



Economic Development Strategy

Introduction

The Village of Stevensville is a small community of approximately 1,100 located in west central Berrien County. With its vibrant downtown area, great schools and close proximity to Lake Michigan, Stevensville is an ideal place to live, invest and play. The Village has witnessed significant positive growth in economic development and private investment in recent years including business expansion, increase in new home construction, and new business operations. The benefits are visible every day, demonstrated by what has come to feel like continuous investment and expansion.

Through the adoption of an economic development strategy, procedures will be institutionalized that enable local officials, elected and appointed bodies to implement the goals and objectives of the Village. Through direction from economic and demographic analyses, the strategy will allow business owners, residents and visitors to have a clear understanding of the vision of the Village. The goals cannot be met without reaching out to stakeholders for support, including Lincoln Township which surrounds the Village, Berrien County, the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Kinexus, and Cornerstone Alliance, the area's lead economic development agency.

The Economic Development Strategy will be shaped in a fluid framework, accommodating for fluctuations to the market and variations in public demand. Specific goals will contain several objectives that address each task and list the expected result. The goals and objectives shall be revisited and amended as necessary, taking into account development patterns and volatility in public and private investment. After compiling the information, Village officials will report on the of the economic development strategy on an annual basis.

Goal I: Business Expansion & Retention

Maintaining existing businesses and extending opportunities to potential business ventures is vital to the economic development of the Village. By staging business visits, creating a business registry and collaborating with local partners, the Village is better suited to retain the existing businesses and present opportunities for the businesses to expand. The Village should be able to meet this goal with several programs and policies to enable staff, officials, and businesses owners to engage in an open dialog that addresses any needs, concerns or suggestions. The Village has identified the following objectives needed to satisfy business expansion and retention:

- Create a targeted Business Retention Program.
- Conduct at least 25 employer visits each year.
- Utilize best practices in the Economic Development industry, providing a high degree of value to the employers while collecting important benchmark data to gauge business trends.
- Collaborate with appropriate partners such as Berrien County, Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Kinexus, and Cornerstone Alliance to help identify challenges and provide needed resources as opportunities arise.
- Create a geographic database, which includes a business registry of all businesses in the Village and properties available for development

Goal II: Business Attraction

In order to continue to attract new and creative businesses, the Village must have a concrete database that quantifies what businesses currently exist. As the Village inputs the database, available properties that are potential for development and redevelopment will be placed on a high priority. The Village will work with private developers on initial conversations that express where the current needs are for business types. The Village will also engage local and state partners for further coordination with market needs for business attraction. The following objectives have been identified to satisfy business attraction:

- Establish a comprehensive Village database of available development properties for site selection purposes - for local, regional and state utilization.
- Work collaboratively with developers, government entities and businesses to identify and utilize incentive programs to bring development projects to fruition.
- Notify potential business owners and developers of the resources available

Goal III: Workforce Development

Establishing a strong and skilled workforce requires constant collaboration with local partners. The Village itself cannot directly facilitate a workforce development program, but can reach out to local and public institutions for partnerships. The Village can act as a liaison between the public institutions and the private businesses to fill the gaps between workforce supply and demand. The Village will engage in a strategy to continue close monitoring of labor needs, employment trends, and business opportunities to help facilitate this gap in the work force market. The following objectives are necessary to satisfy workforce development:

- Notify Lakeshore Schools, Lake Michigan College, and Kinexus when intern or apprenticeship opportunities are available with the Village and on behalf of Village-based businesses when applicable.
- Notify employers, businesses and residents of training opportunities available from Kinexus
- Inform employers and business owners of grant opportunities available from Kinexus and Lake Michigan College

Goal IV: Residential Development Recruitment and Marketing

Stevensville has seen significant growth in residential development in recent years and the availability of land capable of supporting residential use is getting harder to find. The success of the Village's commercial, industrial and retail uses are contingent upon residents using and enjoying those services. The Village will closely monitor population, migration, household income, workforce trends in the county and the region to properly assess the housing supply and demand. It shall be imperative the Village communicate with housing developers, lending institutions and real estate brokers for insight into the housing market. Furthermore, the Village with need to closely monitor of the rental housing quality and supply and adopt policies that ensure all dwelling units are fit for occupancy. The following objectives are necessary for recruitment and marketing of residential development:

- Collaborate with local public and private entities to develop a housing needs assessment and utilize this assessment to attract additional appropriate housing development in the Village.
- Create database of existing housing types and housing conditions.
- Create Rental Unit Certification Program to maintain a record of rental housing units in the Village.

Goal V: Infrastructure

A reliable and supportive infrastructure system is tantamount with successful economic development and is vital to the protection of public health, safety and welfare. The Village must have in place infrastructure that can support businesses, residents, and development both large and small that would not deter businesses or industry from locating to Stevensville. The Village will continue to monitor needs of existing street systems, water and sewer systems, waste water, pedestrian and recreation facilities, and communication needs such a broadband service to ensure that sustainability and service to our existing infrastructure is attainable. Capital expenditures and policies will be considered and adopted to satisfy any needs in the infrastructure that may inhibit or deflect economic development from occurring in the Village. The following objectives are necessary to satisfy infrastructure improvements:

- Execute a plan to create comprehensive broadband service throughout the Village.
- Identify and support critical infrastructure that would pave the way for development within the Village.
- Adopt a "Dig-Once" policy that reduces public facilities maintenance costs and encourages communication between public and private utility providers.

Goal VI: Public Relations & Advocacy

A transparent government is a government that does not operate in a vacuum, neglecting dialog and input from residents and businesses. The Village of Stevensville will remain vigilant in its attempts to make development and redevelopment tools readily available to potential users. The tools will create a streamlined avenue of communication between the private and public partners, and increases the likelihood of implementation. The Village will also assist developers in advocating public input on major projects in the Village. The incorporation of internal policies within the public participation plan will enable the Village to continue an open relationship with public and provide significant opportunities for people to express their thoughts and comments. The following objectives are necessary to satisfy public relations and advocacy:

- Advocate for potential pro-development programs and policies.
- Increase awareness of legislation and policy changes that could impact development.
- Communicate regularly with public and private partners on progress of goals.
- Adopt a public participation plan that assists developers with obtaining public input.

Marketing Component

People who are familiar with Stevensville are fully aware of the qualities the Village has to offer. However, the Village does not immediately correlate on as a destination for recreation, business opportunity, family relocation, and tourism outside of the immediate area. The Village plans to develop a comprehensive marketing package that would assist in the promotion of the Village, created in digital and tangible formats. The marketing package would help the Village capitalize the tremendous quality of life attributes such as Lake Michigan, parks and recreation opportunities, local events, high quality schools and successful business ventures and would enable the Village to promote itself at many local, county, and regional events, in addition to being displayed on the municipal website. To assist in the determination of success and failures of the marketing campaign, the Village will further adopt an internal tracking mechanism. The mechanism can enable better understandings for strategic investments into the promotion of the Village.

To promote the Village, notification of important policy decisions within various mediums will be necessary to enhance the transparency and cooperation with stakeholders. The Village will also remain in close communication with local business organizations such as the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce and Cornerstone Alliance to establish and maintain a "Village Brand". The establishment of a brand will allow for recognition and create a rallying point for all entities to mutually agree upon and achieve. The following objectives are necessary to satisfy the goal of marketing and promotion:

- Development of marketing materials to "tell the Village story".
- Develop a Measurable Dashboard to define and measure return on investment.
- Track activity statistics such as retention and attraction projects.
- Issue regular press releases highlighting recent Village actions and decisions.
- Partner with organizations and local business owners to help establish a Village brand

Goal I: Business Expansion and Retention

Task	Village Task Lead	Partner Organization Involvement & Role
Conduct at least 8 to 10 employer visits each year	President Slavicek	Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce; accompany Village on site visits.
Utilize best practices in the Economic Development industry, providing a high degree of value to the employers while collecting important benchmark data to gauge business trends	Trustee Arter	Best Practices Committee, Strategic Leadership Council, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission; Provide guidance on best practices, assist in gathering data.
Collaborate with appropriate partners such as Berrien County, Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Kinexus, and Cornerstone Alliance to help identify challenges and provide needed resources as opportunities arise	Village office staff	Cornerstone Alliance, Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce; Provide guidance on and identify resources to help eliminate challenges
Create a geographic database, which includes a business registry of all businesses in the Village and properties available for development	Village office staff	Berrien County GIS; Provide staff with geographic information of all Village parcels

Goal II: Business Attraction

Task	Village Task Lead	Partner Organization Involvement & Role
<p>Establish a comprehensive Village database of available development properties for site selection purposes - for local, regional and state utilization.</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Southwest Michigan Association of Realtors; Provide up to date listing information on all available commercial and industrial properties.</p>
<p>Work collaboratively with developers, government entities and businesses to identify and utilize incentive programs to bring development projects to fruition.</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Berrien County Economic Development Partnership, Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce, Cornerstone Alliance, Southwest Michigan Association of Realtors; Notify potential developers of opportunities in the Village of Stevensville and work with the Village staff to provide information to be presented to the Village Council on potential projects.</p>
<p>Notify potential business owners and developers of the resources available</p>	<p>Village Council & office staff</p>	<p>Cornerstone Alliance; Seek developers for potential development opportunities located in the Village and provide developers with information regarding potential tax incentives for developing in the Village limits.</p>

Goal III: Workforce Development

Task	Village Task Lead	Partner Organization Involvement & Role
<p>Notify Lakeshore Schools, Lake Michigan College, and Kinexus when intern or apprenticeship opportunities are available with the Village and on behalf of Village based businesses when applicable.</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Lakeshore Public Schools, Lake Michigan College, Southwestern Michigan College, Western Michigan University, Andrews University, Berrien County Intermediate School District; Offer programs to students that are in line with the needs of the various employers in the Village and surrounding areas.</p>
<p>Notify employers, businesses and residents of training opportunities available from Kinexus</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Lakeshore Public Schools, Lake Michigan College, Southwestern Michigan College, Western Michigan University, Andrews University, Berrien County Intermediate School District; Communicate with local business associations and municipal offices to ensure that business owners are kept abreast of all training opportunities.</p>
<p>Inform employers and business owners of grant opportunities available from Kinexus and Lake Michigan College</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Lakeshore Public Schools, Lake Michigan College, Southwestern Michigan College, Western Michigan University, Andrews University, Berrien County Intermediate School District, Cornerstone Alliance; Maintain open lines of communication with local municipalities and business associations that business owners are kept abreast of all opportunities.</p>

Goal IV: Residential Development Recruitment and Marketing

Task	Village Task Lead	Partner Organization Involvement & Role
Collaborate with local public and private entities to develop a housing needs assessment and utilize this assessment to attract additional appropriate housing development in the Village.	Trustee Arter	Strategic Leadership Council, Quality of Life Committee;
Create database of existing housing types and housing conditions.	Village office staff, Village building department	Southwest Michigan Association of Realtors;
Create Rental Unit Certification Program to maintain a record of rental housing units in the Village.	Village office staff, Village building department	N/A The Village has a program in place for rental housing units.

Goal V: Residential Development Recruitment and Marketing

Task	Village Task Lead	Partner Organization Involvement & Role
<p>Adopt a "Dig-Once" policy that reduces public facilities maintenance costs and encourages communication between public and private utility providers.</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Lincoln Charter Township, City of Saint Joseph, AT&T, Michigan Gas Utilities, Comcast; Create an open line of communication and establish a plan to coordinate projects to ensure the least amount of disruption for residents.</p>
<p>Develop a Capital Improvement and Asset Management Plan to ensure the Village and its residents get the maximum advantage from infrastructure investments</p>	<p>Village Treasurer</p>	<p>Abonmarche; Inventory and evaluate Village assets to prioritize repairs or replacement of Village assets.</p>

Goal VI: Public Relations and Advocacy

Task	Village Task Lead	Partner Organization Involvement & Role
<p>Increase awareness of legislation and policy changes that could impact development.</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Michigan Municipal League, Best Practices Committee, Taxpayer Value Committee; Provide information that can be shared with residents via newsletters, facebook and the Village website.</p>
<p>Adopt a public participation plan that assists developers with obtaining public input.</p>	<p>Village office staff</p>	<p>Michigan Municipal League, Best Practices Committee, Taxpayer Value Committee; Provide sample policies and provide guidance in the creation/implementation of the Public Participation Plan</p>