

City of Ypsilanti Economic Development Action Plan

Presented to City Council: June 2014

The City of Ypsilanti’s urban environment, heritage, and culture allow for the unique opportunity to encourage and support sustainable economic development. The City of Ypsilanti is working towards recertification as a State certified [Redevelopment Ready Community](#)® (RRC), and is committed to working closely with entrepreneurs, business owners, and developers to provide a business-friendly climate while meeting the needs of the Ypsilanti community.

For the last few years, City of Ypsilanti staff has been focused on addressing the declining revenue streams, and finding ways to provide basic services in a new economic climate. City staff has worked with City Council to manage the decline, and adjust the budget accordingly. With that accomplished, staff is focusing on economic development initiatives and partnerships in light of the economic restructuring facing Ypsilanti, Southeastern Michigan and the state as a whole.

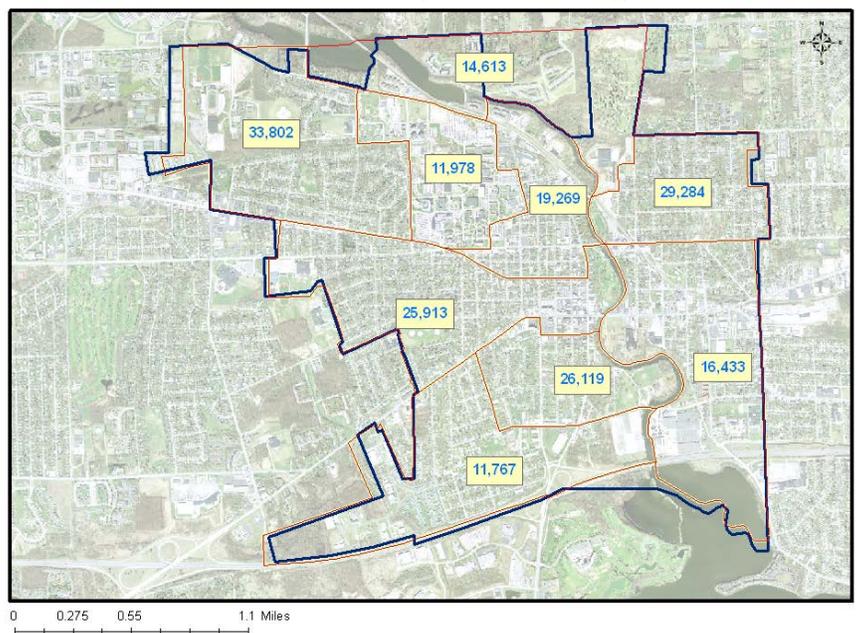
To further promote and facilitate economic development opportunities within the City of Ypsilanti, the City created a yearly work plan that includes continued engagement with partners including DDA, Ann Arbor Ypsilanti Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Works, County departments including Parks and Recreation, Community and Economic Development, Washtenaw Brownfield Authority, Public Health, Small Business and Development Center, Ann Arbor SPARK, Eastern Leaders Group, EMU Social Entrepreneurship program, Michigan Economic Development Corporation among other private and public partners.

As part of the 2013 Shape Ypsilanti Master Plan, data regarding city-wide economic stability of residents was reviewed and analyzed. This data will serve as a benchmark for economic development activities. Of particular concern are lower than average unemployment rates (2013 average of 8.6 %) and signs of the disparity within the City related to educational attainment and income along geographic and racial lines in the City.

On the fiscal side, the decline in manufacturing and loss of real estate value from 2008-2012 have had dramatic impact on the city’s finances. Increases to the general fund are also limited by Proposal A and the Headlee amendment, so new development on vacant land would have the most dramatic changes fiscally.

As well, the city has lost population, but does maintain some of the more dense residential areas in the county. Additional population grows market segments, so additional housing or conversion of vacant buildings or

Per Capita Income - 2011 dollars (ACS 2007-2011)



floors to housing units remains a goal.

What follows is a listing of goals for economic development in the City in general, goals for the yearly work plan, and descriptions of economic development projects and partners. This document is intended to be fairly fluid, as priorities may change based on opportunities, funding, and economic climate.

Economic development goals

1. improve and diversify tax base
2. increase and diversify employment base
3. align workforce development with changing needs
4. improve City's ability to meet business community's needs
5. improve general environment and quality of life

Goals for economic development action plan

- set course for City's efforts and determine priorities and schedule
- utilize external partners effectively
- consider all of Ypsilanti, not just site- specific locations

Set course for City's efforts

Several of the projects listed below represent the City's desire to create a business-friendly climate where developers, investors and others will find predictability and ease in their working relationship with the City. Projects are selected based on a variety of criteria including staff resources, current economic climate, available opportunities (including funding and partnerships) and represent projects that are generally led by the City, or in which City staff are actively engaged.

Projects underway (in alpha order)

Name	Goals	Description	Status	Roles
Analyze redevelopment opportunities and prioritize efforts <i>Expected completion: July 2014</i>	1, 4, 5 To meet fiscal 2016 goals, determine priority redevelopment projects for largest ROI	Based on goals above, determine priority projects in each category to focus the year's efforts	In progress	Lead: Community & Economic Development with City Manager
Angstrom Reuse Strategy <i>Expected completion: December 2014</i>	1, 2, 5 Support reuse or redevelopment of former Ford properties	City staff is working with Angstrom, Ann Arbor SPARK and VantagePort on a strategy for reuse as well as to direct interested parties to the land and building for redevelopment and or reuse of the 80 acre site.	Ongoing.	Lead: City, Ann Arbor SPARK Support: VantagePort, ELG
Capital Improvements Plan <i>Expected completion: December 2014</i>	4,5 Develop 6 year plan for all capital improvements from roads and parks to city buildings and non-motorized infrastructure	This process is required by state law. This would put the city in compliance, and create not just the first plan, but a ready process for updating the plan each year as part of the budget process	Starts June 2014	Lead: Community & Economic Development and City Manager's Office
Commuter Rail and Wolverine Stop <i>Expected completion: Ongoing</i>	5,6 Coordinate with SEMCOG/MDOT to establish commuter rail stop in Depot Town	An ongoing state effort, staff will work to support the effort, install the platform in Depot Town, and lobby for Wolverine Service as well as the planned Ann Arbor to Detroit commuter rail line.	Ongoing	Lead: City Manager, Support: Community & Economic Development

Disposition Policy for Tax Foreclosure reverted properties	1,4,5 The City receives a handful of properties each year. This would map out a process for their reuse.	There has been interest in using vacant land for infill and/or gardening (in the interim). Occasionally, the city obtains properties with structures, and would like to encourage rehab and homeownership.	Initial draft in 2012 to Planning Commission. Scheduled for June or July 2014 PC meeting	Community & Economic Development
<i>Expected completion: September, 2014</i>				
Economic Development Benchmarks	4, 5 To help assess and direct the City's economic development efforts, these benchmarks will provide context for economic, development and quality of life data for the City of Ypsilanti.	Using the 2013 Shape Ypsi plan matrix, 2013 data will be used as a baseline. Collection and synthesis will be done annually as part of the Planning Commission Annual report. These benchmarks are intended to provide accurate information to the public, City Council, and to staff, and to help guide the City's economic development efforts.	Initial benchmarks are expected to be available online by the end of August with annual updates in Jan/Feb.	Lead: Planning Commission; Community & Economic Development
<i>Start date: June 2014 Expected completion: Aug. 2014 – then annual</i>				
EMU/City market communication strategy	Improve communication with students, faculty, and staff on City issues. Provide residents with pertinent info on EMU	Communication gaps remain in the exchanges between Eastern Michigan University and the City of Ypsilanti. The potential to reach existing markets (EMU students, faculty and staff for local Ypsi businesses and events – or Ypsi residents for EMU performances, events and resources) remains untapped. City and EMU are working to improve websites, social media and other efforts to make useful and fun information available on both sides of the aisle	In progress	Lead: EMU and Community & Economic Development Support: CVB and DDA
Landfill	1,5 Redevelop city-owned landfill located near Angstrom Property	This city-owned property is a challenging site to redevelop based on past usage and geo-technical issues. However, its proximity to the Angstrom site may present an opportunity for redevelopment and remediation in conjunction with that site.	Pursuing DTE solar array opportunity	Lead: Community & Economic Development and City Manager office

Promote Sense of Place	4,5 To promote Ypsilanti as a unique area in the region, and to promote a unique identity to residents, visitors and the business community.	Identity is important to economic development efforts whether among new residents, visitors or the business community. A variety of marketing efforts are underway including marketing the downtown to business, the City and area to tourists, and neighborhoods to both real estate agents and potential new residents.	This is an ongoing effort. The City will be represented on relevant marketing committees.	Lead: Arbor/Ypsilanti Convention and Visitors' Bureau Support: DDA/City/ELG, other partners
Popups/Food Carts <i>Expected completion: August 2014</i>	1,2,4,5 Create process and information to encourage entrepreneurial biz	Shape Ypsi has identified both as a means for small business growth, and partial processes have started to accommodate both pop-ups and food carts. Finalize process and develop easy to digest information for entrepreneurs looking to try new business/markets in Ypsilanti	In progress	Lead: Community & Economic Development Support: SBTDC, DDA,
Redevelopment Ready Recertification <i>Start date: Fall 2013</i> <i>Expected completion: December 2014</i>	4,5 To assist business owners and developers as they go through the steps of the permitting and review process ultimately providing for an easier, predictable, and more efficient process.	City staff will be working on a redevelopment guide featuring case studies designed to help guide people through the developing and permitting process with ease. Information will be available online and in print in the Planning and Development Department.	Information is expected to be on the City's website by the end of 2014	Lead: Community & Economic Development
Retention Visits <i>Expected completion: ongoing</i>	1,2,3,4,5 Visit 5-10 businesses in calendar year to assess current needs	Business growth is primarily in expansion of existing business or in new small business starts. City staff will partner with Ann Arbor SPARK and DDA to complete a series of prioritized site visits.	In progress	Lead: Community & Economic Development Support: SPARK, DDA, Chamber, City Manager

<p>220 N. Park – redevelopment strategy and zoning</p> <p><i>Start date: June 2014</i> <i>Expected completion: Aug. 2014</i></p>	<p>1,2,4,5 To work with the neighborhood to find appropriate reuse options and then match zoning to those options.</p>	<p>The City listed this property for sale. The current zoning which dates back to at least the 1980s allows high-density multifamily. This came up as a topic of concern for the neighborhood. The site is also located along the railroad, so uses should be appropriate to this transitional area.</p>	<p>City planning to hold community meeting with options of building types and location in June</p>	<p>Lead: Community & Economic Development</p>
<p>Update Tax Abatement Policy</p> <p><i>Start date: June 2014</i> <i>Expected completion: Aug. 2014</i></p>	<p>1,4,5 To create a predictable and efficient process for the application to and potential approval of tax abatements.</p>	<p>Council adopted a policy previously, but both the Climate Action Plan and Shape Ypsi plan mention incentivizing green businesses and/or small manufacturing, creative economy, renewable energy and local food businesses</p>	<p>Start in June</p>	<p>Lead: Community & Economic Development</p>
<p>VantagePort promotion of Spring Street properties</p> <p><i>Expected completion: concepts: June 2014</i> <i>Marketing: ongoing</i></p>	<p>1, 2, 5 VantagePort will include the Angstrom properties in their future site book.</p>	<p>A regional economic development effort focused on locating airport related businesses in the area would include the City of Ypsilanti. Staff is working with new VantagePort staff on concept plans for the site as well as additional marketing.</p>	<p>Concept plans underway.</p>	<p>Lead: VantagePort, LLC</p> <p>Support – City</p>
<p>Water Street Redevelopment</p> <p><i>Expected completion: Updated marketing plan June 2014</i></p>	<p>1,2,3,4,5 Successful redevelopment of the property.</p>	<p>The Shape Ypsi 2013 Master Plan established design guidelines for the site. Based on that framework, an infrastructure plan has been approved to allow for staged development of the site. Future efforts will include more aggressive marketing of the site as well as completing zoning to further determine form and uses appropriate for development.</p>	<p>Presentation on marketing June 3-ongoing updates and work sessions.</p> <p>Background information on the city’s website.</p>	<p>Lead: Community & Economic Development</p> <p>Support: City Manager, Washtenaw County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (WCBRA)</p>

<p>Workforce Development</p> <p><i>Expected completion: ongoing</i></p>	<p>3,4</p> <p>To continue to develop the employee pool in the City of Ypsilanti, and encourage training and development in new economy.</p>	<p>Essential to the future of economic development in the City, Ypsilanti works with Michigan Works/Employment Training and Community Service (ETCS) on related issues, and is working to enhance this relationship. City will work in particular on target sectors of small manufacturing, creative economy, renewable energy and local food.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: MICHIGAN WORKS!, ETCS, Ypsilanti Community Schools</p>
<p>Zoning Text amendments</p> <p><i>Start date: Nov. 2013</i> <i>Expected completion: Aug. 2014</i></p>	<p>1, 2, 4, 5</p> <p>Revise ordinance to accommodate increased flexibility for businesses of all types, especially entrepreneurial efforts</p>	<p>Shape Ypsi was adopted in Oct. 2013. The key tool for implementing the plan is the zoning ordinance. To reflect the goals of that document changes need to be made, in particular in centers and corridors that would house the majority of new or expanding businesses. The targeted economic sectors are expressly permitted in multiple zoning districts at varying scales.</p>	<p>In progress. Planning Commission reviewing draft in early summer. Expected to be adopted in August 2014.</p>	<p>Lead: Community & Economic Development</p>

Utilize external partners effectively

The City of Ypsilanti is grateful for the many governments, agencies and organizations that help us with economic development work. In recognition of these existing partnerships, City of Ypsilanti staff is looking to further grow and develop these relationships in the short and long term. The number of partners exceeds those listed, but the ones below are mostly local or county partners. The economic development team is open to creating new collaborations with both traditional and non-traditional partners.

Washtenaw County

Ann Arbor SPARK

The lead economic development agency for the county, SPARK is not only working on the SPARK East incubator in downtown Ypsilanti, but is our link to coordinating with incoming businesses around training talent, finding space and help negotiating economic development incentives. SPARK also hosts a series of trainings and networking functions for incoming and current businesses.

Community and Economic Development

OCED staff continues to partner with the City on efforts related to economic development, brownfield redevelopment, Reimagine Washtenaw, the HUD Sustainability grant, and planning in general. Currently staff is assisting with brownfield redevelopment efforts, the Water Street project, Reimagine Washtenaw, zoning ordinance updates, CDBG and HOME fund distribution, and other efforts. This partnership continues to grow and develop.

Michigan Works!

Employment Training and Community Services (ETCS)

The Community Action Agency for the County, ETCS is very involved in helping residents with a wide variety of programming to meet basic needs, and in particular, needs related to job training, career change and retraining. ETCS's training services are designed to meet the needs of all residents and can range from basic skills to high level technical training. ETCS is a key partner in business recruitment as their programming can help connect businesses to the appropriate job pool, and can help residents find new industries to train in.

Parks and Recreation (WCPARC)

WCPARC coordinate the construction and promotion of the Border to Border trail which runs through Ypsilanti. At this point, only a few key stretches remain to be completed in the city limits. The City is also working with WCPARC on the East Side Recreation Center to be located on the Water Street Redevelopment Area.

Public Health

Public Health, in collaborations with the Ypsilanti Health Coalition, has, on numerous occasions, applied for and received state grant money for improvements and education related to parks, recreation and active living. These efforts have included purchase and installation of bike racks and benches and resurfacing of basketball courts at Parkridge Park as well as related events. Public Health continues to partner with the City on providing access to healthy food and related food business opportunities in the City.

University Support

Eastern Michigan University

Eastern Leaders Group (ELG)

ELG is comprised of business and public sector leaders, including Eastern Michigan University, who are working to improve the conditions on the Eastern end of the county. Current projects include are updated regularly on the Eastern Leaders Group website

College of Business Social Entrepreneurship Outreach Program

A new program for the university, it is focused on supporting efforts outside the university and connecting them to University resources.

University Departments

Professors and students in the Urban Planning and Historic Preservation departments have had a long-standing commitment to investigating and coordinating student work focused on issues and challenges within the Ypsilanti community. Students have developed historic walking tours of Ypsilanti, have done projects on revitalization of various sites in town, and continue to connect their coursework to issues in the community.

University of Michigan Urban Planning, School of Natural Resources and School of Information

Professors and students in these departments have continually provided new ideas and studies of ongoing problems and challenges within the Ypsilanti community. Past projects have focused on non-motorized transportation zoning to encourage arts related businesses, brownfield redevelopment and others.

EMU, U of M and Wayne State

All three universities have provided excellent interns over the years for a variety of projects. EMU continues to provide Historic Preservation graduate student interns who routinely staff the Historic District Commission and continue to contribute to the promotion and maintenance of the historic character of Ypsilanti.

Other Partners

Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber continues to be a resource to the business community. They also support business recruitment, development and promotion efforts of the City of Ypsilanti.

Michigan Suburbs Alliance (MSA)

Ypsilanti is a charter member of this group and continues to have a strong relationship with the MSA.

Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

This regional office is located at Washtenaw Community College. The SBDC provide free

business planning services to small businesses and to some non-profits. They also work to involved in youth entrepreneurship, connection to state programs. The SBDC also works to stay on current trends in entrepreneurship and has provided leadership and support to food-based businesses and pop-up retail business models.

Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority (YDDA)

Ypsilanti is fairly unique in that it has two recognizable downtowns. The YDDA is charged with the continued revitalization of their respective districts and are involved in a host of projects and efforts to revitalize the two areas.

Adjacent Local Units of Government (LUGS)

Economic development efforts can only be strengthened by working in collaboration with adjacent and area LUGS. The City of Ypsilanti hopes to work with its neighbors on developing and strengthening collaborations with the townships and the county to the benefit of all.

Local Business Associations

Both the Depot Town Association (DTA) and the Downtown Association of Ypsilanti (DAY) have been essential in providing quality events and attractions to bring residents and visitors to Ypsilanti business districts throughout the year. Other business organizations are also welcome partners.

VantagePort

With their focus on regional job attraction of logistics, office and manufacturing, VantagePort is working with the city on the marketing of the Angstrom Property and will be including it in their property marketing materials and website.