gateway communities of Shiawassee NWR have the fortune of having downtown main streets that allow residents and visitors central access to services and retail amenities. However, some downtowns are being bypassed by highways, which reduces traffic into the small towns. Downtowns and main streets should be destinations for business, entertainment, and culture that bring residents together and draw visitors in from the region. Investments should focus on revitalizing downtown corridors to support vibrant communities and healthy local economies that provide diverse business opportunities; entertainment for all ages; and a safe, walkable and bike-able corridor.

Additionally, communities should look to the revitalization and redevelopment of brownfield spaces—those urban sites with the potential for new building development where there had been previous development on that land, including vacant lots and buildings. As an alternative to greenfield development that can contribute to sprawl, brownfields can be capitalized on to repurpose of existing, underused structures and vacant property into housing, office, industrial, institutional, or retail opportunities or restored to open space.

Prioritized investment into these community assets for revitalization encourages the improvement of existing structures and the safeguarding of natural, pristine resources.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Create a revitalization plan.** Each community should initiate or unite independent efforts into one, comprehensive, vision-focused strategic plan. For example, creating a vibrant, walkable downtown destination requires a comprehensive strategy that stems from a vision of how the community should look in the future. This requires defining the character of the place and its uniqueness and then identifying how to best protect these elements as the community grows. A plan should then be developed and implemented to make the vision a reality. A plan should include strategies for walkable streets and sidewalks, public transit in and around downtown destinations, structured parking, culture and entertainment outlets, increased safety and cleanliness, support for existing

and new business in the downtown, and programming and marketing. One place to start is by following the twelve-step revitalization process developed by the Brookings Institution, which is outlined in *Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization*. See

[http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2005/3/downtownredevelopment%20leinberger/20050307\\_12steps.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2005/3/downtownredevelopment%20leinberger/20050307_12steps.pdf) for more information.

### CASE STUDY: Traverse City Corridors Master Plan

The Traverse City Planning Commission via representation on the Corridor Steering Committee assisted in the development of the Corridors Master Plan for 8th Street, 14th Street, Garfield Avenue, and East and West Front Streets. The Plan provides strategies for revitalizing these corridors as attractive places to dwell and develop business. Quarterly implementation reports are prepared and can be viewed with the plan here, [http://www.traversecitymi.gov/downloads/traverse\\_city\\_corridors\\_master\\_planadopted\\_lq.pdf](http://www.traversecitymi.gov/downloads/traverse_city_corridors_master_planadopted_lq.pdf).

- **Work with surrounding communities on revitalization.** The communities of Frankenmuth, Birch Run, St. Charles, and others should coordinate and discuss revitalization efforts. Lessons learned and keys to success, as well as opportunities to work together, should be explored. Other communities, such as Midland, Bay City, and Traverse City are also resources and should be considered for peer exchanges around community revitalization.
- **Inventory buildings.** A key step to planning for revitalization is to inventory all commercial and industry buildings in each community. This is the first step to understanding where to target investments and to forming partnership and awareness among business owners. An assessment may also help each community identify priority areas to prepare for new business and will help ensure that existing infrastructure is prioritized over new, greenfield development outside of the downtown business core. An assessment will also help the communities identify key elements that define their unique community character and sense of place, which can be used to inform revitalization plans, design guidelines, and marketing efforts.

Public buildings and landmarks can also be included in an assessment to identify priority capital improvement projects that will enhance the community's overall appearance, as well as improve the function and use of the buildings and neighborhoods. A community's investments in public buildings and public space reflect the community's values.

- **Continue to pursue revitalization of brownfield properties and reuse of mill and plant infrastructure.** By 2000, more than 800 abandoned properties in Saginaw's central business district reverted to city or state ownership. Brownfields are potential areas for investment that can transform degraded sites into thriving new centers of commerce and industry; create jobs through cleanup and reuse; provide the means to leverage innovative partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and

private-sector stakeholders such as developers; and secure opportunities to train residents for high-wage environmental careers. The city of Saginaw is very experienced

### **CASE STUDY: Eloy, Arizona**

Eloy, Arizona, is a former cotton-farming town located in Pinal County between Phoenix and Tucson. Eloy grew up around a rail-switching station in the early 1900s and came to anchor a vibrant cotton-producing region. With demand for cotton driven by World Wars I and II, Eloy prospered and incorporated in 1949. The city continued to experience steady growth, adjusting to post-war changes in the cotton market. In 2001, however, a major job loss resulted in a spike in unemployment, which had risen to 14.7 percent by 2010 (almost twice the national average). The devastating effect on the economy had impacts throughout the community, including vacant buildings surrounded by large, empty lots in Eloy's historic downtown.

Eloy's leaders have targeted the revitalization of its downtown as a way to attract new organizations and businesses to Eloy and to put Eloy in a position to benefit from the growth of the Sun Corridor over time. With the help of a downtown revitalization consultant, the city of Eloy developed a strategy to attract major organizations to the center of the community.

One of the first new organizations to approach the city looking for a downtown location was Sunrise Family Medicine, a nonprofit medical clinic. With a \$4.7 million Business and Industry Loan Guarantee from USDA, Sunrise Family Medicine built a facility to house its clinic and pharmacy in downtown Eloy. Shortly thereafter, the Pinal Hispanic Council Behavioral Health Clinic located in a building adjacent to the Sunrise Family Medicine clinic. The Pinal Hispanic Council's clinic was also supported by USDA, from which it received a \$1,617,000 Business and Industry Loan with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In 2012, both clinics opened, attracting people from rural areas miles away from downtown Eloy.

The city's next downtown economic development goal was to provide greater support and resources to entrepreneurs in the area. The city perceived the lagging local economy, the significant fixed costs associated with starting a new business, and a lack of business training as obstacles to the successful entrance of new businesses. To help address these issues, the city partnered with the Holmes Family Trust and USDA to create a business incubator in the downtown area that would provide affordable office space for lease as well as a site for business training and counseling. The Holmes Family Trust owned all of the downtown buildings and donated the old post-office building for redevelopment as a business incubator. In 2010, USDA provided a \$99,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant to the city of Eloy to carry out the renovation; the Holmes Family Trust provided matching funds. The city hopes that the business incubator will provide entrepreneurs with the tools they need to be successful, ultimately providing the basis for local economic growth. For more information, see <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/rdAZCaseStudy.pdf>.

with brownfield redevelopment and accessing the assistance of EPA's Economic Redevelopment Initiative (awarding the city two \$200,000 grants in 1998 and 2000 to target brownfields for greenspace purposes). The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw and the surrounding communities continue to pursue brownfield cleanup and redevelopment and look for creative opportunities associated with these efforts to positively impact the local economy and quality of life through job creation, partnerships, and new businesses. For examples of additional successes from EPA see <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/success/index.htm>.

### **CASE STUDY: Five-Mile Creek Greenway, Jefferson County, Alabama**

As far back as the late 1800s, Jefferson County, Alabama, became a hub of coal mining, coking (processing coal to form a condensed, nearly smoke-free fuel), and related industries that supported the region's burgeoning steel industry. In the decades after World War II, technological advances and a general decline in U.S. steel production decreased demand for these industries, however, and many of Jefferson County's coal-producing and industrial properties were abandoned. Recognizing that these idle properties, many of which were located along scenic Five-Mile Creek, could provide significant recreational value if restored, the Black Warrior-Cahaba Rivers Land Trust led a partnership to transform this former industrial region into a 27-mile greenway with parks and paths.

To date, assessments funded by EPA grants have been conducted on nine properties within the project area, including a 300-acre property used heavily for coal mining, coking, and strip mining. Though the site was reforested in the 1980s, approximately 20 of its original, turn-of-the-century coke ovens remain on the property and are in good condition. The partnership plans to preserve these ovens as reminders of the area's industrial history.

While it could take as long as 20 years to complete the greenway project, many of the former industrial areas have already been cleaned up for recreational use. For more information, see [http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/success/fultondale\\_al\\_BRAG.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/success/fultondale_al_BRAG.pdf).

### **CASE STUDY: Johnstown, Pennsylvania**

Located in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Dick's Automotive opened in 1949 and operated for 56 years. After it closed in 2005, the property sat empty and unused for two years. The Johnstown Redevelopment Authority used \$2,000 of a larger EPA Brownfields Assessment grant to assess contamination levels at the property. The assessment conducted in May 2006 found no contamination, which allowed redevelopment of the property to proceed.

The city and Johnstown Redevelopment Authority leveraged \$1.92 million from state and private sector sources to redevelop the property, which ultimately became a high-tech commercial business. The State of Pennsylvania provided \$720,000 for redevelopment while ITSI Bioscience Research, the property's new owner and occupant, invested \$1.2 million. The resulting biosciences research facility employed 27 people. As a result of the Brownfields Assessment Grant, the return on investment for this property is \$960 per \$1 of grant funds spent. For more information, see [http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/success/johnstown\\_pa\\_brag\\_automotive.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/success/johnstown_pa_brag_automotive.pdf).

- **Integrate the past into the present.** Small-town charm often comes from creative elements that incorporate the story of the town's past into today's streetscape. Frankenmuth has done an incredible job recreating its Bavarian roots in all aspects of the town. Each gateway community should work with area historical societies, natural resource interpreters, and artisans to incorporate historic elements—such as old bricks, mill signs, and architectural features—into new structures, public art, pathways, and/or signs.

### CASE STUDY: Connellsville, Pennsylvania

Fayette County, Pennsylvania, formed a trust to develop history and art resources. As a result of this support, local artist Jody Best designed and fabricated this work of public art, titled "From Coke to Spokes." The art reflects Connellsville's industrial and steel heritage as well as connects it to the county's future of heritage tourism and the Great Allegheny Passage rail trail.



- **Consider pursuing the Main Street Program or its principles.** In the long term, Saginaw and each surrounding community may want to pursue participation in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. Communities use the Main Street approach to revitalize and strengthen traditional commercial districts. In addition to the officially designated Main Street program communities, there are many communities that have simply incorporated Main Street principles into their existing economic development, historic preservation, city management, or urban- and community-planning programs. To date West Saginaw and the village of Chesaning have formally participated in the Michigan Main Street Program.

There are four main tenets adopted by the Main Street approach: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides resources and examples to help communities use this approach to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort. For examples in Michigan, see the Michigan Main Street website at <http://www.michiganmainstreetcenter.com/Home.aspx> or contact Michigan Main Street Manager Laura Krizov at 517-241-1737.



To learn more about the National Main Street Program, see <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street>.

### **CASE STUDY: Fruitvale Neighborhood, Oakland, California—The Main Street Approach**

In 1997, the Unity Council was selected as one of five groups across the country to pilot a new approach to community economic development as part of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Neighborhood Main Street Initiative. The Initiative is a partnership between LISC and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which created the Main Street model as a tool to preserve the historic downtowns of small cities. The Main Street approach represents a way of working for urban community-based organizations. Rather than being providers of direct services to the community, the Main Street host organization becomes a conduit of information and a facilitator for the development of a shared strategy. The Fruitvale Main Street Program is a broad collaboration between the Unity Council and a number of public and private institutions that have a stake in the success of the neighborhood, including local businesses, banks, the city, the police and parks departments, and, of course, concerned neighborhood residents.

The results of the program have been very impressive; over a hundred new jobs have been created and millions of public and private dollars have been invested in the community. These large-scale results are achieved through the coordination of hundreds of very small actions. The Main Street approach emphasizes the long-term impact of small things. For example, the Fruitvale Main Street program coordinates a matching grant program for storefront improvements. The program's staff identifies merchants and property owners in need of assistance and helps them find architects and contractors. With funds provided by the city, the program is able to provide very small grants to match the building owner's investment. Some of these façade projects are entirely new storefronts but others are more modest, such as new signs or awnings. Already the program has touched most of the buildings in the commercial district and the net result of all these small investments is immediately noticeable. For more information, see [http://www.kintera.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136891/k.7B97/Case\\_Studies.htm](http://www.kintera.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136891/k.7B97/Case_Studies.htm).

### **ENGAGE BUSINESS OWNERS IN REVITALIZATION**

Small businesses in a downtown corridor often provide the front door to a community and represent how a community displays its values visually. It is important that local business owners better understand their contributions to community character and how building codes, permitting, and safety standards help the city and its businesses thrive. Saginaw continues to reel from the recession and changes in industry, leaving hundreds of downtown buildings vacant and in disrepair. It is important that Saginaw, as well as the surrounding communities, look for creative strategies to engage businesses that presently occupy buildings to celebrate community character and contribute positively to the appearance of each town and city.

## Recommendations:

- **Incentivize revitalization.** Saginaw city, county, and surrounding townships, chambers of commerce, conventions and visitor bureaus, and other community partners should use both “carrots” and “sticks” to address problems with downtown vacant buildings and encourage revitalization. Options may include education of business and building owners, incentives for building improvements, and stronger enforcement of building codes and other regulations.
- **Implement creative business engagement.** Towns such as Birch Run and St. Charles have made beautification a priority with downtown investments such as pedestrian crossings and landscaping; and the City of Saginaw’s volunteer Beautification Committee coordinates an “Adopt a Spot” program that engages businesses, organizations, school and church groups, and any others willing to commit to beautifying spots throughout Saginaw. The Beautification Commission, economic development groups, and the chambers of commerce should continue to incentivize beautification and restoration projects among business owners in downtowns. Opportunities include providing awards for façade improvements; offering design assistance grants; facilitating fundraisers; organizing “blitz” events or volunteer-led community improvement projects to add public art, provide landscaping, or clean up walls. Communities should consider participating in design studio activities, partnering with university planning and architecture programs, or sponsoring design competitions.

### CASE STUDY: Evanston, Illinois—Façade Improvement Program

The city of Evanston, Illinois, has established a number of incentive programs to assist local existing businesses and welcome new businesses to the city. These include a façade improvement program that invites business owners to improve the appearance of their street-facing exteriors on their commercial buildings within a set standard of design to reflect community character. The Façade Improvement Program offers to fund up to 50 percent of a total qualifying project’s cost to successful applicants. The first 35 linear feet of public right-of-way facing frontage (or less) is eligible for up to \$10,000 on a 50/50 cost-sharing basis. Each linear foot of frontage beyond 35 feet is eligible for an additional \$100 per foot. Improvements include awnings, canopies, doors, windows, fascia, historic restoration, lighting, metal work, tile, trim, painting, and decorative elements. See <http://www.evanstonedge.com/programs/>.

## RESOURCE: Design Guidelines: Setting Design Expectations with Voluntary Programs

Communities can develop voluntary or mandatory design guidelines for business owners and developers to achieve complementary styles for new buildings. The Conservation Fund's *Better Models for Commercial Development* provides examples of towns that have successfully attracted prospective businesses and encouraged them to voluntarily design their buildings to respect and enhance the existing streetscape and downtown fabric. Design guides developed by rural areas and small towns include the *Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide* and the *Carroll County (Maryland) Design Expectations Manual*. All are available online for free.

*Better Models for Commercial Development*: <http://www.conservationfund.org/images/resources/Better-Models-For-Commercial-Development-The-Conservation-Fund.pdf>.

*Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guidebook*: <http://www.pawildsresources.org/designguide>.

*Carroll County Design Expectations Manual*: <http://ccgovernment.carr.org/ccg/compplan/design/intro.pdf>.

- **Look for creative opportunities to fill vacant buildings.** Reclaiming vacant buildings, even temporarily, can support a shift towards a positive downtown or neighborhood image and contribute to community vibrancy. Grassroots organizations, entrepreneurs, and arts councils across the country are working with the owners of vacant properties to fill storefronts in downtowns with artwork, pop-up businesses, and other creative uses. In one case, the offer of 6 months free rent was enough to fill five storefronts with retail businesses in Old Oakland, the historic district of Oakland, California; read about the transformation here, <http://www.fastcoexist.com/1679178/popuphood-how-to-revitalize-a-struggling-neighborhood-in-six-months>. Saginaw and surrounding communities, grassroots organizations, art councils, small business development associations, and others should discuss options to fill vacant storefronts.

### CASE STUDY: Marion, Virginia—Pop-Up Incubator

In 2012, Marion, Virginia, had a declining downtown in which 17 percent of the buildings lay vacant. The Marion Downtown Revitalization Association (MDRA) applied to the Virginia Main Street Program for an economic development grant to be used for business training of local entrepreneurs as part of its effort to attract new businesses and shops downtown. The Virginia Main Street Program awarded a \$15,000 grant to MDRA to fund a new "Pop Up Marion Small Business Boot Camp." The 42 people at the program's pilot workshop learned the fundamentals of operating a small business and engaged in sessions on planning for operations and cash flow, providing customer service, obtaining credit and marketing. By the end of the eight-session course, participants also had developed a business plan.

To support the transition from planning to reality, up to \$5,000 in startup grant funds are offered to help boot camp graduates offset rent or mortgage and utility expenses for six months. To qualify for the grant, applicants must complete all course sessions, commit to being open extended hours, and meet with a business mentor regularly. Since the initial workshop, there have been four rounds of classes, with a total of 103 participants and 31 graduates. As a result of the program, at least 13 new businesses have opened, providing 62 new jobs. Four buildings were sold, eight storefronts have been filled, and seven additional indirect new businesses have begun, with at least 15 additional new jobs. In all, the program has resulted in at least \$200,000 of private investment in Marion's downtown district.

For more information, see [www.preservationnation.org/survival-toolkit](http://www.preservationnation.org/survival-toolkit).

## ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN

Just as it is important to engage business and building owners in the revitalization of downtowns, it is also important to engage neighborhoods, families, schools, and other community groups in the revitalization process. Leaders of Saginaw and the surrounding communities, in partnership with public land managers, should collaborate to lead the community through the revitalization process by building awareness of benefits, cultivating support and new leaders, and developing ongoing opportunities.

### Recommendations

- **Look for overlapping opportunities in which investments in revitalization will benefit visitors and residents.** Visitors may be looking for unique experiences, but there are amenities that both visitors and residents can appreciate, such as opportunities to shop for everyday groceries and basics, visit family restaurants, and enjoy local activities.
- **Make Main Street a destination for community events.** Events such as street cleanups, building painting or murals, art walks, street festivals, farmers' markets, and community gatherings and workshops give local residents and businesses a stake in the downtown and what happens to it. These programs and events also create a lively atmosphere that often instantly enhances pride in the community.
- **Strengthen resident awareness of area attractions, including cultural, heritage, and historical amenities.** Some communities have special "tourist in your downtown" or hometown days in which they invite residents to visit local attractions. Not only do these events support local businesses, but they also may expose residents to new amenities and activities in the area, strengthen pride among community residents, and make residents better community advocates.
- **Develop "blitz" events that engage residents and spur visible change to the downtown streetscape.** An art blitz, for instance, could solicit local professional, amateur, and/or school-age artists to create public art on downtown walls and/or buildings in a one-day or weekend festival setting. Art sites could be selected through applications or identified by the community as priority cleanup sites. Musicians could provide entertainment along Main Street or another downtown area. The youngest residents could participate by creating chalk drawings on sidewalks or by painting on a roll of paper rolled down the closed-off street. (The city of Curitiba, Brazil, for instance, holds a weekly children's art program by unfurling a large paper roll down the



Community Arts Blitz Build for Habitat for Humanity

pedestrian zone and providing paint and brushes for whomever would like to participate). Similarly, a garden blitz could gather local gardeners and landscapers to build and plant downtown container gardens. These are low-cost events that rely on sponsorships, sweat equity, and contributions by residents who take pride in their community.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLANNING

The beauty of the river ecosystems is a defining element of Saginaw and surrounding communities. It is important that the city, townships, county, and its residents recognize the value of the landscape not only as an amenity for those who like to enjoy the outdoors, but also as a contributor to the local economy. Protecting the landscape as an important component of any livability strategy that will successfully position the gateway communities as a destination for outdoor enthusiasts as well ensure the management and conservation of the natural foundation of the area.

Strategic conservation planning, or green infrastructure planning, can be defined as a strategically planned and managed network of natural lands, working landscapes, and other open spaces, as well as site-scale protection of resources. Green infrastructure planning conserves ecosystem functions and provides benefits to people, regardless of land ownership. For communities, the protection of green infrastructure results in less flood damage to property, as floodplains are managed by the network design. The planning and protection of green infrastructure also can support working lands and tourism by creating certainty that preserved spaces are not threatened by development and remain available for recreation that contributes economic growth. And for residents, benefits can include an increase in home values due to the enhanced natural surroundings that make communities more attractive to buyers and protected green space ensures a better quality of life by maintaining clean air and drinking water, scenic views, and places to enjoy outdoor recreation and physical activity.

In 2005, the Saginaw Bay Greenways Collaborative created a vision for a green infrastructure network by using a scientific and community participation approach to identify land best suited for conservation and recreation in Saginaw, Bay, and Midland counties. Groups such as the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Committee have used the identified network to plan for non-motorized transportation in the region. Saginaw, in partnership with Saginaw County and the East Michigan Council of Governments, should consider revisiting the green infrastructure vision to evaluate current protection measures implemented over the past 10 years and assess opportunities for expanded local implementation of conservation and protection strategies.

### Recommendations:

- **Explore opportunities to educate about and implement green infrastructure.** *A Vision of Green for Michigan's Bay, Midland, and Saginaw Counties* provides an impressive road map for strategic resource protection and conservation activities. Implementation of this vision can occur at multiple scales from site to regional.



Site-scale green infrastructure is an approach that uses vegetation, soils, and natural processes to soak up, store, and filter stormwater. From rain barrels to streetscaping individuals and municipalities can implement green infrastructure best practices on their property. Green infrastructure uses design techniques and materials to help manage rainwater where it falls. There are aligning priorities in water management that could prove to be an interesting collaborative partnership with the USFWS, the city and county of Saginaw, surrounding communities and others to assess priority areas to implement green infrastructure designs.

### **CASE STUDY: Managing Vacant and Abandoned Property in the Green Zone of Saginaw, Michigan**

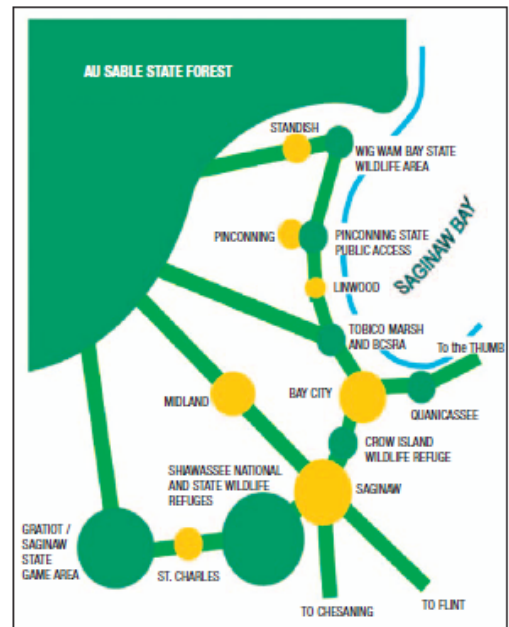
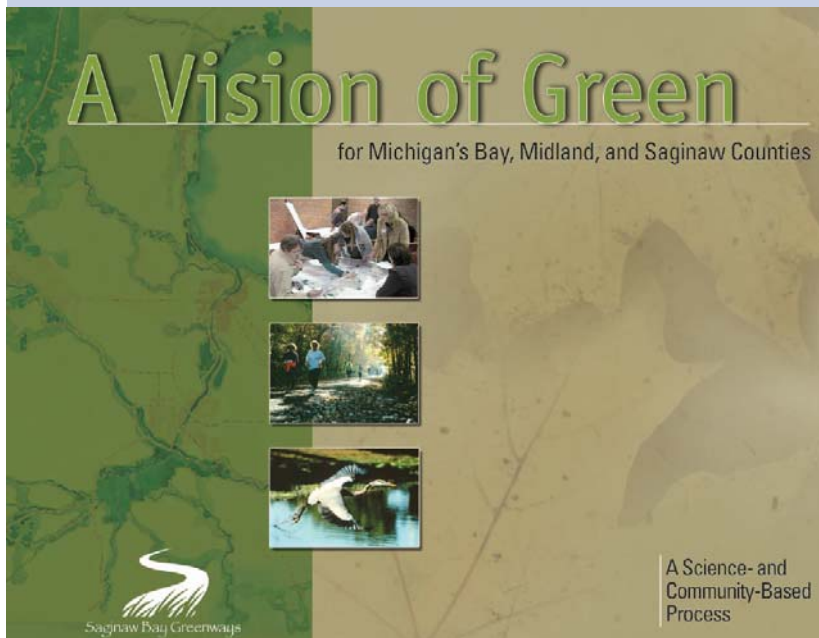
The Green Zone is a working class neighborhood that was historically home to workers at the General Motors Company yet now contains the highest concentration of vacant and abandoned properties in Saginaw. The city requested assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify options for managing land use and infrastructure in the Green Zone, specifically related to supporting “green” uses (e.g., open space parks, community gardens) of vacant and abandoned property; identifying opportunities for green infrastructure in the Green Zone; and examining the potential for decommissioning or reconfiguring road, water, and sewer infrastructure. For more information about the EPA’s assessment and findings, see <http://www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/sgia/Saginaw-SGIA-Report-Final-071614.pdf>.

## CASE STUDY: A Vision for Green

The Saginaw Bay Greenways Collaborative represents a group of local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and concerned citizens united around the goal of developing a green infrastructure system in Saginaw, Bay, and Midland counties. The Collaborative underwent a planning process to inventory natural resources, involve the public in the development of the plan, and distribute information on the benefits of greenways and green infrastructure. As identified in the resulting plan termed *A Vision of Green*, Shiawassee NWR and adjoining Shiawassee River State Game Area form a major hub in the region and the network of rivers in the area are integral corridors to the green infrastructure network. The vision provides several recommendations for implementation which include:

- Establishing organizational framework and leadership
- Education of citizens on the benefits of green infrastructure
- Development of intergovernmental cooperation and regional coordination
- Opportunities for funding and support

For more information, see [http://www.saginawbaywin.org/uploads/vision\\_green.pdf](http://www.saginawbaywin.org/uploads/vision_green.pdf).



## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 5:

Coordinate policies & leverage investments within communities & between the gateway communities & public lands



# COORDINATE POLICIES & LEVERAGE INVESTMENT WITHIN COMMUNITIES & BETWEEN THE GATEWAY COMMUNITIES & PUBLIC LANDS

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- Great Lakes Bay Regional Conventions and Visitors Bureau is one of only a few CVBs that take lodging taxes and reinvest them into communities. They have provided funding to build a soccer complex, assist in the construction of the Dow Events Center, and other investments in the tri-county region.
- The former GM Malleable Plant, now held by the RACER Trust, is a downtown brownfield along the river that is being considered for restoration to wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.
- Expanding medical services and education in the Saginaw area provides opportunities for new and expanded partnerships on public health and active living.
- Up to nine “placemaking” efforts exist in the Saginaw that area draw resources from federal and state economic development opportunities. These efforts prioritize safer neighborhoods, revitalization of vacant spaces, and preservation of community anchors such as schools, churches, and historic buildings.
- MDNR Shiawassee Flats State Game Area is increasingly working with surrounding communities and regional recreation groups to provide education and awareness of fishing and hunting, as well as other recreational opportunities on their land.
- With projects such as the Auto Tour, Green Point Education Learning Center programs, and road improvements around the refuge, the USFWS continues to assess opportunities to leverage resources to provide improved access to the refuge for local residents and visitors.

Communities that demonstrate vision, a sense of purpose in action, and strong diverse partnerships are more likely to receive public and private funding to take on new projects. In a competitive market, corporations, foundations, and even government agencies want to invest in ideas and initiatives with the possibility of strong returns.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities provides key information on opportunities for funding and technical assistance from the three partner federal agencies (HUD, DOT, and EPA). Among its resources is a guide, *Federal Resources for Sustainable Rural Communities*, which demonstrates how rural communities across the country have put their funding into action. Each agency offers different ways of approaching infrastructure planning and construction, economic development, pollution cleanup, and other issues that interfere with creating a livable community. Coordinating and leveraging funding and valuable resources can help communities advance their overall vision and goals. Although the programs listed may change, the guide provides a valuable menu of options that rural communities and small towns can consider when planning and implementing projects. To access the guide, visit [www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/federal\\_resources\\_rural.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/federal_resources_rural.pdf).

This section provides priority recommendations related to:

- Regional collaboration
- Leveraging new and expanding opportunities and partnerships for livability
- Balancing the refuge's mission with support from partner organizations
- Coordinating placemaking efforts in Saginaw

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Many of today's most compelling social, environmental, and economic issues—such as landscape conservation, water quality and quantity, and food security—require people and institutions to work across jurisdictional and agency lines and other boundaries. One example is the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN), a community-based, voluntary initiative to connect people, resources, organizations and programs within the 22 counties that encompass the Saginaw Bay Watershed. Efforts made to engage and support partnerships with neighboring towns, counties, and nearby regions, provide many opportunities to leverage human capital and resources to achieve collaborative goals towards improving the region's quality of life and enhancing livability.

### Recommendations

- **Support and build from existing multi-jurisdictional partnerships to include livability.** The Assessment Team recommends that existing regional and tri-county partnerships should engage in dialogue to discuss aligning priorities around livability and

### RESOURCE: Leadership & Networks- New Ways of Developing Leadership in a Highly Connected World

This report is written for those who run and fund leadership programs that develop and support leadership for social change. It shares many examples of how leaders using network strategies are increasing the impact of social change. The report provides examples of leadership models, values, skills, and behaviors needed to embrace network strategies. To read the report, see [http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/LLC\\_NetworkNLfinal4.pdf](http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/LLC_NetworkNLfinal4.pdf).



## RESOURCE: Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) works throughout the 22 counties that make up the Saginaw Bay Watershed to improve the quality of life in the area by developing projects, supporting related organizations, and developing the region's identity as a sustainable community. Their volunteers are made up of community members that represent business people, farmers, conservationists, tourism specialists, city planners, government representatives, and other community stakeholders. WIN actively seeks out projects and organizations that are working to implement sustainable solutions to current watershed and community challenges. Their focused priorities are in these five areas:

- Agriculture and Pollution Prevention
- Communication/Regional Marketing
- Land Use
- Water Resources
- Wildlife Stewardship

For more information, see <http://www.saginawbaywin.org/>.

discuss new or non-traditional partners to involve in regional collaboration. Network weaving or mapping can be a useful tool to identify overlapping connections and gaps in resources, capital, and needs for participation to strategically target stakeholders, new leadership, and leveraging opportunities.

- **Identify opportunities to develop a cohesive identity based on shared assets and priorities for livability.** The Assessment Team recommends that existing regional efforts develop forums to create a regional identity, identify strengths and assets, promote regional goals, and advance joint opportunities. Regular meetings, workshops, and webinars are good communication tools to begin to create a cohesive partnership surrounding livability. Collaboration between local and state governments, grassroots funding, and engagement with the private sector, as well as unified branding and marketing, are all aspects of regional partnerships that should be pursued.

## CASE STUDY: The PA Wilds Regional Initiative

The Pennsylvania Wilds is a 12 county region that offers tremendous outdoor experiences. Over the past decade, they have strived to make a name for themselves as a destination through what is called The PA Wilds Initiative, an effort to capitalize on sustainable tourism to create jobs, diversify local economies, improve quality of life, and inspire stewardship of the region's natural and cultural assets. The PA Wilds Initiative has many components: branding and marketing, community revitalization, planning, business development, and infrastructure upgrades. All of these components are pursued simultaneously by many different stakeholders. Through their effort they have documented their collaboration efforts, success stories, and impacts. To see their reports, visit <http://www.pawildsresources.org/>.

## LEVERAGE NEW AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERS FOR LIVABILITY

The city of Saginaw and surrounding communities have successfully pursued federal assistance for downtown revitalization and brownfield clean-up, blight mitigation, and road improvements. From these investments, incremental movement towards attracting new businesses, industry, and visibility has gained traction in the region. It is important that Saginaw and surrounding communities look for creative ways to leverage these investments and establish new partnerships for livability.

### Recommendations

- **Capitalize on medical services in the area to bolster public health awareness and active living.** Central Michigan University's new medical campus in Saginaw, as well as large area hospitals and insurance providers, are an opportunity to engage in new partnerships for livability, specifically related to improving public health and supporting active lifestyles. Area medical and insurance industry leaders should be invited to work with local government leaders, public land managers, and civic organizations to identify and leverage resources to assist communities in making priorities to improve quality of life. As medical students, doctors, medical personnel, and patients may also be residents and visitors to the region, this is a great opportunity to engage the medical community in key projects. The Pulse3 Foundation has been very successful in Saginaw with its annual Run For Your Heart Event, a running race to raise awareness of heart disease. The Foundation is dedicated to developing, promoting, and supporting educational and community initiatives that empower people of all ages to live and lead healthier lives. For more information about the Pulse3 Foundation, see <http://www.pulse3.org/>. See more examples of health industry and local community partnerships in the Transportation section of this report.

### CASE STUDY: Allina Health Citizen Health Action Teams

In the Minneapolis area, Allina Health formed a dozen Citizen Health Action Teams to bring community members together to discuss neighborhood health issues and come up with solutions. This effort found that it did not have sufficient in-house expertise to drive the effort and partnered with the Cultural Wellness Center in south Minneapolis. Each resident-led Action Team now receives \$5,000-25,000 a year to help tackle projects related to community health. They include initiatives such as Growing in the Backyard, which helps community residents plant fruits and vegetables on their properties, and Out in the Backyard, to help lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender residents who feel isolated build a sense of community. As of 2013, about 6,600 residents have taken part in Allina's Backyard Initiative. For more information, see <http://www.allinahealth.org/About-Us/Community-involvement/Initiatives-and-programs/The-Backyard-Initiative/Citizen-Health-Action-Teams/>.

### **CASE STUDY: University of Maryland's Mini-Med School**

More than 400 Baltimore area residents annually attend Mini-Med School, a series of tuition-free classes designed to help Baltimore residents improve their health and well-being. Presented by faculty physicians, Mini-Med School lectures are designed to be casual, fun, and informative, while focusing on healthcare issues that are important to everyone. One Mini-Med School student, who first participated as a college sophomore, later became a medical student at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and is today a doctor. To learn more, see <http://medschool.umaryland.edu/minimed/>.

### **CASE STUDY: Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare**

In the Memphis, Tennessee area, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare found that churches are key partners in community engagement. Methodist's community health needs assessment determined that the African-American population had a much higher rate of readmission and lack of support following discharge from the hospital. Methodist formed the Congregational Health Network and now deploys volunteer liaisons to over 500 congregations and faith communities in the region to stay in touch with patients and help them navigate next steps towards healthy living after hospital discharges. The hospital is now experimenting with mini-grants to "close the gap" and provide for transportation to medical appointments and prescription refills. To learn more, see <http://www.methodisthealth.org/about-us/faith-and-health/community/>.

### **RESOURCE: Hospital-Based Strategies for Creating a Culture of Health**

The Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET) is working with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to study the approaches that hospitals and healthcare systems are using to build a culture of health. HRET reviewed community health needs assessments, assessed a broad base of literature, evaluated American Hospital Association and HRET resources, and conducted interviews with hospital leaders. The resulting report provides action steps for hospitals and communities to take to prioritize community health concerns, develop strategies to address them, and foster sustainable collaboration with key partners. For the report, *Hospital-Based Strategies for Creating a Culture of Health*, see <http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2014/rwjf416021>.

- **Explore opportunities to make the former GM Malleable Plant site an anchor for the city of Saginaw and downtown livability.** During the assessment, representatives from the RACER Trust, the custodians of the 320-acre former GM Malleable Plant site, said that local leaders agree that the site is best suited for restoration and natural parkland use. This effort is a key effort that can involve traditional and nontraditional partners to integrate this property into the fabric of the communities of Saginaw. The city of Saginaw should work to include community organizations, public safety, public health, as well as natural resources agencies and recreation organizations to discuss opportunities for this property and priorities for funding and support that can involve the wider region.
- **Reinforce relationships with federal agencies involved in livability for all communities.** The city of Saginaw and surrounding counties have engaged with federal agencies through their Metropolitan Planning Organization and grant awards such as EPA Brownfield Assistance, HUD housing assistance, and FHWA road improvements. The Assessment Team recommends developing consistent communication with these federal agencies about livability and leveraging their assistance. Federal partners in the Michigan region participating as part of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities include:
  - US Housing and Urban Development: Lana Vacha, Detroit Field Office Director, 313-226-7900
  - US Environmental Protection Agency: James VanderKloot, EPA Region 5 Office, 312-353-3161
  - FHWA: Rachael Tupic, FHWA Division Office, 517-702-1829
  - Federal Transit Administration: FTA Region V Office, 312-353-2789
- **Leverage private and corporate funding for livability.** Saginaw is fortunate to be in a region with several industries that continue to support the area and provide jobs to thousands of residents. Saginaw and surrounding communities should take an inventory of businesses, nonprofits, community foundations, and philanthropic organizations to build a multilayered “quilt” of potential partners. Opportunities may lie within corporations looking to invest in surrounding towns, encourage environmental stewardship, or stimulate priority livability elements as part of their corporate mission or responsibility. Local, regional, and state foundations and philanthropic entities may also have funding priorities that align with the needs of the city and surrounding communities. As livability priorities emerge, Saginaw and surrounding cities should communicate with federal and state partners, such as USFWS and MDNR, to establish connections to potential funding sources.

## **BALANCE REFUGE MISSION WITH SUPPORT TO PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

Although public land managers, such as the USFWS, have resource protection-focused missions, there are many opportunities to involve surrounding communities and organizations in the

protection of resources beyond park, refuge, and game areas. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS and MDNR take an active role in providing guidance on resource management and stewardship with neighboring gateway communities, but also be involved in local planning efforts that complement resource management efforts, and provide consistent education, awareness, and guidance on how, when, and where visitors can use public lands in the region to all gateway communities.

## COORDINATE PLACEMAKING EFFORTS IN SAGINAW

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to planning, design, and management of public spaces, especially downtown areas, neighborhoods, and parks. The intent of placemaking is to create spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being. In Saginaw, significant focus has been placed on placemaking due to the high number of vacant public spaces throughout the city. The goal of these efforts is to return vibrancy to the city, reduce crime, and improve the quality of life of residents. During the assessment, it was noted that there are potentially over nine organizations implementing placemaking efforts in Saginaw. Just recently, the city of Saginaw was selected as one of seven Michigan communities to participate in the PlacePlans program. This program is funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority through the MIplace Partnership Initiative and looks to create “transformative placemaking projects” that spur development. For more information about the PlacePlan program, visit <http://placemaking.mml.org/place-plans/>. With so many efforts already in place in Saginaw, it is a recommended priority to align goals and objectives and communicate among organizations.

### Recommendations

- **Establish a communications network among placemaking and livability organizations and leaders.** Similar to establishing communication among regional collaborative organizations, placemaking groups should develop a communication framework to discuss priorities, needs and opportunities, and leverage opportunities. Tapping into new partnerships, as well as aligning priorities, can better assist in targeted investments that are place-based or able to be leveraged across many locations.
- **Celebrate success together.** With so many placemaking improvements occurring across the city and county of Saginaw, it is important that all successes be celebrated and connected to other efforts in the area, especially those that align with livability principles and priorities to improve quality of life. The Assessment Team recommends that a key output for creating a communication framework for placemaking organizations is to find common ground and strategies to celebrate successes for all efforts contributing to enhancing livability in the Saginaw region.





## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLE 6:

Value communities, neighborhoods, & landscapes & the area's natural, cultural heritage, & recreational assets that foster social, economic, & public health



# VALUE COMMUNITIES, NEIGHBORHOODS, & LANDSCAPES & THE AREA'S NATURAL, CULTURAL HERITAGE, & RECREATIONAL ASSETS THAT FOSTER SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, & PUBLIC HEALTH

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## KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- The USFWS' Green Point Environmental Learning Center provides place-based environmental education to many school-aged kids throughout the region.
- The Shiawassee NWR Wildlife Auto Tour Route attracts visitors from across the country and is open to bicycle use.
- Ojibway Island and Wickes Park are urban parks that provide river access and other outdoor recreation opportunities; prime destinations to enjoy the outdoors in Saginaw.
- The Great Lakes Regional CVB thoughtfully uses revenues gained from area lodging taxes to invest in tourist destinations such as youth soccer fields and the FirstMerit Bank Event Park.

The distinctive character and historic features of rural communities and small towns are often among their most important assets. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities concludes that "communities that conserve and build upon ... historic downtowns and main streets, important natural features, and long-standing cultural and religious institutions will be better positioned to enhance quality of life for their residents."<sup>1</sup> Components of livability, such as multimodal transportation improvements, downtown economic development, and partnerships with surrounding public land managers create physical connections between downtown areas and recreational activities for people of all ages and ability, making it easier for people to get where they need to go and get exercise while doing it. Studies show that getting people outside and connecting them with nature has physical, mental, and emotional health benefits. Stronger connections to the land also help to strengthen community pride and quality of life. By fostering connections to the land, history, and culture and by building a strong sense of community, the natural vistas, charming downtowns, and local history and culture of the gateway communities of Shiawassee NWR can become part of creating vibrant, thriving communities and will become mainstays of civic pride and stewardship for generations to come.

This section provides priority recommendations for:

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<sup>1</sup> Partnership for Sustainable Communities, *Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities*, 2011, pg. 7. [http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting\\_Sustainable\\_Rural\\_Communities\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting_Sustainable_Rural_Communities_FINAL.PDF).

- improving awareness of the refuge and other natural resources
- cultivating volunteers and stewards
- engage youth in livability initiatives

## IMPROVE AWARENESS OF THE REFUGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

By providing a myriad of ways to enjoy the outdoors, Shiawassee NWR, Saginaw’s many rivers, MDNR’s Shiawassee Flats State Game Area, the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail, and many more assets contribute immensely to the public health and vibrancy of the region. For this reason, it is important that awareness of the value of these assets is realized among residents and visitors to develop a sense of pride and stewardship, as well as to create an identity connected to natural resources.

### Recommendations

- **Engage residents in experiences in nature.** Echoed throughout this report, building awareness among residents of the abundant natural resource and outdoor recreation opportunities in the region is critical. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS, MDNR, environmental and outdoor recreation organizations, and local governments look for opportunities to provide residents with experiences in the refuge, parks, and on the rivers and trails. An example may be to hold a Neighborhood Day—coordination with neighborhood associations to develop outings on trails, paddle trips on the river, and/or auto tours of the refuge.
- **Connecting the City of Saginaw to the river.** The Flint River Trail and Cass River Trail are two established blueways that run south from Shiawassee NWR. The City of Saginaw is working with resource management agencies and volunteers of the Michigan Water Trail Working Group (<http://www.michiganwatertrails.org/>) to make recreational connections to these trails from the city of Saginaw by improving physical access to the river, signage and mapping related to access to the river, and water safety instruction and river guidance. The Assessment Team recommends that public land managers, tourism agencies, and outdoor recreation organizations look for opportunities to promote these assets and facilitate more use of the river.
- **Increase coordination among land management agencies and gateway community tourism organizations.** The gateway community of Frankenmuth sees over 30,000 people in their visitors center alone each year, a major opportunity to educate visitors on the availability of public lands in the area. During the assessment, tourism representatives voiced the need for more information about when and how to access public lands, the river, and what experiences are possible. The Assessment Team recommends that the USFWS, MDNR, and tourism organizations for each gateway community develop communication plans and creative strategies to ensure that information about the natural assets and recreational opportunities in the area are being

shared with visitors. Familiarization tours are a good initial step to increasing coordination by providing tourism representatives with first-hand knowledge and understanding of the landscape of the area's natural resources.

### Ranger On Call Guide Program

When you walk or ride a bike in Minneapolis, you can enjoy an audio tour of the Mississippi River using Ranger On Call. Ranger On Call provides the opportunity to listen to stories online, visiting Ranger On Call stations along tour routes in person, and by dialing a toll-free number. Each unique story provides a look into the history of the Mississippi River and the cultural and natural assets of the National Park Service's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. For more information, see <http://www.rangeroncall.com>.

## CULTIVATE VOLUNTEERS AND STEWARDS

There is a need to help community members in the Saginaw area recognize their role as stewards of community and to encourage them to step forward. Creating new leaders often involves tapping into skills that a person may not recognize in him- or herself. It may also require fostering leadership skills among interested parties who have little leadership experience.

### Recommendations

- **Develop communication strategies to share information.** The Assessment Team recommends that gateway community leaders convene a forum to brief community members on the region's livability initiatives and invite wider participation. Underlying each meeting or communication outlet should be the following questions: What sectors of the community are missing? Who else should be part of this discussion? What is the best way to reach them?
- **Building a mentor network.** The Assessment Team recommends that community leaders should seek to mentor others to build leadership skills across the community. To this end, Brevard, North Carolina, created a Retiree Resource Network, a group of retired residents with private-sector experience who mentor local entrepreneurs, support new and existing businesses, and offer free consulting services. This initiative facilitates leadership, economic development, and promotes interaction between longtime residents and newcomers, enhancing quality of life for both. For more information, see <http://www.iog.unc.edu/programs/cednc/stbi/cases/pdf/brevard.pdf>.
- **Cultivate, nurture, and invest in local leaders.** Community leadership programs are often facilitated by the chamber of commerce and supported by local businesses. Leadership Saginaw County and the Great Lakes Bay African American Leadership Training Institute are two local examples. The goal of these leadership programs is to

develop local leaders and foster leadership skills and abilities among residents and capitalize on their willingness to be involved. The Assessment Team recommends that area public land managers reach out to these programs to look for opportunities to partner in leadership development opportunities and include stewardship for natural resources as an element of leadership in the region. For more information, see Leadership Saginaw County: <http://www.saginawchamber.org/programs/leadership-saginaw-county.aspx> and Great Lakes Bay African American Leadership Training Institute: <http://www.saginawchamber.org/programs/great-lakes-bay-african-american-leadership.aspx>.

- **Recognize community volunteers.** The city and its partners should recognize and celebrate volunteers through acknowledgement on the web and/or at an annual ceremony. Volunteers could be given a certificate, pin, or badge as a visible reminder of their contributions. Ongoing “super-volunteers” could earn a plaque on a tree, a bench, or other community resource that further contributes to community well-being.
- **Support continued development of Friends of Shiawassee NWR group.** The Assessment Team recommends that USFWS staff at Shiawassee NWR continue to support and advise the development of the refuge’s Friends Group. The USFWS provides several opportunities that help organize and increase the capacity of these volunteer groups including a weeklong Friends Academy training and the Friends Partnership Mentoring Program. For more information on how to access USFWS support for Friends groups, see <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/>.
- **Continue to support area assets with investment.** The Great Lakes Bay Regional Visitors Bureau has been very successful in its use of a lodging tax to invest back in the community. Their investment has contributed to the construction of youth soccer fields and the FirstMerit Bank Event Park. In most areas, lodging taxes support promotion and marketing of tourism attractions, but the support from the Saginaw area’s CVB has gone beyond marketing to physically cultivate new attractions. Additionally, savvy tourism and community leaders have worked together to ensure support for stewardship of their assets. For instance, in Steamboat Springs, Colorado’s Yampa Street revitalization committee solicits proposals from community partners for projects to be funded by lodging tax revenue. Projects range from acquiring vacant land for parks, creating trails to attract tourists, to downtown streetscape revitalization. Additional examples include:
  - “Give back” programs. Tourism Cares for America is a volunteer program to help preserve, conserve, and protect tourism related sites in America that need care and rejuvenation. The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw area communities investigate the feasibility of becoming a Tourism Cares site to cultivate volunteerism and bring awareness to the benefits of tourism and livability. For more information, see <http://tourismcares.org/tourism-cares-america>.



## RESOURCE: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents

This 1997 workbook provides a good overview of how to identify the skills and knowledge of local residents and from there to connect them to wide-ranging community opportunities and initiatives. See <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/CapacityInventories%281%29.pdf>.

- Redistribution of funds to one or more causes. Some corporations, such as Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream and Patagonia Clothing, set aside a percentage of profits for good causes in local areas. Preservation Pilsner from the Upland Brewing Company donates part of its profits to protect the natural areas of Central Indiana. The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw region communities and tourism organizations look for creative ways to leverage relationships with businesses to develop investment opportunities to enhance, support, and protect local assets and destinations.
- Conservation stewardship. A few communities have set up voluntary initiatives to support conservation stewardship. The owner of a local sporting goods store in Crested Butte, Colorado, for instance, launched such an initiative because he wanted to conserve the area's mountains and open spaces. His action created a lot of buzz—and customers. Today, more than sixty businesses—from restaurants, retail stores, and guiding companies to doctors, attorneys, an acupuncturist, realtors, newspapers, and even an animal hospital—now participate in Crested Butte's 1% for Open Space Program in which businesses add one percent to every customer's bill to support conservation efforts. For more information, see [http://www.landscape.org/article/CO/1percent\\_for\\_open\\_space/1/](http://www.landscape.org/article/CO/1percent_for_open_space/1/)

## RESOURCE: Michigan Cares for Tourism

Modeled from and in support of Tourism Cares, the national network of volunteer initiatives, Michigan Cares for Tourism is a volunteer program that has resulted in over 20,000 hours of manpower toward restoring national tourism treasures as well as engaging over 2,000 tourism industry professionals in volunteer efforts.

This effort is the first unified, statewide effort to “give back” to the tourism industry and protect the state's treasured assets. In partnership with Grand Valley State University, MDNR, Tourism Cares, and Travel Michigan, Michigan Cares for Tourism is a volunteer-based program that coordinates an annual clean-up event at a Michigan tourism treasure in need of their support. To learn more about their efforts, see <http://www.gvsu.edu/michigancaresfortourism/>.

## YOUTH IN LIVABILITY

A survey conducted by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (a division of the National 4-H Council) showed that involving young people in decision making helps them build problem-solving skills and social competencies such as communication. Also, these efforts can assist in building a sense of identity, autonomy, and an overall sense of purpose for the youth involved.

While youth learn valuable life skills, adults begin to view young people as valid contributors to the community. Adults also profit from a better understanding of the needs and concerns of young people. Youths often bring a fresh perspective that can help a community find new solutions to old problems. Advocates of youth/adult partnerships assert that programs often are more sustainable and effective when they actively engage young people. Young people can help bring clarity and focus to an organization's mission and forge stronger connections between the organization and local youth, which can benefit the organization over the long term. For more information, visit the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, <http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/>.

The health of the natural environment and vibrancy of Saginaw area communities relies on the engagement of youth in community decision making processes and livability initiatives. The Assessment Team recommends the following strategies to involve youth in civic engagement. The city of Saginaw, surrounding communities, public land managers, and schools should work together to pursue opportunities to actively involve youth across the region in livability efforts.

### Recommendations

- **Explore opportunities for place-based learning.** Place-based learning is an effective strategy for involving and engaging schools, students, and community partners as active citizens of their community and stewards of public-land resources. Place-based learning integrates civic engagement and service learning to create an experience for students of all ages to explore and experience the unique context of their community in a broader framework. These programs tend to be project-based, are relevant to both community and interdisciplinary education, and allow students to discover their own voices in the community. They rely on partnerships among public land managers, schools, and community members. For more resources, visit the Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement at [www.promiseofplace.org](http://www.promiseofplace.org) and for review of the planning manual, [www.promiseofplace.org/curriculum\\_and\\_planning/planning\\_tools](http://www.promiseofplace.org/curriculum_and_planning/planning_tools). The Assessment Team recommends the USFWS and MDNR to do more outreach in the schools to engage more students at an early age and exposes children to the refuge, river, and other natural areas. Friends groups for FWS refuges across the country have set up school bus scholarship, see the transportation chapter for examples of those programs.

## Place-Based Education - A City of Stories: Amherst, Massachusetts

In Amherst, Massachusetts, eighty students conducted oral history interviews with local immigrants, including classmates, teachers, neighbors, and family members. Then they transformed their stories into artists' books with illustrated narratives and poems about the home countries of the immigrants, their journey to the United States, and their transition to American life. Students built architectural book structures (pop-out house books and accordion-road books) that joined together to create city blocks and filled the pages with pictures and words to create a city of stories.

This unique book arts project encourages middle school students to use personal connection and creative storytelling to explore the diversity of their local community. The project integrated language arts, social studies, visual arts, and community outreach. This project explores intersections between text and image on the page, between oral and written traditions of storytelling, between classroom and community, and between people of different cultural backgrounds. For more information, see <http://www.oneheartarts.com/cityofstories.htm>.

- **Engage partners to provide opportunities for youth.** There are many opportunities for young people in the Saginaw area to explore, learn, and gain valuable work-related skills. The Assessment Team recommends that Saginaw city and county work with the schools, chambers of commerce, local businesses and industry, and surrounding public land managers to develop a list of existing internship opportunities. These partners also should work together to prepare a list of potential projects that could be part of a future internship program. Possibilities for internship opportunities may include:
  - Shadowing staff and/or providing project assistance to the USFWS and MDNR to explore work in resource management, hydrology and flood management, water safety, and recreational tourism at Shiawassee NWR and Shiawassee Flats Game Area.
  - Setting up additional AmeriCorps positions through the VISTA program, National Civilian Community Corps, or Conservation Corps, and/or working with the Student Conservation Association to assist with potential resource management or recreational development, such as trail building and maintenance, cabin and facility construction, etc..

## RESOURCES: Building a High Quality AmeriCorps Program

The AmeriCorps Program Start-up Guide is designed to assist non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, state agencies, and local governments in creating and developing programs that engage with AmeriCorps to get things done. For more information, see [http://www.in.gov/ofbci/files/Program\\_Start-Up\\_Guide\(1\).pdf](http://www.in.gov/ofbci/files/Program_Start-Up_Guide(1).pdf).

- **Engage youth in community planning efforts.** The Assessment Team recommends that the city's planning board or city council and other community organizations create youth ambassador committee positions that will allow students to provide their insights and perspectives about the Saginaw area and their vision of its future. The county and communities can also look for opportunities to create poster sessions, panel discussions, and other community engagement events for young people. The best way to involve youth is to make these kinds of events engaging and earnest but also fun. One idea is to use leadership videos that set a fun tone for a community discussion on leadership (such as the Drew Dudley video highlighted in the sidebar.)
- **Train future entrepreneurs.** Lessons on entrepreneurship can be integrated into existing business classes at high school and/or community college levels. Investing in entrepreneurial training exposes young people to opportunities that would allow them to make a good living without leaving the community and demonstrates concrete ways for them to be part of positive changes taking place in their hometown.

### Engaging Future Entrepreneurs: Pennsylvania Wilds

In a recent study by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, young people in rural areas said they would stay in the state if starting a business was an opportunity open to them. In the 12-county Pennsylvania Wilds area, Ta Brant Enos, the small business ombudsman, responded by developing a video to communicate to high school students that they *can* create a business in the area. The video highlights small business owners sharing their success stories and lessons learned, providing inspiration for the younger generation. Participating entrepreneurs include three young snowboarding aficionados who started a snowboarding company, a former U.S. Navy air traffic controller who returned home to start her recreational outfitting business, two young artists who create beautiful letterpress prints for clients worldwide, and friends who used their love of bicycling and the outdoors to open their own cycling shop. Enos offers a one-hour entrepreneurial outreach program to area high school students. See <http://www.pawildsresources.org/youngentrepreneurs>.

### RESOURCE: A Fun Way to Talk about Everyday Leadership

A community is not led only by the mayor and town staff, but also in the many people who put their shoulder to the wheel. It is important to recognize the contributions—big and small—of the many people who make their community a better place to live and work. Drew Dudley talks about this as “everyday leadership.” In his funny video, Drew shares what he calls a “lollipop moment” and speaks about how we all need to do a better job at acknowledging leadership in everyday life. See [http://www.ted.com/talks/drew\\_dudley\\_everyday\\_leadership](http://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership) for video.





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES:

- Livability
- Transportation
- Housing & Lodging
- Economic Competitiveness
- Existing Community Character
- Leveraging Resources
- Valuing Community Assets



# GENERAL LIVABILITY RESOURCES

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## FUNDING RESOURCES

### **Federal Resources for Sustainable Rural Communities**

([http://www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/federal\\_resources\\_rural.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/dced/pdf/federal_resources_rural.pdf))

This guide to HUD, DOT, EPA, and USDA programs highlights federal resources for rural communities that can be used to promote economic competitiveness, protect healthy environments, and enhance quality of life.

### **National Funding Opportunities**

([www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/national\\_funding.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/national_funding.htm))

The EPA has developed a guide of national funding and state-specific resources to assist local and state governments, communities, and nongovernmental organization who are pursuing the varied aspects of smart growth and livability.

### **A Guide to Funding Resources**

(<http://ric.nal.usda.gov/guide-to-funding>)

USDA's National Agricultural Library provides an online guide to funding for rural communities. The guide provides information on the funding process, federal, foundation, and private funding databases, and additional guides and grant writing resources.

### **Rural Federal Funding Database**

(<http://ric.nal.usda.gov/Rural-Federal-Funding-Database>)

USDA's National Agricultural Library houses an online repository of all federal funding available to rural communities in the U.S. The database is searchable by keyword or department/agency.

### **The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)**

(<https://www.cfda.gov>)

CFDA is an internet database containing information about all federal domestic programs including federal grants, loans, insurance, and training programs; information on eligibility, application procedures, selection criteria, and deadlines are also included.

### **Partnership for Sustainable Communities: Five Years of Learning from Communities and Coordinating Federal Investments**

([http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/partnership\\_accomplishments\\_report\\_2014\\_508\\_080414\\_low-res.pdf](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/partnership_accomplishments_report_2014_508_080414_low-res.pdf))

This report shows how DOT, HUD, and EPA are cooperating, changing their policies, and removing barriers to help communities provide more housing choices, make transportation systems more efficient and reliable, and create vibrant neighborhoods that attract business development and jobs while protecting the environment.

### **Vibrant Rural Communities Case Studies Series**

([www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-case-study-series](http://www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-case-study-series))

The National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation developed a case study series that highlights how rural regions and small towns across the country are growing local economies and creating stronger communities. The series demonstrates how small towns can leverage a wide range of tools and approaches to build on their assets, protect resources, and make investments that benefit residents and local businesses.

### **Livability Literature Review: A Synthesis of Current Practice**

([www.narc.org/wp-content/uploads/Livability-Report-FINAL.pdf](http://www.narc.org/wp-content/uploads/Livability-Report-FINAL.pdf))

This report prepared by the National Association of Regional Councils examines livability consensus concepts throughout communities and expands on reoccurring themes. The review will assist practitioners and policymakers understand how states and localities define, plan, and implement livability.

### **Building Livable Communities: Sustaining Prosperity, Improving Quality of Life, Building a Sense of Community**

(<http://www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/report2knew.pdf>)

This 2000 report describes the challenges of dealing with sprawl and celebrates a “wave of local innovation” as Americans work together to improve quality of life in their communities.

## ORGANIZATIONS & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### **Partners for Livable Communities**

([www.livable.org](http://www.livable.org))

Partners for Livable Communities is a national nonprofit organization working to restore and renew the communities where we work and live. The organization helps solve community problems by providing information, leadership, and guidance that help communities help themselves.

### **Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)**

(<http://www.rcac.org>)

RCAC is a nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance; training and financing so rural communities achieve their goals and visions. RCAC serves 13 western states (including Oregon) to provide assistance for environmental infrastructure, affordable housing development, economic and leadership development and community development finance.

### **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)**

(<http://www.lisc.org/>)

LISC connects local organizations and community leaders with resources to revitalize neighborhoods and improve quality of life. The LISC model assembles private and public resources and directs it to locally-defined priorities. The unique structure enables local organizations to access national resources and expertise and their funding partners to leverage their investment and achieve remarkable impacts.



# TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES

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## ACCESS

### **Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)**

(<http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/>)

The Federal Lands Access Program provides funds for work on public highways, roads, bridges, trails, and transit systems that are located on, are adjacent to, or provide access to federal lands. These facilities must be owned or maintained by a state, county, town, township, tribe, municipal, or local government. This program, newly created under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) law, emphasizes projects that provide access to high-use recreation sites or federal economic generators.

The Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) works with the states under its jurisdiction to develop each state's Programming Decisions Committee (PDC). The PDC is responsible for prioritizing the slate of projects for each state's Access Program. The PDC establishes project selection criteria and administers calls for projects.

### **Federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)**

([http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation\\_alternatives/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/);  
[http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621\\_17216\\_18231---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621_17216_18231---,00.html))

The Transportation Alternatives Program combines three previously separate sources of transportation funding through the federal transportation legislation: Transportation Enhancements, the Recreational Trails Program, and Safe Routes to School. TAP is administered by the FHWA, but implemented by the states. While TAP staff selects programs annually, the calls for proposals vary by region. The majority of TAP funding has been focused on high-population areas, with a competitive selection process for the remaining rural areas. TAP typically requires a 20 percent local match. Local agencies should contact MDOT and FHWA program staff for more information about project criteria and focused priorities. MDOT has a variety of services and resources available to local, state and federal government partners and the business community. See, <http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9621---,00.html>.

### **Current Contact:**

Transportation Enhancement Program Manager

Alex Nikoloff

517-241-1317

[nikoloffa@michigan.gov](mailto:nikoloffa@michigan.gov)

## Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants

(<http://www.dot.gov/tiger>)

The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant program provides U.S. Department of Transportation investments in road, rail, transit, and port projects that promise to achieve critical national objectives. TIGER grants are highly competitive with tremendous applicant interest. Grants are targeted to innovative capital projects and planning projects that are multimodal, multijurisdictional, or otherwise challenging to fund through existing programs. The TIGER program employs a rigorous selection process to choose projects with exceptional benefits to make communities more livable and sustainable.

### CASE STUDY: Using TIGER Funding to Revitalize Small Town Main Streets in Colorado

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs received a TIGER II Planning Grant and a HUD Community Challenge Grant to help three small communities—Fowler, Monte Vista, and Rifle—pursue a unique joint planning initiative to revitalize their downtowns. The work will include creating construction-ready design drawings for the renovation of historic buildings and planning for development that will increase walkability, transportation choice, and energy efficiency.

## CONNECTIONS

### FHWA Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

([http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational\\_trails/overview/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/overview/))

The Recreational Trails Program is an assistance program of the FHWA. The RTP provides funds to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and nonmotorized recreational trail uses. RTP funds are available to state, federal, and local government agencies or qualified private organizations. The minimum grant amount is \$10,000 with a maximum of \$100,000. Motorized projects are eligible for the maximum amount of motorized funding available.

Recreational Trails Grants (RTP) are national grants administered by MDNR for recreational trail-related projects, such as hiking, running, bicycling, off-road motorcycling, and all-terrain vehicle riding. Yearly grants are awarded based on funds voted on by the U.S. Congress. For more information, see [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225\\_37985-125045--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_37985-125045--,00.html).



## **Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA)**

([www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca))

The National Park Service's RTCA provides technical assistance to help citizens and community leaders plan and advance locally led conservation projects. Eligible applicants do not need to be located near or be associated with a national park.

## **National Trails Fund**

(<http://www.americanhiking.org/National-Trails-Fund/>)

American Hiking Society's National Trails Fund offers hiking trail improvement grants to active member organizations of its Hiking Alliance. Once a year, Alliance Members have the opportunity to apply for a grant (between \$500 and \$5,000) to improve hiking access or hiker safety on a particular trail.

## **International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA)**

(<https://www.imba.com>)

IMBA provides several grant and technical assistance programs to build trail and bike projects. See below:

*Small Grants Program:* The small grants program provides assistance to IMBA chapters and supporting organizations for trail and bike projects, see <https://www.imba.com/resources-grants/imba-small-grants-program>.

*Trail Solutions:* Trail Solutions offers trail design, construction, assessment, and education. See <https://www.imba.com/trail-solutions/service>.

*Bell Built Grants:* This grant program launched in early 2014 by Bell Helmets to provide up to \$100,000 in technical assistance grants to fund three mountain bike facility built by IMBA Trail Solutions. See <https://www.imba.com/grants/bell-built>.

## **Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grant Programs**

(<http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225---,00.html>)

MDNR awards grants related to the following categories:

- Recreation Acquisition and Development
- Boating
- Dam Management
- Fisheries
- Forestry
- Invasive Species
- Law Enforcement
- Trails Management
- Wildlife Habitat Management

### **Michigan's Safe Routes to School**

([http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9615\\_11261\\_41987---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9615_11261_41987---,00.html) & <http://saferoutesmichigan.org/>)

MDOT's Safe Routes to School Program assists schools and communities in the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools while promoting a healthy lifestyle for children and their parents.

### **East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG)**

([www.emcog.org](http://www.emcog.org))

EMCOG provides both direct services and support to other entities to improve the transportation system within a region of 14 counties surrounding Lake Huron.

### **National Scenic Byway Foundation**

([www.nsbfoundation.com](http://www.nsbfoundation.com))

The National Scenic Byway Foundation aids in the successful completion of projects that might not otherwise be accomplished by the Federal Highway Administration and/or other byway organizations. It can assist in branding, management, preservation, and enhancement of byways through cooperation between government, communities, and other stakeholders.

### **Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook**

(<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/guides/complete-streets-local-policy-workbook/>)

This introductory guide serves as a starting point for transportation experts and interested local leaders to begin mapping out their own Complete Streets policies.

### **Benefits of Complete Streets: Complete Streets Work in Rural Communities**

(<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-rural.pdf>)

Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition developed a fact sheet of the benefits of implementing the complete streets approach in rural areas and small towns.

### **The Best Complete Street Policies of 2012**

(<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs-2012-policy-analysis.pdf>)

The National Complete Streets Coalition examined and scored every policy passed in 2012 based on 10 elements of the policy language: Vision and intent; All users and modes; All projects and phases; Clear, accountable exceptions; Network; Jurisdiction; Design; Context sensitivity; Performance measures; and Implementation next steps. These elements refine a community's vision, provide clear direction and intent, complement community needs, and grant the flexibility needed to create an effective Complete Streets process and outcome.

## WAYFINDING

### **Wayshowing for Byways: A Reference Manual**

([www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/visitor-experience/wayshowing](http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/visitor-experience/wayshowing))

*Wayshowing for Byways* is a reference manual provided by the America's Byways Resource Center that offers suggestions about how to show travelers how to experience a route and for improving the navigational element of the visitor experience. A culmination of more than two years of research, development, and testing, this manual addresses the concerns of a different audience in each chapter.

## TRANSIT

### **Federal Transit Administration (FTA)**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/13747\\_11003.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/13747_11003.html))

FTA provides financial assistance to states, municipalities, transit agencies, and other public bodies for the provision and delivery of public transportation services, capital investments in transit systems and facilities, as well for maintenance and repair of public transit systems. FTA supports the Livable Communities Initiative and is committed to improving livability in rural communities through the support of transportation agencies to make public transit investments. Their programs offer unique opportunities for rural communities.

### **Bus Livability Discretionary Grants**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13094\\_3557.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13094_3557.html))

The Bus Livability Discretionary Grants program provides unallocated Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities money to projects that fulfill the six livability principles of the interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The goal of the program is to invest in projects that increase transportation options, provide access to jobs and affordable housing, encourage economic development, and improve accessibility to transportation for the public. The program funds capital expenses for a wide range of projects, such as intermodal facilities, sustainably oriented buses, bicycle infrastructure, and more.

### **Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093\\_3556.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093_3556.html))

This program provides formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these

needs. Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of population for these groups of people.

### **Rural Areas Formula Program**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093\\_3555.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093_3555.html))

This program provides funding to States for the purpose of supporting public transportation in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000.

### **Job Access and Reverse Commute Program**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093\\_3550.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093_3550.html))

The program is to address transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment.

### **New Freedom Program**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093\\_3549.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13093_3549.html))

This program provides additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and society.

### **Rural Transit Assistance Program**

([www.webbuilder.nationalrtap.org](http://www.webbuilder.nationalrtap.org))

This program provides training, technical assistance, research, and related support services in rural areas.

### **Intercity Bus Program**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/legislation\\_law/12349\\_6519.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/legislation_law/12349_6519.html))

The Intercity Bus Program under FTA's nonurbanized area formula grant program supports the connection between nonurbanized areas and the larger regional or national system of intercity bus service. The program provides critical transit access to residents in nonurbanized areas to employment, health, educational, and other important "human" services and opportunities.

### **Major Capital Investments (New Starts/Small Starts)**

([http://www.fta.dot.gov/12304\\_3559.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/12304_3559.html))

These discretionary programs are the federal government's primary financial resources for supporting the planning, development, and construction of major transit capital projects.

## MULTIPLE MODES

### **FHWA Bicycle & Pedestrian Program**

([http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian))

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Program, part of the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Human Environment, promotes bicycle and pedestrian transportation use, safety, and accessibility. Definitions for priority bicycle facilities include:

Bicycle facilities: Defined as shared roadways, signed shared roadways, bike lanes, and shared-use paths. Providing adequate bike facilities that are clearly marked can mean easier, safer, and more frequent trips made by bicyclists.

Bike shops and rental outfitters: Which offer important amenities for traveling cyclists and residents. Bicycle retailers provide the goods and services associated with bicycling, act as information resources about bicycling for visitors and new riders, and can often attract and cultivate biking enthusiasts in communities.

Bike parking and bicycle racks: Which are often simple and inexpensive ways to make an area more accessible for bicyclists. Having these amenities allows bikers to explore downtowns, shop, eat, and feel safe knowing that there is a secure place to leave a bike.

Bike hostels: These can take many shapes and forms, from the formal to the informal, all providing the necessary amenities for long-distance travelers or the bicyclist on a budget.

### **National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project (NBPD)**

(<http://bikepeddocumentation.org/>)

The National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project (NBPD) is a collaboration between Alta Planning + Design and the Institute of Transportation Engineers' Pedestrian and Bicycle Council to provide information on forecasting and counting, how counts influence bike and pedestrian programs, and adjustment factors to help extrapolate counts to annual figures.

### **MDOT's Biking In Michigan**

([http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9615\\_11223---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9615_11223---,00.html))

MDOT is working to create a better, safer roadway for all users by providing a variety of services and information supporting walking and bicycling, including:

- Training for engineers and planners
- Educational and safety videos and publications
- Road and trail bicycle maps to view, order or print
- US Bicycle Routes 10,20, and 35 information
- State and national parks information for bicyclists
- Information on the use of ferries and major bridges

### **Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance**

(<http://www.michigantrails.org/>)

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is the statewide voice for non-motorized trail users, helping people build, connect and promote trails for a healthier and more prosperous Michigan.



## **People For Bikes**

(<http://www.peopleforbikes.org/>)

Formerly the Bikes Belong Coalition, People for Bikes provides funding for important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the United States. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives.

## **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center**

([http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/planning/funding\\_government.cfm](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/planning/funding_government.cfm))

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center serves as a website with resources for planning and design, training, government funding, and other programs related to pedestrian and bicycle projects. See their case study compendium for examples of pedestrian and bicycle project implementation at

[http://katana.hsrb.unc.edu/cms/downloads/pbic\\_case\\_study\\_compendium.pdf](http://katana.hsrb.unc.edu/cms/downloads/pbic_case_study_compendium.pdf).

## **The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

(<http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/lwcf/index.html>)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund program provides matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities (as well as funding for shared federal land acquisition and conservation strategies).

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Direct Loans**

([http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/HAD-CF\\_Direct\\_Loans.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/HAD-CF_Direct_Loans.html))

Rural communities can receive loan funds to construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety, and public services. This can include costs to acquire land needed for a facility, pay necessary professional fees, and purchase equipment required for the operation of the facility.

### **Metropolitan and Rural Transportation Planning: Case Studies and Checklists for Regional Collaboration**

(<http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/rpompo.pdf>)

## OTHERS

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), with funding support from FHWA, developed this guide to facilitate improved collaboration, communication, and partnerships among the nation's metropolitan planning organizations, rural transportation planning organizations, state departments of transportation, and other entities.



# HOUSING & LODGING RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES

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US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

## **Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants**

([http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/sustainable\\_housing\\_communities/sustainable\\_communities\\_regional\\_planning\\_grants](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/sustainable_communities_regional_planning_grants))

This program provides grants to help improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, and increase state, regional, and local capacity to incorporate livability, sustainability, and social equity values into land use plans and zoning.

## **Community Challenge Grants**

([http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/sustainable\\_housing\\_communities/HUD-DOT\\_Community\\_Challenge\\_Grants](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/HUD-DOT_Community_Challenge_Grants))

This program provides grants to enable communities in fostering reform and reducing barriers to achieving affordable, economically vital, and sustainable communities. Such efforts may include amending or replacing local master plans, zoning codes, and building codes. This program also supports the development of affordable housing through the development and adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances and other activities such as acquisition of land for affordable housing projects.

## **Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities**

([http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/sustainable\\_housing\\_communities/capacity-building](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/capacity-building))

This program, jointly funded by HUD and EPA, will identify intermediaries to provide additional assistance to the recipients of the two grant programs above.

## **Housing Choice and Project-Based Voucher Programs**

(<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/about/index.cfm>)

Housing Choice and Project-Based Voucher Programs provide rental subsidy funding to local public housing agencies for units that are chosen by the tenant in the private market (housing choice vouchers) or for use in specific developments or units (project-based vouchers). Housing choice vouchers allow tenants more flexibility in deciding the location of their residence, often enabling residents to live closer to work, family, amenities, or services.

### **HOME Investment Partnership**

(<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/programs/home>)

The HOME Program provides formula funding directly to larger cities and counties, to consortia of local governments, and to state governments. The HOME program is designed to create affordable housing for low-income households and can take the form of direct assistance or loan guarantees. Funds can be used for most kinds of housing development, including acquisition and rehabilitation in the creation of low-income housing. Additionally, HOME program funds can be used for homebuyer assistance and for tenant-based rental assistance.

### **Green Refinance Program Plus**

([http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/2011/HUDNO.11-106](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2011/HUDNO.11-106))

Green Refinance Plus is an enhancement of the Fannie Mae/FHA Risk-Share program, which provides funding for the refinance, preservation, and energy-efficient retrofits of older affordable multifamily housing properties, including those that are currently in Fannie Mae's or FHA's portfolio. This program allows for lower debt service coverage and higher loan-to-value ratios, to generate extra loan proceeds for property rehab and energy-efficient retrofits.

### **Mortgage Insurance for Rental Housing**

(<http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/progdesc/renturbanhsg220.cfm>)

Several FHA mortgage insurance programs can be used to facilitate the new construction and substantial rehabilitation of multifamily rental projects. Some FHA programs can be used to refinance and acquire existing multifamily projects not requiring substantial rehabilitation.

## US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

### **USDA's Housing and Community Assistance Programs**

([http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/LP\\_Subject\\_HousingAndCommunityAssistance.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/LP_Subject_HousingAndCommunityAssistance.html))

USDA provides loans and grants to rural communities and individuals for housing and community facilities including the purchase, repairs, energy efficiency, and rural rental housing.

## MICHIGAN HOUSING RESOURCES

### **Michigan State Housing Development Authority**

(<http://www.michigan.gov/mshda>)

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority provides financial and technical assistance through public and private partnerships to create and preserve safe and decent affordable housing.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### **Urban Land Institute Ten Principles for Developing Affordable Housing**

([http://www.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/TP\\_AffordableHousing.ashx\\_.pdf](http://www.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/TP_AffordableHousing.ashx_.pdf))

This publication summarizes the knowledge and experience of experts in the affordable housing industry and ways to encourage the development of more affordable housing choices as part of localities' efforts to achieve balanced, healthy, and sustainable communities.

### **Affordable Housing Design Advisor**

([www.designadvisor.org](http://www.designadvisor.org))

The Affordable Housing Design Advisor brings together experience and ideas from successful affordable housing projects all over the country and the people who developed, designed and built them. To accompany the Affordable Housing Design Advisor, a design-focused workbook was developed as a tool to help communities meet affordable housing design goals. For more information, see <http://huduser.org/Publications/PDF/finalall.pdf>.

### **National Association of Realtors' (NAR) Smart Growth Action Grants**

(<http://www.realtoractioncenter.com/for-associations/smartgrowth/smart-growth-action-grants.html>)

NAR's Smart Growth Action Grants support a wide range of land-use related activities with the primary goal of supporting more sustainable development through involvement of realtors.

### **Enterprise Affordable Housing Design Grant**

(<http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/solutions-and-innovation/design-leadership/design-grant#sthash.cHT9nR2j.dpuf>)

Enterprise's Pre-Development Design Grant program provides funding for design exploration during the early stages of affordable housing development. Carrying the project from inception to the beginning of schematic design, these grants enable development teams to define project goals, identify challenges, and explore multiple design solutions.



## NeighborWorks America

([www.nw.org](http://www.nw.org))

NeighborWorks America is one of the country's leaders in affordable housing and community development. It works to create opportunities for lower-income people to live in affordable homes in safe, sustainable neighborhoods that are healthy places for families to grow.

## Housing Assistance Council Affordable Green Building in Rural Communities

(<http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/documents/greenbuildingreport.pdf>)

This exploratory report provides many examples of affordable green building in the rural context and more details of the challenges rural organizations may face incorporating green techniques in affordable housing projects.

## The Center for Community Progress

(<http://www.communityprogress.net/>)

The Center for Community Progress is the only national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to building a future in which entrenched, systemic blight no longer exists in America's communities. As a national leader on solutions for vacant, abandoned, and problem properties, Community Progress service as the leading resources for local, state, and federal policies and best practices that address the full cycle property revitalization, from blight prevention, through the acquisition and maintenance of problem properties, to their productive use.



# ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES

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## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

### **USDA's Promoting Tourism in Rural America**

(<http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/tourism.html>)

This revision of *Promoting Tourism in Rural America* covers the major issues in rural tourism including agritourism, cultural/heritage tourism, ecotourism, planning, marketing, economic impact and more.

### **National Trust for Historic Preservation Survival Toolkit**

(<http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/economics-of-revitalization/heritage-tourism/survival-toolkit/#.UwPtMsRDseg>)

The recent downturn in the economy has had a major impact on many sectors of the cultural and heritage tourism industry. The news over the past few years includes a number of losses—heritage sites and museums closing, state programs eliminated, tourism agency budgets slashed, and so forth. Despite the challenges, many communities have survived and thrived. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has collected success stories in this “Survival Toolkit” that provides a wide range of suggestions for continuing and expanding heritage tourism even during downturns in the economy.

### **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**

(<http://arts.gov>)

The National Endowment for the Arts provides several grants to expand and enhance the role of the arts and cultural tourism products throughout the country. Potential funding opportunities for Sweet Home include:

***Challenge America Fast-Track Review Grants:*** The NEA provides up to \$10,000 in matching grants for projects in underserved communities for cultural districts, public art, and cultural tourism promotion. For more information, see <http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/challenge-america-fast-track>.

***Art Works:*** This program supports nonprofit arts activities in disciplines such as folk and traditional arts, museums, and presenters (including festivals). For more information, see <http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works>.

***Our Town:*** This program supports creative place-making projects that contribute to the livability of communities and places the arts at the core.

***Citizens' Institute on Rural Design:*** The CIRD provides site and downtown design/planning workshops for small communities administered by the Project for Public Spaces. For more information, see [www.rural-design.org](http://www.rural-design.org). See their resource *Seven Secrets of Successful Communities* at <http://rural-design.org/blog/seven-secrets-successful-communities>

### **Preservation Directory Grants and Funding Sources**

(<http://www.preservationdirectory.com/PreservationGeneralResources/GrantsFundingSources.aspx>)

The Preservation Directory provides information about grants and fundraising for historic and cultural resource preservation.

### **Grantmakers in the Arts**

(<http://www.giarts.org/>)

Grantmakers in the Arts is a national network of private, public, and corporate arts funders that provides leadership and service that advances the use of philanthropic and governmental resources to support the growth of arts and culture.

### **Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs Grant Program**

(<http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#mcaca-grants>)

The Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs coordinates grants to arts and culture organizations, cities and municipalities, and other nonprofit organizations to encourage, develop and facilitate an enriched environment of artistic, creative and cultural activity in Michigan.

### **ArtPlace America**

([www.artplaceamerica.org](http://www.artplaceamerica.org))

A collaboration of 13 national and regional foundations and six of the nation's largest banks, ArtPlace America advances creative placemaking across the country, the practice of making arts and cultural projects central in place-based strategies to transform communities.

### **Outdoor Industry Association Outdoor Recreation Reports**

(<http://www.outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/recreation/resources.php>)

The gateway communities of Shiawassee NWR can track the trends and growth in various outdoor recreation activities—including Michigan-specific highlights—by accessing the annual studies from the Outdoor Industry Association including the Outdoor Recreation Economy Report and the Outdoor Participation Report.

## REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

### **Know Your Region**

(<http://www.knowyourregion.org/about>)

Funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and managed by the NADO Research Foundation, this research project explores regional and local approaches to economic innovation and competitiveness across the United States. The resources developed as part of the overall project curriculum, as well as the Know Your Region online clearinghouse, are intended to help local officials, economic development practitioners, community leaders, and citizens assess local and regional assets, needs, and visions in a global context, leading to long-term regional prosperity and sustainability.

### **EDA Tools for Economic Development**

(<http://www.eda.gov/tools/>)

The EDA provides resources for local economic development ranging from identifying levels of distress, developing a strategic plan, building a regional economic cluster, and identifying the competitive advantage.

### **CASE STUDY: Maryville, Tennessee Greenway Trail Attracts Major Corporations**

The neighboring cities of Maryville and Alcoa, Tennessee, are proud of their eight-mile greenway trail as a transportation system that provides residents with a healthy alternative for travel to work, school, recreation areas, shops, and restaurants. The trail has helped instill a strong sense of community pride; it also attracts an increasing number of visitors, new residents, and employers. One example is the relocation of Ruby Tuesday's Restaurant Support Center to a site adjacent to the trail. The company's Chairman and CEO Samuel E. Beall, III, stated "I was very impressed with the beauty of the park, which helps provide a sense of community to this area, as well as the many benefits it provides to our more than 300 employees." Blount Memorial Hospital, Alcoa, Inc., and other businesses have contributed more than \$300,000 of funds and easements to enhance the trail's core funding of more than \$1 million in federal Transportation Enhancements. In addition to the economic benefits, the schools use the trail system as part of their physical education programs and as a natural classroom for units on nature and ecology. More information is available from Tom Wietnauer, city of Maryville, at [tweitnau@ci.maryville.tn.us](mailto:tweitnau@ci.maryville.tn.us), or Chris Hamby, city of Alcoa, at [chamby@ci.alcoa.tn.us](mailto:chamby@ci.alcoa.tn.us).

## **CASE STUDY: An Ethnographic Investigation of a Community's Use of Sport and Cultural Events**

A recent study indicates the potential of event tourism for rural communities, acknowledging that event and festival production can be a highly effective means for publicizing a rural community's appealing features and attracting tourists who might otherwise never visit. The benefits of festivals extend well beyond generating tourism dollars and include strengthened social capital of rural communities and enriched quality of small-town life. Further, the study highlights how the social outcomes of sport events may be leveraged when the arts are used to complement sports and when commercial elements support social leverage. Such sports and arts performances can be blended to support both economic and social objectives. The report advises that communities considering event-based tourism carefully plan the economic and social objectives and ensure that they are in line with community capacity.

See Vassilios Ziakas, *An Event Portfolio in Rural Development: An Ethnographic Investigation of a Community's Use of Sport and Cultural Events*, (2007), [http://www.academia.edu/1833723/An\\_Event\\_Portfolio\\_in\\_Rural\\_Development\\_An\\_Ethnographic\\_Investigation\\_of\\_a\\_Communitys\\_Use\\_of\\_Sport\\_and\\_Cultural\\_Events](http://www.academia.edu/1833723/An_Event_Portfolio_in_Rural_Development_An_Ethnographic_Investigation_of_a_Communitys_Use_of_Sport_and_Cultural_Events).

## **CASE STUDY: Regional Visioning & Implementation: Bear Lake Valley Blueprint**

The Bear Lake Valley Blueprint in rural Utah and Idaho used scenario planning and cost/benefit analyses to clarify priorities and guide local decision making. The area's regional economy is based mainly on agriculture and tourism. The region focused on a vision for future growth in towns and villages to preserve working lands and open space. The regional plan calls for more compact and infill development, more walkable mixed-use neighborhoods, reduced water demand, and lower road construction costs. Overall, their scenario estimated \$83 million in lower local infrastructure costs. Regional leaders recognized that integrating regional infrastructure can better align resources and promote the region's competitive advantages. (NADO Research Foundation, "Regional Approaches to Sustainable Development." September 2011. [www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NADO-Sustainable-Devt-2011.pdf](http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NADO-Sustainable-Devt-2011.pdf))

## CASE STUDY: Clarion-Little Toby Creek Trail, Pennsylvania

This picturesque 18-mile trail meanders along the Wild and Scenic Clarion River and Little Toby Creek through Elk and Jefferson counties between the charming small towns of Ridgway and Brockway. Starting in 1992, it took nine years, \$1.8 million and thousands of volunteer hours to complete the trail. The trail is open year round for nonmotorized use (bicycling and walking), and in the winter becomes an excellent cross-country skiing trail.

According to local historian and former regional planner Bob Imhof the community pushed for the trail's development in order to provide a place for residents to ride bicycles, taking advantage of the existing moderate grade rail beds from the area's historic lumber heritage. Shortly after the trail's opening, residents in Ridgway were surprised by the arrival of bike tourists, who were seeking a new riding experience. An existing outfitter quickly added bicycles to its canoe livery and now the trail benefits both residents and visitors. According to the 2007 Clarion River Greenway Plan, local tourism sources report that visitors to the Clarion River corridor generate \$144 million in revenue annually, with hubs such as Ridgway critical to the local region. Much of the revenue is generated from outside of the corridor, and results in a net gain for the area.

More recently, Brockway was selected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as one of two communities in Pennsylvania to participate in a pilot healthy community program aimed at combating obesity. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has assisted by working to better integrate the trail into the community, and by helping to develop a walk-to-school program.

## NEW BUSINESS

### **USDA Rural Development**

([www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov))

USDA Rural Development supports rural regional economic prosperity by providing job training and business development opportunities for rural residents, including cooperative business development, community economic development and strategic community planning, and faith-based and self-help initiatives.

### **USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG)**

([http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP\\_RBOG.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_RBOG.html))

The primary objective of the RBOG program is to promote sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Other USDA grants are also available. More information is on the USDA website at [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RD\\_Grants.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RD_Grants.html)



### **USDA Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG)**

([http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp\\_vapg.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_vapg.html))

The primary objective of the VAPG program is to help agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based value-added products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the end goals of this program.

### **American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA)**

(<http://www.amiba.net/>)

AMIBA is a charitable organization that helps communities start and sustain an Independent Business Alliance.

### **Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

([www.eda.gov](http://www.eda.gov))

U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) plays a critical role in fostering regional economic development efforts in communities across the nation.

*Economic Development Assistance Program:* <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=248297>

*Planning and Local Technical Assistance Program:* <http://www.grants.gov/view-opportunity.html?oppId=189193>

### **Small Business Administration (SBA) and SBA's Small Business Development Centers**

The U.S. Small Business Administration can help potential and existing small business owners start and grow their businesses and provides loans, grants, training, and other small-business resources. The Michigan branch can be reached at [www.sba.gov/mi](http://www.sba.gov/mi). The SBA's Small Business Development Centers further build, sustain, and grow small businesses as well as promote small business development and enhance local economies by creating businesses and fulfilling the SBA mission of creating jobs.

### **Made in Rural America Initiative**

In February 2014, President Obama directed his administration, working through the White House Rural Council, to lead a new "Made in Rural America" export and investment initiative. This initiative is charged with bringing together federal resources to help rural businesses and leaders take advantage of new investment opportunities and access new customers and markets abroad. For more information, see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/07/fact-sheet-opportunity-all-establishing-new-made-rural-america-export-an>.

## ShadeFund

(<http://www.shadefund.org/>)

ShadeFund invests in entrepreneurs across the United States who generate economic, social, and environmental returns. Its goal is to help people build enterprises that make a difference with every board foot, kilowatt hour, paddle stroke, or bushel they produce. ShadeFund links small investors to entrepreneurs pursuing projects that build local economies and support small businesses that conserve land and water resources.

## Michigan Business

(<http://www.michiganbusiness.org/#home-intro>)

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is the state's marketing arm and lead advocate for business development, talent and jobs, tourism, film, and digital media incentives, arts and cultural grants, and overall economic growth. The MEDC offers a number of business assistance services and capital programs for business attraction and acceleration, entrepreneurship, strategic partnerships, talent enhancement, and urban and community development.



# VALUING EXISTING COMMUNITY & CHARACTER RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES

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## INFILL & BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

### **Managing Maryland's Growth: Models and Guidelines for Infill Development**

([http://planning.maryland.gov/pdf/ourproducts/publications/modelsguidelines/infillfinal\\_1.pdf](http://planning.maryland.gov/pdf/ourproducts/publications/modelsguidelines/infillfinal_1.pdf))

This publication is intended to help local governments, architects, builders, and developers achieve infill by offering remedies that overcome barriers; illustrating rural, suburban, and urban strategies; and identifying alternative approaches.

### **Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) of Washington: Infill Development**

(<http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/infilldev.aspx#infill>)

The MRSC has created an online database of guidebooks, reports, strategies, incentives, and tools to encourage infill development in communities.

### **Brownfields Federal Programs Guide**

(<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/partners/brownfields-federal-programs-guide-2013.pdf>)

This is a guide to all federal brownfield programs and how these programs encourage economic development and sustainability as part of revitalization of brownfield sites.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES & PRESERVATION OF CHARACTER

### **Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guidelines**

(<http://www.pawildsresources.org/designguide>)

The Pennsylvania Wilds is known for its strong sense of place. The region's rural and historic character is part of what makes the area attractive to visitors and residents, and along with the commitment of local leaders to serve as stewards of that character. The PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship is a voluntary planning document that highlights how communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds can protect or enhance their rural character as they grow. This is a resource for developers, planners, architects, business or property owners, revitalization partners, and community leaders.

### **Carroll County, Maryland Design Expectations**

(<http://ccgovernment.carr.org/ccg/compplan/design/>)

Carroll County, Maryland, is rich in history and rural in nature. The county welcomes new business as part of supporting its thriving community. In doing so, county staff asks the business community to treat their special place with respect by submitting plans that will architecturally and aesthetically complement their community. The county provides design expectations to developers in the earliest stages of planning and engineering processes to minimize the amount of time it takes to move through the site plan and approval process. The guide provides requests, but not requirements, for creative design.

### **Better Models for Commercial Development**

(<http://www.conservationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Better-Models-For-Commerical-Development-The-Conservation-Fund.pdf>)

*Better Models for Commercial Development* shows how communities can improve the design and siting of new commercial development. This booklet was written for elected officials, planning commissioners, developers and interested citizens around the country. It shows how new commercial development can be made more attractive, more efficient and more profitable.

## REVITALIZATION & REUSE

### **USDA's Sustainable Rural Downtowns Case Studies**

(<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SustainableRuralCommunities.html>)

USDA highlights nine communities that leveraged USDA funds and strengthened their local economy through sustainable development.

### **National Clearinghouse for Education Facilities (NCEF)**

(<http://www.ncef.org/rl/preservation.cfm>)

NCEF provides a host of resources on reusing educational facilities, such as school, commercial, or community facilities.

### **USDA's Rural Information Center: Downtown Revitalization**

(<http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/downtown.html>)

In 2005, USDA created an online guide to downtown revitalization that includes community planning resources, funding sources, best practices, and model programs

### CASE STUDY: Artists in Storefronts

An ongoing project in the Whittier neighborhood of Minneapolis, Artists in Storefronts aims to work with neighborhood organizations, artists, and local businesses in an effort to promote creativity, revitalize local economies, and provide everyone with equal, open access to art. See [www.artistsinstorefronts.com](http://www.artistsinstorefronts.com).

### CASE STUDY: Ridgway, Pennsylvania, Historic Façade Grant Program

Ridgway, Pennsylvania (population 4,000), is well known for its award-winning Historic Façade Grant Program, which began as a partnership between the Borough of Ridgway and the Ridgway Heritage Council in 1998. The program was initially funded by a grant from the Stackpole-Hall Foundation of Elk County and the Borough of Ridgway. Current funding is provided through a state grant and is administered through the Borough of Ridgway with help from the Ridgway Main Street Program. All improvements must follow the U.S. Secretary of Interior standards of design practices for preservation; if needed the Ridgway Heritage Council Design Committee provides free consulting on project design. A business is eligible for up to \$5,000 in grant funding. Eligible applicants can be the building or business owner. The applicant must match or exceed the grant amount. Ridgway, Pennsylvania, also has a Streetscape Program that, with federal transportation funding, added entrance signs, lighting, and benches to the downtown. See <http://www.ridgwayheritagecouncil.com/faccedilade-program.html>.



# LEVERAGING RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES

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## **Aligning Strategies to Maximize Impact: Case Studies on Transportation and Economic Development**

(<http://www.nwccog.org/index.php/resources/grant-opportunities/>)

This National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation report highlights case studies where transportation planning efforts are linked with economic development strategies in a regional context.

## **Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities**

([http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting\\_Sustainable\\_Rural\\_Communities\\_FIN\\_AL.PDF](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting_Sustainable_Rural_Communities_FIN_AL.PDF))

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities published this guide in 2011 to share examples and outcomes from its (then) three-year old initiative. The document explains how the Partnership supports rural communities and provides case studies organized by principle.

## **Reaching Out: A USDA Forest Service Toolkit for Equal Participation**

(<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/Toolkit.pdf>)

This toolkit is designed to help forest service staff liaison with landowners, community leaders, nonprofit organization, and volunteer groups that are implementing USFS goals and programs.

## **Grantmakers in the Arts: Resources for Culture and Community Revitalization and Collaboration**

(<http://www.giarts.org/article/culture-and-community-revitalization-collaboration#resources>)

Grantmakers in the Arts provides a detailed resource compendium of publications that provide examples, research, and assessment of the best practices to community revitalization and collaboration, and the role of the arts.

## **Saginaw County Community Action Committee, Inc.**

(<http://www.saginawcac.org/index.html>)

Saginaw County Community Action Committee, Inc. is a community action agency that provides programming to the low income and elderly population of Saginaw County. It is one of 30 community action agencies serving the State of Michigan and part of a network of over 1000 community action agencies serving the entire nation. This network affords the Saginaw Community Action Committee access to a supportive network of community action problem solvers.





# VALUING COMMUNITY ASSETS RESOURCES & CASE STUDIES

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## VALUING COMMUNITIES

### **Outdoor Nation and Merrell Pack Project Grants**

(<http://outdoornation.org/grants>)

Five \$2,500 grants are awarded each year to the most innovative, impactful, and sustainable projects focusing on increasing outdoor recreation while also creating significant relationships with the environment.

### **Discover Our Shared Heritage**

(<http://www.nps.gov/NR/travel/>)

The National Park Service's Discover Our Shared Heritage travel itinerary program was developed through the Heritage Education Services Program to showcase thematic tours at historic sites across the country. Itineraries offer self-guided tours focusing on significant American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Itineraries are developed as a partnership between the local organizers and the National Park Service.

### **USDA's Arts and Humanities in Rural America**

(<http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/artspub.html#cb>)

This online guide brings together full-text resources for local officials and organizations seeking information on planning arts and humanities programs in their communities.

### **Wells Fargo Foundation**

([https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/charitable/or\\_guidelines](https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/charitable/or_guidelines))

The Wells Fargo Foundation supports long-term economic growth and quality of life for everyone in communities across the country. It promotes economic development, financial education, affordable housing, and environmental responsibility.

### **Stronger Together: A Manual on the Principles and Practices of Civic Engagement**

([http://www.nps.gov/civic/resources/CE\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/civic/resources/CE_Manual.pdf))

This manual is intended for educators and interpreters who are engaging and developing programs with parks, schools, and neighboring communities and interacting with the public. It provides an overview of the principles and practices of civic engagement.

## **The Triple Bottom Line Tool**

(<http://www.tbltool.org/>)

The Triple Bottom Line Tool helps optimize and communicate investment alignment with economic, environmental, and social performance, what's referred to as the triple bottom line or TBL. Investors, economic development professionals, and decision makers can use this tool to configure development investments for maximum returns, consider and prioritize alternatives, and communicate investment alignment with TBL goals.

### **CASE STUDY: Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association**

The Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association began over 30 years ago with the mission of providing art for personal growth and to serve as an economic engine for the community. They act as a nonprofit arts council serving the mountain communities of North Georgia, East Tennessee, and Western North Carolina. Over the years, the center has grown to serve an audience of 30,000 annually with programming that includes art and music classes for youth and adults and exhibit galleries to showcase and sell local artists' work. The center hosts several popular festivals, including Arts in the Park and the Plein Air Festival (both juried arts events) and the Wildlife and Nature Art Festival and Expo which showcases wildlife and nature artists and also offers outdoor activities including hiking, fishing, camping, and boating. See <http://www.blueridgearts.net>.

### **CASE STUDY: HandMade in America—Western North Carolina**

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, HandMade in America, based in Western North Carolina, has become a national model for cultural and heritage trail development. HandMade in America was created to showcase artists and craftspeople in a 23-county region and to generate economic impact for this economically depressed area.

HandMade developed a system to guide visitors directly to the artists' studios, but to do so they needed criteria to determine which artists would be included on the trail. To be part of the HandMade in America initiative, shops and galleries must feature American-made crafts with an emphasis on those from Western North Carolina, and restaurants must feature indigenous foods as part of their standard menu. Participants are trained in how to welcome and accommodate visitors and how to think as entrepreneurs to create new partnerships and promotions. See [www.handmadeinamerica.org](http://www.handmadeinamerica.org).

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

### **The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement**

([www.promiseofplace.org](http://www.promiseofplace.org))

The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement provides information about place-based education. See their manual at [www.promiseofplace.org/curriculum\\_and\\_planning/planning\\_tools](http://www.promiseofplace.org/curriculum_and_planning/planning_tools).

### **Effective Practices to Engaging At-Risk Youth in Service**

([http://www.utahciviccoalition.org/downloads/Engaging\\_At-Risk\\_Youth\\_in\\_Service.pdf](http://www.utahciviccoalition.org/downloads/Engaging_At-Risk_Youth_in_Service.pdf))

Youth Service America designed this guide to provide an overview of the underlying theory and effective practices for engaging at-risk youth in service by examining the roles they have played and can play in serving their communities.

### **The 4-H Youth Development Program**

([www.4-h.org/youth-development-programs/citizenship-youth-engagement/community-action/rural-youth/](http://www.4-h.org/youth-development-programs/citizenship-youth-engagement/community-action/rural-youth/))

Engaging Youth, Serving Community began with a grassroots effort to recognize the 4-H Centennial in 2002. The National Conversation on Positive Youth Development in the 21st Century brought together youth and adults in local communities, at the state level, and finally in Washington, D.C., to discuss how to develop a positive future for America's youth.

The following national goals were established:

- empower rural communities to involve youth as partners in decision-making and governance
- improve the quality of afterschool programs in rural communities by increasing the competencies of providers and integrating 4-H curricula
- provide professional staff and volunteer development to increase the capacity of regions, states, and local communities to accomplish the first two goals.

The program aims to impart youth with the life skills and experience they need to emerge as effective leaders and contributing members of society.

### **CASE STUDY: The Of the Student, By the Student Service Learning Project.**

The Of the Student, By the Student, For the Student Program is a nationally recognized, award-winning service learning program that offers students a full immersion in American history and heritage. Eighth grade students find themselves onsite at the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, bringing the stories of those who came before them to life in videos that they write, produce, shoot, and edit under the guidance of JTHG professionals. The resulting mini-movies, or Vodcasts, offer a permanent record of the students' personal experiences and interpretations.

The pilot program was created and customized by the JTHG Partnership for Harpers Ferry Middle School students in conjunction with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. See <http://www.hallowedground.org/Education/Of-the-Student-By-the-Student-For-the-Student-Service-Learning-Project>.

### **CASE STUDY: Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's Kids in Parks Program**

Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and receiving the Champions of Change Award from the White House, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's Kids in Parks Program is getting kids unplugged and outside for their health—and the health of parks. The program is being expanded throughout the nation with TRACK Trails adventures being added to the program's website as a way to earn prizes designed to make their next outdoor adventure more meaningful and fun. See [www.kidsinparks.com](http://www.kidsinparks.com).

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

### **Healthy People, Healthy Places—Building Sustainable Communities through Active Living**

(<http://www.nlc.org/Documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/Research%20Innovation/Sustainability/healthy-people-healthy-places-mag-jun11.pdf>)

The National League of Cities developed a report that details the role local leaders play in promoting health through creating the conditions—removing barriers, increasing opportunities, and providing information—for individuals to incorporate healthy option such as physical activity into their daily lives.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Community Health**

(<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/index.htm>)

The CDC's Division of Community Health supports community health initiatives that focus on tobacco-free living, active living, and healthy eating. Four programs provide funding which supports sidewalks, trails, bicycle parking, farmers markets, community gardens, community health elements in comprehensive plans, and a variety of other activities. In addition, the REACH program is specifically focused on eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in community health.

**US Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)**

(<http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/index.html>)

The Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) coordinates activities related to rural health care within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Part of HRSA, ORHP has department-wide responsibility for analyzing the possible effects of policy on residents of rural communities.

***Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant Program:*** The purpose of the outreach program is to promote rural health care services outreach by expanding health care delivery to include new or enhanced services in rural areas. See

<http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/community/careservicesoutreach.html>.

***Rural Health Information Technology Network Development:*** The purpose of the RHITND Program is to enhance health care delivery in rural America by supporting rural health networks in the adoption and meaningful use of electronic health records/electronic medical records. See <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/community/rhitnd.html>.

***Rural Health Network Development Program:*** The primary objective of this program is to assist health oriented networks in developing and maintaining sustainable networks with self-generating revenue streams. These grants support rural providers who work in formal networks to integrate administrative, clinical, technological, and financial functions. See <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/community/networkprogram.html>.

***Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant:*** The Network Planning program provides one-year grants to support the planning and development of a formal health-care network to improve health care delivery in rural areas. This program provides one-year grants up to \$85,000 and allows applicants to develop a business or strategic plan, conduct a needs assessment, conduct health information technology readiness, and ultimately form a network. See <http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/community/rhnetworkplanning.html>.

## AGING POPULATION

See **Rural Transit Assistance Program** as listed in Principle 1 Resource list:  
<http://www.nationalrtap.org/State.aspx>

## **AARP**

(<http://www.aarp.org>)

AARP's Public Policy Institute provides a number of publications on livable communities. These include resources on funding, such as *Weaving It Together: A Tapestry of Transportation Funding for Older Adults*, which offers seven case studies, many of which feature rural transit systems. Available at [www.aarp.org/research/ppi/liv-com2/policy/transportation/articles/weaving-it-together-transportation-funding-for-older-adults-AARP-ppi-liv-com/](http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/liv-com2/policy/transportation/articles/weaving-it-together-transportation-funding-for-older-adults-AARP-ppi-liv-com/).

## **National Center for Mobility Management**

(<http://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/>)

This organization works with communities to help them coordinate human service/public transportation services for more efficient service delivery.

## **National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST)**

(<http://ncst.madwolf.com/>)

The National Center on Senior Transportation strives to increase transportation options for older adults to support their ability to live independently in their homes and communities throughout the United States.

## **Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.**

The Bank of America Charitable Foundation is one of the largest foundations in the nation that focuses on preserving neighborhoods and housing and on revitalizing communities. Applicants must be a 501(c) (3). Visit the web site for more information

[http://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=fe\\_qksSw9OI](http://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=fe_qksSw9OI).

## **Walmart Foundation State Giving**

(<http://foundation.walmart.com/apply-for-grants/state-giving>)

The Walmart State Giving program provides grants to nonprofits that serve underserved populations and align with the Walmart Foundation's giving focus areas. Focused Giving includes programs focused on Hunger Relief & Healthy Eating and Career Opportunity only. Examples include efforts that aim to enroll people in SNAP, healthy eating/cooking skills training, nutrition education, and career skills or job training efforts that lead to placement. Community Engagement Giving is broader and includes programs focused on the unmet needs of underserved populations that may fall outside of the focus areas listed above.







# ASSESSMENT ITINERARY

**TENTATIVE**

**Itinerary For**

**Livability Assessment Tour**

**Michigan's Great Lakes  
Bay Region**

**Monday, September 8 –**

**Thursday, September 11,**

**2014**

**Monday, September 8, 2014:**

**Afternoon:** Arrive in Saginaw and check into the Ramada Inn & Suites  
Address: 3325 Davenport Avenue, Saginaw  
Contact: Reservation desk  
Phone: 989-793-7900  
Notes: Room-block (seven rooms – 4 kings & 3 double/doubles)  
reserved under “Livability Assessment”; Room rate:  
\$75.00/night + taxes;

**6:00-8:00pm:** Complimentary dinner at the Ramada Inn & Suites

**Tuesday, September 9, 2014:**

NOTE: Complimentary hotel breakfast for overnight guests served 6:30-10:00am

NOTE: All participants are asked to gather at the Ramada Inn & Suites

**7:15am:** Mitchell Motorcoach transportation arrives at hotel

**7:30am:** All guests begin boarding the motorcoach

**7:45am:** Depart hotel

NOTE: Drive time between the Ramada & Greet Point ELC:  
Approximately 3.5 miles/10 minutes

**8:00am:** Motorcoach arrives at Green Point Environmental Learning Center

Address: 3010 Maple Street, Saginaw

Contact: Lionel Grant

Phone: 989-759-1669

Email: lionel\_grant@fws.gov

**8:30am:** Orientation meeting

**10:00am:** Depart on driving tour, which includes:

- Green Point
- Former Germania Country Club
- Adjacent Inner City Saginaw
- Woodland Trail
- Wickes Park

**12:30pm:** Buffet lunch at Horizons Conference Center

Address: 6200 State Street, Saginaw

Contact: Miranda Csutora

Phone: 989-799-4122

Notes: Reservation made 8/20 for 20 people; \$13.13 per person  
inclusive;

**1:30pm:** Depart on driving tour, which includes:

- GM’s former Malleable Iron Foundry
- James Township (Ed Hak)
- Saginaw Valley Rail Trail
- Saginaw Township

**4:30pm:** Tour concludes at Green Point ELC

**4:30pm:** Roundtable discussion

**5:15pm:** Meetings conclude - Motorcoach departs for Ramada Inn with group. Please note that any guests wishing to drive themselves to dinner in Bay City or wishing to depart the group may ride the coach back to the Ramada Inn.

**5:30pm:** Motorcoach Departs from Ramada Inn for Bay City

NOTE: Drive time between Green Point ELC and Bay City:  
Approximately 19 miles/30 minutes

**6:00pm:** Dinner at the Dockside

Address: 1019 North Water Street, Bay City

Contact: Eric Malmo

Phone: 989-894-0772

Notes: Reservation made per Cassandra on 8/20 for 20 people on riverside deck; Order off menu;

**8:00pm:** Return to the Ramada Inn & Suites for the evening

NOTE: Drive time between Bay City and the Ramada Inn:  
Approximately 17.5 miles/22 minutes

NOTE: Motorcoach driver provided overnight accommodations per transportation contract

**Wednesday, September 10, 2014:**

NOTE: Complimentary hotel breakfast for overnight guests served 6:30-10:00am

NOTE: All participants are asked to gather at the Ramada Inn & Suites

**7:30am:** All guests begin boarding the motorcoach

**7:45am:** Depart hotel

NOTE: Drive time between the Ramada & Spaulding Township Hall:  
Approximately 9 miles/16 minutes

**8:00am:** Motorcoach arrives at Spaulding Township Hall

Address: 5825 Cole Road, Saginaw

Contact: Dick Leach

Phone: 989-780-0959

Email: [sdleach@gmail.com](mailto:sdleach@gmail.com)

**8:30am:** Discussion & roundtable meetings

**9:30am:** Depart on driving tour, which includes:

- Spaulding Township
- Refuge auto tour route

**12:30pm:** Lunch at the Rustic Inn

Address: 133 North Saginaw Street, St. Charles

Contact: Monica Randall

Phone: 989-865-6466

Notes: Reservation made for 20 people on 8/22; Monica works Monday-Wednesday-Friday-Saturday-Sunday; See attached menu items for call-in order;

**2:00pm:** Depart on driving tour, which includes:

- St. Charles
- Shiawassee River State Game Area

**5:00pm:** **Tour concludes at Spaulding Township Hall**  
**5:15pm:** **Meetings conclude - Motorcoach departs for Ramada Inn with group. Please note that any guests wishing to drive themselves to dinner at the H in Midland or wishing to depart the group may ride the coach back to the Ramada Inn.**

NOTE: Drive time between Spaulding Township Hall and Midland:  
 Approximately 31 miles/40 minutes

**6:00pm:** **Dinner at The H Hotel**  
 Address: 111 West Main Street, Midland  
 Contact: Tim Shelton  
 Phone: (989) 839-0500  
 Notes: The CVB will sponsor this meal.

**8:00pm:** **Return to the Ramada Inn & Suites for the evening**

NOTE: Drive time between Midland and the Ramada Inn:  
 Approximately 29 miles/30 minutes

NOTE: Motorcoach driver provided overnight accommodations per transportation contract

**Thursday, September 11, 2014:**

NOTE: Complimentary hotel breakfast for overnight guests served 6:30-10:00am

NOTE: Any overnight guests who will not be staying overnight Thursday need to check out of the hotel

NOTE: All participants are asked to gather at the Ramada Inn & Suites

**7:30am:** **All guests begin boarding the motorcoach**

**7:45am:** **Depart hotel**

NOTE: Drive time between the Ramada & the Great Lakes Bay CVB:  
 Approximately 3.5 miles/8 minutes

**8:00am:** **Motorcoach arrives at the Great Lakes Bay Regional CVB office**

Address: 515 North Washington Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Saginaw  
 Contact: Annette Rummel  
 Phone: 989-245-1223 (mobile)  
 Email: annette@gogreat.com  
 Notes: CVB to provide beverages & snacks

**8:30am:** **Discussion meetings**

**10:00am:** **Depart on driving tour, which includes:**

- Bridgeport
- Chesaning
- Birch Run
- Frankenmuth

**12:00pm:** **Lunch at the Frankenmuth Brewery**

Address: 425 South Main Street, Frankenmuth  
 Contact: Ryan Buchinger  
 Phone: 989-262-8300  
 Notes: Spoke with Ryan 8/22; Reservation sent via email 8/22;  
 See attached menu items for call-in order.

**1:30pm:**

**Depart Frankenmuth for Saginaw**

NOTE:

Drive time between Frankenmuth and Saginaw:

Approximately 18 miles/25 minutes

**2:00pm:**

**Selected guests depart on Johnny Panther Quest boat tour**

Address: 101 Lee Street, Saginaw

Contact: Wil Hufton

Phone: 810-625-4057

Email: jppcaptain@aol.com

NOTES: Boat can accommodate 10 people maximum; Reservation made 8/20; \$300.00 fee.

**2:30pm:**

**Remaining guests are returned to the Ramada Inn & Suites;  
motorcoach returns to the Lee Street boat dock**

**3:45pm:**

**Boat tour concludes and guests board motorcoach and return to the  
Ramada Inn & Suites; Transportation departs**

**4:00pm:**

**Event concludes and depart for home**

NOTE:

Guests may spend additional evening at the Ramada Inn & Suites and depart on Friday, however, NO room block has been made for this