ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Prepared for
The City of Grayling, Michigan

March 2017

Prepared by:
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risingtide

an initiative of the Michigan Department of Talent and Economic Development

The Rising Tide project supports vibrant, thriving communities to attract business investment and talent by creating a sustainable path toward economic stability and growth. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority–collectively, the Talent and Economic Development (TED) team–have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential. This document was produced as part of that effort.

PLACE of Main ADVISORS, LLC

in association with

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ADVANCED REDEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS

February 2017

City of Grayling
City Council
1020 City Boulevard
P.O. Box 549
Grayling, MI 49738

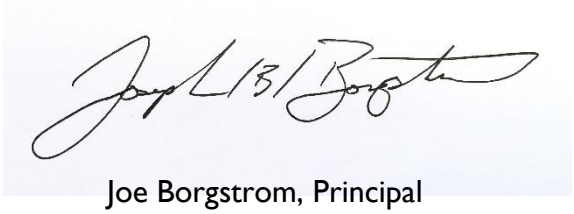
Dear City of Grayling Council:

On behalf of the Project Rising Tide Team, Place & Main Advisors, LLC, is pleased to present you with this final draft of the Economic Development Strategy for the City of Grayling. This economic development strategy is part of the city's participation in Project Rising Tide and is provided for by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

This strategy includes the results of numerous meetings, interviews and site visits, and a two-night summit conducted by the local Project Rising Tide Steering Committee, comprised of representatives of the City, DDA, Chamber, Convention and Visitors' Bureau, Crawford County and others. This strategy details specific steps, responsible parties and timelines for implementation. In the end, we are confident in the strategy we have put forth and the community's ability to execute it.

Thank you for the opportunity for our firm to work with you. We have truly enjoyed our time getting reacquainted with the City of Graying and have high expectations for its future.

Sincerely,



Joe Borgstrom, Principal

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I. OVERVIEW

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The City of Grayling is located along I-75 in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. The City of Grayling is also served by a state trunk line, M-72, which connects the city to the City of Traverse City, a very popular tourist destination community. The Au Sable River cuts through downtown and serves as the starting point for the largest canoe race in Michigan, the Au Sable River Canoe Marathon, which brings in hundreds of competitors and thousands of spectators annually. The city is also home to nearby Camp Grayling, a full spectrum, four-season joint military training facility operated by the Michigan National Guard which hosts more than 10,000 domestic and International troops annually. The community is served by Munson Healthcare's Grayling Hospital, which has 81 licensed inpatient beds, a 39-bed skilled nursing/ long-term care unit, and an active emergency department.

SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION

Population

In 2000, the city had a population of 1,956, dipping to 1,881 in 2010. The city is currently estimated at 1,880 people.

Household Income

The median household income for the city is estimated at $35,042 and expected to rise to $36,606 in 2021. Per capita income is estimated at $19,236.

Labor Force

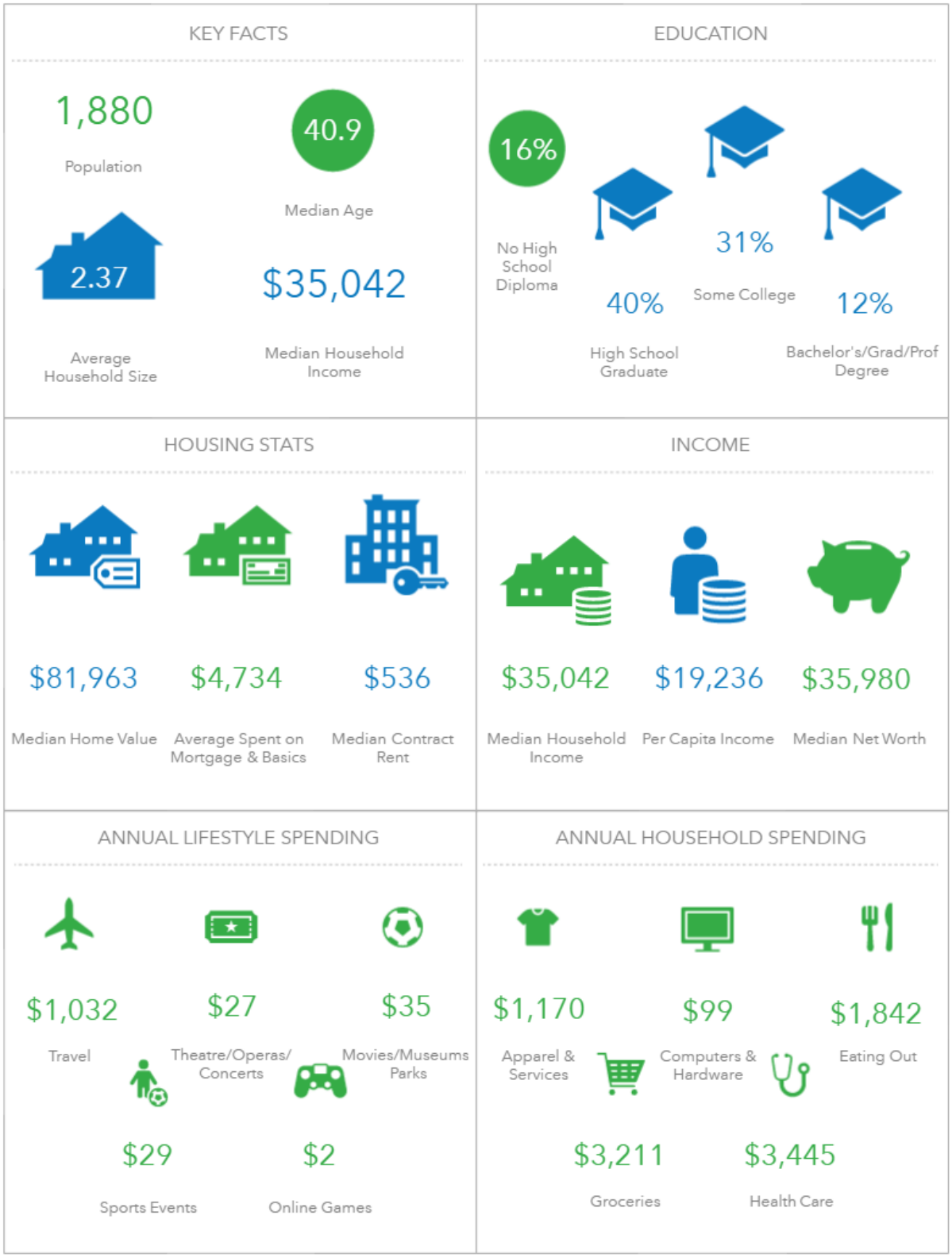
The total labor force within the city limits was estimated at 753 people with a projected growth to 789 in 2021.

Housing

The total number of housing units occupied in Grayling for 2016 was 761 with 489 (64.26%) of those being owner-occupied and 272 (35.74%) were rental units. The median home value in Grayling is $81,963 with a median rental rate of $536 a month.

Additional key statistics can be found on Table 1 on page 7.

Table 1.


KEY FACTS
1,880
Population
40.9
Median Age
2.37
Average Household Size
$35,042
Median Household Income
EDUCATION
16%
No High School Diploma
40%
High School Graduate
31%
Some College
12%
Bachelor's/Grad/Prof Degree
HOUSING STATS
$81,963
Median Home Value
$4,734
Average Spent on Mortgage & Basics
$536
Median Contract Rent
INCOME
$35,042
Median Household Income
$19,236
Per Capita Income
$35,980
Median Net Worth
ANNUAL LIFESTYLE SPENDING
$1,032
Travel
$27
Theatre/Operas/ Concerts
$35
Movies/Museums Parks
$29
Sports Events
$2
Online Games
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD SPENDING
$1,170
Apparel & Services
$99
Computers & Hardware
$1,842
Eating Out
$3,211
Groceries
$3,445
Health Care

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PROCESS

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On September 21 and 22, 2016 a task force consisting of representatives of the City of Grayling, Grayling Downtown Development Authority/Main Street, Crawford County, Grayling Regional Chamber of Commerce, Grayling Visitor's Bureau, Michigan Works! and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) held a two night public brainstorming session to solicit input from residents, businesses and other stakeholders on potential economic development activities the city should consider. There was tremendous attendance with more than 100 people attending each night.

As a result of these sessions, the community at large played a significant role in the drafting of this strategy.

Strengths

The community identified the following areas of strength for Grayling (in no order):

a. Walkability – many/all resources can be accessed by walking, safety
b. Snowmobile trails – Tourism
c. Community feel – the spirit and friendliness of the community
d. Healthcare – Munson Hospital
e. Dial-A-Ride – transportation
f. Schools – all of them, good schools with a fine reputation
g. I-75 and the Rail being close
h. River system
i. Hartwick Pines – tourism, outdoor activities
j. Bike path – open path
k. Camp Grayling – economic input and positive representative
l. Large public land area – DNR – Outdoor opportunities
m. Forestry and wildlife
n. Public Library
o. Access to lots of places in the vicinity – central location in the region
p. Great spirit
q. Lots of potential



r. Hanson Hills – historically and recreationally
s. Airfield/airport
t. Two really fine art galleries – culture

Challenges

The community also identified the following weaknesses in the city (in no order):

a. Lack of affordable high speed internet near the city vicinity – high speed not accessible outside of the city (within one mile of town)
b. Lack of condos/maintenance-free housing
c. Lack of regional transportation – transportation is not connective between public transportation systems within the region (Roscommon to Grayling)
d. Lack of good food/restaurants
e. Need an interchange at 4 Mile for M72
f. Lack of coordination between state agencies and local community/government
g. Terrible hours for public transportation – Dial-A-Ride closes too early
h. Cell phone towers/service
i. Single lane traffic – people miss the double lane downtown – they avoid downtown to avoid the traffic
j. Not a lot of ways to get home safely from drinking in the PM – We want Uber



k. Enormity of start-up cost – lack of available capital for development
l. Parking downtown – we want a parking garage
m. Lack of child care – affordable/licensed
n. Some out of date businesses that are dragging down everyone else – not enough fresh/new business stock
o. Too much blight (residential and commercial)
p. City Government closed on Friday
q. Lack of utilization of the water front – not prioritizing or identifying development opportunities
r. We are surrounded by state land and the golf course – lack of redevelopment opportunities for in-fill
s. Lack of safe passages for snowmobilers
t. Want more restaurants outside of downtown
u. Lack of common marketing and branding

III. LOCAL & REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

III. LOCAL & REGIONAL ECONOMIC GOALS

For an economic development strategy to follow best practices put forth by the Redevelopment Ready Communities program, the individual objectives must tie back to one or more of the local goals and goals identified in the regional context. Each of the goals put forth in this strategy meets this criterion.

Local Economic Goals

The City of Grayling has set forth the following goals for its local economic development efforts:

1) Increase Economic Opportunity for Residents and Businesses

2) Increase Housing Options for Talent Retention and Attraction

3) Reinvest in Infrastructure and Buildings

4) Develop/Redevelop Underused Properties

5) Improve Overall Quality of Life

Regional Economic Goals

Prosperity Region 2, which encompasses the City of Grayling and the northeast portion of Michigan's lower peninsula has identified the following goals for the region's economic development goals:

1) Strengthen the quality of place throughout Northeast Michigan to entice talent and business development.

2) Increase national and global recognition of the region by showcasing a consistent and effective Northeast Michigan image

3) Facilitate entrepreneurship and grow existing businesses in the region.

4) Present Northeast Michigan to the global community as a high quality regional destination

5) Expand, enhance, and support the Wood Products Industry Cluster in the Region

6) Expand, enhance, and support the Local Foods Cluster in the Region.

7) Move toward sustainability by seizing green opportunities in Northeast Michigan.

8) Expand, enhance, and support the Aerospace Cluster in the Region.

9) Attract, develop and retain a talented workforce in Northeast Michigan

10) Ensure adequate infrastructure exists which meets the needs of business, residents, and visitors.

11) Collaborate to provide consistent and coordinated level of service in the region.

These goals are directly referenced in the Economic Development Strategy Chart (Table 2 on page 20)

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Economic Development Strategy is a direct reflection of the input of residents, business owners and other stakeholders. As a result, some of the tasks identified are not areas one would normally see in a traditional economic development strategy. However, they do represent very real challenges the community sees as having a direct impact on their economic success.

Following this narrative is a copy of the of the interactive Excel spreadsheet (Table 1) with specific action steps, responsible parties, connections to local and regional goals and respective timelines for this strategy's execution.

Additional Considerations

In addition to existing market data, the Grayling area is anticipating the arrival of Arauco-USA, wood product producer to begin operations at its announced new location. This new major employer is anticipated to create more than 200 new jobs and will undoubtedly attract new residents to the area. Further, Camp Grayling is positioning itself as a year-round training facility with an added emphasis on winter combat and operations training.

Strategic Objectives

Child Care- The lack of a licensed, professional day care and early learning center is a barrier to working parents in the community. Currently, only in-home day care is available for children under five years old. In-home care providers rarely have back up providers in case of illness and can create hardships on working families. In addition, these in-home providers generally do not offer formal pre-school activities.

Camp Grayling- Creating and maintaining a relationship with Camp Grayling is an economic imperative for the city and its businesses. The Camp attracts over 10,000 soldiers and their families for trainings primarily in the summer, but may be expanded to year-round activity. This "military tourism" represents a significant amount of additional spending in the community. In addition, Camp Grayling directly spends an additional $16 million annually in the community.

Cell Service & Internet- Improving cell service in the area and improving internet accessibility is critical to Grayling's economic future. From the hospital to Camp Grayling to manufacturers and every small business and resident, having business level internet speed is critical to ensuring businesses can be retained and attracted, including potential home-based and visiting business people on vacation.

Transportation- Improving transportation options, including mass transit, is an important part of Grayling's economic development strategy. Residents as well as representatives for Camp Grayling have expressed the need for better coordinated and more frequent public transportation options to major employers and to downtown during hours beyond those offered by the current service providers.

Housing Options- Residents have expressed the need for more housing types including downtown lofts/apartments, multi-family apartments, condos, townhouses and additional upper scale single family. There are currently no multi-family apartment offerings, which makes transitioning to the community difficult. Furthermore, a recent Target Market Analysis (TMA) supports the addition of many of these types of housing options.

Improvement of Sub Standard Housing & Blight Reduction- The community has identified the need to both improve the housing stock of the area as well as reduce blight. A strong blight enforcement and rental inspection code and enforcement can help rectify these issues.

Real Estate Redevelopment- A review of the residential TMA and retail market leakage data shows the need for redevelopment of some existing real estate. Several of these key properties are significantly underutilized and are currently under private ownership. Redevelopment of these sites will require collaboration between the City and the property owners to facilitate their reuse. Mixed-use and residential development should be fully explored. The following sites should be prioritized in the following order, with specific priority given to the first five sites:

a. Fred Bear property



b. Golf course



c. Former Pro Build site



d. Old Bike Shop



e. Shoppenagon



These sites should also be strongly considered for redevelopment:

f. Former Sawmill property
g. Upper Floor of Goodall's Bakery
h. Former Valero Station
i. Lot by Shell
j. City Parking Lots
k. Lot between Shell and Brickery
l. Cedar Motel
m. Hospitality House
n. Moser property on business loop

o. Huntington bank (small one)
p. Rite-Aid
q. Grayling glass by Rolling Oak
r. Keyport
s. Michigan State Crime Lab – relocate

Increase & Diversify Dining Options- Both resident feedback and market data supports the expansion and/or recruitment of additional dining options. Every attempt should be made to reach out to existing restaurants to expand their offerings before recruiting outside businesses.

Barriers to Finance- Business owners and residents have identified the need for resources related to financing both of real estate development and business start-up and expansion. Gathering information on financing options, grants and loans into a central location that is easily accessible and understandable is recommended.

Improve Appearance of Downtown- Business and property owners need to be educated on best practices for façade and storefront appearances as well as the various financing and grant options that are available to them. Every effort should be made to make connection between property owners and façade improvement grants through the MEDC. Another opportunity available to the downtown is to consider infill development along Cedar Street (M-72) between Michigan Avenue and Ogemaw Street. Grayling's Main Street is Michigan Avenue which runs perpendicular to M-72. As a result, regional traffic along Cedar Street (M-72 is exposed to off-street parking lots instead of potential downtown businesses.

PTAC Registration for Local Businesses- Camp Grayling pours $16 million annually into the community through payroll, goods and services. However, if a business wants to participate in contracting opportunities above the amount of $3,000, they need to be registered in the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) program. From construction to catering, local businesses can help retain this spending locally, but only if they are registered. Providing multiple opportunities for local businesses to register and making them aware of opportunities should be high priority.

Unifying Branding- The city and unrelated community organizations lack a unifying brand. This brand can effectively market the community to potential businesses, tourists and residents. A brand that appropriately represents the area will benefit both the city as well as local businesses by communicating the values and what makes the community special.

SPECIAL NOTE
Not included in the public's assessment, but a critical piece nonetheless is the need for money to implement many of these projects. With that in mind, we heavily suggest:

Implement Downtown Development Authority Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and 2-mill Assessment for Operations- The city should implement a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plan and 2 mill assessment for operations of the downtown development authority (DDA). The TIF plan will allow the city, through the DDA, to capture the tax increment generated from improvements within the district and can be used toward making further public improvements that create a snowball effect. In addition, the DDA act allows for the assessment of up to 2 mills to fund operations of the DDA. These funds would be extremely beneficial to Grayling's DDA/Main Street program to ensure ongoing operations and expansion to other potential services to benefit downtown businesses and property owners.

Table 2.

PROJECT RISING TIDE Grayling

Economic Development Strategy

STATUS COLOR LEGEND & TOGGLE

Not Started	In Progress	Delayed	Complete
ON	ON	ON	ON

OBJECTIVE	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	STATUS	OWNER	SECONDARY	ANTICIPATED START DATE	ANTICIPATED END DATE	ACTUAL START DATE	ACTUAL END DATE
1. Identify Child Care Options & Market Potential	1	9	In Progress	Kim Murphy, City of Grayling	Crawford County Human Services Collaborative				
1.A. Develop List of Exising Child Care Providers	1	9	Not Started	Kim Murphy, City of Grayling	Crawford County Human Services Collaborative				
1.A.2 Review Licensing Violations of Registered Child Care	1	9	Not Started	Kim Murphy, City of Grayling	Crawford County Human Services Collaborative				
1.B. Review Market Leakage Report for Child Care Expenses	1	9	Not Started	Kim Murphy, City of Grayling	Crawford County Human Services Collaborative				
1.C. Identify Potential Appropriate Sites for Child Care	1	9	Not Started	Kim Murphy, City of Grayling	Crawford County Human Services Collaborative				
1.D. Discuss Pre-School Options with Grayling Public Schools	1	9	Not Started	Kim Murphy, City of Grayling	Crawford County Human Services Collaborative				
2. Establish & Maintain Communication with Camp Grayling for Collaboration	1	9	In Progress	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
2.A. Hold monthly meetings with Camp Grayling, Chamber, CVB and City	1	9	In Progress	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
3. Improve Cell Service & Internet Connectivity	1, 3, 5	10	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Crawford County				
4. Improve Regional Transportation Option	1, 5	10	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Julie Dean, Crawford County Regional Transit Authority				
4.A. Engage Local Transportation Services	1, 5	10	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Julie Dean, Crawford County Regional Transit Authority				
4.B. Gather Relevent Useage and Potential Useage Data	1, 5	10	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Julie Dean, Crawford County Regional Transit Authority				
4.C. Refine Business Models to Create Sustainable Option(s)	1, 5	10	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Julie Dean, Crawford County Regional Transit Authority				
5. Increase "Missing Middle" Housing Options	2, 5	9, 1	In Progress	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				

5.A. Review Missing Middle Target Analysis	2, 5	9, 1	Complete	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling					
5.B. Identify Potential Single Family and Multi-Family Housing Sites (In concert with Objective 8)	2, 5	9, 1	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission					
5.C. Develop Marketing Materials for Sites (Incl. TMA information)	2, 5	9, 1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission					
5.D. Issue RFQ/RFP for Housing Developer	2, 5	9, 1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission					
5.E. Secure Developer/Development Agreement(s)	2, 5	9, 1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission					
6. Improve Sub Standard Housing	2, 5	9, 1	In Progress	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling					
6.A. Create Enforceable Rental Inspection Ordinances	2, 5	9, 1	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Hanne Dysinger, Crawford County Housing Commission					
7. Reduce Blight	4	1	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
7.A. Create Blight Ordinance	4	1	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
7.B. Actively Enforce Blight Ordinance	4	1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
8. Identify & Promote Redevelopment Opportunities	2, 4	9, 1	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
8.A. Meet with Potential Redevelopment Property Owners to Assess Willingness to Develop or Sell	2, 4	9, 1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
8.B. Create Map of Redevelopment Opportunities	2, 4	9, 1	In Progress	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
8.C. Create Marketing Materials for Each Development/Redevelopment Site	2, 4	9, 1	Not Started	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling					
8.D. Issue RFQ/RFP for Housing Developer	2, 5	9, 1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
8.E. Secure Developer/Development Agreement(s)	2, 5	9, 1	Not Started	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					
9. Increase & Diversify Eating Option	1, 5	6	Not Started	Traci Cook, Grayling Chamber	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street					

9.A. Create Grayling Restaurant Week	1, 5	6	Not Started	Traci Cook, Grayling Chamber	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street				
9.B. Use Building Inventory and Redevelopment Sites to Market to Other Restaurantuers in the Region	1, 5	6	Not Started	Traci Cook, Grayling Chamber	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street				
10. Identify Barriers to Lack of Capital, Solutions	1	2	Not Started	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
10.A. Develop Financing Options Package for Potential Businesses and Developers	1	2	Not Started	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
10.B. Package prioritized sites with financing suggestions, list of local/regional/state resources, and development suggestions and renderings with cost estimates	1	2	Not Started	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
11. Improve Appearance of Downtown (Facades, Streetscape, Arts)	2	1	In Progress	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Stacy Melsaac, Grayling Main Street/DDA				
11.A. Provide Education to Building Owners on Design Standards	2	1	Complete	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Stacy Melsaac, Grayling Main Street/DDA				
11.B. Provide Education to Building Owners on Available Façade Grants	2	1	Complete	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Stacy Melsaac, Grayling Main Street/DDA				
11.C. Provide Education to Building Owners on Best Practices for Window Displays, Rotating Stock, Signage	2	1	Not Started	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Stacy Melsaac, Grayling Main Street/DDA				
12. Register Grayling Area Businesses with PTAC for Contracting Opportunities thru Camp Grayling	1	2	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Traci Cook, Grayling Chamber				
12.A. Market Opportunity for Local Businesses to do Contracting Work with Camp Grayling via PTAC	1	2	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Traci Cook, Grayling Chamber				
12.B. Host PTAC Training Event in Conjunction with NEMCOG PTAC Center	1	2	Not Started	Alayne Hansen, Michigan Works!	Traci Cook, Grayling Chamber				
13. Create a Unifying Brand Campaign	1, 5	4	In Progress	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
13.A. Engage with ArnettMuldrow & Associates via Michigan Main Street to Develop Branding	1, 5	4	Complete	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
13.B. Grayling DDA/Main Street Adopts New Branding	1, 5	4	Complete	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
13.C. Grayling CVB Adopts New Branding	1, 5	4	In Progress	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				
13.D. City of Grayling Adopts New Branding	1, 5	4	In Progress	Rae Gosling, Grayling DDA/Main Street	Erich Podjaske, City of Grayling				

V. IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

V. IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

The completion of this Economic Development Strategy will not be easy. The City of Grayling will require partners. Thankfully, several local entities have committed time, energy and funding to help projects like those suggested here.

The professionals and organizations listed below can provide valuable expertise, time, effort and assistance with executing this strategy. Their respective names and organizations appear assigned in individual tasks in the Economic Development Strategy table.

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