

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
RESOURCE INVENTORY AND
ANALYSIS**

JUNE 2006

**PREPARED BY THE WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL
PLANNING COMMISSION WITH FUNDING FROM
ITS MEMBER COMMUNITIES AND THE U.S.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION**

West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
Member Communities:

Allegan County
City of Big Rapids
City of Cedar Springs
City of Grand Rapids
Ionia County
Mecosta County
Montcalm County
Osceola County
Ottawa County
City of Wyoming

County memberships cover all communities within the county

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INTRODUCTION

The primary goals of this planning process include:

- Provide the means to create a more focused approach to economic development and long-range strategic planning – related primarily to manufacturing
- Develop an inventory of industrial parks
- Develop an inventory of land planned/zoned for industrial uses
- Develop an inventory of economic development programs
- Establish a set of recommendations related to the need for additional facilities and programs – or the lack of need due to an excess of facilities
- Create a process that can strengthen the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) without a duplication of effort
- Define the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of the seven-county area served by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) related to economic development

While the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides a lot of information about the area’s economy and potential projects, it does not identify existing and potential resources to promote economic growth in the seven-county area. This planning process provides an inventory of resources including programs, staffing, industrial parks, existing industrial areas, and communities that have set aside areas for economic development-related growth. It also identifies the need for additional facilities and areas with excess capacity in the seven-county region.

WMRPC Staff conducted the inventory and analysis with the assistance of the WMRPC Board, the CEDS Committee, and each of the 199 communities within the seven-county area. The initiative increases the capacity of the WMRPC to provide a complete picture of the area’s economic development capabilities – making it easier to guide community and economic development.

WMRPC Board

- Steve McNeal, Allegan County
- Thomas Hogenson, City of Big Rapids
- Mark Gifford, City of Big Rapids
- Jerry Homminga, City of Cedar Springs
- Pat Capek, City of Cedar Springs
- Suzanne Schulz, City of Grand Rapids
- James Jendrsiak, City of Grand Rapids
- Gregg Yeomans, Ionia County
- Joe Marhofer, Ionia County
- Charles Luteran, Mecosta County
- John Todd, Mecosta County
- John Johansen, Montcalm County
- Marcia Walker, Montcalm County
- Elmo Hoaglund, Osceola County
- Paul Thibodeau, Osceola County
- Edward Berghorst, Ottawa County
- Mark Knudsen, Ottawa County
- Spencer Bertram, City of Wyoming
- Tim Cochran, City of Wyoming
- Charles Mulholland, Chair (At-Large)
- Regina Davis, Member At-Large
- Tammy Holt, Member At-Large
- Tom Lindeman, Alternate, Montcalm County

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

- Larry “Casey” Jones, Allegan County
- Susan Shannon, City of Grand Rapids
- Diane Smith, Ionia County
- Julianne Burns, Ionia County
- Dan Petersen, Montcalm County
- Donald Smucker, Montcalm County
- Mike Fleitman, Mecosta County
- Cindy Plautz, Mecosta County
- Dan Massy, Osceola County
- Larry Morlock, Osceola County
- Edward Berghorst, Ottawa County
- Ken Rizzio, Ottawa County
- Tim Cochran, City of Wyoming
- Dorothy Ravell, Member At-Large
- Chuck Birr, Member At-Large

Project Participants

In addition to the WMRPC Board, the CEDS Committee, and WMRPC staff, the following people provided input to this study:

- John Peck, Economic Development Administration (retired from EDA prior to completion of study)

Project Area

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) serves Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Osceola, and Ottawa counties. The Project Area is the same as the service area for the WMRPC. The WMRPC, also known as “Region 8” is one of Michigan’s 14 Regions and is a designated Economic Development District.

PLANNING PROCESS

The following work program details the tasks performed to complete this study. The WMRPC worked with the seven counties and individual communities to compile information related to available programs and physical resources.

Action 1 – Introduction

The WMRPC initiated the planning process by publishing the intent of the initiative in its newsletter, *Region 8 Notes* that is sent to over 550 communities and organizations across the seven-county area. The WMRPC also updated the Board and CEDS Committee on the capacity building initiative and sought the Board's and Committee's input (throughout the process). While the WMRPC involved the Board and CEDS Committee to help gather information, analyze information, and complete the initiative, it was necessary (and beneficial) to solicit additional input from communities and organizations not represented on the Board and/or CEDS Committee. This included telephone calls and letters to the communities in the Region and to organizations such as the Right Place Inc. and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

Action 2 – Program Description

The WMRPC described each of the economic development organizations serving communities in Region 8. The descriptions include service areas, staffing, contact information, governance, funding sources, and services provided. Other points about each organization are also discussed. The organizations' relationship with the WMRPC is also discussed since there are several communities in Kent County that are not currently members. The WMRPC gathered this information using personal visits, telephone calls, e-mail, web sites, committee meetings, and letters.

Action 3 – Inventory of Existing and Future Manufacturing Locations

The WMRPC invited each of the 199 communities in Region 8 to provide information related to the amount of land currently used for manufacturing purposes and the amount of land set aside (in future land use plans) for manufacturing. To assure that all communities with such goals responded, the responses were discussed at WMRPC Board meetings and CEDS meetings with County representatives to determine if any communities needed follow-up calls. This was necessary since not all communities in Region 8 have manufacturing opportunities (existing or planned). In addition to simple acreage figures, each community was asked to respond to a series of questions to gain a better understanding of their community and economic development resources and goals. Additional questions included such points as:

- Amount of industrial park space (total, vacant, and planned)
- Number of employees in existing industrial facilities
- The availability of a Renaissance Zone or other tax incentives
- Amount of land in Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities

- Availability of industrial land at or near airports
- Availability of incubator space and description of facilities (size, staff, etc.)
- Amount of land in areas designated for redevelopment
- Location of sites
- Status of land use plans
- Potential projects (similar to CEDS)
- Major vacant/available facilities in community

Once the information was gathered from all of the communities, the WMRPC developed text and tables describing the Region's economic development resources.

Action 4 – Map Information

The WMRPC created maps showing the various concentrations of opportunities across the region. Maps do not identify individual sites, but focus on the location of communities with concentrations of land either used or available for manufacturing. Staff also generated maps that show the overall economic conditions by county or community. Other mapped information includes transportation routes, community boundaries, and general land uses across the seven-county area.

Action 5 – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The WMRPC developed an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to economic development resources in Region 8. This analysis builds on the ongoing strategic planning initiated by the Region in to evaluate the CEDS process. The analysis was based on interviews with 30 key individuals from across the seven-county area. The WMRPC Board and CEDS Committee assisted WMRPC staff in identifying an appropriate mix of people to interview. Once the interviews were completed, staff prepared a report detailing the Region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to existing resources. The WMRPC and the CEDS Committee will use this information to establish future roles and focus areas related to economic and community development.

Action 6 – Identify Gaps or Surpluses in Facilities and Programs

The WMRPC identified communities that have gaps or surpluses in facilities and programs based on criteria such as acreage of existing facilities, vacant facilities, population, population projections, the workforce, unemployment rates, capacity of local utilities, proximity to major transportation routes, and community goals. While many communities may feel they need additional facilities, this evaluation is intended to provide an unbiased evaluation of the need (or lack of need) for additional industrial parks, land planned/zoned for industrial uses, and programs. Staff from the WMRPC developed a matrix with criteria for evaluating gaps/surpluses for each county. The WMRPC sought participation from U.S. EDA for developing appropriate criteria.

Action 7 – CEDS Committee and WMRPC Review and Adoption

The WMRPC compiled all of the information for CEDS Committee review and approval. Once the CEDS Committee reviewed and approved the capacity building initiative, it was passed to the WMRPC (Board) for final review and approval. Both the CEDS Committee and the Board were kept up-to-date at regular Committee and Board meetings. Once approved, 100 Copies of the report were printed and forwarded to each county and participating community, state/federal legislators, EDA, MEDC, USDA, MDOT and other interested agencies. The WMRPC also posted the report on our web page (wmrpc.org).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN REGION 8

Federal Programs

While there are numerous federal programs available to communities in Michigan, the two that are most closely tied to economic and community development include the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and U.S.D.A. Rural Development.

U. S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The WMRPC is the liaison between the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and communities in Region 8. This long-term relationship began in 1972 when the WMRPC was designated an EDA Economic Development District.

This program involves several ongoing components including the annual updating of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS Committee, with the assistance of WMRPC staff, develops an annual document that describes the economic conditions of the seven counties, recent successes, and ongoing challenges related to economic development.

The CEDS Committee also solicits economic development projects from each of the communities (counties, cities, villages, and townships) in Region 8 as well as other community-based organizations. The CEDS lists all of these projects, which communities feel would benefit the economic conditions of the area. After CEDS Committee and WMRPC Board adoption, this list of projects is forwarded to EDA, USDA, MEDC, state and federal legislators, and other organizations for funding consideration. EDA requires projects appear in a CEDS for funding consideration.

Identifying a community project in the CEDS does not automatically move the project forward. After listing the project, communities must meet with the Region and EDA to develop and promote projects. The WMRPC facilitates meetings between communities and EDA to determine if a community's project meets EDA's criteria.

EDA funds projects related to economic development and job creation – such as infrastructure improvements that benefit existing or potential businesses, the development of industrial parks, the development of business incubators, or other projects intended to increase the income of an area's residents. Additionally, EDA's Investment Policy Guidelines provide communities with direction related to EDA's goals. The Guidelines follow:

1. Be market-based and results-driven – An investment will capitalize on a region's competitive strengths and will positively move a regional economic indicator measured on EDA's Balanced Scorecard, such as: an increased number of higher-skill, higher-wage jobs; increased tax revenue; or increased private-sector investment.

2. Have strong organizational leadership – An investment will have strong leadership, relevant project management experience, and a significant commitment of human-resources talent to ensure a project's successful execution.
3. Advance productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship – An investment will embrace the principles of entrepreneurship, enhance regional clusters, and leverage and link technology innovators and local universities to the private sector to create the conditions for greater productivity, innovation, and job creation.
4. Look beyond the immediate economic horizon, anticipate economic changes, and diversify the local and regional economy – An investment will be part of an overarching, long-term comprehensive economic development strategy that enhances a region's success in achieving a rising standard of living by supporting existing industry clusters, developing emerging new clusters, or attracting new regional economic drivers.
5. Demonstrate a high degree of commitment by exhibiting:
 - High levels of local-government or nonprofit matching funds and private-sector leverage
 - Clear and unified leadership and support by local elected officials
 - Strong cooperation between the business sector, relevant regional partners, and local, state, and federal governments

Staffing changes at EDA are currently occurring, including the retirement of the Michigan EDA representative. Contact the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission for up-to-date contact information.

U.S.D.A. Rural Development

Rural Development is committed to improving the economy and quality of life in rural communities. Rural Development supports public facilities and services such as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and telephone/electric services. Rural Development promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools (such a program exists in Ionia, Montcalm, Mecosta, and Osceola counties). Rural Development also offers technical assistance to communities and businesses for such projects as starting agricultural and other cooperatives.

While Rural Development and the WMRPC do not have a formal working arrangement, the two agencies often work together on projects such as establishing the multi-county revolving loan program or specific community projects. Additionally, staff from Rural Development frequently presents information at Board and CEDS Committee meetings.

Contact information varies by specific programs within Rural Development. Contact the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission for up-to-date contact information.

State of Michigan Programs

Like federal programs, there are numerous programs available for communities economic development needs. The two principle programs include the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)

MEDC is Michigan's primary agency promoting economic development statewide. The MEDC was formed in 1999 through an alliance between the State of Michigan and several local communities. It has a private sector board of directors comprised of business people, local economic developers, and educators.

MEDC's services include the Community Assistance Team (CATeam), which responds to the economic development needs of communities by packaging economic incentives such as CDBG, Brownfield, SBT, and Urban Land Assembly. The CATeam also can provide planning grants and strategic planning services. The CATeam operates the Michigan Main Street program and the Blueprint for Michigan's Downtowns program.

MEDC provides many services for businesses including consultation education training, export services, job training, selling to government programs, and helping companies meet changing demands through strategic planning assistance.

Michigan offers many financing programs and incentives through the MEDC. Michigan's brownfield redevelopment program provides benefits to businesses that reuse contaminated, functionally obsolete, or blighted properties. The MEDC assists communities with infrastructure needs with Community Development Block Grants. The Industrial Development Revenue Bond program provides businesses with capital cost savings related to interest rates and taxes. The Economic Development Job Training program is a major feature of the state's economic development efforts. The Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) was created to promote economic growth and job creation through tax credits. The Michigan NextEnergy Authority was created to promote the development of alternative energy sources. Property tax abatements are available for new real and personal property. The Renaissance Zones are used to encourage the development of selected areas across Michigan and are virtually free of state and local taxes. Tool and Die Recovery Zones are industry-based zones designed to retain existing jobs. SBA 504 Loans provide small businesses with long-term financing for the acquisition or construction of fixed assets.

Contact information varies by specific programs within MEDC. Contact the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission for up-to-date contact information.

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Each year, the WMRPC receives state funds under the statewide “Regional Transportation Planning” program as legislated by Act 51’s Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF). The WMRPC’s work program includes the following activities:

Administration – Provide program and financial status accounts, which satisfy requirements of the Regional Agency and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and to provide program administration and management, support.

Technical Assistance to MDOT – Assist in various tasks to update the Statewide Long-Range Plan (SLRP), and a State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Included are potential coordination and hosting of public involvement meetings as required.

Also assist in various tasks in addressing specific Department issues, projects and programs, such as road, transit, non-motorized, rail, marine, airport, State Planning and Research (SPR) Program, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Program, Enhancement (ENH) Program, Heritage Route (Scenic By-Ways) Program and other Department projects, programs, and issues. Work with MDOT as appropriate through the Program Coordinator and Manager, MDOT Regions and Transportation Service Center (TSC)’s, to reach mutual agreement of process and resources in conducting such work.

HPMS Update – Assist MDOT by annually updating sample segment data in accordance with the Highway Performance Management System (HPMS), Traffic Monitoring Guide (TMG), and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines, as provided by MDOT. Completion is to be by December 31 of the calendar year.

Traffic Counting – Develop an on-going program for obtaining traffic volume data and determining Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) for strategic locations within the region, and to assist the Department in obtaining supplemental counts, i.e. assistance in TEA-21 activities, and counts provided to developers, local jurisdictions, and others.

Public Involvement – Assist MDOT in providing the public an opportunity, as appropriate, to review and comment on activities related to this Program.

Technical Assistance – Provide services to local transportation oriented entities with activities to improve existing transportation systems, add new transportation systems, and address local transportation issues directly relating to future actions to improve the area's transportation system.

Corridor Studies – The WMRPC has assisted in the development of three corridor studies in Region 8. These studies emphasize communities working together to enhance the capacity and safety of existing corridors through access management. Access management relates to the rational placement of entrances to corridors to reduce conflict between through traffic and traffic exiting or entering the corridor. Examples of access

management include consolidation of driveways, aligning intersections, and service drives for connected businesses. MDOT has funded three studies in Region 8.

M-40/M-89 Corridor – This corridor study began in 1998 and continues today with quarterly meetings of the M-40/M-89 Corridor Committee. The study area stretches from the northwest corner of Allegan County to the southeast corner and passes through numerous townships and cities.

M-66 Corridor – This corridor study began in 2000 and continues today with quarterly meetings of the M-66 Corridor Committee. The original study area was between I-96 and the City of Ionia, but now includes the entire section of M-66 in Ionia County.

M-104 Corridor – This corridor study occurred in 2004 and involved two townships, one city, one village, Ottawa County Planning and Grants, the Ottawa County Road Commission, MDOT, and the WMRPC. The study focused on Access Management and improving traffic flow through the six mile corridor.

Economic Development – In addition to traditional transportation improvements (road and bridge construction and maintenance, etc.) MDOT has several programs targeting economic development in Michigan. The Transportation Economic Development Fund provides for the distribution of money to counties and municipalities to assist in the funding of highway, road, and street projects necessary to support economic growth. The Transportation Enhancement Program funds enhancements that improve Michigan’s intermodal transportation network and the quality of life in Michigan. The State Infrastructure Bank has a limited amount of money for low-interest loans for transportation improvements.

Contact information varies by specific programs within MDOT. Contact the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission for up-to-date contact information.

Regional Programs

West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC)

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) serves the seven Michigan counties of Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Osceola, and Ottawa. The WMRPC has a staff of three people that includes the Director, a Planner, and an Administration Assistant. The WMRPC is the designated Economic Development District, assisting the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) with efforts in the seven-county area, including developing the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that lists economic development projects communities would like to undertake. The WMRPC is the liaison between communities and the EDA. The WMRPC also promotes the relationship between the seven counties’ economic developers through the CEDS Committee – which regularly meets to discuss regional issues, develop the annual CEDS, receive training, and promote EDA’s programs.

In addition to economic development, the WMRPC offers other community development services (that are usually related to economic development). The WMRPC has a close relationship with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to improve transportation systems across the Region. The WMRPC performs corridor studies, traffic counts, access management studies, Michigan's new transportation asset management program, and other activities related to transportation.

Other ongoing activities performed by the WMRPC include land use plans for communities, recreation plans, studies along shoreline communities related to growth and planning, hazard mitigation planning, and other plans as required by communities. Additional services provided by the WMRPC include providing regional reviews of projects, maintaining U.S. Census materials, maintaining a library and other data services, and providing customized mapping services and GIS services for members.

The WMRPC receives funding from EDA, MDOT, and dues from each of the seven counties (Kent County is the exception, but Grand Rapids, Wyoming, and Cedar Springs provide funding in Kent County). Additional funds are generated through other Michigan programs and individual member projects.

Dave Bee, AICP, Director
WMRPC
820 Monroe, NW, Suite 214
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503-1478
Telephone: (616) 774-8400
Web: www.wmrpc.org

The Right Place, Inc.

The Right Place, Inc. serves the "Greater Grand Rapids Area" which includes Kent County and the surrounding counties as needs arise – such as when Electrolux was closing in Greenville, which is located in Montcalm County. Ms. Birgit Klohs, the President of The Right Place Inc., leads a staff of 15 highly skilled individuals that include a representative in Japan and another in Germany.

"Founded in 1985, The Right Place, Inc. is a regional, non-profit economic development organization that is directed by a board consisting of business and community leaders. Its mission is to promote area economic growth through high-quality employment, productivity, and technology. The program focuses on retaining existing jobs, supporting local business growth, and attracting new businesses to the Greater Grand Rapids area" (The Right Place, Inc.).

The Right Place, Inc. receives funds from both private organizations and local government units. Funding is raised in five-year blocks to allow strategic planning and to limit uncertainties related to year-to-year fund raising.

The 2004-2008 Strategic Plan identifies five key strategies:

1. Lead Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction.
2. Identify and Develop Emerging Growth Opportunities.
3. Strengthen Manufacturing Leadership and Innovation.
4. Lead Urban Redevelopment Vital to Business Retention and Attraction.
5. Lead Regional Initiatives in Economic Development.

The program offers a variety of services for manufacturing expansion or relocation including:

- Local and state government liaison
- Site selection
- Workforce development
- Customized market research
- Manufacturing assistance

Staff also markets the region to a worldwide audience and actively pursues companies, professionals and resources whose presence would enhance the competitiveness of area manufacturers or strengthen the regional economy. The Right Place, Inc. also provides a link between business and education to help ensure the area's workforce is prepared to meet the needs of business. The program, in cooperation with the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, serves as a conduit for information and as a liaison between development, infrastructure improvement, and other factors that contribute to the area's business climate.

The Right Place, Inc. has an ongoing relationship with the WMRPC. Staff often attend WMRPC Board Meetings and CEDS Committee meetings and have worked to bring EDA grants into the City of Grand Rapids. Staff of both organizations also serve on several committees together and frequently exchange information related to economic development in the area.

Birgit Klohs, President
The Right Place Inc.
161 Ottawa Ave. NW, Suite 400
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503-2701
Telephone: (616) 771-0325
Web: www.rightplace.org

Allegan County

Allegan County

Allegan County is currently (as of May 2006) in transition related to economic development services. It recently eliminated the Allegan County Economic Alliance and is in the process of determining the most effective way to promote the County's

economic development interests. The County is a member of the WMRPC and has two representatives on the WMRPC Board and two representatives on the CEDS Committee.

Larry “Casey” Jones, Chair
Allegan County Board of Commissioners
County Administration Building
3283 122nd Avenue
Allegan, Michigan 49010

Cities

The following cities are represented on the WMRPC through Allegan County. Each city has staff representing the economic and community development needs of the community. Basic contact information is provided for each community.

- City of Allegan –** Robert Hillard, Manager
112 Locust St.
Allegan, Michigan 49010
Telephone (269) 673-5511
- City of Douglas –** Jill Eyre, Manager
City of (The Village of) Douglas
86 W. Center St.
Douglas, Michigan 49406
Telephone (269) 857-1438
- City of Fennville –** City of Fennville
222 S. Maple St.
Fennville, Michigan 49408
Telephone (269) 561-8321
- City of Otsego –** Thad Beard, Manager
City of Otsego
117 E. Orleans St.
Otsego, Michigan 49078
Telephone (269) 694-6146
- City of Plainwell –** Erik Wilson, Manager
City of Plainwell
414 N. Main St.
Plainwell, Michigan 49080
Telephone (269) 685-6821
- City of Saugatuck –** City of Saugatuck
102 Butler St.
Saugatuck, Michigan 49453
Telephone (269) 857-2603

City of Wayland – Deborah Nier, Manager
City of Wayland
103 S. Main St.
Wayland, Michigan 49348
Telephone (269) 792-2265

Villages and Townships

Allegan County has 24 townships and 2 villages that are all represented on the WMRPC through Allegan County. Each township and village has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships and villages contact either Allegan County (see above) or the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

Ionia County

Ionia County Economic Alliance

The Ionia County Economic Alliance (ICEA) serves all of the communities and businesses in Ionia County. The Alliance was created through a partnership between MSU Extension and Ionia County. The Alliance is funded through investment from Ionia County, MSU Extension, individual units of government throughout the County, and private businesses.

Services and programs for Business Retention and Expansion include the Manufacturers Retention and Expansion Visitation Program, the Small Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program, workforce development efforts with companies and educational entities, counseling local businesses for information and referrals related to business plan enhancement and financial management, providing educational programs for local businesses to expand their skills, and obtaining grants to upgrade local infrastructure necessary for current business operations. Business Attraction services include marketing Ionia County and properties via the web from local to state sites, working with a regional economic development organization to attract new businesses through manufacturers directory and a site consultant event, assisting interested site consultants and companies with area information, incentive packaging to attract new businesses such as employee training and infrastructure upgrades, and counseling entrepreneurs in business plan development as well as financing options. Community Development services include working to improve downtowns through strategic planning facilitation and educating on how business-government collaboration can benefit communities. Also within community development, ICEA facilitates regional land use planning through the organization of the M-66 Corridor Land Use Advisory Board, giving local government and state government a forum for discussing needs related to development. In addition to the above services, ICEA services as the Director of the County Economic Development Corporation and the Ionia County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (ICBRA). The ICEA obtained two \$200,000 grants from the USEPA for Brownfield Assessment and is currently managing these grants and the

consultant firm hired to complete the grant projects. This grant will enable communities to reuse abandoned buildings, put them back on the tax rolls, and increase the local job base. In addition, this type of grant has been a spring board for receiving additional EPA and HUD funding in other counties that have received the grant in the past.

ICEA's 22-member Board of Trustees is comprised of both private and public representatives. Staff includes an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant.

Diane Smith, Executive Director
Ionia County Economic Alliance
545 Appletree Drive
Ionia, Michigan 48846
(616) 527-8014
www.icea-mi.org

Cities

The following cities are represented on the WMRPC through Ionia County. Each city has staff representing the economic and community development needs of the community. Basic contact information is provided for each community.

City of Belding – Randall Debruine, Manager
City of Belding
120 S. Pleasant St.
Belding, Michigan 48809
Telephone (616) 794-1900

City of Ionia – Julianne Burns, Grants Administrator
City of Ionia
114 N. Kidd St.
Ionia, Michigan 48846
Telephone (616) 527-4170

City of Portland – Carolyn Bennett, DDA Director
City of Portland
259 Kent St.
Portland, Michigan 48875
Telephone (517) 647-5027

Villages and Townships

Ionia County has 16 townships and 7 villages that are all represented on the WMRPC through Ionia County. Each township and village has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships and villages contact either the Ionia County Economic Alliance (see above) or the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

Kent County

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) does not have a direct relationship with Kent County due to the County's decision to not belong as a member to the WMRPC. The WMRPC regularly invites participation and keeps up-to-date on County interests, but there is no formal agreement. The WMRPC does provide many services to Kent County communities, such as performing regional reviews, providing Census information, reviewing planning documents, etc. For this project the WMRPC also spent some time gathering land use plans and other information to determine the quantity of land dedicated to manufacturing. There are three communities that are members of the WMRPC. The Right Place, Inc. (see above) is one of the primary providers of economic development services in Kent County.

Member Communities

The following cities are represented on the WMRPC as individual units. Each city has staff representing the economic and community development needs of the community. Basic contact information is provided for each community.

City of Cedar Springs – Jerry Homminga, Manager
City of Cedar Springs
66 S. Main St.
Cedar Springs, Michigan 49319
Telephone (616) 696-1330

City of Grand Rapids – Susan Shannon, Business Advocate
City of Grand Rapids
300 Monroe NW, Room 920
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone (616) 456-3196

City of Wyoming – Tim Cochran, Planner
City of Wyoming
1155 28th St.
Wyoming, Michigan 49509
Telephone (616) 530-7258

Non-Member Communities

Kent County – Daryl Delabbio, Administrator
Kent County Administrative Building
300 Monroe Avenue, NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone (616) 336-2523

- City of Grandville –** City of Grandville
3195 Wilson Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418
Telephone (616) 531-3030
- City of Kentwood –** City of Kentwood
4900 Breton Ave. SE
Kentwood, Michigan 49518
Telephone (616) 698-9610
- City of Rockford –** City of Rockford
7 S. Monroe St.
Rockford, Michigan 49314
Telephone (616) 866-1537
- City of Walker –** City of Walker
4243 Remembrance Rd. NW
Walker, Michigan 49544
Telephone (616) 453-6311

Villages and Townships

Kent County has 21 townships and 5 villages that are not represented on the WMRPC. Each township and village has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships and villages contact Kent County (see above).

Mecosta County

Mecosta County is a member of the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission and has two members on the WMRPC Board and a member on the CEDS Committee. The City of Big Rapids is also a separate member of the WMRPC. All communities in Mecosta County are represented on the WMRPC.

Mecosta County Development Corporation

The Mecosta County Development Corporation (MCDC) serves all of the communities and businesses in Mecosta County. The Corporation is housed in the same building as the area's Convention and Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce. MCDC is funded through Mecosta County, and individual communities across the County (cities, villages, and townships) as well as private businesses.

MCDC provides a variety of services related to business retention and expansion including workforce training, small business classes and consultation, and technical assistance. MCDC also provides local economic development assistance to communities, gathers economic and demographic information, shares information about available

buildings and land, and provides information to businesses seeking new opportunities. MCDC also participates in a multiple-county revolving loan program to assist businesses in funding projects.

The MCDC Board is comprised of both private and public representatives. Staff includes an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant.

Mike Fleitman, Executive Director
Mecosta County Development Corporation
246 North State Street
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
Telephone (231) 592-3403
www.mecostaedc.com

City of Big Rapids

The City of Big Rapids operates its own economic development activities. The primary contact person is:

Mark Gifford, City Planner
City of Big Rapids
226 North Michigan
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
Telephone (231) 592-4036

Villages and Townships

Mecosta County has 16 townships and 4 villages that are all represented on the WMRPC through Mecosta County. Each township and village has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships and villages contact either the Mecosta County Development Corporation (see above) or the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

Montcalm County

Montcalm Alliance

The Montcalm Alliance serves all of the communities and businesses in Montcalm County. Montcalm Alliance is funded through Montcalm County, and individual communities across the County (cities, villages, and townships) as well as private businesses.

The Alliance provides a variety of services related to business retention and expansion including workforce training, small business classes and consultation, and technical assistance. The Alliance also provides local economic development assistance to communities, gathers economic and demographic information, shares information about available buildings and land, and provides information to businesses seeking new

opportunities. Montcalm Alliance also participates in a multiple-county revolving loan program to assist businesses in funding projects. The Montcalm Alliance also serves many of the functions of a planning department and is currently very involved in developing the County's first Comprehensive Plan.

The Montcalm Alliance Board is comprised of both private and public representatives. Staff includes an Executive Director.

Franz Mogdis, Executive Director
Montcalm Alliance
621 New Street
Stanton, Michigan 48888
Telephone (989) 831-5261

Cities

The following cities are represented on the WMRPC through Montcalm County. Each city has staff representing the economic and community development needs of the community. Basic contact information is provided for each community.

City of Carson City – Fred Brown, Manager
City of Carson City
123 E. Main St.
Carson City, Michigan 48811
Telephone (989) 584-3515

City of Greenville – Bryan Gruesbeck, Assistant Manager
City of Greenville
411 S. Lafayette St.
Greenville, Michigan 48838
Telephone (616) 754-5645

City of Stanton – Janet Miller, Clerk
City of Stanton
225 S. Camburn St.
Stanton, Michigan 48888
Telephone (989) 831-4440

Villages and Townships

Montcalm County has 20 townships and 6 villages that are all represented on the WMRPC through Montcalm County. Each township and village has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships and villages contact either the Montcalm Alliance (see above) or the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

Osceola County

Osceola Economic Alliance

The Osceola Economic Alliance (OEA) serves all of the communities and businesses in Osceola County. The Alliance is under Michigan State University Extension and is funded by Osceola County. Michigan State University provides benefits for the Economic Developer's position (insurance, etc.).

The mission of the Osceola Economic Alliance is to "Encourage and facilitate community and economic growth in Osceola County, Michigan." The Alliance's primary customers include manufacturers, existing and start-up small businesses, local units of government, and individuals seeking housing information.

The Alliance's objectives include:

1. Conduct an ongoing business retention and expansion program.
2. Conduct business attraction activities.
3. Assist businesses utilize state and local programs.
4. Maintain an economic development website.
5. Publish manufacturing newsletters.
6. Provide business counseling, research, and referral services.
7. Serve on regional boards that serve the interests of Osceola County.
8. Serve as the point of contact for Osceola County's Community Development Block Grant for Housing Rehabilitation and as the information source for State housing programs.
9. Maintain the Osceola County website.
10. Conduct research, write grants, and provide other services to local units of government and non-profit organizations.

The OEA has a seven-member Board of Directors that includes representatives from Osceola County government, private industry, education, and local citizens.

Dan Massy, Community & Economic Development Agent
301 W. Upton Avenue
Reed City, Michigan 49677
Telephone: (231) 832-7397
E-mail: massyd@msu.edu

Cities

The following cities are represented on the WMRPC through Osceola County. Each city has staff representing the economic and community development needs of the community. Basic contact information is provided for each community.

City of Reed City – George Freeman, Manager
City of Reed City
227 E. Lincoln St.
Reed City, Michigan 49677
Telephone (231) 832-2245

City of Ewart – Roger Elkins, Manager
City of Ewart
200 S. Main St.
Ewart, Michigan 49631
Telephone (231) 734-2181

Dan Elliot, Director
Ewart DDA/LDFA
127 N. River St.
Ewart, Michigan 49631
Telephone (231) 734-6119

Villages and Townships

Osceola County has 16 townships and 4 villages that are all represented on the WMRPC through Osceola County. Each township and village has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships and villages contact either the Osceola Economic Alliance (see above) or the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

Ottawa County

Ottawa County Economic Development Office, Inc.

The Ottawa County Economic Development Office, Inc. (OCEDO) is a 501(c)(4) non-profit corporation which was formed in 1991 for the purpose of providing professional economic development services to Ottawa County, its local units of government, residents, and business and industry. OCEDO has a thirteen (13) member advisory Board of Directors. About half of its funding comes from local units of government; a third from fees for services; and the remainder from other sources. The Mission of OCEDO is to encourage and facilitate economic development activity county-wide which will retain and create job opportunities, tax base, and private sector investments.

Economic development services provided by OCEDO include the following:

- 1. Industrial Retention, Expansion, & Attraction Services:** Conduct industrial retention visits and assist manufacturers access federal, state, and local business assistance programs (financing, tax abatements, employee training, and infrastructure grants).

2. **Small Business & Technology Development Center Services:** Provide no cost, one-on-one counseling to prospective and existing small business owners as a Satellite of Grand Valley State University's Region 7 Office under the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center (MI-SBTDC) program; distribute business start-up resource materials to clients (on preparing a business plan, registering a business, applying for licenses and permits, requesting a bank loan, and SBA loan programs).
3. **Grant Writing Services:** Prepare applications for federal and state grants to help finance needed public infrastructure improvements to support private sector investments.
4. **Other Services:** Undertake other related activities like preparing tax abatement applications, economic reports and surveys, and providing information.

Kenneth J. Rizzio, Executive Director
Ottawa County Economic Development Office, Inc.
6676 Lake Michigan Drive
Allendale, Michigan 49401
Telephone: (616) 892-4120
E-mail: krizzio@altelco.net

Ottawa County Planning and Grants Department

Ottawa County has the most complete planning department and staff of any of the counties in Region 8. The department assists communities in planning efforts, is involved in transportation planning and economic/community development, assists communities in seeking grants, has a complete planning library, and assists communities in numerous other ways. Closely tied to the Department is the County's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department.

Mark Knudsen, Director
Ottawa County Planning and Grants
12220 Fillmore
West Olive, Michigan 49460
Telephone: (616) 738-4852
E-mail: mknudsen@co.ottawa.mi.us

Lakeshore Advantage

Lakeshore Advantage is a relatively new organization that serves the economic development needs of the Holland-Zeeland Area.

Randy Thelen, President
201 W. Washington Ave., Suite 410
Zeeland, Michigan 49464
Telephone: (616) 772-5226
E-mail: Randy.Thelen@LakeshoreAdvantage.com

Cities

The following cities and villages are represented on the WMRPC through Ottawa County. Each city has staff representing the economic and community development needs of the community. Basic contact information is provided for each community.

- City of Holland** – Phil Meyer, Director
City of Holland Planning Department
270 S. River Ave.
Holland, Michigan 49423
Telephone (616) 355-1300
- City of Grand Haven** – Erin Wade, Director
City of Grand Haven Planning Department
519 Washington Ave.
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
Telephone (616) 842-3210
- City of Ferrysburg** – Craig Bessinger, Manager
City of Ferrysburg
408 Fifth St.
City of Ferrysburg, Michigan 49409
Telephone (616)
- Village of Spring Lake** – Ryan Cotton, Manager
Village of Spring Lake
102 W. Savidge St.
Spring Lake, Michigan 49456
Telephone (616) 842-1393
- City of Zeeland** – Tim Klunder, Manager
City of Zeeland
21 S. Elm St.
Zeeland, Michigan 49464
Telephone (616) 772-5352
- City of Coopersville** – Steven Patrick, Manager
City of Coopersville
289 Danforth St.
Coopersville, Michigan 49404
Telephone (616) 997-9731
- City of Hudsonville** – Dan Strickwerda, Director
City of Hudsonville Planning Department
3275 Central Blvd.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426
Telephone (616) 669-0200

Townships

Ottawa County has 17 townships that are all represented on the WMRPC through Ottawa County. Each township has its own elected body and varying levels of staffing to promote economic development. For up-to-date information on individual townships contact either Ottawa County Planning and Grants (see above) or the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission.

RENAISSANCE ZONES IN REGION 8

These zones are virtually free of state and local taxes for businesses located within their boundaries.

Allegan County

No Renaissance Zones

Ionia County

Ionia County has one Renaissance Zone. Contact Diane Smith (616) 527-8014 for more information.

Belding

4.35 acres, 140,000 square foot building, access to rail, located on Flat River

Kent County

City of Grand Rapids

Kent County has ten Renaissance Zones that are all located in the City of Grand Rapids. Contact Susan Shannon (616) 456-3196 for specific information on the following Zones.

1. A-Tek Manufacturing, 5.5 acres
2. Division & Buchanan, 173.74 acres
3. Furniture Center, 76.23 acres
4. Grandville, 120.99 acres
5. Madison Square, 46.66 acres
6. Metropolitan Hospital, 14.06 acres
7. Monroe Center, 1.8 acres
8. Railroad Junction, 143.52 acres
9. Terra Firma, 17.00 acres
10. Wealthy-Eastern-Franklin, 48.63 acres

Mecosta County

Mecosta County has one Renaissance Zone. Contact Mike Fleitman (231) 592-3403 for more information.

Big Rapids Township

120 acres, Industrial Park, in effect until 2016, water & sewer constructed in 2005

Montcalm County

Montcalm County has six Renaissance Zones. Contact Franz Mogdis (989) 831-5261 for more information.

Carson/Boomer/North Shade

512.5 acres

City of Stanton

197.5 acres

Howard/Pierson/Reynolds

267.0 acres

Montcalm Township

143.4 acres

Village of Edmore

137.8 acres

City of Greenville

New Zone

Osceola County

Osceola County has two Renaissance Zones. Contact Dan Massy (231) 832-7397 for more information.

Evart

Established in 2002, zoned residential, 5.6 acres

LeRoy Township

Established in 2002, zoned light industrial, 160 acres

Ottawa County

No Renaissance Zones

SMARTZONE

There is one SmartZone in Region 8. Located atop “Health Hill” in downtown Grand Rapids, the Grand Rapids SmartZone is home to several major institutions (Grand Valley State University, Van Andel Research Institute, Spectrum Health System, St. Mary’s Mercy Medical Center, Mary Free Bed Hospital, and Grand Rapids Community College) that collaborate to provide nearly every critical resource needed to support life science industry growth – all within a five city block radius. From basic and applied research and animal and human clinical trials to a Good Manufacturing Practices laboratory and commercialization services, the SmartZone is a one-stop center for life science companies. The SmartZone is operated by the West Michigan Science and Technology Initiative. “The Initiative” serves a technology accelerator and business incubator within the Grand Valley State University Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences. The Initiative is supported by the City of Grand Rapids, the Right Place, Inc., Grand Valley State University, Van Andel Research Institute, and Grand Rapids Community College.

Susan Shannon, Business Advocate
City of Grand Rapids
300 Monroe NW, Room 920
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone (616) 456-3196

INDUSTRIAL PARKS IN REGION 8

Certified Business Parks

The Certified Business Park (CBP) Program is a revamp of the Certified Industrial Park (CIP) Program as defined in the Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) Act, P.A. 282 of 1986, amended by P.A. 248 of 2000. The Michigan Economic Developers Association and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation administer the program. They have adopted a set of standards for qualified developments.

Any municipality/owner/developer can prepare a park based on the CBP standards. There is no minimum acreage requirement. For purposes of certification, conforming zoning uses would include all activities typical for a business/industrial park setting with the exception of residential and retail. The local zoning ordinance or protective covenants will define those uses allowed. However, eligible property as defined for tax increment financing within an LDFA (see Section 2(p) of P.A. 248 of 2000) may differ. Industrial park developers and communities use this identification as a marketing tool. Prospective clients can take occupancy without delay. Eligible developments must have a set of protective covenants in place that address:

- Compatible zoning uses allowed (as noted above)
- Type and style of building
- Landscaping
- Parking
- Screened outdoor storage
- Location of loading docks
- Setback specifications
- Sign control
- Continuous management identified to oversee compliance

This is a voluntary program and currently includes 60 parks throughout the state.

Any development that meets the above qualifications is eligible for certification. All parks certified are reviewed every three years by a certified review team to ensure that the guidelines and requirements are being maintained.

For applications, please contact MEDA at Post Office Box 15096, Lansing, Michigan 48901-5096; or call (517) 241-0011

Allegan County

Allegan Highlands Industrial Park, located in the City of Allegan, is a 90 acre park with 81 developed acres. Contact:

Robert Hillard, Manager
City of Allegan
112 Locust St.
Allegan, Michigan 49010
Telephone (269) 673-5511

Montcalm County

The Greenville Industrial Park, in the City of Greenville, is an 81 acre industrial park (with recent and ongoing additions). Contact:

Bryan Gruesbeck, Assistant Manager
City of Greenville
411 S. Lafayette St.
Greenville, Michigan 48838
Telephone (616) 754-5645

Osceola County

The City of Evert Air Industrial Park, located in the City of Evert, is a 157 acre park with over 100 acres of available space. Contact:

Dan Elliot, Project Consultant
City of Evert LDFA
PO Box 668
Evert, Michigan 49631
Telephone (231) 734-6119

Ottawa County

The Jamestown Commerce Center, in Jamestown Township, is a 310 acre privately owned park. Contact:

Bill Bouma
Rietberg Companies
4072 Chicago Dr.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Industrial Parks

The following are communities with industrial parks. Size and available space was provided by communities in a survey performed in September 2005. Since the following are not necessarily “certified,” the level of services and utilities available will vary between communities and parks. This section also identifies “planned” industrial parks, which means that communities have set aside areas for future development in their community plans – no schedules, engineering, or funding are necessarily identified.

Allegan County

City of Allegan

The City has a 199 acre industrial park with 117 acres occupied. There are no additional industrial parks planned at this time. Contact:

Robert Hillard
City of Allegan
112 Locust St.
Allegan, Michigan 49010
Telephone: (269) 686-1113

Dorr Township

The Township has an 80 acre industrial park that is vacant. An additional 65 acres is planned. Contact:

Donald Kaczanowski
Dorr Township
4196 18th St.
Dorr, Michigan 49323
Telephone: (616) 681-9874

Fillmore Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 100 acres planned for future development. Contact:

Keith Potter
Fillmore Township
4219 52nd Avenue
Holland, Michigan 49423
Telephone (269) 751-7655

Hopkins Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 100 acres planned for future development. Contact:

Mark Evans
Hopkins Township
142 E. Main
Hopkins, Michigan 49328
Telephone (269) 793-3188

Leighton Township

Leighton Township has 40 acres of industrial park land, of which 20 acres are occupied. The Township has an additional 80 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:

Spencer Moore, Supervisor
Leighton Township
4475 Kalamazoo Ave.
Caledonia, Michigan 49316
(616) 891-8238

Manlius Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 120 acres planned for future development. Contact:

Barbara VanGelderren
Manlius Township
3134 57th St.
Fennville, Michigan 49408
Telephone (269) 561-8855

City of Plainwell

Plainwell has 157 acres of industrial park space, of which 132 acres are occupied. Contact:

Brad Deneau, Economic Development Manager
City of Plainwell
141 N. Main St.
Plainwell, Michigan 49080

Watson Township

Watson Township has 50 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently ten acres are occupied. Contact:

Cathy Pardee
Watson Township
1895 118th Avenue
Allegan, Michigan 49010
Telephone (269) 672-7254

Wayland Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 660 acres planned for future development. Contact:

Randy J. Marklevitz
Wayland Township
416 131st Ave.
Wayland, Michigan 49348
Telephone (269) 792-3666

Ionia County

City of Belding

The City of Belding has a fully-occupied 80 acre industrial park. Contact:

Lynne Ladner
City of Belding
120 S. Pleasant
Belding, Michigan 48809
Telephone: (616) 794-1900

City of Portland

The City of Portland has a fully occupied industrial park. Contact:

Tom Dempsey
259 Kent St.
Portland, Michigan 48875
Telephone: (517) 647-7531

Boston Township

Boston Township has 55 acres of industrial park space with no occupants. Contact:

Robert Dunton
Boston Township
PO Box 2
Saranac, Michigan 48881
Telephone (616) 642-6636

City of Ionia

The City of Ionia has a 50-acre industrial park. Occupancy is near capacity. Contact:

Julianne Burns, Economic Development Coordinator
City of Ionia
114 N. Kidd St.
Ionia, Michigan 48846
Telephone (616) 527-4170

Otisco Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 100 acres planned for future development. Contact:

H. Paul Reeves
Otisco Township
9663 Button Rd.
Belding, Michigan 48809
Telephone (616) 794-3506

Village of Pewamo

The Village does not have an industrial park but has 20 acres planned. Contact:

Shelly Spitzley
Village of Pewamo
130 E. Main
Pewamo, Michigan 48873
(989) 593-2553

Kent County

Byron Township

The Township has 300 acres of industrial park that is 80 percent occupied. Contact:

Larry Nix
Telephone: (616) 224-1500

Caledonia Township

Caledonia Township has 78 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently 50 acres are occupied. Contact:

Bryan Harrison, Supervisor
Caledonia Township
250 Maple
Caledonia, Michigan 49316
Telephone (616) 891-0070

Cannon Township

Cannon Township has 32 acres zoned for an industrial park. Contact:

Christine James
Cannon Township
6878 Belding Rd. NE
Rockford, Michigan 49341
Telephone: (616) 874-6966

Cascade Township

Cascade Township has 1,793 acres established for industrial parks. Currently 1,094 acres are occupied. An additional 534 acres are planned for industrial parks. Contact:

Steve Peterson
Cascade Township
2865 Thornhills
Cascade, Michigan
Telephone (616) 949-0224

City of Cedar Springs

The City has 60 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently available and 60 additional acres planned. Contact:

Jerry Homminga
City of Cedar Springs
66 S. Main St.
Cedar Springs, Michigan 49319
Telephone (616) 696-1330

Gaines Township

Gaines Township has 140 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently 100 acres are occupied. Contact:

Brian Tingley
Gaines Township
8555 Kalamazoo Ave.
Caledonia, Michigan 49316
Telephone (616) 698-6640

City of Grandville

The City has 150 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently fully occupied.

Contact:

Ken Krombeen
City of Grandville
3195 Wilson Ave. SW
Grandville, Michigan 49418
Telephone (616) 530-4983

Grattan Township

The Township does not have an industrial park but has 40 acres planned. Contact:

Maria Bajema
Telephone: (616) 691-8450

Village of Kent City

The Village of Kent City has a 22 acre industrial park with nine acres occupied. Contact:

Michael J. Page
Village of Kent City
83 Spring St.
Kent City, Michigan 49330
Telephone (616) 678-7232

City of Kentwood

The City of Kentwood has 370 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently 332 acres are occupied. Contact: Lisa Golder

City of Kentwood
4900 Breton
Kentwood, Michigan 49518
Telephone (616) 554-0709

Lowell Township

Lowell Township has 270 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently the facility has no occupants. Contact:

John Timpson, Supervisor
Lowell Charter Township
2910 Alden Nash Ave.
Lowell, Michigan 49331
Telephone (616) 897-7600

Plainfield Township

The Township has a 40 acre industrial park. 35 acres are occupied with 60 additional acres planned. Contact:

Bill Fischer
Plainfield Township
6161 Belmont
Belmont, Michigan 49306
Telephone: (616) 364-8466

Village of Sparta

The Village has a 100 acre industrial park with 20 acres occupied. Contact:

Bryan Chodkowski
Village of Sparta
156 E. Division
Sparta, Michigan 49345
Telephone: (616) 887-8251

Vergennes Township

The Township has a 35 acre industrial park. 20 acres are occupied with 40 additional acres planned. Contact:

Tim Wittenbach
Vergennes Township
10381 Bailey Dr.
Lowell, Michigan 49331
Telephone: (616) 897-5671

City of Walker

The City has 350 acres of industrial park space with an additional 100 acres planned. No contact information was provided.

City of Wyoming

The City of Wyoming has 355 acres of industrial parks that are completely occupied. Contact:

Barbara VanDuren, Assistant Manager
City of Wyoming
1155 28th St.
Wyoming, Michigan
Telephone (616) 530-7244

Mecosta County

Aetna Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 60 acres planned for future development. Contact:

Dee Barringer
PO Box 228
Morley, Michigan 49336
Telephone (231) 856-7610

Big Rapids Township

The Township has a 120 acre industrial park. Currently five acres are occupied. Contact:

Mike Fleitman, Executive Director
Mecosta County Development Corporation
246 North State Street
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
(231) 592-3403
www.mecostaedc.com

City of Big Rapids

The City of Big Rapids has 257 acres developed for industrial park space. Currently 228 acres are occupied. Contact:

Mark Gifford
City of Big Rapids
226 N. Michigan
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
Telephone (231) 592-4020

Green Charter Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 280 acres planned for future development. Contact:

John Wellnitz
Green Charter Township
PO Box 233
Paris, Michigan 49338
Telephone (231) 796-6201

Home Township

Home Township has a fully occupied 20 acre industrial park and 115 planned acres. Contact:

Home Township
125 S. Third St.
Edmore, Michigan 48829
Telephone: (989) 427-3092

Village of Mecosta

The Village does not have any industrial parks, but has 13 acres planned for future development. Contact:

Alan Fountain
Village of Mecosta
115 W. Main St.
Mecosta, Michigan 49332
Telephone (231) 972-7614

Morton Township

Morton Township has 60 acres of industrial park space, with 35 acres occupied. The Township has an additional 40 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:

Lewis Johnson
Morton Township
290 W. Main St.
Mecosta, Michigan 49332
Telephone (231) 972-7138

Montcalm County

City of Carson City

The City has 30 acres of industrial park space that is completely occupied. Contact:

Fred Brown
City of Carson City
123 E. Main
Carson City, Michigan 48811
Telephone: (989) 584-3515

Village of Edmore

The Village has 220 acres developed for industrial parks, with 100 acres occupied. An additional 500 acres is planned for industrial. Contact:

Paul Kluwe
Village of Edmore
PO Box 170
Edmore, Michigan 48829
Telephone: (989) 427-5641

City of Greenville

The City has 350 acres of industrial park space with 175 acres occupied. An additional 85 acres are planned. Contact:

Bryan Gruesbeck
City of Greenville
411 S. Lafayette
Greenville, Michigan 48838
Telephone: (616) 754-5645

Home Township

Home Township has a 20 acre industrial park that is completely full. The Township has an additional 115 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:

Home Township
125 S. Third St.
Edmore, Michigan 48829
(989) 427-3092

Village of Howard City

The Village has a 100 acre industrial park that is 90 percent occupied. An additional 10 acres are planned. Contact:

Mark Rambo
Village of Howard City
125 Shaw St.
Howard City, Michigan 49329
Telephone: (231) 937-4311

Montcalm Township

The Township has a fully occupied 20 acre industrial park and 125 planned acres. Contact:

Del Christensen
Montcalm Township
1880 S. Greenville Rd.
Greenville, Michigan 48838
Telephone: (616) 754-5133

Osceola County

Osceola County lists 55 acres of industrial park space, of which 25 acres are occupied.

Contact: Dan Massy, Community & Economic Development Agent
301 W. Upton Avenue
Reed City, Michigan 49677
Telephone: (231) 832-7397

City of Ewart

The City has 60 acres of industrial parks with approximated ten acres occupied. Contact:

Roger Elkins
City of Ewart
200 S. Main
Ewart, Michigan 49631
Telephone: (231) 734-2181

Village of Marion

The Village of Marion has 15 acres of industrial park space, with no occupants. Contact:

Douglas Cutler
Village of Marion
118 E. Main St.
Marion, Michigan 49665
Telephone (231) 743-6801

Richmond Township

The Township does not have any industrial parks, but has 130 acres set aside for the development of an industrial park. Contact:

Terry Gerber
Richmond Township
23584 2 Mile Road
Reed City, Michigan 49677
Telephone: (231) 832-5917

Ottawa County

Allendale Charter Township

Allendale Charter Township has 80 acres of land developed for industrial parks, with 60 acres occupied. The Township has an additional 40 acres planned for industrial park space. Contact:

Jim Beelen, Supervisor
Allendale Charter Township
6676 Lake Michigan Dr.
Allendale, Michigan 49401-0539
Telephone (616) 895-6295

Blendon Township

Blendon Township has a completely occupied 60 acre industrial park. Contact:
Richard Voetberg, Zoning Administrator
Blendon Township
7161 72nd Ave.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426
Telephone (616) 875-7707

City of Coopersville

The City of Coopersville has 197 acres of land developed for industrial parks, with 90 occupied acres. Contact: Steven Patrick, Manager
City of Coopersville
289 Danforth St.
Coopersville, Michigan 49404
Telephone (616) 997-9731

Crockery Township

The Township has ten acres of industrial parks with six acres occupied. An additional 20 acres is planned. Contact:
Leon Stille
Crockery Township
17431 112th
Nunica, Michigan 49448
Telephone: (616) 837-6868

Georgetown Charter Township

Georgetown Charter Township has 187 acres of industrial park, with 150 acres occupied. The Township has an additional 20 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:
William Holland, Supervisor
Georgetown Charter Township
1515 Baldwin St.
Jenison, Michigan 49429

City of Grand Haven

The City has 180 acres of industrial park space that is 100 percent occupied. An additional 715 acres are planned. Contact:
Pat McGinnis
Grand Haven
519 Washington Avenue
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
Telephone: (616) 847-4888

City of Holland

The City has 2,502 acres of industrial park space with 1,736 acres occupied. Contact:

Greg Robinson
City of Holland
270 S. River Avenue
Holland, Michigan 49423
Telephone: (616) 355-1368

City of Hudsonville

The City of Hudsonville has 182 acres of industrial park space, of which 138 acres are occupied. The City has an additional 72 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:

Pauline Luben, Manager
City of Hudsonville
3275 Central Blvd.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426
Telephone (616) 669-0200

Olive Township

Olive Township has 450 acres developed for industrial park. Less than half is occupied. The Township has an additional 600 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:

Arlan Meekhof
Olive Township
6480 136th Avenue
Holland, Michigan 49424
Telephone (616) 786-9996

Robinson Township

Robinson Township has 100 acres of industrial park space, of which 15 acres are occupied. Contact:

Greg Ransford
Robinson Township
12010 120th
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
Telephone (616) 846-2210

Spring Lake Township

The Township has 40 acres of industrial park that are 75 percent occupied. There are 80 additional acres planned. Contact:

John Nash
Spring Lake Township
106 S. Buchanan
Spring Lake, Michigan 49456
Telephone: (616) 842-1340

Tallmadge Township

Tallmadge Township has 160 acres of industrial park space and is near capacity. The Township has an additional 80 acres planned for industrial park. Contact:

Bill Wiersma, Supervisor
Tallmadge Township
O-1451 Leonard Rd. NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49544
(616) 677-1248

Wright Township

The Township has 190 acres of industrial parks with no available space. Contact:

JoAnn Becker
Wright Township
1565 Jackson St.
Marne, Michigan 49435
Telephone: (616) 677-3048

Zeeland Township

Zeeland Township has 200 acres of land developed for industrial parks, of which 100 acres are developed. An additional 300 acres are planned for industrial park. Contact:

Brad Slagh, Supervisor
Zeeland Township
6582 Byron Rd.
Zeeland, Michigan 49464
Telephone (616) 772-6701

EXISTING & PLANNED INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

In addition to industrial parks, many communities have industries located in non-industrial park settings. The following table identifies land currently used for non-industrial park industry and additional land planned/zoned for such uses. This information was gathered through a community survey performed in September 2005. It should be noted that “industrial” means different things to different communities. Many rural areas have mining operations that are identified as industrial.

Community	Existing Industrial Land (non-ind. parks) (acres)	Planned/Zoned Additional Industrial Land (acres)
Allegan County		
City of Allegan	192	0
Allegan Township	40	200
Boston Township	10	0
Dorr Township	10	250
City of Fennville	50	13
Fillmore Township	5	0
Ganges Township	290	0
Heath Township	200	80
Hopkins Township	60	100
Laketown Township	50	500
Leighton Township	20	0
Manlius Township	65	55
City of Otsego	90	50
City of Plainwell	14	0
Salem Township	10	30
Saugatuck Township	10	500
Watson Township	1	0
Wayland Township	100	660
Ionia County		
Boston Township	10	0
Village of Lake Odessa	20	0
Otisco Township	170	100
Village of Pewamo	20	0
Kent County		
Ada Township	375	30
Algoma Township	72	122
Byron Township	100	200
Caledonia Township	240	0
City of Cedar Springs	30	0
Cannon Township	16	0
Gaines Township	140	400
City of Grandville	200	0
Continued on Next Page		

Community	Existing Industrial Land (non-ind. parks) (acres)	Planned/Zoned Additional Industrial Land (acres)
Kent County		
Grattan Township	5	0
Village of Kent City	0	23
City of Kentwood	788	0
City of Lowell	113	93
Lowell Charter Township	0	50
Plainfield Township	50	0
Village of Sparta	40	0
City of Walker	200	100
City of Wyoming	2,435	50
Mecosta County		
Aetna Township	25	80
City of Big Rapids	13	14
Green Charter Township	35	245
Wheatland Township	35	15
Montcalm County		
City of Carson City	30	250
Village of Edmore	100	500
City of Greenville	150	85
Home Township	55	0
Montcalm Township	30	150
Osceola County		
City of Evart	15	0
Reed City	93	110
Richmond Township	32	0
Ottawa County		
Allendale Ch. Township	220	40
Chester Township	4	70
City of Coopersville	181	105
Crockery Township	5	0
City of Ferrysburg	12	5
Georgetown Township	100	20
City of Grand Haven	536	536
Grand Haven Township	316	604
City of Holland	1,736	766
City of Hudsonville	97	6
Laketown Township	50	500
Olive Township	100	NA
Polkton Township	100	260
Robinson Township	10	0
Spring Lake Township	580	100
Village of Spring Lake	4	0
Tallmadge Township	40	0

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Allegan County

Allegan Area Chamber of Commerce

882 Marshall St., Suite B
Allegan, Michigan 49010
Telephone (269) 673-2479

Otsego Chamber of Commerce

135 East Allegan St.
Otsego, Michigan 49078
Telephone (269) 694-6880

Plainwell Chamber of Commerce

798 East Bridge St.
Plainwell, Michigan 49080
Telephone (269) 685-8877

Saugatuck/Douglas Visitors Bureau

PO Box 28
Saugatuck, Michigan 49453
Telephone (269) 857-1701

Wayland Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 24
Wayland, Michigan 49348
Telephone (269) 792-9246

Ionia County

Belding Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 237
Belding, Michigan 48809
Telephone (616) 794-2210

Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce

439 West Main
Ionia, Michigan 48846
Telephone (616) 527-2560

Lakewood Area Chamber of Commerce

839 Fourth Ave.
Lake Odessa, Michigan 48849
Telephone (616) 374-0766

Portland Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 303
Portland, Michigan 48875
Telephone (989) 647-2100

Kent County

Chamber of Commerce of Cedar Springs

90 N Main
Cedar Springs, MI 49319
Telephone (616) 696-3260

Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce

111 Pearl St.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone (616) 771-0318

Greater Grandville Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 175
Grandville, Michigan 49468
Telephone (616) 531-8890

Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 224
Lowell, Michigan 49331
Telephone (616) 897-9161

Rockford Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 250
Rockford, Michigan 49341
Telephone (616) 866-2000

Sparta Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 142
Sparta, Michigan 49345
Telephone (616) 887-2454

Wyoming-Kentwood Area Chamber of Commerce

590 32nd St.
Wyoming, Michigan 49548
Telephone (616) 531-5990

Mecosta County

Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce

246 North State St.
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
Telephone (231) 796-7649

Montcalm County

Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce

108 N. Lafayette St.
Greenville, Michigan 48838
Telephone (616) 754-5697

Lakeview Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 57
Lakeview, Michigan 48850
Telephone (989) 352-1200

Trufant Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 129
Trufant, Michigan 49347
Telephone (616) 984-2396

Osceola County

Ewart Area Chamber of Commerce

127 North River St.
Ewart, Michigan 49631
Telephone (231) 734-2191

LeRoy Area Chamber of Commerce

4760 North Mackinaw Trail
LeRoy, Michigan 49655
Telephone (231) 768-4558

Marion Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 294
Marion, Michigan 49665
Telephone (231) 743-9929

Reed City Area Chamber of Commerce

211 W. Upton, Suite A
Reed City, Michigan 49677
Telephone (231) 832-7332

Ottawa County

Allendale Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 539
Allendale, Michigan 49401
Telephone (616) 895-6295

Grand Haven Chamber of Commerce

One South Harbor Dr.
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
Telephone (616) 846-3165

Coopersville Area Chamber of Commerce

289 Danforth St.
Coopersville, Michigan 49404
Telephone (616) 997-9731

Holland Area Chamber of Commerce

272 East Eighth St.
Holland, Michigan 49423
Telephone (616) 392-2389

Hudsonville Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 216
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426
Telephone (616) 662-0900

Jenison Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 405
Jenison, Michigan 49429
Telephone (616) 457-3670

Zeeland Chamber of Commerce

149 Main Place
Zeeland, Michigan 49464
Telephone (616) 772-2494

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

Participants

Over several months the following people were interviewed by staff of the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission to better understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in West Michigan.

- Mr. Thad Beard, Manager, City of Otsego
- Mr. John Berchtold, Controller/Administrator, Montcalm County
- Mr. John Boerger, Citizen, City of Portland
- Ms. Marsh Boerger, Citizen, City of Portland
- Mr. Fred Brown, Manager, City of Carson City
- Mr. Paul Bullock, Administrator, Mecosta County
- Mr. Robert Burns, Mayor, City of Stanton
- Mr. John Bush, Drain Commissioner, Ionia County
- Ms. Jane Clark, Director, Holland Chamber of Commerce
- Mr. Douglas Cutler, President, Village of Marion
- Mr. Brad Deneau, Downtown Development Director, City of Plainwell
- Mr. Willis Driesenga, Supervisor, Holland Charter Township
- Mr. Dan Elliot, Project Consultant, Evert Downtown Development Authority/Local Development Finance Authority
- Mr. Donald Flanders, Economic Development Coordinator, City of Portland
- Mr. Mark Gifford, Planner, City of Big Rapids
- Mr. Robert Hillard, Manager, City of Allegan
- Mr. Timothy Klunder, Manager, City of Zeeland
- Mr. Paul Kluwe, Manager, City of Edmore
- Mr. Ted Kortess, President, Greenville Community Bank
- Mr. Karl Linebough, Banker, Chemical Bank
- Mr. Dan Massy, Director, Osceola Economic Alliance
- Ms. Ann Query, Director, Zeeland Chamber of Commerce
- Mr. Carllen Rose, Business Owner, City of Big Rapids
- Mr. Stephen Sobers, Manager, City of Big Rapids
- Mr. Randy Thelen, Director, Lakeshore Advantage
- Ms. Anja Wing, Director, Big Rapids Chamber of Commerce

Strengths

The WMRPC asked participants to identify strengths of the region and their counties. Strengths include any existing facilities, programs, resources, or attributes that have a positive influence.

Region-wide Strengths

There are many region-wide strengths across the seven-county area served by the WMRPC. While most participants focused on their communities, some strengths are related to the overall area and are strengths that cross borders. The following are some of the area's strengths:

Natural Features –

- Lake Michigan
- Inland lakes, rivers, and streams
- Tourism opportunities
- Natural Resources
- Agriculture
- Natural beauty of area
- Four seasons
- Land available
- Quality of life

Built Attributes –

- Extensive road network that includes many interstate highways (I-96, I-696, US-131, US-31, M-6, etc.)
- Location, contains big city (Grand Rapids) and close to bigger cities (Detroit, Chicago)
- Mix of urban and rural communities
- Available infrastructure
- Competitive utilities costs
- Available capacity in industrial parks
- Quality of life
- Network of airports across Region
- Transit available in much of Region

Economy –

- High productivity
- West Michigan survives economic cycles better than Michigan as-a-whole
- Affordable cost of living
- Commitment to economic development
- Good manufacturing base
- Many good, small, stable companies
- Strong chambers of commerce

- Grand Rapids' many attractions (Cultural, Employment, Tourism, Education)
- Grand Rapids as regional health center
- Expanding role of life sciences in Grand Rapids and Region
- Philanthropy – very generous individuals, businesses, and foundations
- Reasonable tax base
- Strong Foundations
- Renaissance Zones, Cool Cities, etc. (Michigan programs)

Education –

- Education opportunities (K-12)
- Many Universities in Region (public and private)

People –

- Growing population (greater growth than Michigan as-a-whole)
- Strong workforce and work ethic
- Educated professionals living in communities

Leadership and Programs –

- Michigan's programs targeting community development
- Good region-wide leadership
- Small Business & Technology Development Center (housed at Grand Valley State University)
- West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
- West Michigan Strategic Alliance
- The Right Place, Inc.
- Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
- Safety
- Good management of communities

Sub-Region Strengths

While the overall region has many comprehensive strengths, each county has specific strengths.

Allegan County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Allegan County including:

- Politically secure across County
- Easy access to US-131
- Prime property available along US-131
- Reasonable tax base
- Great location between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo
- Allegan County has unique characteristics in each of the County's four quadrants
- Located on Lake Michigan

Ionia County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Ionia County including:

- Automobile industry still viable in Ionia County
- Location between Lansing and Grand Rapids on I-96
- Development on M-66 between Ionia and I-96
- Prisons in Ionia
- Ionia County has a diversity of income – in-county, Lansing, and Grand Rapids

Kent County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Kent County including:

- Regional job center
- Many retail centers
 - 28th Street
 - Grandville
 - Alpine Avenue
- Strong downtown (Grand Rapids)
- Strong Transportation System that includes many expressways
- Strong Health Care/Health Sciences Emphasis
- Variety of communities (Urban, Suburban, Rural)
- Many cultural amenities
 - Van Andel Arena
 - Devos Center
 - Museums
 - Meijer Gardens
 - Grand Rapids Symphony and other performing arts groups/organizations
 - John Ball Zoo
 - Millenium Park
- Many higher education opportunities
 - Grand Valley State University
 - Michigan State University (and future Medical School)
 - Ferris State University
 - Western Michigan University
 - Calvin College
 - Aquinas College
 - Cornerstone University
 - Cooley Law School
 - Baker College
 - Others
- Many large manufacturers headquartered in Kent County
- Life Sciences, hospitals, health-education, and other health related growth/focus
- Redevelopment of many areas in Grand Rapids

Mecosta County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Mecosta County including:

- High standard of living
- Availability of qualified workforce
- New industrial park ready to serve industries
- Organizations focused on improving area
- Natural features
- Availability of housing
- Lower cost of living
- Location between Grand Rapids and Traverse City/Cadillac
- Rural County with full-service city (Big Rapids)
- Tourism opportunities
- Diversified manufacturing base that continues to prosper even though many of Michigan's industries are struggling
- Ferris State University
 - Prepare students for real life
 - Partner with communities
 - Plastics program
 - Training workers
 - Professors and staff bring unique expertise to County
- Big Rapids as County's center of government and commerce
- Roben Hood Airport
- US-131
- City of Big Rapids' infrastructure
- Library

Montcalm County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Montcalm County including:

- Affordable and available workforce
- Montcalm Alliance (the economic and community development organization for the entire county)
- County has good bond rating
- Many inland lakes and available lakefront properties
- Philanthropy in County (Meijer)
- Hospitals in Montcalm County
- Improved County Government
- Land Available
- Renaissance Zones
- Power plant in Carson City
- Good infrastructure in Carson City
- Most communities get along with neighboring communities (city-township relationships)
- Recreation opportunities in Montcalm County
- Quality of life

- Agriculture industry
- Close to Lansing and Grand Rapids
- Not crowded, room to grow
- M-46 cross-state traffic

Osceola County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Osceola County including:

- Cooperative attitudes (with surrounding townships) in Ewart and Reed City
- Yoplait, Liberty Dairy, and strong manufacturing base
- Three municipalities with Downtown Development Authorities
- Industry in Osceola County
- “Bedroom” community for Cadillac
- Clean, quite
- Individuality of residents
- Retired people like the area
- Cities and villages have up-to-date infrastructure

Ottawa County – People listed a variety of strengths related to Ottawa County including:

- Strong industrial base
- Population growth in Ottawa County – continues to be one of Michigan’s fastest growing counties
- Cooperative spirit
- Educational attainment of residents
- Many worldwide corporations and players
- Good location – I-196 Corridor and rail
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Good labor pool
- Not union-heavy
- High tech automotive firms (Gentex and others)
- Companies invest in technology and equipment
- Commitment to mentorship of businesses
- Lakeshore Advantage
- Ottawa County Economic Development Office, Inc.
- County supportive of business and industry
- Good infrastructure in-place across entire County
- Unified approach to economic development
- Business incubation
- Strong service-related businesses serving businesses
- Good insurance ratings due to well-trained and equipped fire departments
- New hospital opening in 2006 in Holland
- High percentage of engineers in County
- Attractive downtowns in Ottawa County

- Manufacturing that improves because local people challenged to figure out better ways to address an issue
- Hope College and Grand Valley State University
- County and community parks
- Food processors
- Ottawa County leads Michigan in PA198 Tax Abatements
- Ottawa County works well with MEDC

Weaknesses

The WMRPC asked participants to identify weaknesses of the region and their counties. Weaknesses include gaps in any existing facilities, programs, resources, or attributes that have a negative influence.

Region-wide Weaknesses

There are many region-wide weaknesses across the seven-county area served by the WMRPC. While most participants focused on their areas, some weaknesses relate to the region and often cross borders. The following are some of the area's weaknesses:

Natural Features –

- Distance to major population centers
- Weather (cloudy, cold, snow)
- Michigan's location (peninsula) takes it off the direct transportation route, increases cost of transporting products

Built Attributes –

- Road maintenance is under-funded
- Lack of interconnected transit that crosses borders

Economy –

- Communities having difficulties related to decreasing revenues
- Loss of manufacturing and inability to replace lost jobs with good paying jobs
- Concentration of manufacturing
- Move from small farms to large farms influences small communities
- Lack of diversification of employers
- Delphi's troubles will have impact on Region
- Still focused on attracting manufacturing
- Companies losing local ownership – not supporting the communities as much as in the past
- Wage-rates compared to other areas
- Need to determine how to make up for jobs lost due to increased productivity
- Midwest facing flat growth
- Non-Union in Grand Rapids
- Lack of investment capital

Education –

- Problems facing urban schools (funding, decreasing enrollment, test scores, low graduation rates, perceptions, etc.)
- Smaller rural districts often lack advanced classes
- Schools do not react as fast as business and industry
- Schools do not have resources to react quickly
- Skills of labor pool often do not match needs of industry

People –

- Entire area is seen as very conservative

Leadership and Programs –

- Communities having difficulties related to decreasing revenues
- Unfunded mandates
- Government regulations
- Lack of promotion of Region

Sub-Region Weaknesses

While the overall region has a variety of weaknesses that influence the entire area, each county has specific weaknesses.

Allegan County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Allegan County including:

- Lack of county-wide economic development program, nobody promoting County
- No plan for US-131 Corridor through Allegan County
- County pulled in three or four different directions (Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Holland, and South Haven)
- Parts of County are viewed as too far from major transportation systems

Ionia County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Ionia County including:

- Ionia County should have had space waiting for Lansing Area automotive manufacturers and suppliers
- Lack of philanthropy in County
- Image of prisons in Ionia County
- Lack of zoning in most parts of Ionia County
- Lack of funding for communities to carry out goals
- Attitudes of many people towards government
- Not enough control over growth
- City-County-Township conflicts

Kent County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Kent County including:

- Urban school districts
- Fiscal challenges in urban centers
- Lack of cooperation between cities/urban areas and townships/rural areas
- Development of rural areas threatens agricultural base of Kent County

Mecosta County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Mecosta County including:

- Conflicts between communities (primarily city and townships) creates image of no cooperation
- East-west access across County
- Limited north-south access through Big Rapids
- City of Big Rapids is landlocked
- “Rural” can be seen as weakness for many types of development
- Lack of quality workforce
- No retail recruiting in Big Rapids
- Truck traffic in downtown Big Rapids
- No county development plan for manufacturing and retail
- Transportation issues
- Elected officials need more training
- Short-sightedness of many residents

Montcalm County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Montcalm County including:

- Perceived as too rural for some types of development
- Very poor county (low incomes and persistent high unemployment rate)
- Recent loss of Electrolux (2,700 jobs) and related suppliers and support businesses
- Loss of manufacturing jobs
- Lack of capital and entrepreneurial opportunities
- Much of County is far from freeway (US-131 runs through western panhandle)
- Disconnect between panhandle and rest of County
- Montcalm not always seen as West Michigan
- Many people commute long distances
- Many people do not have skills to attract new businesses to Montcalm County
- Grand Rapids is an easier market to utilized and connect with
- Old housing stock in cities and villages
- Hitachi needs to be developed since it is a major gateway to Edmore and Montcalm County

Osceola County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Osceola County including:

- Transit system may lose funding
- Local manufacturers very cyclical
- Need advanced internet capacity in County
- County seat in corner of County and perceived as not serving parts of County

Ottawa County – People listed a variety of weaknesses related to Ottawa County including:

- Companies losing local ownership – not supporting the communities as much as in the past
- Schools do not react as fast as business and industry
- Schools do not have resources to react quickly
- Concentration of manufacturing
- Labor pool does not always match training required for new jobs
- Issue of traditional “Dutch” way of doing things versus change
- Urban schools problems
- Changing demographics

Opportunities

The WMRPC asked participants to identify opportunities of the region and their counties. Unlike strengths and weaknesses (which are here and now) opportunities represent potentially positive events, activities, programs, or actions that are “over the horizon” and can have a positive impact if they are sought by a community or region. While related, opportunities are not always as easy to identify as strengths and weaknesses.

Region-wide Opportunities

There are many region-wide opportunities across the seven-county area served by the WMRPC. While most participants focused on their communities, many opportunities relate to the entire area. The following are some of the area’s opportunities:

Natural Features –

- Agricultural processing/value added agriculture
- Lake Michigan and other natural resources
- Increased agricultural productivity
- Environment, Grand River

Built Attributes –

- Internet services/wireless opportunities allow people to work anywhere
- M-66 turning into “Michigan’s Mainstreet” with a slower-paced way to traverse Michigan from south to north
- Development near interchanges across region

Economy –

- Increasing gas prices could encourage people to live in cities and urban centers – as opposed to continuing to expand into undeveloped areas
- Tourism
- Service Industry
- Health services in region
- Restructuring of U.S. automotive industry
- Restructuring of education system
- West Michigan’s economy better than Michigan’s as-a-whole
- Affordable land and cost-of-living
- Area being considered for Cabela’s (large sporting goods store/tourist destination)
- Diversify away from traditional manufacturing
- Eldercare

Education –

- Colleges and Universities

People –

- Build on engineering expertise
- Dedicated workforce

Leadership and Programs –

- Focus on downtowns
- Strong opportunities for manufacturing
- Stable government in Region and United States
- Renaissance Zones
- Communities need to find niche and market themselves
- Intergovernmental cooperation
- Joint service agreements between communities
- Need to replace industrial tax abatements with improved incentives

Sub-Region Opportunities

While the overall region has many opportunities, each county has individual opportunities.

Allegan County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Allegan County including:

- Need to be able to plan for growth and respond to challenges and opportunities
- Natural resources
- Historic resources

Ionia County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Ionia County including:

- Need to expand opportunities related to Ionia County’s agricultural base
- Centralized mill operations in Portland
- Development south of Ionia on M-66
- GIS in County
- Improved relationships between various levels of government
- Desirable mid-point location between Grand Rapids and Lansing

Kent County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Kent County including:

- Continued improvement of Grand Rapids’ downtown
- Ongoing land use plan in Wyoming
- New Hospital in Wyoming
- “Health Hill” development in Grand Rapids
- Life Sciences in Grand Rapids
- Expanding university and college presence in Grand Rapids
- Redevelopment of underutilized manufacturing areas and facilities in Kent County

Mecosta County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Mecosta County including:

- Cost of living in northern Michigan will promote growth
- Affordable housing will promote growth
- Transit issue will need to be addressed sooner than later
- Financial institutions
- Canadian Lakes’ continued growth
- Renaissance Zone and Industrial Park
- Development in Big Rapids Township

Montcalm County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Montcalm County including:

- Soybean ethanol plant in County’s future
- Hospital expansion in Carson City
- Renaissance Zones in Montcalm County
- Stanton working to identify 5-year capital improvements
- Countywide transit
- Countywide land use plan in progress (draft in circulation 4-06)
- Greenville’s growth in housing and population
- Hitachi in Edmore – 62 acres and 300,000 square feet of manufacturing space
- Small businesses
- Tourism (Shipshewana North)
- Changing landscape in Greenville (growth on west side of town)

Osceola County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Osceola County including:

- NABCO building has space for new businesses
- Evert Industrial Park has space for new businesses
- Countywide land use planning
- Need to develop “Business Center” in Evert
- Need public sector to subsidize high-tech projects that area cannot wait for private sector to start
- Recreation opportunities in Marion
- M-66

Ottawa County – People listed a variety of opportunities related to Ottawa County including:

- Jobs available if people are properly trained
- Combined community foundation in Holland and Zeeland
- Manufacturing continues to expand in Ottawa County
- Downtowns continue to thrive in Ottawa County
- Redevelopment of older areas of downtowns
- Holland’s waterfront
- Lakeshore Advantage

Threats

The WMRPC asked participants to identify threats to the region and their counties. Unlike strengths and weaknesses (which are here and now) threats represent potentially negative events, activities, programs, or actions that are “over the horizon” and can have a negative impact on a community or region unless they are identified and actions are taken to address the threats. While related, threats (like opportunities) are not always as easy to identify as strengths and weaknesses.

Region-wide Threats

There are many region-wide threats to the seven-county area served by the WMRPC. While most participants focused on their communities, many threats are related to the entire area. The following are some of the area’s threats:

Natural Features –

- Loss/degradation of natural resources
- Distance to major population centers
- Demand for water in Great Lakes Basin

Built Attributes –

- Unsustainable growth in rural areas
- Big box stores’ impact on downtowns

Economy –

- Continued loss of manufacturing jobs
- Inability to replace lost jobs with jobs that pay as much
- Increasing fuel costs will impact ability of public agencies to provide services, cost of private services, and the level of people's expendable income
- Income in rural areas is below Michigan's
- Increasingly difficult to own a home, loss of affordable housing
- Unemployment
- Connection to "rust-belt" image
- Excess amount of household incomes spent on automobile expenses
- Downturn of economy related to automobile industry
- Lack of diversification of employment/dependence on manufacturing
- Impact of Delphi/General Motors
- Businesses leaving region for other parts of the USA or world
- Wages paid at big box stores not adequate
- Loss of local small businesses that reinvest in their communities
- Increasing poverty, decreasing wages
- Globalization
- Loss of local businesses and corporate headquarters
- Decline of U.S. automobile industry
- Increases in efficiency can decrease employment opportunities
- Region not competitive with other areas of the world related to wages
- Transition from manufacturing to service industry
- Cost of utilities in Michigan not competitive with other areas
- Lack of confidence in economy inhibits start-up businesses

Education –

- Lack of appropriate worker skills
- No goal of matching employers' needs with potential employees' skills
- School cuts

People –

- Aging workforce – are there enough well-educated people to replace those leaving the workforce?

Leadership and Programs –

- Continued decreases in revenue sharing and other community revenues will effect services offered and overall quality of life
- Continued cuts in services from state and federal governments
- Inability to maintain roads
- Loss of expertise as people retire from government
- Renaissance Zones ending tax-free status (what happens when benefit is gone?)
- Single Business Tax
- Michigan not promoting itself

- More focus on small businesses versus chasing large businesses
- Conflict between rural and urban areas/city township issues
- Duplication of services between communities/levels of government
- Difficult to offer tax abatements to businesses when economy is down and communities losing resources
- Partisan politics in Michigan wastes limited resources

Sub-Region Threats

Allegan County – People listed a variety of threats related to Allegan County including:

- Disagreements between different levels of government and on many elected bodies
- Lack of direction related to economic development

Ionia County – People listed a variety of threats related to Ionia County including:

- Potential excess housing as much is being built while others are on the market
- Unemployment
- Lack of industry in Ionia County

Kent County – People listed a variety of threats related to Kent County including:

- Loss of population and tax base in urban center of Kent County
- Continued unsustainable development in townships
- Continued loss of manufacturing employment in Kent County
- Loss of agricultural base in Kent County
- Continued duplication of services

Mecosta County – People listed a variety of threats related to Mecosta County including:

- Lack of adequate east-west access through Mecosta County
- Limited north-south access through Big Rapids
- Difficulties between communities will make collaboration more difficult and make attracting businesses impossible
- Big box stores' impact on Downtown Big Rapids

Montcalm County – People listed a variety of threats related to Montcalm County including:

- Loss of manufacturing jobs, gap left by loss of Electrolux
- Low per-capita income in Montcalm County
- High unemployment rate in Montcalm County
- Hitachi in Edmore – potential environmental problems and gateway to the community

Osceola County – People listed a variety of threats related to Osceola County including:

- Loss of manufacturing jobs
- Unplanned growth

- Reduced state funding for local governments
- Not enough well-educated people to replace those retiring
- Lack of natural resource-based vision

Ottawa County – People listed a variety of threats related to Ottawa County including:

- Decreasing demand for housing in Ottawa County
- Jobs must meet needs of families
- Good cost of living in Ottawa County
- Urban-rural issues
- Unsustainable growth in townships and rural areas
- Loss of local businesses

GAPS AND SURPLUSES IN REGION 8

This action was added when the WMRPC solicited matching funds (for this project) from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). While the MEDC did not assist in funding this project, this action was left as part of the project since there is value in its goal of identifying where and how to spend limited resources.

Of course every community is entitled to pursue its goals of economic prosperity. The problem relates to the fact that there are limited resources and that spreading these resources across a broad area dilutes the effectiveness of such actions and creates difficulties related to long-term sustainability. Communities must remember that economic development is not a one-time effort – utilities must be maintained and upgraded, people must receive proper training, and communities must adjust to the ever-changing ways that the private sector operates.

Survey Results

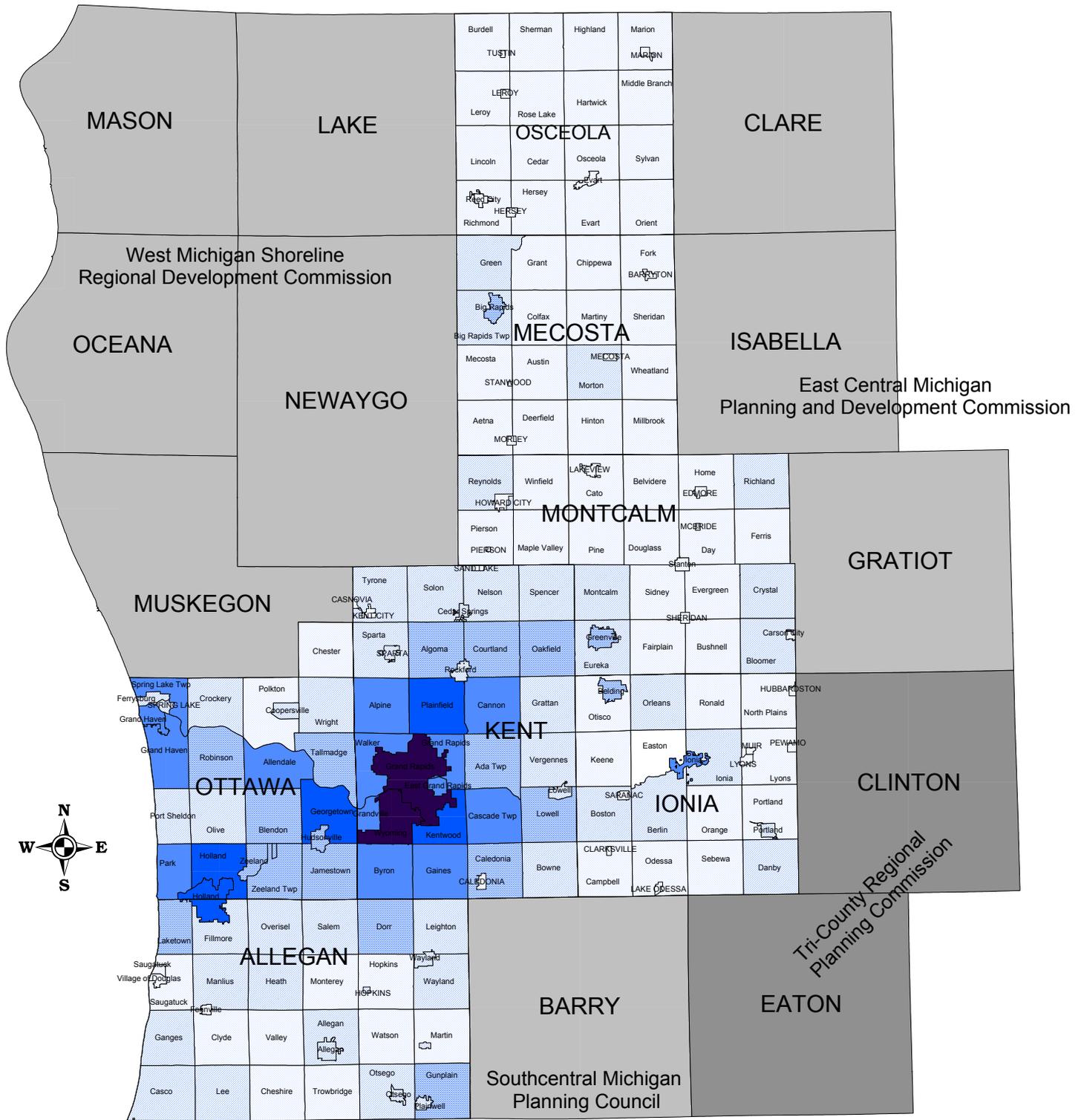
A series of maps presents the information obtained from the survey of the Region's 199 communities. This information, as well as information from interviews is used to identify the gaps and surpluses across Region 8. Due to the quantity of information obtained from the surveys, mapped information is the most concise way to present the information.

Population Distribution

Map 1 shows the population distribution of Region 8. Kent County, with a population of 600,000, contains the urban core communities of Grand Rapids and Wyoming and is the population center of the Region. The communities surrounding Grand Rapids and Wyoming also have large populations. Following Kent County in population is Ottawa County, with a population approaching 300,000, which includes several cities (Holland, Grand Haven, Zeeland, Ferrysburg, Coopersville, Hudsonville, and the Village of Spring Lake) and many townships with large populations. Allegan County, with a population approaching 120,000 is the Region's third largest county. Montcalm and Ionia counties each contain approximately 65,000 residents. Mecosta County is just over 42,000 and Osceola is the smallest County with under 25,000 residents.

Primary Interest by Municipality

Map 2 shows the distribution of communities across Region 8 that are interested in economic development, those that are interested in the preservation of a rural atmosphere, and those communities that are undecided.



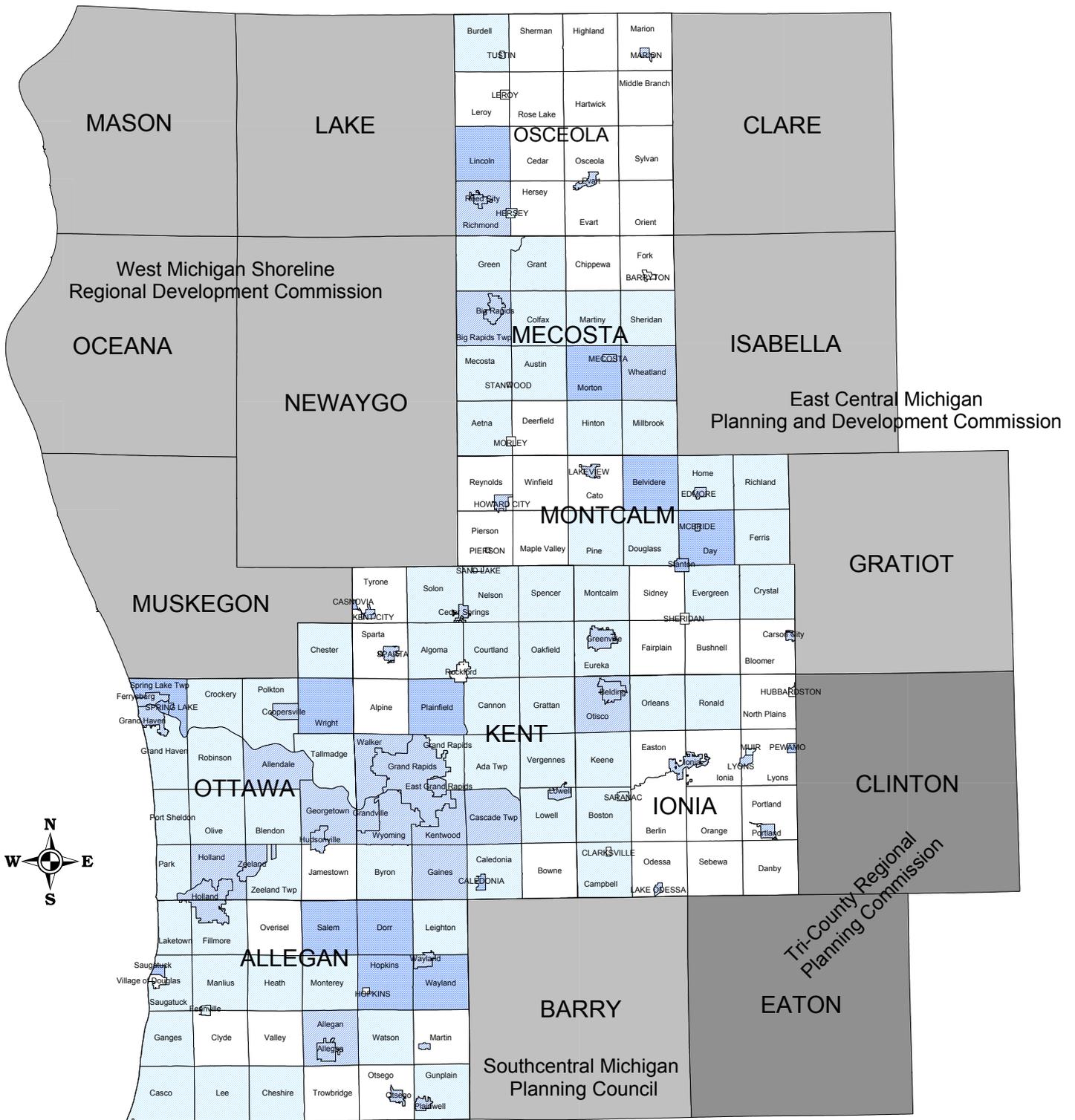
Population

- Less than 2,500
- 2,500 to 4,999
- 5,000 to 9,999
- 10,000 to 24,999
- 25,000 to 49,999
- 50,000 +

**WMRPC Population
by Municipality**

Source: 2000 U.S. Census





Primary Interest by Municipality- Map 2

Primary Interest

- No Data
- Preservation of Rural Atmosphere
- Economic Development
- Undecided

WMRPC



One of the first steps in identifying gaps and surpluses in facilities and programs relates to the overall goals or interests of a community. Not each of the 199 communities in Region 8 is interested in the traditional definitions or goals of economic development. Many are rural areas that are interested in agriculture – which is essential to the Region’s economy but does not necessarily require industrial parks, water and sewer, or programs related to attracting new businesses. Other communities are more interested in serving as “bedroom” communities and do not feel it is essential to provide the level of services necessary to attract businesses.

Industrial Parks

Map 3 shows the distribution of industrial parks across Region 8. The heaviest concentrations are located in Kent and Ottawa counties, but there are pockets across the regions in areas such as Allegan, Plainwell, Greenville, and Big Rapids. Since the information used for this map is “self-reported” from communities, the definition of industrial parks can vary from a fully supported park to a vacant piece of property.

Occupancy of Industrial Parks

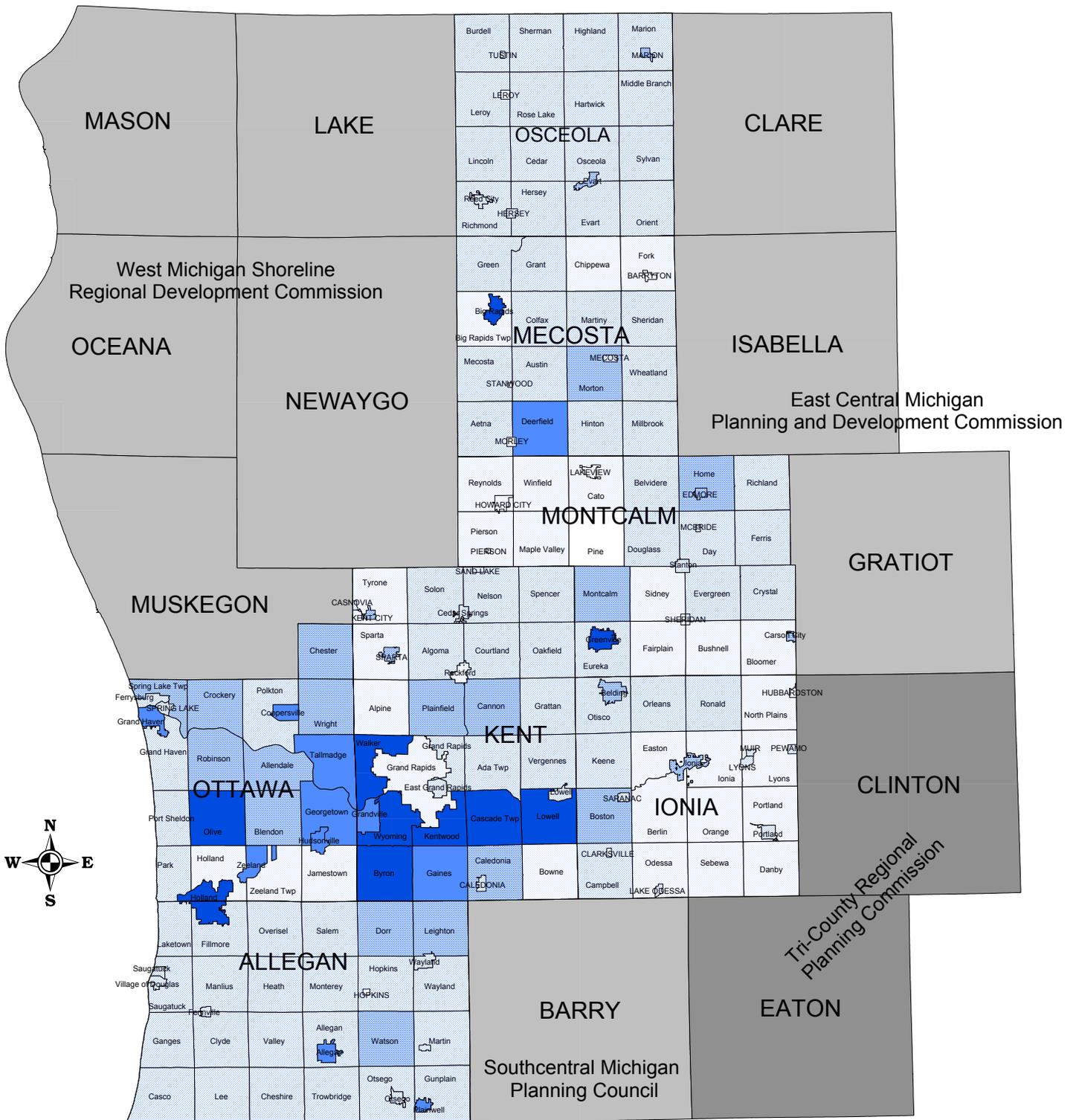
Map 4 is closely related to Map 3 and shows the occupancy rate of industrial parks across Region 8. Higher occupancy rates are centered on Grand Rapids, but also exist in Greenville, Big Rapids, Edmore, Holland, Grand Haven, Plainwell, Zeeland, Olive Township, and Deerfield Township. Many communities report available space in industrial parks, with each county having industrial parks that are less than half full.

Planned Industrial Parks

Map 5 identifies concentrations of planned industrial parks – which are located across the entire Region. “Planned” does not necessarily mean that communities are ready to begin construction on a new industrial park. “Planned” generally means that land is set aside in their land use plans for additional industrial park space. Six of the seven counties have at least one community that has at least 100 acres of industrial parks planned: Allegan County has three communities, Kent County has two, Mecosta County has one, Montcalm County has two, Osceola County has one, and Ottawa County has three communities with at least 100 acres of new industrial parks planned. Ionia County has one community with between 1 and 100 acres planned.

Non-Industrial Park Manufacturing Land

Map 6 looks at land that is currently used for manufacturing that is not located in an industrial park. The majority of this resource is located in Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan counties, but all of the counties contain such land uses. Map 7 is closely tied to Map 6 and reflects land that communities have “planned” for additional manufacturing uses. Each county, except Ionia County, have communities that have at least 100 additional acres planned for manufacturing uses. Again, Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan counties have the highest concentrations planned.

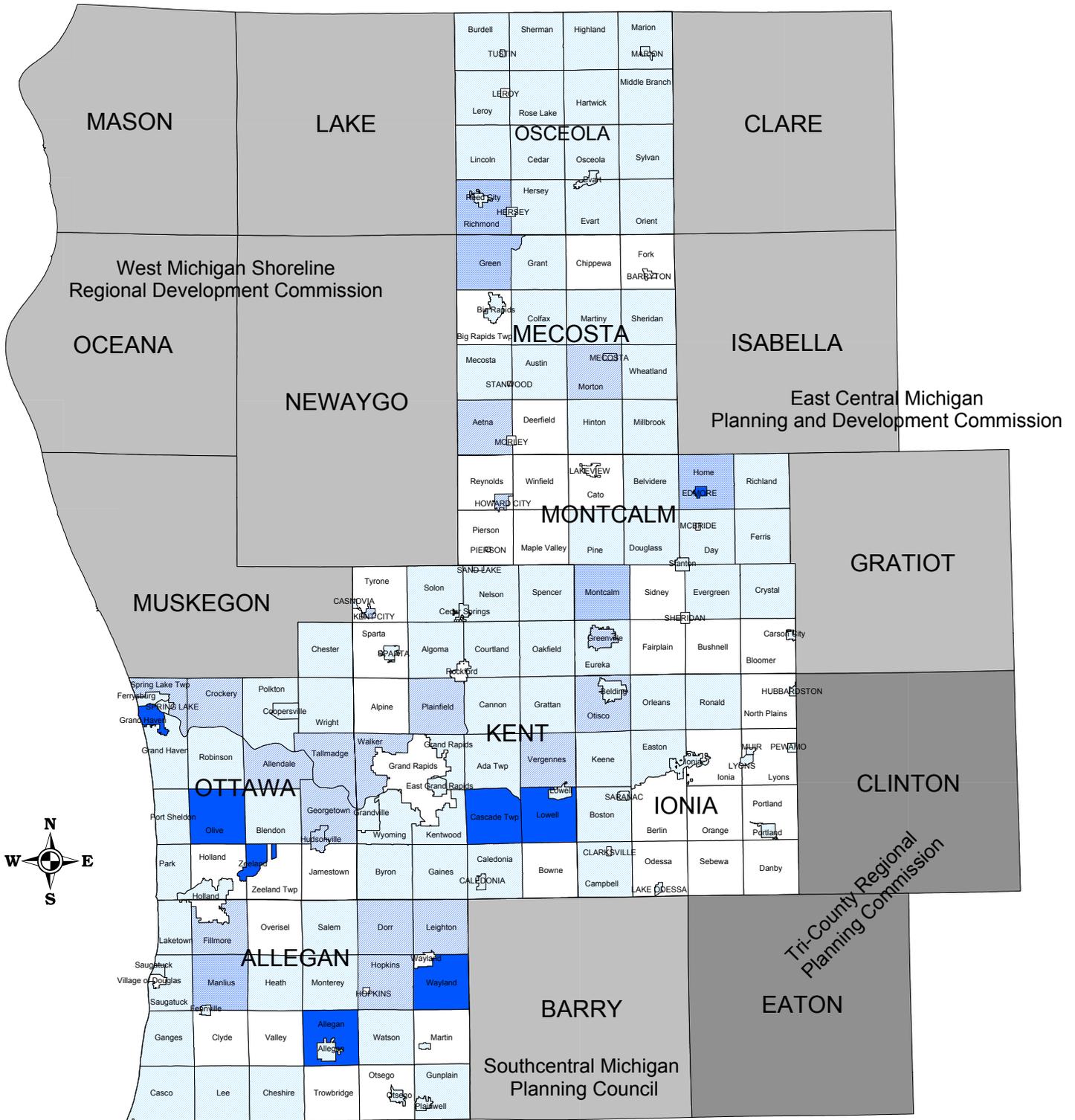


Existing Industrial Parks
By Acres

- No Data
- No Industrial Parks
- 1 to 100
- 101 to 200
- More than 200

Existing Industrial Parks by Municipality
Map 3

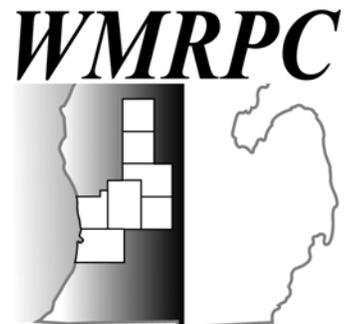


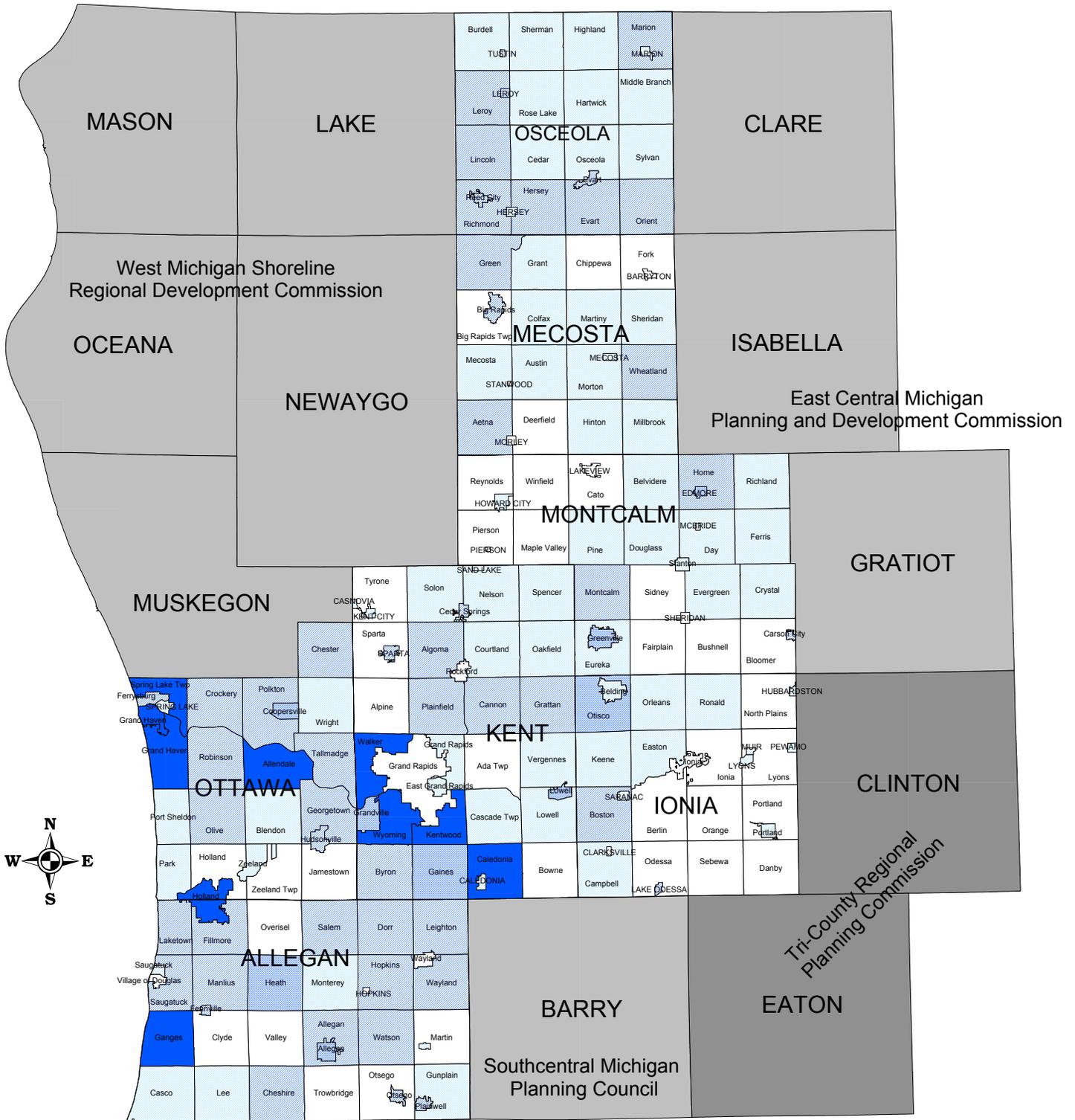


**Planned Industrial Parks
by Acres**

- No Data
- None Planned
- 1 to 100
- 101 to 200
- Greater than 200

**Planned
Industrial Parks
by Municipality
Map 5**



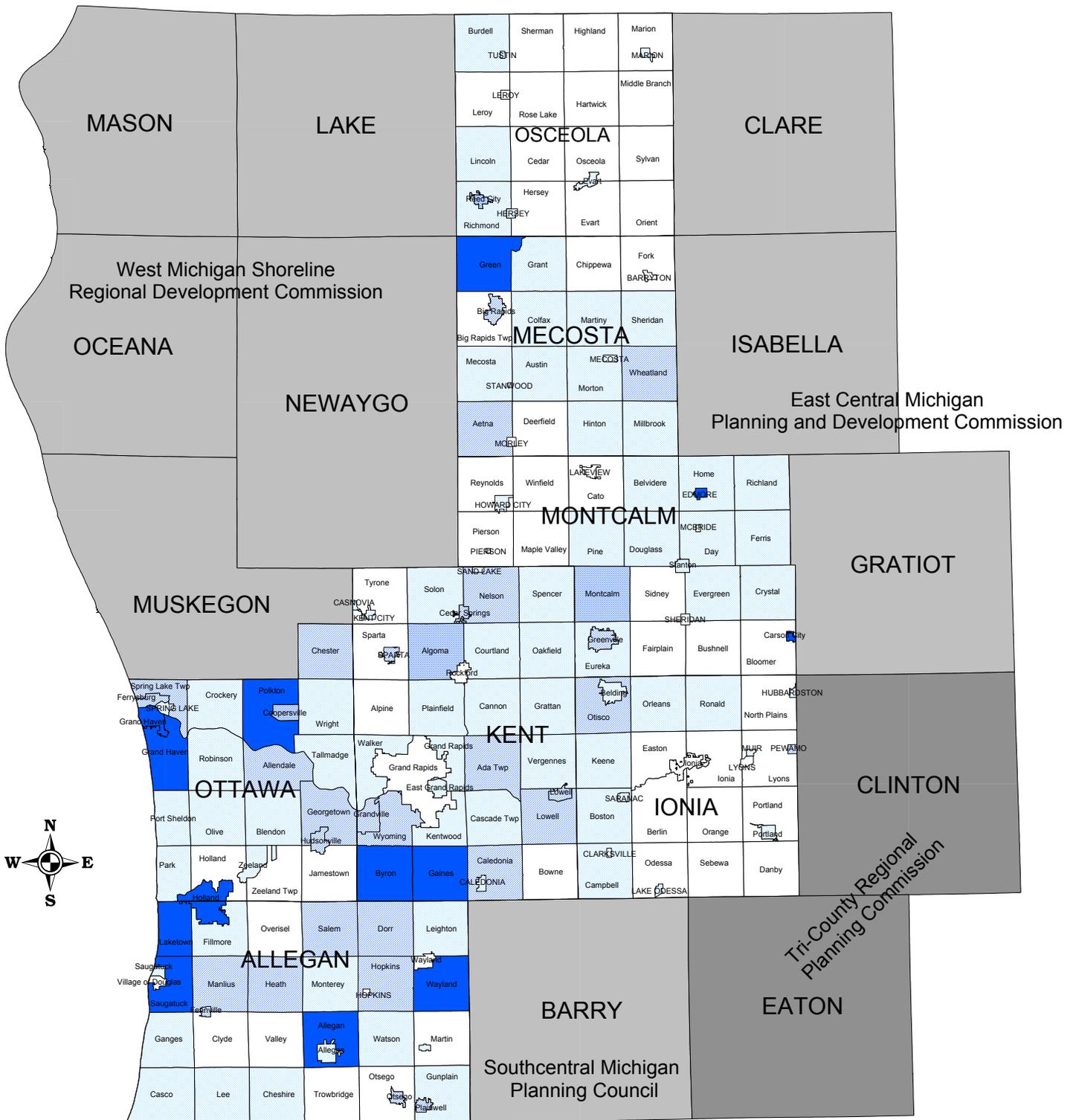


Existing Manufacturing
by acres

- No Data
- 0
- 1 to 100
- 101 to 200
- Greater than 200

Existing Land Used for Manufacturing (Non-Industrial Park) by Municipality Map 6





**MFG Planned
by Acres**

- No Data
- 0
- 1 to 100
- 101 to 200
- Greater than 200

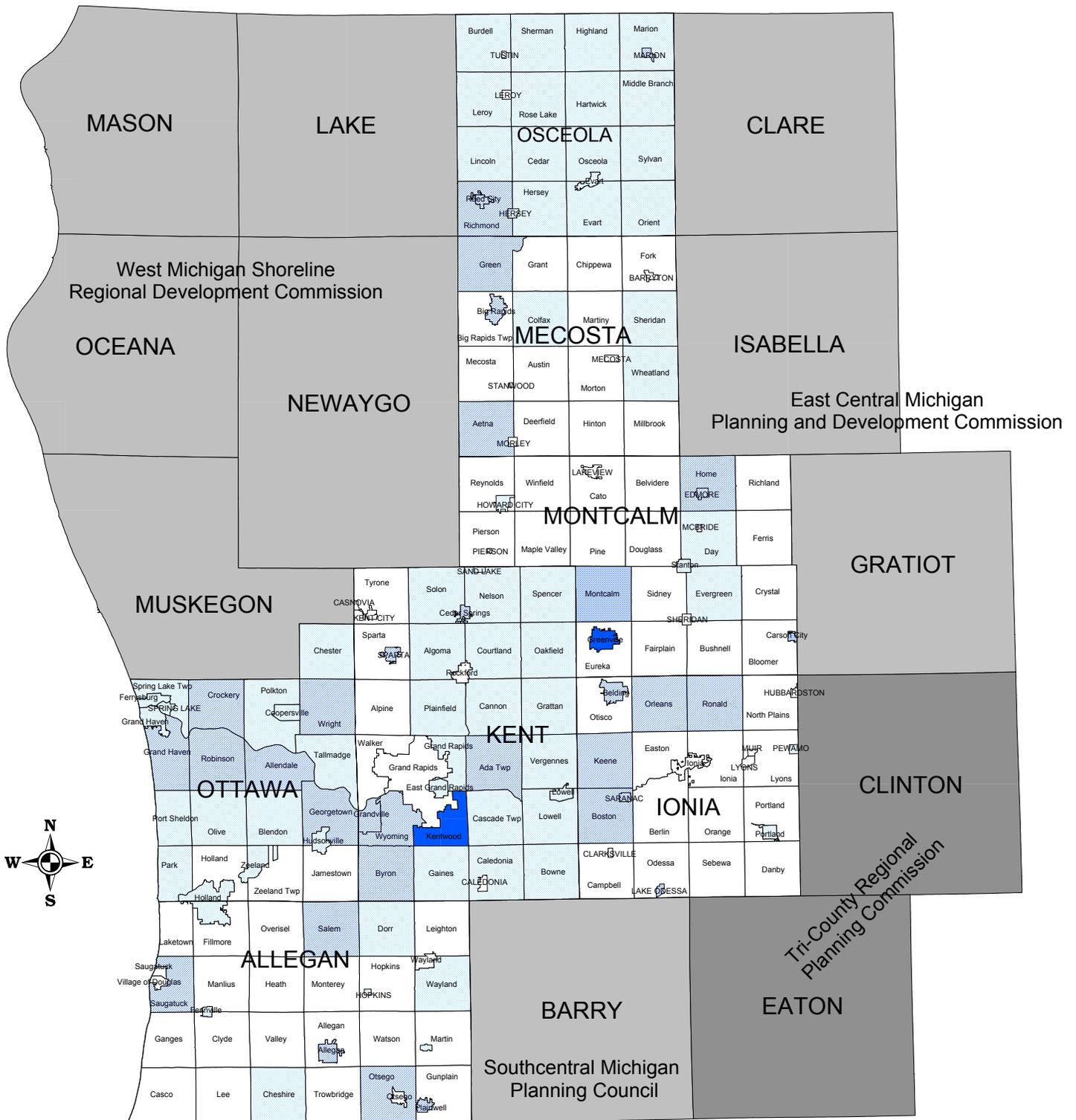
**Additional Planned
Manufacturing Land
by Municipality
Map 7**



Map 8 shows the acreage of abandoned facilities across the seven-county area. Kentwood and Greenville both have a large amount of vacant and abandoned facilities (greater than 200 acres). Montcalm Township follows with between 100 and 200 acres.

Map 9 mirrors the communities with industrial parks and land used for manufacturing. Communities with large numbers of manufacturing-related employment are located in Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan counties – as well as communities in the other four counties.

Finally, Map 10 identifies the age of communities' land use plans. This is important information since it shows the last time communities really considered how much land should be set aside for industrial parks, manufacturing, or other land uses. Communities should review their land use plans every five years and should perform a new plan every 10 years – although 20 years is a standard amount of time that a plan is created to envision. Typically, communities that have greater rates of growth and development pressures should (and do) update their plans more frequently than areas that have very little growth pressures. But, even communities that do not have tremendous growth pressures should have a plan in place to guide their development – unless they would rather have outside forces shape their futures. Many communities in Ionia, Montcalm, Mecosta, and Osceola counties do not have plans in place. Most communities in the other three counties (Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan) have plans that are fairly current. While not shown on the map, most counties have countywide plans that are fairly current. Kent County does not have a countywide plan in place, but has a lot of planning information related to the Grand Valley Metro Council's "Blueprint" process. Montcalm County currently (April 2006) has a draft countywide plan in the review stage.

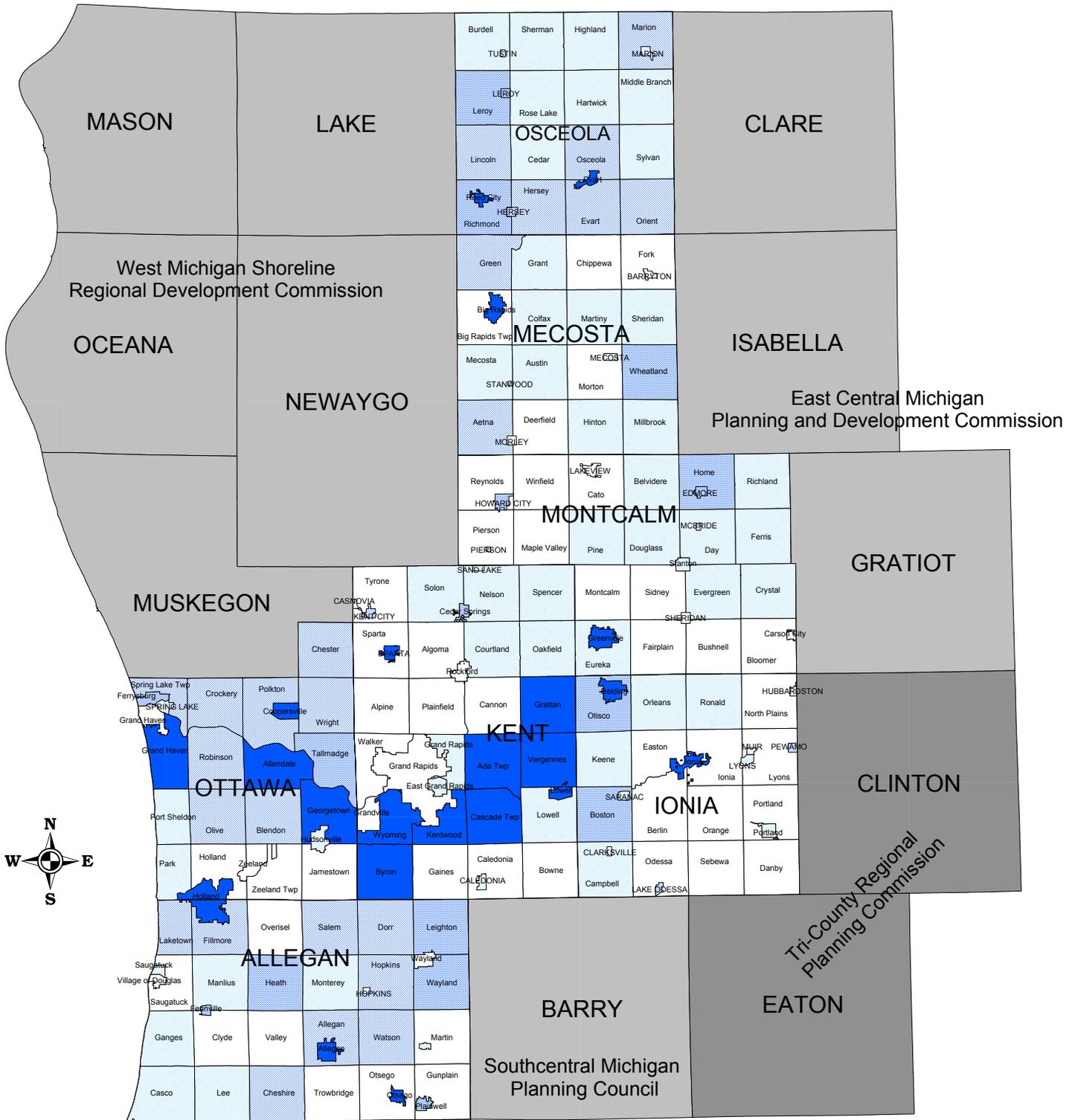


Vacant/Abandoned Facilities
by Acres

- No Data
- 0
- 1 to 100
- 101 to 200
- Greater than 200

**Vacant and Abandoned
Facilities
by Municipality
Map 8**

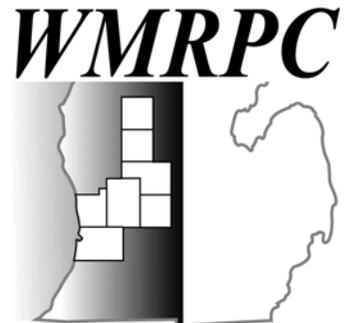


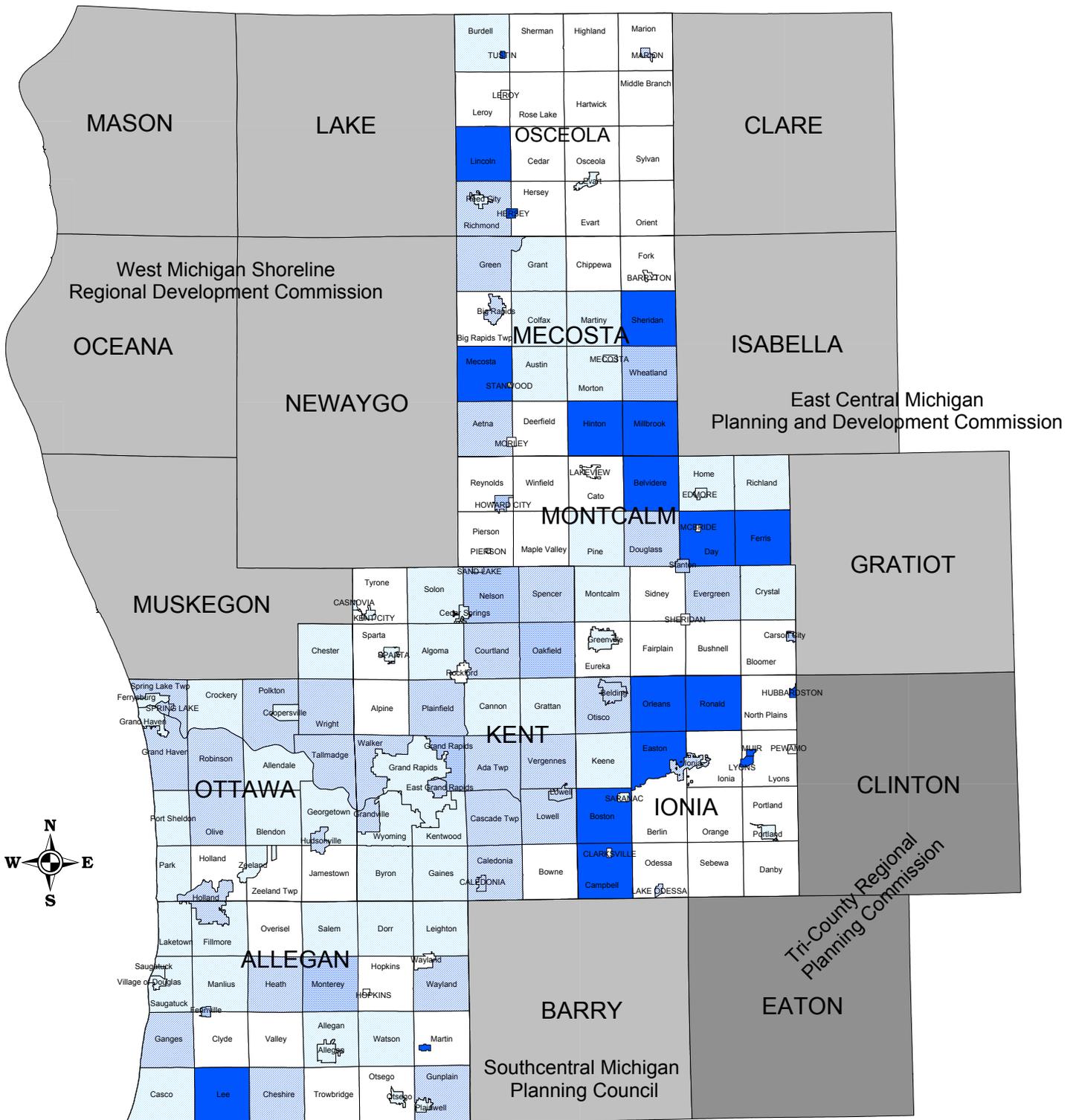


MFG Related Employment

- No Data
- 0
- 1 to 100
- 101 to 500
- Greater than 500

Manufacturing Related Employment by Municipality Map 9

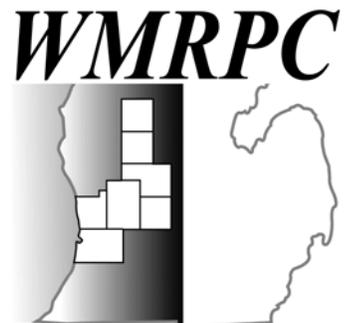




Age
in Years

- No Data
- Less than 5
- 5 to 10
- Greater than 10
- No Plan

Age of Land Use Plan by Municipality Map 10



County Scores

Table 1 shows a series of evaluation criteria for determining the economic development capacity of the seven counties within Region 8. The criteria include:

- **The 2000 population** since a larger population has a greater capacity to provide workers and a greater need to provide employment for the population.
- **The projected numeric increase in population** between 2000 and 2020 since projected growth will fuel and/or require economic growth.
- **The acreage of existing industrial parks and other industrial land** since existing development is a key component in the economic health of an area.
- **Acres per 100 people** – reflects importance of economic development for communities of all size.
- **Vacant industrial parks and manufacturing land** since the capacity for growth is a key component in sustained growth.
- **Vacant Acres per 100 people** – compares projected growth with capacity.
- **2005 Workforce** – Compares the workforce to the overall population to recognize the fact that some communities’ residents are not seeking employment (retirees, students, prisoners, etc.).
- **The Unemployment Rate** recognizes the need for economic development.
- **The Transportation Network** (three categories) recognizes the importance of being able to transport raw materials, people, and finished products.
- **Community Goals** are important since many communities goals are not primarily related to economic development.

Each of these 12 criteria was given 100 points that were divided between the seven counties. While counties with larger populations received the most points in many categories, some of the categories allowed smaller counties opportunities to “compete” more evenly.

The three largest counties did “score” higher than the smaller counties, but the population was not the only factor in how the seven counties compared with each other. Obviously, a large county is going to be the economic center when compared to counties that have only a fraction of the population of the larger counties. But, it is interesting to see how the smaller counties fared when compared to each other.

Kent County, which has the largest population, received the highest number of points (360.3). Kent had the highest score in 7 of the 12 categories – primarily related to population, transportation, and community goals. Kent County did not have the lowest score in any of the categories.

Ottawa County, which has the second largest population, received the second highest number of points (259.1). Ottawa had the highest score in 3 of the 12 categories – related to acres per person, vacant industrial sites, and the percentage of the population in the workforce. Ottawa County had one category with the lowest score – since they have the lowest unemployment rate in the seven-county area.

Allegan County, which has the third largest population, received the third highest number of points (143.8). The County did not have the highest or lowest score in any of the categories.

While Montcalm County has the fifth largest population, it scored fourth. Montcalm County scored highest in 2 of the 12 categories – with the highest amount of vacant acres per 100 people and the highest unemployment rate of the seven counties. While these may both seem like negatives, it demonstrates a high level of capacity for growth in the County. Montcalm had the lowest score in 3 of the 12 categories – related to the low amount of interstate highway mileage and number of exits, and the fact that rural preservation is more important than economic development in many parts of the County.

Mecosta County, which has the sixth largest population, received the fifth highest number of points (112.8). The County did not have the highest or lowest score in any of the categories.

Osceola County, which has the seventh largest population, received the sixth highest number of points (104.1). The County did not have the highest score in any of the categories. The County scored lowest in 3 of the 12 categories – related to population, projected growth, and the amount of two lane “US” and “M” routes.

While Ionia County has the fourth largest population, it scored seventh in the overall score (94.8). The County did not have the highest score in any of the categories but had the lowest score in five categories that all related to the amount of land used or designated for industrial purposes.

Table 1 – Economic Development Capacity of Counties in Region 8

Information/Categories	Counties							Region 8
	Allegan	Ionia	Kent	Mecosta	Montcalm	Osceola	Ottawa	
2000 Population (U.S. Census)	105,665	61,518	574,335	40,553	61,266	23,197	238,314	1,104,848
Score	9.6	5.6	52.0	3.7	5.5	2.1	21.6	100.0
2020 Population (projection)	144,266	82,269	772,201	55,762	85,191	31,563	393,642	1,564,894
Score	8.4	4.5	43.0	3.3	5.2	1.8	33.8	100.0
Existing Industrial Parks & Manufacturing Land (acres)	1,877	385	8,629	530	1,105	515	6,594	19,635
Score	9.6	2.0	43.9	2.7	5.6	2.6	33.6	100.0
Acres per 100 People (2000 Census)	1.8	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.8	2.2	2.8	1.8
Score	15.0	5.0	12.5	10.8	15.0	18.3	23.3	100.0
Vacant Industrial Parks and Manufacturing Land (acres)	271	76	1,319	205	363	80	1,451	3,765
Score	7.2	2.0	35.0	5.4	9.6	2.1	38.5	100.0
Vacant Acres per 100 people (Projected Population Increase)	0.7	0.4	0.7	1.3	1.5	1.0	0.9	0.8
Score	10.8	6.2	10.8	20.0	23.1	15.4	13.8	100.0
2005 Workforce	54,517	31,239	324,999	20,181	29,588	10,461	136,841	607,826
Score	14.3	14.1	15.7	13.9	13.4	12.5	16.0	100.0
2005 Employed	51,174	29,035	306,526	18,783	27,089	9,697	130,016	572,320
2005 Unemployed	3,343	2,204	18,473	1,398	2,499	764	6,825	35,506
2005 Unemployment Rate	6.1	7.1	5.7	6.9	8.4	7.3	5.0	5.8
Score	13.1	15.3	12.3	14.8	18.1	15.7	10.8	100.0
Miles of Interstate	57	25	115	26	13	26	47	309
Score	18.4	8.1	37.2	8.4	4.2	8.4	15.2	100.0
Number of Exits	14	6	44	4	3	4	12	87
Score	16.1	6.9	50.6	4.6	3.4	4.6	13.8	100.0
Miles of Two-lane “US” or “M” routes	88	78	164	86	106	77	131	730
Score	12.1	10.7	22.5	11.8	14.5	10.5	17.9	100.0
Economic Development Goal (Percent of Population)	26.4	41.4	71.2	38.4	21.3	28.9	59.8	57.9
Score	9.2	14.4	24.8	13.4	7.4	10.1	20.8	100.0
OVERALL SCORE	143.8	94.8	360.3	112.8	125.0	104.1	259.1	1,200.0

Source: West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Overall Findings

Allegan County

Allegan County's location between Holland, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo provides a great opportunity for growth – but it also pulls the County in several directions. The County's 2000 population of 105,665 is projected to increase to 144,266 by 2020.

Allegan County has five communities with Industrial Parks (plus the City of Holland which is located in Allegan and Ottawa counties). There are currently 250 acres of space available in the County's industrial parks – with the size of the County's projected population this amount will probably not be adequate in the future, so new parks are a priority. The County has a slightly higher unemployment rate than the region as-a-whole but incomes tend to be similar to the overall region.

The County has seven cities (plus the City of Holland) that each have a unique character. The County also has many recreation and tourism opportunities related to Lake Michigan, several tourist-related communities, and a large State Game Area. The County has five chambers of commerce. North-south access through the County is a strength, but east-west access is limited.

Some of the immediate challenges facing the County relate to the need to establish a countywide economic development program. Currently there is no overall program, person, or organization guiding economic development efforts in Allegan County. Additionally, the County needs to establish a corridor management plan for land along the US-131 Corridor – to promote economic development and make the best use of limited resources.

Ionia County

Ionia County's location between Grand Rapids and Lansing provides a great opportunity for growth. The County's 2000 population of 61,518 is projected to increase to 82,269 by 2020.

Ionia County has a well-supported economic development organization (Ionia County Economic Alliance) that promotes economic development across the County and runs the County's Brownfield Authority. The County also has one Renaissance Zone. Ionia County has three communities with Industrial Parks. There are currently only 55 acres of space available in the County's industrial parks – so new parks should be high priority at this time. Ionia County's residents have a diverse source of incomes – either in Grand Rapids, Lansing, or within the County where prisons are a major employer. The County has a much higher unemployment rate than the region as-a-whole and incomes tend to be lower than the overall region.

The County has three cities that each have a unique character. The County also has many recreation and tourism opportunities related to State Recreation and Game Areas. The

County has four chambers of commerce. Ionia County is well-served by its transportation network, but does lack a north-south interstate – but growth along M-66 (between I-96 and the City of Ionia) is phenomenal.

Some of the immediate challenges facing the County relate to the need to promote and develop sites for business and industry. Additionally, the County has not been able to implement zoning – which could discourage investors if there is uncertainty related to the development capacities of adjacent properties.

Kent County

Kent County is the economic and cultural center of Region 8. Kent County's many amenities, strong support for businesses, and other strengths assures growth in the future. The County's 2000 population of 574,335 is projected to increase to 772,201 by 2020.

Kent County has many well-supported economic development organizations for the larger individual communities and has the support of the Right Place Program Inc. The County also has ten Renaissance Zones located in the City of Grand Rapids that are all very successful. Kent County has 14 communities with Industrial Parks. There are currently 1,300 acres of space available in the County's industrial parks – with the size of the County's projected population this amount will probably not be adequate in the future, so new parks are a priority. One point that should be included about Kent County relates to the fact that the City of Grand Rapids did not submit information for this report – so the actual amount of manufacturing land and vacant land is actually much higher. The County has a slightly lower unemployment rate than the region as-a-whole and incomes tend to be about the same as the overall region. Manufacturing is still very important to Kent County, but other major employers include the many health care services and the related life facilities. Additionally, Kent County is home to many universities and colleges.

The County has many cities that each has a unique character and the County has urban, suburban, and rural communities to match the needs of almost anybody. The County is the cultural center of West Michigan and is a popular tourism and convention destination. The County also has many State Game Areas for outdoor activities. The County has seven chambers of commerce. Kent County is well-served by its transportation network that includes US-131, I-96, I-196, and the new "South Beltline" (M-6).

Some of the immediate challenges facing the County relate to the need to improve the urban school districts, the need to preserve the County's agricultural base, the need to adequately fund urban amenities and services, and the need for more coordination between communities.

Mecosta County

Mecosta County's rural character and the amenities available in Big Rapids will insure the future growth of Mecosta County. The County's 2000 population of 40,553 is projected to increase to 55,762 by 2020.

Mecosta County has a well-supported economic development organization (Mecosta County Development Corporation) that promotes economic development across the County. The County has one Renaissance Zone. Mecosta County has three communities with Industrial Parks. There are currently 110 acres of space available in the County's industrial parks – so new parks may not be high priority at this time. Mecosta County's residents have a diverse source of incomes – either commuting outside of the County or at major employers within the County – such as Ferris State University in Big Rapids. The County has a higher unemployment rate than the region as-a-whole and incomes tend to be considerably lower than the overall region.

The County has only one city, but has several villages along the major transportation corridors. The County also has many recreation and tourism opportunities related to State Recreation and Game Areas. The County has one chamber of commerce. Mecosta County is well-served by its transportation network, but does lack an adequate east-west transportation corridor.

Some of the immediate challenges facing the County relate to the need to improve east-west access across the County and the need for improved coordination and cooperation between communities. Filling the new Airport Industrial Park with quality employers should also be a major goal of the County.

Montcalm County

Montcalm County's rural atmosphere, with a close proximity to urban areas, provides a great opportunity for growth. The County's 2000 population of 61,266 is projected to increase to 85,191 by 2020.

Montcalm County has a well-supported economic development organization (Montcalm Alliance) that promotes economic development across the County and administers other community development activities. The County has six Renaissance Zones. Montcalm County has six communities with Industrial Parks and one certified industrial park. There are currently 300 acres of space available in the County's industrial parks – so new parks may not be high priority at this time. Montcalm County's residents have a diverse source of incomes – either in Grand Rapids, Lansing, or within the County where manufacturing jobs are important (but have taken several serious hits in the past several years) and other jobs in prisons and hospitals are major employers. The County has the highest unemployment rate of any of the seven counties in the region and incomes tend to be considerably lower than the overall region.

The County has three cities that each has a unique character as well as numerous villages and unincorporated areas. The County also has many recreation and tourism opportunities related to State Recreation and Game Areas. Montcalm County has three chambers of commerce. Montcalm County has the smallest amount of interstate miles of any of the Region's counties, but has many well-maintained two-lane state routes.

Some of the immediate challenges facing the County relate to the need to replace the many manufacturing jobs that have left the area over the past several years. Even before these jobs vanished, the County's unemployment rate was always higher than the Region as-a-whole. Also, filling the spaces that were vacated (Electrolux, Hitachi, etc.) will be a major challenge. The County is currently adopting its first countywide land use plan and may move in the direction of providing zoning for communities across the County.

Osceola County

Osceola County's rural character and quality of life will insure the future growth of the County. The County's 2000 population of 23,197 is projected to increase to 31,563 by 2020.

Osceola County has a well-supported economic development organization (Osceola Economic Alliance) that promotes economic and community development services across the County. The County has two Renaissance Zones. Osceola County has one community with a certified industrial park. There are currently only 65 acres of space available in the County's industrial park – so new parks may be a priority in the near future (even though the County's population is small, it is easy to occupy 65 acres with just a few businesses). Osceola County's residents have a diverse source of incomes – either commuting outside of the County or at employers within the County. The County has a higher unemployment rate than the region as-a-whole and incomes are considerably lower than the overall region.

The County has two cities and several villages providing a variety of lifestyles. The County also has many recreation and tourism opportunities related to State Recreation and Game Areas. The County has four chambers of commerce. Osceola County is well-served by its transportation network.

Some of the immediate challenges facing the County relate to the need to promote sites for business and industry, while diversifying away from manufacturing which makes up a large percentage of the County's jobs.

Ottawa County

Ottawa County is an economic powerhouse in West Michigan that seems to thrive no matter how the rest of Michigan is performing. The County's location on Lake Michigan, proximity to Grand Rapids, many amenities, strong support for businesses, and other strengths assures the County will remain one of the fastest growing counties in

Michigan. The County's 2000 population of 238,314 is projected to increase to 393,642 by 2020.

Ottawa County has many well-supported economic development organizations for the larger individual communities and has the support of the Ottawa County Economic Development Office Inc., and the County's Planning and Grants Department. Ottawa County has 14 communities with Industrial Parks, including one certified industrial park. There are currently 1,400 acres of space available in the County's industrial parks. New parks would not be a high priority at this time for typical counties, but Ottawa County's reputation as a place for businesses creates additional demands for industrial space. The County always has lower unemployment rate than the region as-a-whole and incomes are well above the Region's and Michigan's incomes. Manufacturing is still very important to Ottawa County, but the County is also a major agricultural area – which creates conflicts related to the need to preserve farmland while meeting the growing demands of more residents and businesses.

The County has seven cities that each has a unique character and the County has urban, suburban, and rural communities to match the needs of almost anybody. The County is a popular tourism destination with many Lake Michigan beaches and a variety of festivals including the Tulip Festival in Holland and the Coast Guard Festival in Grand Haven. The County has seven chambers of commerce. Ottawa County is well-served by its transportation network that includes I-96, I-196, US-31 and many state routes. There are long-term plans to develop a US-31 bypass around much of the County urbanized area on the west side of the County.

One of the challenges facing Ottawa County relates to balancing the demand for further growth with the needs of the agricultural community that is a major strength in the County.

Region 8

The Region's projected growth from 1,104,848 in 2000 to 1,564,894 in 2020 depends on the economic success of the major urban counties in West Michigan. While the success of the rural counties is also essential, they alone cannot drive the Region's economy. Also, due to the disproportionately high (compared to the rest of the Nation) number of manufacturing jobs in West Michigan, the Region has been hard-hit over the past six years as these jobs have disappeared because of companies relocating and to increases in productivity – both of which leave employment gaps in West Michigan.

West Michigan needs to take advantage of its many strengths such as its natural resources, its four seasons, its huge agricultural base, its unique communities, its entrepreneurial spirit, its existing infrastructure, its many higher education facilities, its health sciences opportunities, its philanthropic spirit, its urban centers, its rural areas, and its people.

Major weaknesses across West Michigan that must be addressed include the fiscal challenges facing communities, the education challenges facing many school districts, and the continuing change from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.