



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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JANUARY 2024

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OVERVIEW OF KEY INFORMATION

The City of East Tawas (City) is located along state trunkline US-23, which runs from Jacksonville, Florida to Mackinaw City, Michigan. In 2004, the Michigan Department of Transportation designated the non-freeway section as the Sunrise Side Coastal Highway. Since 2009, it has been called the Huron Shores Heritage Route 23 which is part of the Pure Michigan Byway program. Visit www.us23heritageroute.org for more information.

East Tawas is a popular tourist destination community. The City's parks and campground offer playgrounds, picnic areas, 178 campsites and approximately 2,000 feet of beach frontage. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State boat launch ramps provide great access to both Lake Huron and Tawas Lake for fishing and recreational activities.

Travel away from the water and check out our lively downtown, which offers a variety of options for shopping and dining. Newman Street hosts many street festivals such as Tuesday Night Live, Summerfest, an annual car show and street dance, a chili cookoff during Perchville USA and multiple other activities through the year!

Neighboring attractions such as the Tawas Point Light House, Lumberman's Monument, Corsair Trail, Iargo Springs, and the Au Sable River provide additional attractions for visitors.

POPULATION

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2000, the City had a population of 2,951, 2,808 in 2010, and as of 2020, 2,723.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

According to the 2020 Census the median household income for the City was \$40,417.

HOUSING

In 2010 the City had 1,332 households with 939 being owner occupied. The current 2020 Census number of households in the City is 1,440 with a median taxable value of \$95,500 for owner occupied homes.

STRATEGY PROCESS

In planning for the future of a community, it is essential to understand both the community of people to be served and the physical resources that the community has to offer. As well as assure that our staff and boards and commissions align decision making with the components of the economic development process by using various City/Community adopted plans such as:

- Design Standards and Specifications
- Master Plan
- Parks & Recreation Plan
- Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) Plan
- Zoning Ordinance

PURPOSE

To actively promote redevelopment of existing property, recognize new business opportunities and embrace partnership and involvement.

STRENGTHS

- Access to natural resources. Located on Lake Huron with beautiful beach front access, Tawas Lake and River access along with local surrounding resources.
- And access to the Tawas Point Light House, State Campground, and the Huron National Forest.
- Great tourist destination, with great downtown shops and restaurants.
- Great City Services provided by the East Tawas Fire Department, Police Department, Parks Department, Department of Public Works and Office Staff.

CHALLENGES

- Identifying housing opportunities.
 - Geographic location of East Tawas.
 - Improving aging infrastructure.
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RETENTION OF KEY BUSINESSES

Retention of key business to maintain a vibrant downtown Local Economic development goals and objectives:

See Appendix A for current City Economic Development Projects.

- Consider establishing a Business Improvement District / Principal Shopping District within the boundaries of the Central Business District to promote economic development.
- Continue to promote vitality by emphasizing the downtown area and waterfront as an entertainment and recreational center, i.e., restaurants, theater, library, retail center, etc.
- Evaluate the Central Business and Office/Service/Commercial zoning districts to ensure accommodation of a compatible, complementary and balanced mix of uses within the downtown area. Review Zoning Ordinance requirements to promote development.
- Encourage cooperation between the City and business organizations such as the East Tawas Business Association, to promote activities and policies which increase the ability of the City's commercial areas to compete for consumer dollars.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop marketing materials to promote East Tawas and tell our story.
- Highlight events, major projects and policy decisions.
- Partner with the Chamber, East Tawas Business Association, Tax Increment Finance Authority, local business community and residents to help keep East Tawas a vibrant community.

GOALS

- **Improve Housing & Reduce Blight-** The community has identified a need to improve both the housing stock of the area as well as reduce blight. A strong blight enforcement and rental inspection code can help rectify these issues.
- **Real Estate Redevelopment-** Several key properties are underutilized and 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.
See Appendix B for a list of high priority sites that are vacant or commercial property listed on the market. These properties should be considered for redevelopment.
- **Improve Appearance of Downtown-** Business and property owners need to be educated on best practices for façade and storefront appearances as well as opportunities for financing and grants. Every effort should be made to make connections with property owners and provide information on grants available through Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Other opportunities for financial assistance are through the City’s Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program. Becoming a member of the East Tawas Business Association helps to build business relationships and creates a direct connection to the efforts to beautify the downtown.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

The completion of this Economic Development Strategy will require many partners. We are thankful to have several local entities committing time, energy, and funding to help projects like those suggested here.

Listed below are professionals and organizations that can provide valuable expertise and assistance in executing this strategy.

- Mayor
- City Council
- City Manager
- Zoning Administrator
- Planning Commission
- Tax Increment Finance Authority
- East Tawas Business Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Visitor’s Bureau
- Local Real Estate companies

Appendix A: Economic Development Projects

Project/Action	Details/Location	Responsibility	Timeline	Supports
CBD Height Amendment	Amendment to change the Zoning Ordinance requirements to allow 60' height in the CBD vs 40'. Help to promote vertical development to allow for upper floor residential options.	East Tawas City Council and Planning Commission.	2023-24	East Tawas Master Plan
Review of TIFA District/ Mainstreet program	Continue to review the TIFA District. The board has been reviewing a possible Principal Shopping District. And met with the MEDC regarding the Mainstreet program.	City of East Tawas and Tax Increment Finance Authority.	1-3 years	TIFA Plan, Economic Development Plan
Relationships with local investors, real estate companies and property owners.	Continue to work with local stakeholders in redevelopment of properties. Highlighting appropriate uses for the properties zoning district, directing interested parties and promoting resources.	Real Estate Companies, Local owners, investors, the City of East Tawas.	ongoing	Master Plan, Marketing Plan, Economic Development Plan
Continued Communication	Continue to promote communication between the ETBA, TIFA, Tawas Chamber to promote East Tawas and its local events.	ETBA, TIFA, City and Chamber	ongoing	All aspects of the City

Appendix B: High Priority Sites

Property Address	Details/Location	Zoning District	Allowed Use
200 Newman Street	Commerical Building-Old car dealership, Brownfield Development Property.	Central Business District	Commerical: resturants, shops, offices, service groups, Public facilities-church, libraries, city buildings. Loding and single family 2nd story only.
719 W Bay Street	Vacant Commercial- Old real estate office	WaterFront	Single Family and waterfront related facilities. Museums, offices, public spaces. Multifamily residential
821 Newman Street	Current Non profit banquet hall-Grandfathered use.	High Density Residential	Continue current banquet use, or possible PUD residential Development.
223 W Tawas Lake Rd	Vacant Single Family Home	High Density Residential	Single Family Residential
501 W State Street	Vacant Signel Family Home: Blight Violations	High Density Residential	Single Family Residential
404 W Lincoln Street	Vacant Single Family Home	High Density Residential	Single Family Residential
400 W State Street	Vacant Single Family home- old Funeral home building.	High Density Residential	Single Family Residential, Potential PUD Development.