



# SWOT Analysis



**MICHIGAN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

## *What you will learn:*

*What is a SWOT analysis*

*How to conduct a SWOT analysis*

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This technique can help you find out what's working well, what isn't so good and determine what parts of the community have potential and what might be standing in the way of that success.

Evaluating a community's strengths and weaknesses can be done if you are thinking about a new master plan, at the initial phase of a master planning process, or as part of an annual meeting between elected and appointed officials.

A SWOT Analysis matrix is a 2x2 grid, with one square for each of the four aspects of SWOT.

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population &amp; job growth</li> <li>• Low Cost of Living</li> <li>• Central Location</li> <li>• Natural Resources</li> <li>• Accessibility to higher education</li> <li>• Quality of Life</li> <li>• Large Military presence</li> <li>• Transportation Routes and Highway Systems</li> <li>• Access to Healthcare System</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited Telecommunications Infrastructure</li> <li>• Limited Water/Wastewater Distribution</li> <li>• Lack of High Paying Jobs</li> <li>• Lack of Night Life / Entertainment</li> <li>• Educational Disparities, especially for rural counties</li> <li>• Limited Affordable Programs for disadvantaged Youth</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Infrastructure Readiness</li> <li>• Unified Development Codes</li> <li>• Military Transition</li> <li>• Talent Retention</li> <li>• Smart traffic solutions</li> <li>• Alternative Energy sources</li> <li>• Developable Land</li> <li>• Business Retention Investments</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base Realignment and Closures (B.R.A.C.)</li> <li>• Resource constraints (water, transit, agriculture)</li> <li>• Uncontrolled population growth</li> <li>• Restrictive Federal Policies</li> <li>• Political disconnect between local and state governmental authorities</li> <li>• Limited Public school funding</li> </ul>

Published by the  
**MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PLANNING**  
 Summer 2020  
 1919 West Stadium Boulevard, Suite 4  
 Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48103  
 734.913.2000 | [www.planningmi.org](http://www.planningmi.org)  
[info@planningmi.org](mailto:info@planningmi.org)  
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*SWOT Example from Development District of Central Texas*

## ***What the Law Says:***

### **The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, in part states the following:**

#### Sec. 7

- (1) A local unit of government may adopt, amend, and implement a master plan as provided in this act.
- (2) The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:
  - (a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.
  - (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
  - (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
  - (d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:
    - (i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets and provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods by motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and other legal users.
    - (ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.
    - (iii) Light and air.
    - (iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
    - (v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.
    - (vi) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.
    - (vii) Recreation.
    - (viii) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability

#### Sec 31

- (2) In the preparation of a master plan, a planning commission shall do all of the following, as applicable:
  - (a) Make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth within the planning jurisdiction with due regard to its relation to neighboring jurisdictions.
  - (b) Consult with representatives of adjacent local units of government in respect to their planning so that conflicts in master plans and zoning may be avoided.
  - (c) Cooperate with all departments of the state and federal governments, public transportation agencies, and other public agencies concerned with programs for economic, social, and physical development within the planning jurisdiction and seek the maximum coordination of the local unit of government's programs with these agencies.

Sec. 33 (1) A master plan shall address land use and infrastructure issues and may project 20 years or more into the future. A master plan shall include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive, explanatory, and other related matter and shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the planning jurisdiction

A SWOT Analysis is often done at a single meeting as a brain storming session. Items are added to the list without too much immediate discussion. Once recorded, they can be honed down and clarified in subsequent discussions.

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors.

Strengths are assets or qualities that your community does particularly well, or in a way that distinguishes it from other communities. When considering strengths and weaknesses, imagine how visitors or neighboring municipalities see your community. Do they notice weaknesses or strengths that you tend to be blind to?

Opportunities and Threats as external factors, arising from the wider economy or environment. Opportunities are openings or chances for something positive to happen, such as eco-tourism or a new assembly plant. Threats include anything that can negatively affect your community from the outside, such as rising lake levels or economic recession. It's vital to anticipate threats and prepare for them.

A facilitator (whether a contractor or volunteer) can be helpful when undertaking a SWOT Analysis.

When interpreting a SWOT analysis, it is important to look for instances where internal strengths are paralleled by external market opportunities. Equally, it is important to spot instances where internal program weaknesses are match by corresponding external threats.

A SWOT analysis can reveal hidden obstacles as well as identify positive elements not be readily evident. Used properly, SWOT can generate valuable data quickly.

### *SWOT Follow Up*

- Were there any surprises?
- Are there items that require fact checking?
- If the SWOT was conducted as the first step of the master plan process, the next step may be researching the topics listed. If the SWOT was conducted at an annual meeting, the next step may be following up with staff, outside agencies, or writing a new ordinance.
- Determine who will follow up with the items highlighted in the SWOT and set a date to report back to the group.

This tear sheet was developed by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The Michigan Association of Planning is a 501 c 3 organization, dedicated to promoting sound community planning that benefits the residents of Michigan. MAP was established in 1945 to achieve a desired quality of life through comprehensive community planning that includes opportunities for a variety of lifestyles and housing, employment, commercial activities, and cultural and recreational amenities.

