HART, MICHIGAN



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING PLAN

2019

Prepared by Community Image Builders (CIB)

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**As of January 2020, Hart graduated from the Main Street program. The efforts and responsibilities formerly managed by the program will transition to the Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart), a provisional name for the organization at the time of this writing.*

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PLANNING PROCESS

This economic development strategy for the City of Hart is a collaborative planning project between the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities program and the City of Hart. The result of this project will be an economic road map to assist with job creation, marketing and branding along with redevelopment and investment strategies for the community. These actions will both strengthen and diversify the local economy. The road map will also help guide the coordinated effort between Prosperity Region 4, Oceana County and the City of Hart to work in a cooperative manner that will integrate aspects of the regional economic development strategy with the local economic development effort.

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

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

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

Economic Landscape



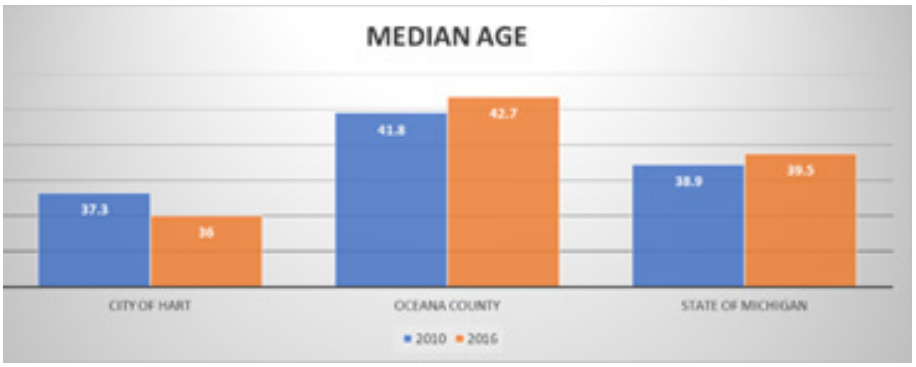
Figure 1

The City of Hart is located in north-western section of Oceana County along US-31 The city is surrounded by Hart Township. The current population of the City of Hart is 2,275 according to 2017 US Census estimates with 58% of the current population within the work age group between 16 and 65 years of age. Of that percentage, 54.7% are active in the labor force with 45.3% not currently active in the labor force for any number of reasons. Currently, the US labor participation rate is 62.7%, which Hart is considerably lower.

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

Since the last recession, labor participation rates have generally been in decline, locally, regionally and nationally, but not because of reduced employment opportunities. During the recent recession, a considerable number of workers that became unemployed permanently left the labor force. As employment opportunities declined, it became more difficult for workers aged 55+ to find meaningful employment, so many either took part time work, worked off the record, signed up for permanent disability or simply retired.

Figure 2



To better understand the decline in labor participation, we need to look at the age distribution within the City of Hart and surrounding communities. At quick glance, the population is getting younger, a sight not seen across many communities in Michigan. This demonstrates that the city still has a younger population for employers to draw workforce from.

Secondly, while the largest age cluster is 65+, the 10-29 age group is nearly equal in size. This shows that numerous residents within the city have families. Of the 877 total households within the city, 64.3% are families, leading us to believe that families are choosing to reside in the City of Hart for a great quality of life along with a good school system. Given the large age bracket between 10 and 29 years of age, it is anticipated that this trend will continue into the future should conditions remain consistent going forward.

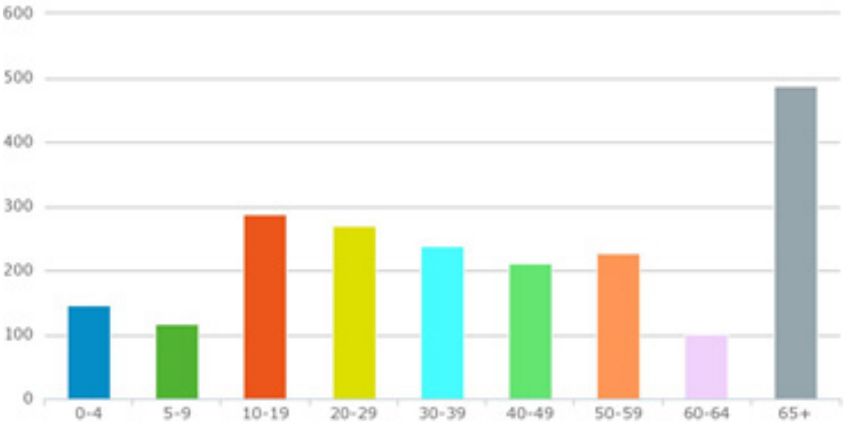
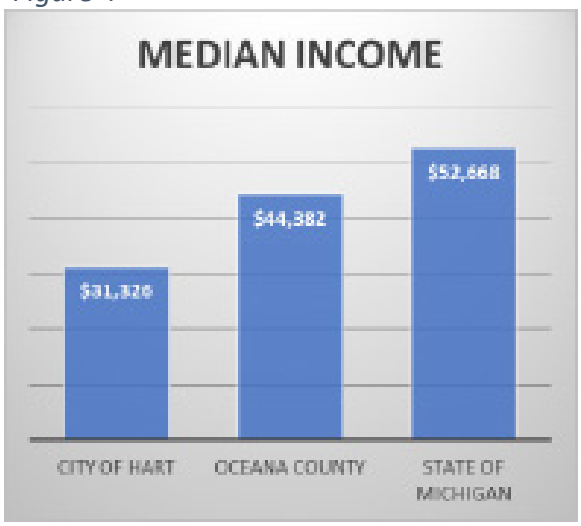


Figure 3: Age Distribution

Figure 4



Income, Employment and Education

The median household income in the City of Hart, $31,326 is relatively lower compared to Oceana County at $44,382. When you look deeper in to the income data, understanding that many of the available jobs within the city revolve around tourism, customer service and food processing. Given this the average wage for these types of industries generally hovers around minimum wage ($9.25/hour in Michigan), it makes sense that the median income within the city is lower in general compared to the county and state. The addition of new manufacturing in the industrial park should help increase wages in the city, especially as the park grows to full capacity. Looking at families, the median household income for families is $40,385.

Figure 5

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2016 (US Census Estimate)		
	State of Michigan	%
Population 25 Years and Over	6,682,881	100
Less than 9th grade	209,210	3.1
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	467,257	7
High school graduate or equivalent	1,978,662	29.6
Some college, no degree	1,587,525	23.8
Associate's degree	608,429	9.1
Bachelor's degree	1,117,697	16.7
Graduate or professional degree	714,101	10.7

Median non-family income is $18,935 which would generally be a single income, head of household. Another key statistic that could be reducing the overall median income in the city is that 37.1% of the earning population is drawing some level of Social Security Benefits with a mean income of $16,000.

Looking at the educational attainment of the City of Hart, a large percentage of the population (46.2%) has completed some level of higher education. It is important to note however that both Oceana County (11.2%) and the State of Michigan (17.1%) are out pacing the City of Hart (9.2%) for bachelor's degree attainment. One of the issues identified during the community SWOT session is the overall lack of availability of higher education throughout all of Oceana County.

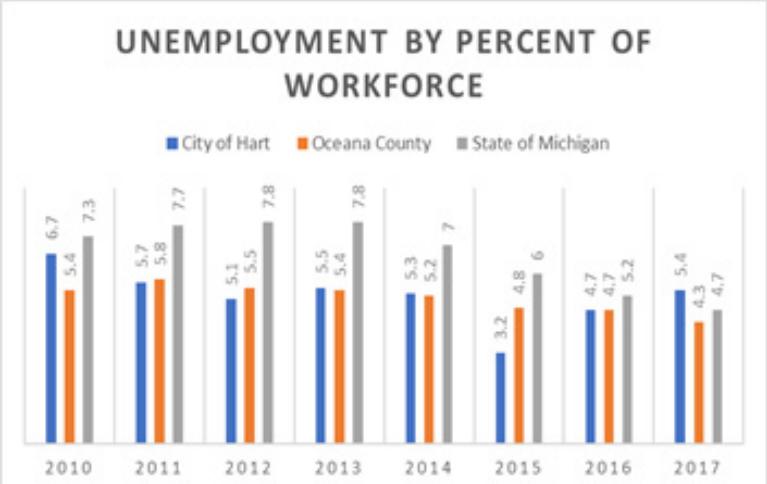


Figure 6

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

The landscape of Oceana County varies greatly including thousands of acres of productive farmland, international transportation routes such as US-31 along with several vital smaller cities, townships and villages. Despite the county's diversity, it's residents and businesses share many of the same opportunities, assets, and challenges that can be more effectively acted upon with a coordinated effort.

Figure 7

INDUSTRY OF EMPLOYED WORKERS (US Census 2017 Estimates)	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	837
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	45
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0
Construction	50
Manufacturing	160
Wholesale trade	35
Retail trade	67
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	51
Transportation and warehousing	51
Utilities	0
Information	0
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing:	57
Finance and insurance	32
Real estate and rental and leasing	25
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management	51
Professional, scientific, and technical services	8
Management of companies and enterprises	0
Administrative and support and waste management services	43
Educational services, and health care and social assistance:	156
Educational services	38
Health care and social assistance	118
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services:	97
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	4
Accommodation and food services	93
Other services, except public administration	33
Public administration	35

The State of Michigan and many of its communities have been emerging from one of the most extensive economic recessions on record since the Great Depression. At its height, unemployment topped 7.8% across the state. Locally, unemployment wasn't nearly as high as seen in the Figure 6, but the same pattern was present as identified regionally, across the state and across the nation.

Looking at the industry of the City of Hart, the largest employment sectors for residents of the city fall in the categories of manufacturing and health care and social assistance.

It is important to note, that while figure 7 identifies the industries of employed workers in the City of Hart, it is not wholly indicative of the industries found within the City of Hart. A full list of industries identified within the city itself can be found in the appendix of this plan.

It is also important to understand where workers are going and where they are coming from. Of the 837 workers estimated by the census living in the City of Hart, 46.8% of them work within the city. The remaining 53.2% work outside of the city proper, yet not too far from the city. The median commute time for workers in the city is 14 minutes, or roughly 10 miles from the city.

Regional Economic Development

West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance

The City of Hart and Oceana County are a part of Michigan's Prosperity Region 4. The Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) is a voluntary process formed by former Governor Rick Snyder to create vibrant regional economies. The Governor identified ten regions throughout the state and asked leaders from the sectors of regional planning, adult education, workforce development, economic development, transportation, and higher education to pursue activities that promote prosperity. Region 4, also known as the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) is comprised of 13 counties: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.

A major focus of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance's (WMPA) Prosperity Plan is to identify projects of regional significance. Since 2013, WMPA has received over $1,000,000 in grant money, helping to fund more than 16 projects of regional significance. The process of selecting projects included a call for project submission with specific evaluation criteria requirements sent out to over 1,000 agencies and individuals; review of projects to determine if requirements were met, and then public voting at regional summits.

Oceana County Economic Alliance/The Right Place

The Oceana County Economic Alliance is an organization created to assist business development needs in Oceana County, and is a partner with The Right Place. Services offered to current and prospective new businesses include: financing, site selection, research information, education, networking opportunities with economic development agencies, workforce development, and trade. Its mission is to create a diverse economic environment by strengthening talent, leveraging resources, and supporting retention, expansion, attraction and creation of Oceana County businesses.

City of Hart Tax Increment Finance Authority

The City of Hart Tax Increment Finance Authority was established in 1983 to serve as an economic tool to assist with reinvestment in the City of Hart. The TIFA was extended in 2012 for 15 years to end in 2027 unless it is reauthorized and extended again at that time. TIFA districts capture incremental growth as a result of increasing property values and investments made in the district above and beyond the established base value if the district. These captured revenues can then be utilized to assist with financing public improvements within the district. This district can be a great tool to catalyze new development or reinvestment opportunities within the city.

SWOT Analysis

On March 12th, 2019, the City of Hart Economic Development Steering Committee completed as SWOT Analysis as a way of obtaining perceptions of the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The intent of the sessions was to gain insight, but more importantly, to establish a community identity and how the city fits into the larger region.

Strengths

- Lake in Downtown
- Proximity to Lake Michigan/Silver Lake
- Significant Tourism economy
- County Seat
- Proximity to State Highway
- Industrial Park
- Land available for industrial growth
- Intact Historic Downtown
- Hart Montague Trail
- Year-round Recreational options
- Food Processing
- Food Growth
- Strong Public Schools
- Robust municipal utilities
- Water
- Sewer
- Power
- Building Entrepreneurial Support
- Active group of core support
- Michigan Works in County
- Active CET program
- Strong intergovernmental collaboration with County and surrounding communities
- Migrant Workforce
- Businesses work well together
- Reasonable cost of living
- Beautiful
- Easy to work with City
- Close to metro areas – GR, Muskegon, Cadillac
- Strong Health care service birth to death
- Recent website updates
- connections to Silver Lake Sand Dunes
- Silver Lake/Hart Chamber of Commerce
- JGP Campground and Park
- Aggressive Park Planning
- Downtown Pocket Park
- Hart Commons

- Farmer's Market
- Summer concert series
- Hart Historic District
- Bi-lingual workforce population
- Employer Resource Network
- Workforce housing and subsidized rent
- City Financially Sound/Strong City Budget
- Safe place to be
- Michigan Opportunity Zone
- Strong Community Foundation – Career Access Network

Weaknesses

- Housing Shortage
- Older Housing Stock
- Housing Stock – single family detached
- No Post-secondary education resources in county
- Workforce – education primarily high school
- Population base
- Hard to attract businesses/programs
- Death out paces Births – population shrinking
- No Champion for post-secondary workforce development
- Lack of high paying jobs/jobs requiring higher education
- Amazon effect
- Lowest income in state/county-wide
- Absentee landlords
- Tax Payer initiatives competing with businesses
- Lack of community appeal/no community promotion
- Lack of quality of life – cultural opportunities
- Lack of a shared vision for community
- Conservative/Lack of Forward thinking
- Culture of this is the way it has always been done
- Good ol' Boys network

Opportunities

- Michigan Opportunity zone
- Small Biz Centric Chamber
- Recreational Marijuana industry
- Recreational Opportunities
- Develop Pro-growth culture change
- Culture Shift
- Cultivate greater collaboration
- Organization to organization
- Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart)
- Starting Block

- Schools
- Oceana Home Partnership
- Council on Aging
- Available Industrial, Commercial and Residential develop-able land
- Affordable workforce
- Opportunity for vertical mixed-use development in downtown
- Opportunity to expand fiber internet – Great Lakes Energy
- Utility Reliability
- Utility expansion available
- Recip Plant (natural gas)
- Incentives Policy
- Sewer/Water/Electric
- Capitalize on Hispanic Population
- Embrace diversity that's here
- Tourists
- People moving here
- Connect Hispanic community
- Bigger presence of SBDC
- Existing Brick and Mortar vacant structures
- Gales IGA
- Shopko
- Diversify industry
- Indoor recreation options

Threats

- Dependent on one major tourism driver
- Hart Lake threatened by Federal Regulations
- City economy based upon one sector – food growth/processing
- Competition
- Losing what workforce we have to other areas
- Aging Population
- Talent Recruitment (school and healthcare)
- County government privatizing services
- City and County vision and goals not aligned
- Best & Brightest are leaving
- Grass is always Greener
- Migrant workforce disruption
- County elected officials – archaic/not willing to adapt
- Resistance to growth/change
- Fixed mindset
- Lack of transportation options
- Seasonal/Weather dependent economy
- Lack of intergovernmental collaboration
- Hart, Pentwater, Shelby, Silver Lake

Goals and Objectives

Goals are high level policy statements that drive future decisions around projects and investment opportunities that can contribute to community growth.

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

	Goals	Objectives
Education	Develop and enhance partnerships with educational institutions from K-12 through post-secondary	• Have the city reconsider passing a millage for both West Shore and Muskegon Community Colleges • Identify apprenticeship opportunities for residents not looking at higher education • Partner with Michigan Works to drive residents to job training opportunities • Support Ottawa County Skills for Success Program (byproduct of Marshall Plan). Soft skill training program for all age groups
Infrastructure	Develop a cost effective, consolidated infrastructure system	• High-speed Broad Band connectivity throughout the community • Work with Connect Michigan • Prioritize internet connectivity as part of the infrastructure plan within the City of Hart • Expand public water and sewer to un-served city locations • Engage in dialog with surrounding communities regarding shared services to stretch limited community resources • Continue to prepare short and long-term capital improvement programs covering major infrastructure and facility needs • Consider traffic calming measures as opportunities arise, particularly in neighborhoods and downtown • Continue support of the Michigan Energy Optimization Program • Encourage neighborhood and development connectivity for streets and non-motorized transportation to ensure a more efficient and convenient transportation network • Improve electric reliability to maintain our reduced downtime during outages and improve peak generation capacity
Regional Collaboration	Strengthen existing and create new collaborative partnerships to operate effectively as one voice for regional economic success.	• Collaborate with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Corporation (5 county EDO recognized by EDA) • Expansion of regional activities • Improve communication regarding regional economic development opportunities • City to host intergovernmental joint meetings to discuss regional economic development and goals and issues related to economic development and tourism

Industry Activities	Develop an ecosystem for creating, attracting, expanding, and retaining businesses.	• Continue to work with agribusiness and encourage them to consider business expansion opportunities such as agritourism, cidery, winery and orchard tours • Agribusiness relationship building • Business incentive program and policy for business attraction, retention and marketing. • Entrepreneurial ecosystem/support/development program • Access business retention program through The Right Place and the county • Work with PTAC to assist companies in the city • SBDC representation
Destination	Continue efforts to make Hart a destination city with a high quality of life.	• Utilize the Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart) as an advocate to draw tourism and investment in Downtown Hart. • Identify additional events to attract tourists and residents from outside of the area to the City of Hart. • Create a targeted marketing campaign to attract businesses, tourists and new potential residents to Hart

Implementation

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

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

Tenets of Successful Implementation

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

Commitment

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

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

Integrate with Project Design

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

Guidance for Development Decisions

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

Evaluation and Monitoring

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

Redevelopment Strategies

How to Attract Developers?

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

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

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

Why Hart?

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

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

Understand the Market

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

Developer Matchmaking

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

TIFA/City Property Acquisition

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

Gap Funding

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

Action Table

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

The following table identifies major steps and projects designed to maintain and improve the City of Hart. Implementation of these items will have a positive impact on the character and vitality of the

community. Many of the implementation recommendations presented herein will require the close cooperation of many bodies. The final column in the table indicates the primary group(s) responsible for implementation.

Action	Priority	Responsibility
Infrastructure		
Formalize the annual CIP development process and tie specifically to the Master Plan and Economic Development Strategy	Ongoing	Administration, City Council, TIFA, Planning Commission, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart)
Enhance streetscaping with landscaping, lighting, signage, wayfinding and sidewalk improvements	Mid-term	City Council, TIFA, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart)
Lincoln Street reconstruction	2020	City Council, Administration
Energy generation assessment	2020	City Council, Administration
Watermain transmission upgrades and replacement	2020	City Council, Administration
Regional transportation growth	Mid-term	City Council, Administration
Education		
Research a county-wide millage to support community college expansion within Hart and Oceana County.	Mid-term	City Council, Administration, School District, Oceana College Access Network, Oceana County
Identify additional ways to connect local graduating students to employment opportunities within the City of Hart	Short-term	School District, Administration, The Right Place, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart), Oceana College Access Network
Economy & Business Development		
Continue working with developers and property owners to develop and redevelop downtown buildings and sites into multi-story, mixed-use developments.	Ongoing	Administration, TIFA, PC, & City Council
Utilize incentives when necessary to support local redevelopment efforts.	Ongoing	Administration, City Council & developers
Develop an incentive implementation policy	Short-term	Administration, City Council
Promote the improvement and restoration of facades in the downtown area through utilization of façade improvement programs, micro-loans and SBA lending sources	Ongoing	Administration & TIFA
Utilize programs from the MEDC to assist with placemaking such as the Public Spaces Community Places program or the Michigan Community Revitalization Program	Ongoing	Administration, City Council, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart)
Focus development efforts around the re-occupancy of vacant retail buildings throughout the city while upgrading the sites to meet current ordinance standards.	Ongoing	Administration & PC
Market destination opportunities within the city including parks and recreation facilities, programs and special events.	Short-Term	Administration & City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart)
Initiate small group meetings with businesses in the city to gauge the local business climate as part of retention program.	Ongoing	Administration, Oceana County Economic Alliance

Action	Priority	Responsibility
Create a small business kiosk at City Hall to provide key business resource program information in a central location that is easily accessed by entrepreneurs and small businesses.	Ongoing	Administration, Oceana County Economic Alliance, Right Place, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, SBA
Improve the use of social media to convey positive messages and development opportunities throughout the city.	Ongoing	Administration
Work with the Right Place to attract new companies the City of Hart Industrial Park to utilize the remaining space available within the park	Ongoing	The Right Place, City Council, Administration
Complete all phases of the marketing and branding strategy to promote the city and potential development opportunities.	Short-Term	Administration, City Council
Develop a business retention strategy to support local businesses within the city.	Ongoing	Administration, TIFA & Chamber of Commerce
Create an agribusiness tourism directory to highlight local establishments with agritourism opportunities such as orchards, vineyards and breweries.	Ongoing	TIFA, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart), Administration
Become certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community under the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.	Short- & Mid-Term	Administration & City Council
Work with OCEA and MEDC to identify potential marketing support for the City of Hart, specifically if there is grant funding to support a marketing position for the City of Hart	Short-term	Administration, City Council, Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart)
Start intergovernmental joint meetings with West Michigan Shoreline Alliance	Short-term	City Council, Administration
Complete a housing Target Market Analysis to identify housing needs and opportunities for the City of Hart	Short-term	City Council, Administration, Planning Commission

Incentives Available to Assist Development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brownfield - The Brownfield Program uses tax increment financing (TIF) to reimburse brownfield related costs incurred while redeveloping contaminated, functionally obsolete, blighted or historic properties. It is also responsible for managing the Single Business Tax and Michigan Business Tax Brownfield Credit legacy programs (SBT/MBT Brownfield Credits).

The Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) with assistance from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), administers the reimbursement of costs using state school taxes (School Operating and State Education Tax) for non-environmental eligible activities that support redevelopment, revitalization and reuse of eligible property. The MEDC also manages amendments to SBT/MBT Brownfield Credit projects approved by MSF. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) administers the reimbursement of environmental response costs using state school taxes for environmental activities, and local units of government sometimes use only local taxes to reimburse for eligible activities (i.e., "local-only" plans).

Michigan Transportation Economic Development Fund - The mission of the Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) is to enhance the ability of the state to compete in an international economy, to serve as a catalyst for economic growth of the state, and to improve the quality of life in the state.

The funds are available to state, county, and city road agencies for immediate highway needs relating to a variety of economic development issues.

City Properties and Utilities – The City can negotiate both property costs and utility/development fees for city owned property. The city would require a developer to submit a development proposal which

would be review internally for economic impacts. If the economic impacts are high for the city, fees may be potentially reduced to support the project.

Master Plan

In early 2018, the City of Hart adopted a new Master Plan which specifically details opportunities for future downtown development. Since the Master Plan serves as the primary policy guide as well as the vision for future growth in the community, we felt it was important to include the downtown plan within this strategy to create cohesion between both. The downtown plan can be found on the following page.

Background: Best Practice 5.2.1

The City of Hart is involved in the MEDC's program known as Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC). This program requires communities to rise to high levels of performance in many areas of community development. RRC is a voluntary certification program designed to promote effective community redevelopment strategies through a set of best practices. The program provides a certification for those communities that integrate transparency, predictability and efficiency into their daily development practices. Official RRC certification recognizes that a community has a vision for the future and has adopted practices to achieve local goals.

Among the RRC best practices is the need for a marketing and branding strategy that describes deliberate steps to be taken to communicate strategic community messages to reach target audiences. The marketing and branding strategy aims to define and leverage the local brand and communicate a positive community identity. It helps articulate the business case for private investment by describing uniqueness, worth and value. The development of this marketing plan focuses directly on RRC Best Practice number 5.2.1 (per updated RRC best practices, March 2019). The economic development strategy and the marketing and branding strategy are designed to work in collaboration so that objectives identified within the economic development strategy will have a direction connection to the marketing and branding strategy. RRC certification requires evidence that a community has taken an introspective and thoughtful look at itself from the standpoint of how it communicates local opportunity, desirability and appeal to internal and external audiences.

Marketing

Marketing strategically focuses on target audiences and uses a proactive approach to achieve results. A marketing strategy outlines deliberate steps to promote a community and communicate its economic assets and positive community attributes. It shows how the community intends to take control over its perception and leaves less to chance. Rather than hoping that word gets out, or that somehow the community will be discovered, a marketing strategy identifies steps to highlight opportunity and community assets. Without a strategy, communities would be at a competitive disadvantage because:

- Other municipalities who understand the power of marketing are fine tuning efforts to draw distinction between their community and others. This can further widen the gap in perceptions about desirable communities.
- Positive attention to development opportunities, progress toward economic development goals, or other image-enhancing tactics would be more happenstance than intentional and deliberate.

- The community would continue to be defined by past experiences and inaccurate stereotypes.

To provide more context to a marketing strategy, we can borrow from the expertise of marketing professionals in the private sector, and consider a concept called the seven P's of marketing. The seven P's of marketing include; product, price, place, packaging, promotion, physical evidence and people with reference to the fact that all are important and interrelated. For our purpose, we will focus on six P's of marketing; all the below minus "packaging."

1. Product

The City of Hart or a specific aspect of Hart is the product. In some ways Hart is similar to other products, as we choose where to live and where to invest our time and money, and for how long. Communities are more of a product today compared to what they once were, as we live in an increasingly mobile society where residents can easily move and sometimes create their own job opportunities and take them elsewhere.

2. Price

Price represents an expression of value. People are drawn to live and invest in places where they see the value of community attributes and offerings. Offerings include educational opportunities, parks, low crime rates, rising property values, sense of place, natural beauty, prospects for economic growth, etc. Values can be expressed in terms of what now exists, and second, it can be connected to a sense of optimism and confidence in the future as Hart draws attention to plans and opportunity.

3. Place

When considering a product, place refers to the sale and distribution channels. In the community, place has a double definition. The first concept of place is tied in with the concept of product—the built environment, the infrastructure, the downtown. It evokes emotional attributes that form connections with people at a deeper level. This concept of place is fundamental to lasing economic development as attributes of a strong place can't be outsourced, relocated or closed. The second concept really refers to where we are hunting—where we are casting our nets to attract those new investments and next businesses that will locate or relocate to Hart.

4. Promotion

Promotion is the specific effort to target people and it should be guided by a strategy. While communities are not typically engaged in direct selling, general advertisement or steps to create publicity, there are ways to promote Hart in a way that will help to achieve the goals outlined in the economic development strategy.

5. Physical Evidence

Physical Evidence are the tangible components that communicate the product or service. In a community, the physical evidence of becoming Redevelopment Ready Community Certified could be gateway signs, directional signs and identification signs within the community, decals on municipal vehicles, the city's official website update, etc.

6. People

All of the human actors who play a part in the product or service delivery can influence the perception of "the buyer." This is typically described as customer service, but in a wider sense, this component could be an interaction between residents or potential business owners with city staff and leadership, and between residents and prospective residents, visitors, and tourists. Hart's people are the brand ambassadors.

The emphasis of this marketing plan is about rethinking how the City of Hart can use its new economic development and planning strategies to more deliberately express its identity, uniqueness and brand values. It also draws attention to how Hart can take steps to manage and develop its brand to add strength. It is also worth noting that these goals are not intended to be met in a few weeks, a month, or even a year. Commitment to the goals and objectives and intentionally communicating the key messages across all community stakeholders is imperative to reap maximum rewards in the city's development.

Approach

Throughout the facilitation process with the City of Hart steering committee, the members identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and then outlined goals and objectives for community redevelopment. Among the discussion, the steering committee identified some impediments to economic growth and outlined their vision for the community. The steering committee provided feedback structured around the following "buckets:"

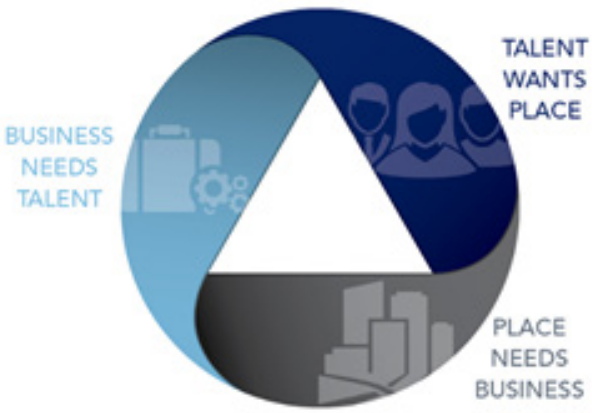
- Business economy including current business and attracting future business
- Workforce including current workforce and attracting talent
- Place/location

Considering the fundamental steps to building a redevelopment ready community where business needs talent, talent wants place, and place needs business, all three key components need to work in collaboration and be unified for the plan to succeed. The strategy can't ignore a key component (talent, place, business) and expect to achieve good results.

Key Challenges

The following are key challenges that were uncovered during the SWOT analysis and from prior experience that will hinder the effectiveness of this marketing plan if not adhered to:

- Consistency: Marketing messages need to be clear and consistent. It is the consistent, desired experience that builds trust and trust is the foundation for loyalty.
- Frequency: Marketing outreach and promotion should adhere to a scheduled frequency to be effective (i.e. press releases focused on economic development to media 2x a month).
- Lack of awareness and communication: Regional organizations with a mission to encourage and develop economic growth in the area are not communicating on a regular basis. It was mentioned frequently during steering committee meetings that more collaboration needs to happen between regional agencies at the county level (and lower) so everyone is aware of what



the other is doing. Reducing duplicity, aligning where useful, and joining forces can help to achieve goals much faster than can be accomplished alone.

- Resources: The city of Hart is led by an exceptional team of people who are dedicated to improving the city. However, many responsibilities are spread across a small team, and many employees wear several hats. Identifying "champions" to take on marketing responsibilities poses a challenge. It is recommended that the city start an internship program in partnership with Muskegon Community College to employ an intern to assist with marketing-related roles (website content, social media, event planning, etc.), hire a part-time marketing associate, and/or contract with a marketing professional.

Economic Development Marketing

Target Market Segments for Economic Development

Identifying the marketing opportunities starts with first defining the target market segments with differentiated needs. There are many diverse individuals and groups who may be considered "customers" of the city, from residents to the City Council, community leaders, local businesses, and potential businesses. To ensure adequate focus on moving the city closer to its economic development vision of attracting new businesses, we identified 3 key audiences: location advisors/site selectors/corporate executives, developers, and regional organizations.

1. Location Advisors/Site Selectors & Corporate Executives

Location advisors, also known as site selectors, are the executives within an organization or who work on behalf of an organization who are responsible for deciding where to locate next. Other c-level executives (CEOs, COOs, CFOs, etc.) would have significant influence in the decision as well. Case studies on successful business clusters indicate that this group is at the core of the target segment.

2. Developers

Developers play a highly active role in economic development. Hart has a strong agricultural and food processing industry, and another strong economic driver is seasonal tourism. Hart also has "primed for development" vacant facilities and the city offers incentives for developers. The city also maintains low utility costs due to the municipality-owned power plant—significantly below the average rate per kilowatt hour than surrounding communities.

3. Regional & Intermediary Organizations and Public-Private Partnerships

Regional and intermediary organizations and public-private partnerships serve as catalysts and neutral meeting grounds to connect the private sector and the public sector. As mentioned above, these

organizations enable small communities to pool resources and share services. They are or will be key partners and can be leveraged to provide Hart access to a network on a much larger scale than what the city can do on its own with limited resources. This group includes the following organizations:

- Oceana County Economic Alliance
    - Vision: The Oceana County Economic Alliance fosters economic prosperity as the central hub for the promotion, support, and growth of Oceana County.
    - Mission: To create a diverse economic environment by strengthening talent, leveraging resources, and supporting the retention, expansion, attraction, and creation of Oceana County businesses.
- The Right Place
    - The Right Place provides business growth assistance to both local and international companies including site location services, connections to regional supply chain and service providers, regional business tours, consultation on state and local business incentives, and more.
- West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Corporation
    - Mission: to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments.
- West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance
    - The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) was created in 2013 as part of Governor Snyder's Regional Prosperity Initiative. The governor identified 10 prosperity regions across the state, the WMPA is also known as Region 4. The purpose of the initiative is to increase communication and collaboration as well as better coordinate and integrate investments around economic development, workforce development, and infrastructure.
- Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce
    - Your membership with the Silver Lake Sand Dunes Area Chamber of Commerce makes you part of a powerful network of businesses who are working together to promote and increase prosperity for each other and the entire community. We are using our strategic plan to focus on key goals and projects that align with our Mission and Vision.
- Connect Michigan (for broad band infrastructure)
    - Connect Michigan, in partnership with the Michigan Public Service Commission, is working to ensure that all can experience the benefits of broadband. Technology, especially widespread access, use and adoption of broadband, improves all areas of life.
- Michigan Energy Optimization
    - Thirteen cooperative and municipal utilities are part of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) collaborative, a group of electric service providers that offer Energy Optimization programs.

- Michigan State Extension in Oceana County
    - Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's International Marketing Program
    - Link to main site
    - The mission of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's International Marketing Program is to assist Michigan food and agricultural businesses in developing domestic and international market opportunities to effectively grow their business.

It's important to note that the Oceana County Economic Alliance (with the assistance of The Right Place) lists the following relevant 2018-2021 goals on their website:

1) Update and expand the availability of marketing materials at least annually.
2) Develop and update an economic development website at least twice a year with links to various organizations performing economic development activities like The Right Place, MEDC.
3) Create food processing specific marketing materials for business development efforts.
4) Create fund development marketing materials especially geared for private investment prospects.

Th city of Hart and OCEA/The Right Place can mutually benefit from taking steps to attain those goals, and the keys to attainment are consistent communication, collaboration and action.

This list above is not necessarily an exhaustive list but contains the major players who can have the largest impact on Hart's economic growth as the city continues to collaborate with them.

Economic Development Target Market Messaging Chart

Each market segment has significantly different needs when it comes to new business and new development in the city of Hart. These differing segments can be best reached through a combination of "high touch" person-to-person communications and targeted digital and print media. The table below provides an overview of customized key messages that will help match the city's value with the specific needs of that individual segment. The main target audiences for Hart's economic development marketing messages are listed on the left side of the chart and represent the groups or individuals who will be targeted with the key messages on the far-right side of the chart.

The tagline "Take your business to Hart" is a call to action for the target audiences to consider Hart when locating their business or new development. It also harkens the old idiom to "take (something) to heart" which means to be greatly affected by something; to take it seriously. The tagline can work in a variety of other related campaigns by replacing the word "business" with the subject that is being promoted, i.e. "Take your schools to Hart." Using that tagline and hashtag in campaigns will continue to build the Hart brand and associate it with the unique assets of Hart that the town celebrates.

Segment	Primary Interests	Outreach Tools	Key Messages to Segment
Location advisors/Site selectors & Corporate Executives (with site influence)	• Reducing risk, credible and trustworthy sources • Available and skilled workforce • Accessibility and location • Incentives and taxes • Predictable permitting process	• Meetings at industry events • Website/online media • Partnerships and industry networks • Industry press • Briefings/tours	***Take your business to Hart*** • Plenty of available land and vacant facilities • We offer fast approvals • Incentives available • Beautiful location 7 miles from Lake Michigan and 40 min. from Muskegon • Forward-thinking city leadership • Low utility costs due to the Municipality-owned utility—industrial electric costs are $.11/kWh lower than the state average
Developers	• Reducing risk • Quality/style of development • Return on investment • Quick tenant placement • Predictable permitting process • Zoning and land use	• Engagement in community building vision • Trade media and press • Briefings/tours • Website/online media • Area business reports	***Take your business to Hart*** • Untapped market potential • Desirable location • Fast approvals • Incentives available • Small-town charm with forward-thinking city leadership • Low utility costs due to the Municipality-owned utility—industrial electric costs are $.11/kWh lower than the state average
Regional & Intermediary Organizations, Public-Private Partnerships (OCEA, The Right Place, WMSRDC, etc.)	• Promoting and expanding economic development in the region • Growing the organization's reputation and credibility • Networking	• Brochures/Fact sheets • Briefings • Engagement in community building vision • Community educational forums	• Changes will offer major economic opportunities for local community • Together we can make Hart a great place to do business and development projects • We are leveraging your investment

Getting the Message Out

Identifying the right channels to deliver a market awareness program plays a central role in building interest and cultivating the support for the city's brand and redevelopment strategy among key stakeholders. Based on an audit of Hart's current communication channels, there is an immediate opportunity in the key areas as described below.

Economic Development Marketing

Online Tools

In 2017, the Development Counsellors International (DCI) published survey results from their "Winning Strategies in Economic Development Marketing" survey, which is administered every three years, with the first in 1996. The survey audience consists of executives at a random selection of U.S.-based companies with direct site-selection responsibilities and is heavily weighted toward the following titles: CEO, president, CFO and vice president. The distribution list was augmented with the addition of more than 300 location advisors or consultants, a similarly influential group providing guidance and counsel to corporate executives nationwide. DCI received 331 responses to their most recent survey in 2017.

DCI asked respondents to gauge the effectiveness of eight conventional marketing techniques used by economic development groups. Since 1996, respondents have rated each technique (advertising, direct mail, internet/website, media relations/publicity, hosting special events, planned visits to corporate executives and telemarketing) on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who rated each technique as a 4 or a 5.

Having an internet/website presence is rated as the most effective marketing technique, followed by planned visits to corporate executives. Media relations/publicity and hosting special events tied for third. Often, an economic development organization's website is the first introduction to a location being considered for investment. When asked the likelihood of visiting an economic development organization's website during their next site-location search, 65 percent of respondents reported a rating of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale, in which 1 is low and 5 is high.

Sixty-five percent of respondents used the internet during their last site-selection search, and 65 percent reported a strong likelihood that they would visit an economic development organizations' website during the next site search.

The Winning Strategies survey asked respondents to rate those features that are most important to the usefulness of an economic development organization's website. Respondents could select up to five of the 14 offered features most typically included in an economic development website. As has been the case since 2008, incentive information (57 percent) is ranked as the most-useful feature of an economic development organization's website, followed by demographic information (48 percent), a searchable database of available buildings and sites (44 percent) and workforce statistics (43 percent). Decision makers place less weight on testimonials from local employers and video content, which were selected by 8 percent and 3 percent of the respondents, respectively. The city's current website does not deliver on any of these except for mentioning that incentives are available. Researching other city government websites can be a cost effective and efficient method to determine which tools and designs Hart should adopt.

Recommendations for Online Tools:

1) Build a "Take your business to Hart" economic development site either as a stand-alone site, a page on the official city site, and/or a link within the OCEA site with the following content:
    a) A short city description
    b) List of incentives available
    c) Utility information (emphasize low cost of energy, great water quality)
    d) Commercial/industrial sites and available land for sale (updated regularly)
    e) Workforce demographics embedded in the site and not a redirect to the census site—significant traffic loss happens this way
    f) Resources for job seekers
    g) Resources for employers
    h) News
    i) Images
2) Once complete, reach out to partners and request they link to this new site/page from their sites.



3) Drive traffic to the site via the city's social media accounts

a) As properties sell and redevelopment occurs, consider boosting posts targeting residents and business owners to assist in sharing the news

4) Provide news updates on completed projects and current projects that are approved for public view

5) Draw attention to site via city's Facebook page and through other established social media accounts

6) Write a press release about it and send it to local/national press

7) Continue to create content and keep it fresh with news, images of events and redevelopment, videos, etc.

8) Reach out to MEDC and inform them of new site and explore linking options from their site. Ask to list identified/available redevelopment sites in Hart on the Redevelopment Ready Sites page (https://www.miplace.org/redevelopment-ready-sites/)

Examples of other economic development websites include:

http://www.discoverflinttownship.com/

http://www.santarosaedo.com/

Social Media:

The benefits to using social media to get messages out about the community are plentiful. It's cost-effective and can be leveraged to reach a wide number of people in and around the community. Sharing images via Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn will keep Hart front of mind and provide an outlet for updates, events and news about the community. LinkedIn accounts for economic development are useful as posting news and other related content about the business activity, partnerships and events provides an opportunity for the economic development target audiences to interact with messages about Hart.

Below is a "Take your business to Hart" economic development promotional image concept that could be used online, via email and in print:



Economic Development: Earned Media & Public Relations:

Every event, festival, milestone celebration, economic development win, business opening/relocation and downtown development is an opportunity to gain positive attention from local and regional media outlets. Media outlets sometimes have "best of" lists or articles and many of Hart's assets could participate—whether it's the cultural restaurants downtown, the historical district museum or the trail, continuing to tout those assets to regional media will help get the word out. With each event, a press release should be written and sent to local media contacts with a follow up call to ask if more information is needed or to directly invite a member of the media. By establishing relationships with regional media and earning media attention, we can increase favorable news exposure from an economic development perspective about the city's development potential, increase coverage around new, progressive city programs or services, or tout the regional benefits to potential businesses that are considering relocating. A good directory of media outlets in the area can be found here: https://web.muskegon.org/Media

- Here's an example of a type of article that Hart could participate in: https://expo.mlive.com/life-and-culture/g66l-2019/06/91a6df9ce32166/see-the-poll-winners-for-michigans-best-

waterfront-restaurant.html

- "Pitching" ideas to local press about content can prove mutually beneficial as well. For instance, talking to an editor or writer of a local media outlet (MLive) about the idea of having a "Top ten most unusual summer festivals in Michigan" article where the Asparagus Festival is nominated is an effective and fun way to gain exposure and attention.

Economic Development: Strengthening Relationship with Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce

During the SWOT analysis and secondary steering committee meeting, it was mentioned that the current relationship with Hart and the Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce is "fair at best." Much attention is focused on the Silver Lake area and sand dunes, and very little information about the city of Hart is available in the Chamber's print publications or website. One of the main reasons for this is because only four businesses in Hart are members of the Chamber, and that is likely because membership is cost prohibitive.

In a discussion with Lynne Ladner (early June 2019), the idea was brought up by her to request a business sponsorship with financial assistance from the Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart) with the Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce so that local Hart businesses could obtain chamber membership and receive the marketing benefits that go along with their reach and exposure. That way Hart businesses could experience the benefits from membership (listings within their publication, website, rest area brochures, etc.) and renew at a reduced or negotiated cost if the Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart) assistance is decreased or unavailable in the future. Having a more balanced representation from Hart's business district would strengthen the relationship between Hart and chamber of commerce and allow future opportunities to partner on events, sponsorships, content, and more.

Economic Development: Agritourism

Agritourism as an economic driver has been identified as an opportunity for the city and local farms. Hart currently is home to a handful of orchards of variable size, some of which already offer agritourism opportunities and farm markets open to the public (i.e. Rennhack Orchards). Farmers considering agritourism can tap into information found at these websites for tips on getting started and business funding:

Getting started: http://www.ecofarmingdaily.com/agritourism-tips-getting-started/

Funding: https://www.agmrc.org/business-development/starting-a-business/raising-money/grant-opportunities-and-information

Hard cider producers and agritourism appeal

Another opportunity tied in with agritourism is the offering of hard cider, because hard cider is becoming a popular adult drink. Here are some noteworthy statistics:

- For the U.S. cider market, local and regional cideries make up 25% of the total revenues that are generated by the industry each year. (Statista)
- In 2017, the hard cider market in the United States dropped from $536 million to $470 million.

During this time, however, the smaller brands within the industry actually grew. In 2016, the smaller brands experienced 41% growth, and in 2017, they experienced 30% growth. (Forbes)

Forbes article: https://www.forbes.com/sites/taranurin/2018/02/28/hard-cider-sales-slip-then-rebound/#4adf94c04a4c

Trends and statistics: https://brandongaille.com/21-hard-cider-industry-statistics-trends-analysis/

Michigan cider community site: https://www.cydermarket.com/michigan.html

The industry is poised for growth in the hard cider market, and apple growers in northern Michigan are well-positioned to reap rewards if they are willing to produce and sell hard cider.

Economic Development: Events

FAM Tour: Consider hosting a FAM tour for a group of potential developers and/or site selectors to introduce them to the area and highlight the city's assets as well as the competitive advantage that Hart has (incentives, forward-thinking leadership, low utility costs, prime sites for development). Create brochures to leave with the group that emphasizes the key messages and contains high-quality images.

Economic Development: Redevelopment Sites Marketing:

Additionally, support from the MEDC's Redevelopment Services Team (RSTeam) will aid in marketing Hart's redevelopment ready sites. Hart's economic development team can work with the RSTeam to build the community's RRC Certified online map page once they reach certification. An example of this is here: https://www.miplace.org/redevelopment-ready-sites/dearborn/

Training/Workforce Development

Post-Secondary Education Millage

Looking at the educational attainment of the City of Hart, a large percentage of the population (46.2%) has completed some level of higher education. It is important to note however that both Oceana County (11.2%) and the State of Michigan (17.1%) are out pacing the City of Hart (9.2%) for bachelor's degree attainment. One of the issues identified during the community SWOT session is the overall lack of availability of higher education throughout all of Oceana County.

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

One of the first steps toward gaining more educational or training opportunities in the city is to vote on and pass a millage that would allow educational facilities to operate successfully in the city. It was mentioned during the SWOT analysis that a millage had failed in the past, but it's possible that a future millage for education could have a chance at being successful. A community-wide awareness campaign six months prior to the vote should be undertaken by city leadership and the school superintendent and supporting parties. Town hall meetings, community meetings and other informational sessions where the public is informed of the benefits of passing such a millage should be held so residents can have questions answered. Information about the millage in email campaigns to parents of school children via

email newsletters, direct mail clearly outlining and justifying the costs, and articles in local newspapers can increase the awareness and aid to communicate the benefit of passing such a millage.

Outreach and Partnership

It is within the realm of possibility that nearby community colleges would consider a satellite location in the city of Hart. Both Muskegon Community College and West Shore have identified priorities within their strategic initiatives to improve community outreach. Connecting with those colleges to enter into a feasibility analysis of locating a satellite campus in Hart would be a step in the right direction for the city to bridge the post-secondary education and training gap that currently exists.

Muskegon Community College identified the following as their second and third priorities in their 2017-2022 Strategic Plan:

- Academic Programs: Develop, implement, and evaluate relevant and innovative programs that meet current and emerging student, business, industry, and community needs
- Provide a state-of-the-art learning environment that meets academic needs while promoting access and sustainability
- Links to the community outreach page and strategic plan:
    - https://www.muskegoncc.edu/community-outreach/
    - http://www.muskegoncc.edu/strategicinitiatives/wp-content/uploads/sites/137/2016/05/MCC_2017-2022_Strategic_Plan_bookview.pdf

West Shore Community College has also prioritized community service within their strategic plan and in their vision statement. Below is West Shore Community College's second priority listed in their 2018-2023 strategic plan:

- Serve Our Community: We are dedicated to serving individuals, businesses, and communities in our region. Within the context of our mission, we strive to meet the needs of our diverse constituencies and audiences. We are committed to providing the best service, removing barriers to success, and aiding in the achievement of personal and professional goals. We not only play an academic role in our communities, but we also serve as a center for workplace development and training, recreational services, and cultural enrichment opportunities. As individuals and a collective, we seek to be active participants in the lives of our communities, contributing to personal, economic, and community vitality.
- Link to the West Shore strategic plan https://www.westshore.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Updated-Strategic-Plan-05.11.18.pdf

Nurturing a relationship with Muskegon Community College and West Shore Community College could build the groundwork necessary to initiate the possibility of a satellite location in Hart. Working closely with them to provide data for feasibility and market studies will help move the process along.

Vocational Training

Helen Keller is credited with saying "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." This quote encapsulates the importance of working with organizations who have similar missions in order to achieve

greater results. When it comes to workforce development among the population of Hart, the only way to make significant change is to develop and nurture regional partnerships who focus on not only training local talent to fill local jobs, but to also help retain that talent. At this time in Michigan's history, there are over 545,000 open jobs across the state including those in high-paying, highly-rewarding careers such as IT, healthcare, manufacturing, computer science and other professional trades fields.* For that reason, we are seeing many new organizations and campaigns throughout the state with a mission to develop the skills talent that is needed to fill those positions. *Source: GoingPRO in Michigan

Proposed Actions:

1. Promote Going PRO as a resource to the high school to inform graduating seniors of opportunities they may not be aware of.

2. Include links to Going PRO and related resources for job seekers on the Hart economic development website/webpage.

3. Discuss the opportunity to host a "signing day" on National Signing Day (May 8) with high-school graduates who are going into the trades with the local schools to promote the opportunities that exist outside of a four-year college degree. More info: https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/high-school-seniors-nationwide-commit-to-the-skilled-trades-on-national-signing-day-300845869.html

City of Hart

LOGO ASSETS

SECONDARY LOGO

City of Hart

TAGLINE LOGO

Take Me to Hart







COLOUR PALETTE

#FFD03D

#FFC20E

#9bcb51

#545454

#000000

BRAND FONTS

PLAYLIST SCRIPT

abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

AVENIR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

Take Me to Hart

City of Hart
PUBLIC WORKS

City of Hart
TIFA

City of Hart
ENERGY DEPARTMENT

City of Hart
BIOPURE

City of Hart
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

City of Hart
PARKS & REC

BRAND FONTS

PLAYLIST SCRIPT

abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

AVENIR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

Marketing Channels

DIGITAL	PHYSICAL
Website	Wayfinding & Other Signage
Social Media	Print Collateral
Event Calendar	Special Events
Email Marketing	Print Advertising
Videos	Electronic Messaging Sign @ City Hall

Community Assets

- Lake in Downtown
- Proximity to Lake Michigan/Silver Lake/Silver Lake Sand Dunes
- Significant Tourism Economy
- County Seat
- Intact Historic Downtown
- Hart Montague Trail
- Year-round Recreational options
- Food Processing
- Food Growth
- Strong Public Schools
- Robust municipal utilities (water, sewer, power)
- Thriving Downtown Businesses
- Reasonable cost of living
- Beautiful
- Recent website updates
- John Gurney Park & Campground within City
- Downtown Pocket Park
- Hart Commons Park & Event Hub
- Summer concert series
- Hart Historic District Museum & Village
- Safe place to be

Photos of Historic Hart













Destination Marketing

With tourism ranking as one of the top industries world-wide and creating numerous jobs and money for local communities, it is an important area to focus on. But as in many other industries, tourism can face many challenges - especially in rural areas. Small towns should focus less on the big tourism industry, and really home in on what makes their place unique. Planning for long term sustainability, staying authentic to local communities, and spreading the word, are all important factors to sustaining small town tourism.

For Hart, focusing on the charming, small town assets would be the most beneficial to the city. Hart Lake—the 240-acre lake in the middle of town, the Hart-Montague trail, the charming downtown rich with cultural heritage, the festivals, the historical museum, the proximity to Lake Michigan and Silver Lake, and the orchards are the city's best assets to promote.

Destination Marketing: Proposed Actions

"Take me to Hart" campaign

Launch a "Take me to Hart" campaign with images of children in apple orchards, images of people enjoying the festivals, the Hart-Montague trail, Hart Lake, John Gurney campground, downtown, etc. in various seasons with the "Take me to Hart" tagline in the following locations and positions:

- Website landing page hosted by the city with links to learn more about these assets
    - Example: https://www.traversecity.com/
- The Silver Lake Chamber of Commerce (print and online ads—request the back cover of the visitor's guide to replace Ludington's ad)
- Signage at the Silver Lake State Park
- Electronic message board signage at Pentwater and/or exit 149 with campaign tagline and directions to Hart
- "Take me to Hart" billboards along US-31 as far south as Sawyer, MI or Saugatuck to capture Chicagoans seeking a weekend get-away
- Social media campaign with #TakeMeToHart hashtag—encourage tourists and residents to use this hashtag in posts about their vacation

Reach out and ask to link to the campaign's landing page to various travel sites like the ones below:

- http://www.shorelinevisitorsguide.com/
- https://www.michigan.org/
- https://www.travelocity.com/discover

The next page shows some concepts for a tourism campaign in print and online that promote agritourism and the Hart-Montague trail. More images could include a fishing boat at sunrise at Hart Lake, a winter scene of snowmobiles on trails or skiers, etc.:


HART
Take me to Hart


HART
Take me to Hart

Destination/Tourism: Festivals

When done well and promoted, festivals and events can often bring in double the city's population in a matter of one weekend. Festivals and events can be an excellent way to draw people in who haven't interacted with the city before and introduce them to a new potential vacation destination. Consider adding at least one summer or fall festival to the calendar to draw more attraction, public relations opportunities and visitors to Hart.

- Ideas:
    - Apple Blossom Festival: Considering Hart has numerous apple orchards, and apple blossom festival to celebrate the apple season in late spring/early summer either before or after the Asparagus Festival could be a fun and lucrative way to draw attention to one of the city's tastiest assets. This could be promoted through the channels listed above for the "Take me to Hart" campaign.
    - Homecoming: The small-town atmosphere of Hart should be celebrated, and what better way to celebrate than to bring back those who spent their formative years here? Consider a Homecoming festival in late summer over a weekend using social media to bring back Hart grads and other residents to the city, especially as redevelopment begins to showcase the exciting things happening within the city.
    - Launch a Hart business passport campaign during an event or festival where visitors can get a printed "Take me to Hart" passport booklet to collect inked stamps of the Hart logo at select downtown locations (shops, restaurants, breweries). Have a minimum number of stamps that people must retrieve and hold a drawing with a collection of items from local shops as the winning prize.

Benchmarking, Metrics and Ways to Track Progress

In an economic development arena for community vitality, it's important to benchmark so you have an idea of progress. For communities, benchmarking is the process of measuring performance against past performance, industry standards, and competitors.

Benefits to benchmarks:

- It is an effective approach for achieving operational change. Benchmarks are the catalyst that moves an organization to higher levels of performance.
- It focuses upon the processes that improve results – not simply results.
- Performance measures are often improved as a result of benchmarking.
- Decision making improves because the community has enhanced end-user knowledge, process focus, and performance measures.
- Benchmarking improves innovation and creativity since self-imposed barriers to success are removed.

Examples of community-based business benchmarks include new business inquiries and conversations generated through marketing channels, new jobs announced, local business expansion, capital investments in the community, and number of new businesses opening.

Examples of awareness-generating and marketing outreach performance indicators include website traffic, media coverage, social media reach and engagement, and email marketing performance.

Striking a Balance

Overall, the city of Hart has a great deal of positive momentum and is poised to experience meaningful economic growth in both the industrial and/or commercial segments as well as in the tourism industry. As city leadership prioritizes goals and contributes resources to obtain those goals, the city will experience economic vitality. The challenge will be maintaining the balance of a comfortable pace of growth over time while keeping peace with full-time residents and making sure their opinions are not just heard but fully understood and put into action. As many steering committee members agreed, Hart seems to be one of Michigan's best kept secrets, and many city residents love their hometown because of that. The challenge lies in striking the balance between the desires of the residents to keep Hart as it is, and the increase in tourism that will occur over time. The talented city staff and thoughtful committee members are aware of that challenge, and as economic growth occurs, they have the capacity to honor the wishes of the residents while staying true to the vision they have for the city.

Appendix

Industry

Total Businesses by Establishment Type (2018)		
	TOTAL	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3	1.23
Agricultural Services	2	0.82
Coal and Ore Mining	0	0.00
Oil and Gas	0	0.00
General Construction	3	1.23
Heavy Construction	7	2.87
Food Manufacturing	3	1.23
Tobacco Manufacturing	0	0.00
Textile Mills	0	0.00
Apparel and Textile Manufacturing	0	0.00
Lumber and Wood Production	0	0.00
Furniture Manufacturing	0	0.00
Paper Manufacturing	0	0.00
Printing and Publishing	2	0.82
Chemicals	0	0.00
Petroleum Refining	0	0.00
Rubber and Plastics	0	0.00
Leather Manufacturing	0	0.00
Stone, Glass, and Concrete	0	0.00
Metals Fabrication	0	0.00
Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	2	0.82
Transportation	5	2.05
Travel Services	0	0.00
Transport Services	0	0.00
Communications	0	0.00
Utilities	0	0.00
Durables Wholesale	1	0.41
Non Durables Wholesale	6	2.46
Building Materials, Hardware and Garden	2	0.82
General Merchandise Stores	2	0.82
Food Markets	3	1.23
Convenience Stores	3	1.23
Other Food Stores	2	0.82
Auto Dealers and Gas Stations	7	2.87
Clothing Stores	0	0.00
Furniture Stores	1	0.41
Home Furnishings	1	0.41
Electronics and Computer Stores	0	0.00
Music Stores	0	0.00

Restaurants	5	2.05
Other Food Service	3	1.23
Bars	1	0.41
Drug Stores	3	1.23
Liquor Stores	0	0.00
Specialty Stores	7	2.87
Catalog and Direct Sales	0	0.00
Banks and Financial Institutions	15	6.15
Insurance Carriers	1	0.41
Insurance Agents and Brokers	5	2.05
Real Estate	6	2.46
Hotels and Lodging	4	1.64
Dry Cleaning and Laundry	1	0.41
Beauty and Barber Shops	8	3.28
Other Personal Service	4	1.64
Advertising	0	0.00
Computer Services	2	0.82
Other Business Services	3	1.23
Auto Repair/Services	5	2.05
Miscellaneous Repair Services	2	0.82
Motion Pictures	1	0.41
Entertainment and Recreation Services	6	2.46
Health and Medical Services	19	7.79
Hospitals	8	3.28
Legal Services	5	2.05
Primary and Secondary Education	8	3.28
Colleges and Universities	0	0.00
Social Services	11	4.51
Child Care Services	1	0.41
Museums and Zoos	2	0.82
Membership Organizations	12	4.92
Professional Services	6	2.46
Government	30	12.30
Unclassified Establishments	4	1.64

Total Employees by Establishment Type (2018)		
	TOTAL	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	5	0.17
Agricultural Services	8	0.27
Coal and Ore Mining	0	0.00
Oil and Gas	0	0.00
General Construction	17	0.56
Heavy Construction	56	1.86
Food Manufacturing	265	8.79
Tobacco Manufacturing	0	0.00
Textile Mills	0	0.00
Apparel and Textile Manufacturing	0	0.00

Lumber and Wood Production	0	0.00
Furniture Manufacturing	0	0.00
Paper Manufacturing	0	0.00
Printing and Publishing	21	0.70
Chemicals	0	0.00
Petroleum Refining	0	0.00
Rubber and Plastics	0	0.00
Leather Manufacturing	0	0.00
Stone, Glass, and Concrete	0	0.00
Metals Fabrication	3	0.10
Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	188	6.24
Transportation	43	1.43
Travel Services	1	0.03
Transport Services	0	0.00
Communications	0	0.00
Utilities	0	0.00
Durables Wholesale	2	0.07
Non Durables Wholesale	280	9.29
Building Materials, Hardware and Garden	15	0.50
General Merchandise Stores	19	0.63
Food Markets	100	3.32
Convenience Stores	28	0.93
Other Food Stores	10	0.33
Auto Dealers and Gas Stations	33	1.09
Clothing Stores	0	0.00
Furniture Stores	7	0.23
Home Furnishings	6	0.20
Electronics and Computer Stores	0	0.00
Music Stores	0	0.00
Restaurants	61	2.02
Other Food Service	23	0.76
Bars	6	0.20
Drug Stores	19	0.63
Liquor Stores	0	0.00
Specialty Stores	13	0.43
Catalog and Direct Sales	0	0.00
Banks and Financial Institutions	50	1.66
Insurance Carriers	2	0.07
Insurance Agents and Brokers	13	0.43
Real Estate	32	1.06
Hotels and Lodging	18	0.60
Dry Cleaning and Laundry	2	0.07
Beauty and Barber Shops	18	0.60
Other Personal Service	44	1.46
Advertising	0	0.00
Computer Services	3	0.10
Other Business Services	10	0.33

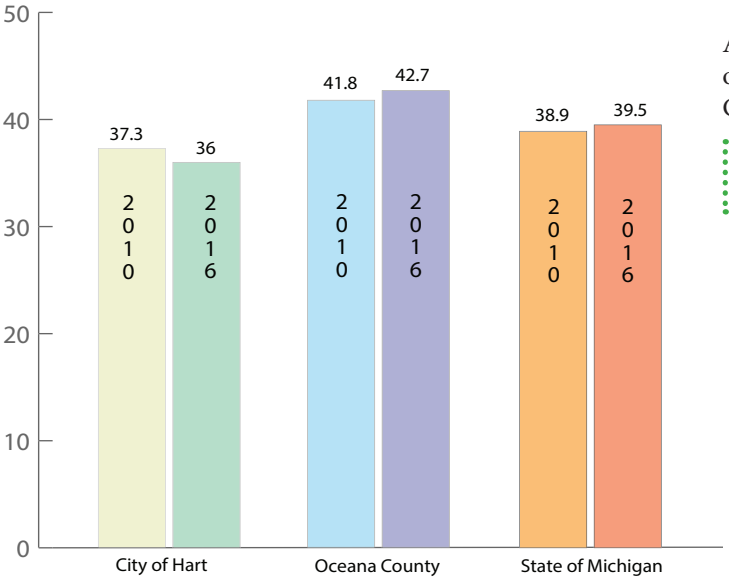
Auto Repair/Services	13	0.43
Miscellaneous Repair Services	4	0.13
Motion Pictures	3	0.10
Entertainment and Recreation Services	39	1.29
Health and Medical Services	78	2.59
Hospitals	461	15.30
Legal Services	18	0.60
Primary and Secondary Education	487	16.16
Colleges and Universities	0	0.00
Social Services	53	1.76
Child Care Services	7	0.23
Museums and Zoos	22	0.73
Membership Organizations	65	2.16
Professional Services	26	0.86
Government	303	10.05
Unclassified Establishments	4	0.13

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Hart, MI
By the numbers

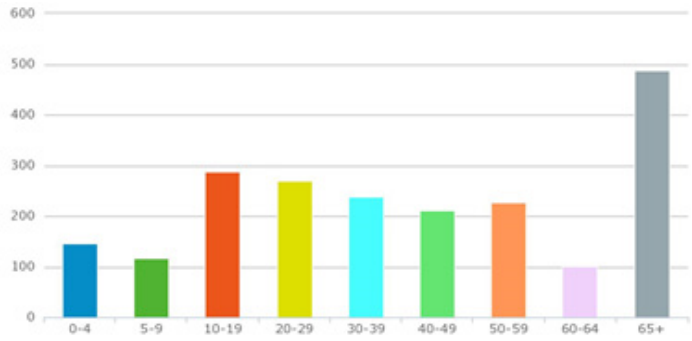
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Demographics



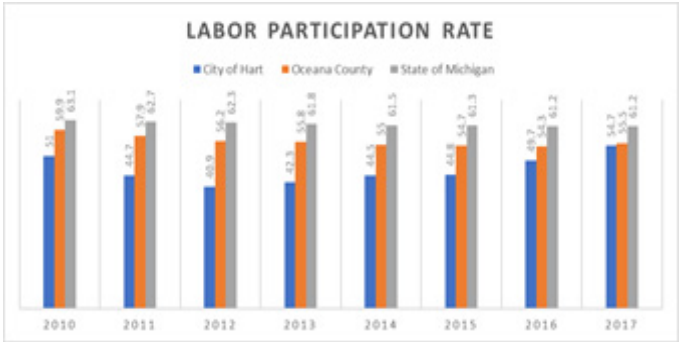
As of 2016, the median age of individuals living in the City of Hart is 36.

36



While the largest age cluster is 65+, the 10-29 age group is nearly equal in size.

Workforce



The City of Hart's labor participation rate is 54.7%.

54.7%

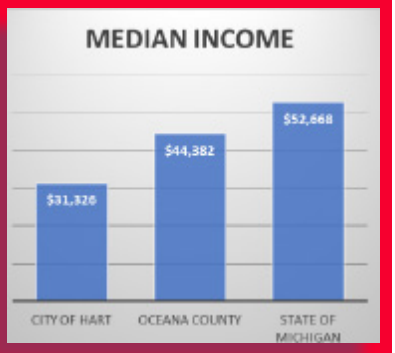
Population



According to 2017 US Census estimates, the current population of the City of Hart is 2,275.

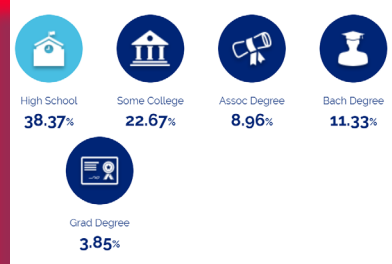
2,275

Income



The median household income in the City of Hart, $31,326, and the median household income for families is $40,385.

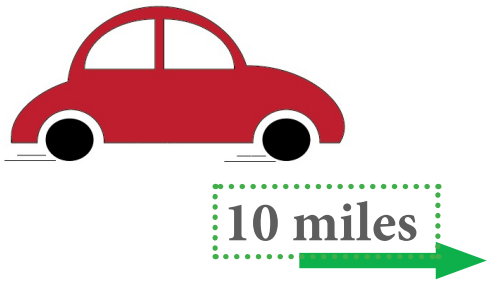
Education



The majority of the population of Hart has a high school degree, and 24.14% have a college degree.

24.14%

Commute patterns



53.2% of the workforce work outside of the city proper. The median commute time for workers in the city is 14 minutes, or roughly 10 miles from the city.



Industries

INDUSTRY OF EMPLOYED WORKERS (US Census 2017 Estimates)	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	837
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining:	45
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0
Construction	50
Manufacturing	160
Wholesale trade	35
Retail trade	67
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	51
Transportation and warehousing	51
Utilities	0
Information	0
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing:	57
Finance and insurance	32
Real estate and rental and leasing	25
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management	51
Professional, scientific, and technical services	8
Management of companies and enterprises	0
Administrative and support and waste management services	43
Educational services, and health care and social assistance:	156
Educational services	38
Health care and social assistance	118
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services:	97
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	4
Accommodation and food services	93
Other services, except public administration	33
Public administration	35



The largest employment sectors for residents of the city fall in the categories of **manufacturing, health care** and **social assistance**.

Take Your Business to Hart | ***Take Me to Hart***



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Economic development target markets & key messages

Segment	Primary Interests	Outreach Tools	Key Messages to Segment
Location advisors/Site selectors & Corporate Executives (with site influence)	• Reducing risk, credible and trustworthy sources • Available and skilled workforce • Accessibility and location • Incentives and taxes • Predictable permitting process	• Meetings at industry events • Website/online media • Partnerships and industry networks • Industry press • Briefings/tours	**Take your business to Hart** • Plenty of available land and vacant facilities • We offer fast approvals • Incentives available • Beautiful location 7 miles from Lake Michigan and 40 min. from Muskegon • Forward-thinking city leadership • Low utility costs due to the Municipality-owned utility—industrial electric costs are $.11/kWh lower than the state average
Developers	• Reducing risk • Quality/style of development • Return on investment • Quick tenant placement • Predictable permitting process • Zoning and land use	• Engagement in community building vision • Trade media and press • Briefings/tours • Website/online media • Area business reports	**Take your business to Hart** • Untapped market potential • Desirable location • Fast approvals • Incentives available • Small-town charm with forward-thinking city leadership • Low utility costs due to the Municipality-owned utility—industrial electric costs are $.11/kWh lower than the state average
Regional & Intermediary Organizations, Public-Private Partnerships (OCEA, The Right Place, WMSRDC, etc.)	• Promoting and expanding economic development in the region • Growing the organization's reputation and credibility • Networking	• Brochures/Fact sheets • Briefings • Engagement in community building vision • Community educational forums	• Changes will offer major economic opportunities for local community • Together we can make Hart a great place to do business and development projects • We are leveraging your investment

Economic development action table

	Goals	Objectives
Education	Develop and enhance partnerships with educational institutions from K-12 through post-secondary	• Have the city reconsider passing a millage for both West Shore and Muskegon Community Colleges • Identify apprenticeship opportunities for residents not looking at higher education • Partner with Michigan Works to drive residents to job training opportunities • Support Ottawa County Skills for Success Program (byproduct of Marshall Plan). Soft skill training program for all age groups
Infrastructure	Develop a cost effective, consolidated infrastructure system	• High-speed Broad Band connectivity throughout the community • Work with Connect Michigan • Prioritize internet connectivity as part of the infrastructure plan within the City of Hart • Expand public water and sewer to un-served city locations • Engage in dialog with surrounding communities regarding shared services to stretch limited community resources • Continue to prepare short and long-term capital improvement programs covering major infrastructure and facility needs • Consider traffic calming measures as opportunities arise, particularly in neighborhoods and downtown • Continue support of the Michigan Energy Optimization Program • Encourage neighborhood and development connectivity for streets and non-motorized transportation to ensure a more efficient and convenient transportation network • Improve electric reliability to maintain our reduced downtime during outages and improve peak generation capacity
Regional Collaboration	Strengthen existing and create new collaborative partnerships to operate effectively as one voice for regional economic success.	• Collaborate with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Corporation (5 county EDO recognized by EDA) • Expansion of regional activities • Improve communication regarding regional economic development opportunities • City to host intergovernmental joint meetings to discuss regional economic development and goals and issues related to economic development and tourism.
Industry Activities	Develop an ecosystem for creating, attracting, expanding, and retaining businesses.	• Continue to work with agribusiness and encourage them to consider business expansion opportunities such as agritourism, cidery, winery and orchard tours • Agribusiness relationship building • Business incentive program and policy for business attraction, retention and marketing • Entrepreneurial ecosystem/support/development program • Access business retention program through The Right Place and the county • Work with PTAC to assist companies in the city • SBDC representation.
Destination	Continue efforts to make Hart a destination city with a high quality of life.	• Continue utilizing the Hart Economic And Redevelopment Team (Heart) as an advocate to draw tourism and investment in Downtown Hart • Identify additional events to attract tourists and residents from outside of the area to the City of Hart • Create a targeted marketing campaign to attract businesses, tourists and new potential residents to Hart.



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The Keys to Hart's Economic Development Success:

- Commitment to achieving goals and objectives
- Strong partnerships and inter-agency collaboration in an effort to achieve common goals
- Resource support to get the work done
- Consistent, frequent communications from the city to residents and business owners through the tactics outlined in the full plan.



Key economic development marketing tactics:

- Create additional web pages on the city's current website or develop a new, separate economic development website that incorporates the slogan "Take Your Business to Hart." The site/pages should contain key messages, industry information, community demographics, maps of redevelopment ready sites and available land
- Social media campaigns leveraging images of the community using the brand slogan
- Earn media by pitching stories about the asparagus festival and other unique local events and businesses
- Establish a committee to research, develop and support local agritourism
- Expand opportunities for workforce development by creating partnerships with nearby community colleges and vocational training facilities. Propose a millage vote to increase funding for educational facilities.

Destination marketing:

- Establish a committee to research, develop and support local agritourism with locally-crafted hard cider events
- "Take me to Hart" social media, advertising and communications campaigns, local business passport campaign, local events like homecoming and apple blossom festival.





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