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Project Team

Clam Lake Downtown Development Authority:

Julie Snider, Chair	(231) 779-4656
Mike Lueder, Vice Chair	(231) 775-9797
Mike McGuire, Secretary	(231) 920-1571
Steve Kitler, Treasurer	(231) 779-4064
Jeremy Winkle	(231) 775-8536
Pat Carroll	(231) 876-0302
Scott Kleinsorge	(231) 779-4002
Steve Anderson	(231) 775-7382
Dale Rosser	(231) 775-0505

Clam Lake Township Downtown Development Authority Executive Director:

Kathy Adair Morin (989) 709-1576
director@clamlakedda.org

Wexford County GIS Department Analyst:

Sarah Merz (231) 779-9470
smerz@wexfordcounty.org

Planning Consultant:

Mansfield Land Use Consultants
Douglas Mansfield, President
830 Cottageview Drive, Suite 201
Traverse City, MI 49685
Phone: (231) 946-9310
Email: dougm@maaeps.com

Petra Kuehnis, RLA
petrak@maaeps.com

Elise Crafts, Community Planner
elise@maaeps.com

Introduction to Project

History of the Clam Lake DDA

The Clam Lake Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was created in 1994. The DDA boundary begins at the southern border of the City of Cadillac and runs south along Business Route 131 to the MDOT building and then along Mackinaw Trail to M-115 and up to and including Eldorado Golf Course. Approximately 100 acres of the DDA await development. In 2014 the DDA recognized the need to provide direction, motivation, and visioning for the future of the DDA through a strategic planning process.

Role of Mansfield Land Use Consultants

Mansfield Land Use Consultants (MLUC), was hired by the DDA in April of 2015 to facilitate the process and create a strategic plan. The agreed upon contract between the DDA and MLUC includes the following components to compose the strategic plan:

- I. Foundational Base Model of the DDA
This model is composed of current data including property ownership, land uses, zoning, roads, trails, etc., which provides the elements required to initiate a study of the opportunities and restrictions of the area.
- II. Character Study of the DDA
Document general findings including dimensional relationships, design character, scale, landscape, conflicts, etc., which provides the opportunity to make suggestions for recommended improvements to immediate concerns.
- III. SWOT Analysis
Discuss and prioritize the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Clam Lake DDA with property owners, residents, involved agencies, and general public.
- IV. Goals and Objectives
Collate priorities from SWOT analysis into goals and objectives for the DDA upon discussion with property owners, residents, involved agencies, and general public.
- V. Implementation Framework
Establish implementation policies and processes as well as attempt to define cost of same, again seeking input from property owners, residents, involved agencies, and general public.

The final deliverables, including inventory, photos, maps, interview summaries, and the strategic plan are to be presented at a joint meeting with the DDA and Township Boards, to be held on Monday, September 21st at the Township Hall.

Base Model

Creating an inventory of existing conditions in the DDA is the first step of the strategic planning process. The DDA cannot set goals and implement actions to achieve those goals without first understanding what exists at present, including infrastructure, land uses, and property ownership. MLUC inventoried these and related attributes as shown in Appendix A.

The base model is a collection of raw data. This data is synthesized to create a character study which generates meaningful conclusions regarding what is working well within the DDA and which areas could use improvement.

Character Study

The following character study highlights the positives of the DDA while also calling attention to the areas which need strengthening.

Established Recreational Attractions

Generations of visitors have vacationed at the recreational resorts within the DDA. These elements within the DDA provide an important opportunity in that they draw in a population from beyond the local and regional vicinity. Exposing new people to the area and the benefits of DDA is an effective way to attract potential future entrepreneurs and residents.





Evergreen Resort (page 4 top), Golf Course at Evergreen Resort (page 4 bottom), Eldorado Golf Course (above).

Established Medical Office Services Area

A node of professional medical offices is located in the heart of the DDA on Professional Drive. The area provides a nice medical campus type setting with convenient access to both Mackinaw Trail and South Mitchell Street (US 131 Business). Users of these medical practices may benefit from additional convenience and service establishments within the area.





Professional Drive Medical Office (page 5), Pine Ridge Drive Medical Office (top), Mackinaw Trail Medical Office (bottom).

Opportunity for Growth

Although the DDA offers a nice mix of resort, professional, office, service, retail and municipal/institutional uses, there are still many vacant and underutilized properties within the DDA Boundary. This provides a nice opportunity for future growth and the opportunity for the DDA group to be able to guide and define the spirit and intent of future growth within the DDA.





7.5 acre vacant parcel in the heart of the DDA along Mackinaw Trail (page 6 top), 85+ acres of prime vacant land at the M-115 and US-131 interchange (page 6 bottom), 100+ acres of US-131 frontage with existing vacant office building (above).

Aesthetic of the Road Corridor

There is no continuity in the aesthetic of the road corridors within the DDA.

Incorporating some common design elements throughout the DDA would help to define the DDA boundary and create a sense of place upon entering the DDA. Design elements could include adopting a street scape landscape planting standard, decorative light poles, and banners with DDA branding.



Typical highway commerce aesthetic does not provide a sense of place (top) and pleasant rural aesthetic along Mackinaw Trail in the heart of the DDA (bottom).

Streetscape can Define DDA Boundaries

The new US 131 exit 177 interchange has provided the beginning of a streetscape with a decorative median strip and lights, but it does not visually connect throughout the service areas of the DDA. The DDA area would be more identifiable if these design elements were repeated at important nodes and gateways throughout the DDA district.



Existing streetscape treatment along US-131 business corridor provides a sense of arrival to the DDA and sense of place.

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the public meetings (noted on page 11) MLUC requested interviews with individual property owners within the DDA in order to ensure their concerns, visions, and questions are fully considered in the strategic plan. The DDA provided the following list of property owners to interview:

1. AJ & J Real Estate Investment
2. Chemical Bank
3. Robert Meyer
4. Van Drie Home Furnishings
5. RD Johnson Properties
6. Dr. Mike Lueder
7. Maryanne Reamer
8. Franke Septic
9. Cadillac Area Public Schools
10. Jim McGuire
11. Evergreen Resort

Interview Questions

MLUC composed the following questions to ask the identified stakeholders:

1. Please describe the property that you own within the DDA. E.g. vacant/developed, land-use, size, etc.
2. How long have you owned the subject property?
3. Why did you invest in the DDA?
4. Do you agree with your current tax assessment?
5. What are your future goals for your property?
6. What advantages/disadvantages does the location and characteristics of your property allow for its current use? Future use?
7. What advantages/disadvantages does the DDA provide to you as an investor and property owner?
8. Can you identify roadblocks to developing your property?
9. Can you identify roadblocks to developing within the DDA in general?
10. What types of future land uses would you like to see in the DDA as a property owner, user, and/or resident? What types of land uses would you not like to see?
11. The Master Plan provides the following goals for the DDA. Which of these goals is most helpful to you and are any not helpful?
 - a. Sanitary sewer system
 - b. Water system
 - c. Encourage use of Exit 177
 - d. Convert vacant public lands in DDA to developable private property
 - e. Plan and develop internal road system
 - f. Sell the vision

MLUC contacted these identified stakeholders and was able to conduct interviews with the following individuals:

1. Jeremy Winkle, Van Drie Home Furnishings
2. Jim McGuire
3. Dr. Mike Lueder, Dental Health Professionals
4. Jon Catlin, Chemical Bank
5. Carl Thomas, Evergreen Resort

Response

All of the stakeholders who participated own either large tracts of vacant land or prominent businesses within the DDA. Most invested in Clam Lake due to the availability of cheaper land and larger parcels relative to the City of Cadillac. While largely satisfied with their investment, the participants identified areas of improvement for the DDA, including:

- More retail/customer service land uses and senior housing development would be beneficial.
- Infrastructure needs to be improved for large-scale development to occur.
- Relationship between the DDA, Clam Lake Township and City of Cadillac could be improved.

Several stakeholders spoke to recent investments, such as the streetscape improvement at the southern entrance to the DDA, as positive reflections of the community. Most individuals were able to name benefits of investing within the DDA as a whole as well as specific advantages of their particular parcel(s). The stated advantages include:

- Aesthetically pleasing community – rolling hills, heavily wooded, scenic views.
- High visibility to adjacent corridors.
- Easily navigable road system and plentiful parking.
- Current zoning allows for a variety of land uses.

Hearing from individual property owners of the DDA was a helpful and important exercise of the strategic visioning process, however less than half of the targeted individuals responded to the requests for interview by MLUC. The opinion of these absent stakeholders is valuable to the present and future of the DDA and continued attempts should be made to obtain their perspectives.

Public Meetings

The DDA and MLUC conducted visioning sessions at the Clam Lake Township Hall on August 5th, 19th, and September 21st, 2015. These sessions were open to the general public in order to encourage dialogue and gain input regarding the topics at hand. Notices were mailed to property owners within the DDA district, posted at the township hall, and published in the Cadillac News. The first meeting on August 5th explored the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) facing the DDA. The second meeting on August 19th built upon the SWOT analysis to create goals and objectives for the DDA and begin discussing the means to implement these. The final meeting, to occur on September 21st provides the implementation framework for success.

August 5th, 2015: SWOT Analysis

SWOT, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, is an analytical framework which helps an organization to understand existing challenges and identify opportunities to correct those challenges. Awareness of these elements means the DDA can more effectively focus the strategic visioning process.

There were twelve attendees present at the August 5th meeting. These included two MLUC representatives, six DDA representatives, and four members of the public. Doug Mansfield explained that the purpose of the meeting was to document the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the DDA. Ensuing discussion provided the following SWOT analysis:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good trip generation / but not congested ▪ Good soils (septic/wells) ▪ Aesthetic – clean, professional, good ▪ No undesirable element, business, industry ▪ Township willing to have a DDA ▪ Low taxes ▪ Good schools ▪ Good highway access – infrastructure ▪ Cable and cellular service is good ▪ Very safe ▪ Trees ▪ Trail system heavily used ▪ State – Fed hub for resources ▪ Good vacant land with good access ▪ Clean land, no contamination, barriers ▪ Association with Cadillac ▪ No financial struggles – good morale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoning requires SUP often / varied uses ▪ Cross-jurisdictional cooperation ▪ Infrastructure no WIFI, internet could be better ▪ Good employment (lack-of) opportunities for next generation ▪ Agriculture (small farms fail) and milk dependent ▪ Need more strength in hospital service/jobs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cheap affordable spacious land ▪ Good access to State reps / relationships ▪ Lots of varied zoning in district 	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship with MDOT ▪ Township leadership to work out issues (w/ City) ▪ College to stay in current location ▪ Piggy-back growth from Cadillac ▪ Wilcox property (empty 3 years) ▪ DDA (is active) ▪ Reasonable tax/assessment rates ▪ Proved (historically) do not need sewer to grow ▪ Best city council for cooperative growth (in 15 years) ▪ No water/sewer = cheaper land ▪ 3 of 5 Township Board members changing over next election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of planning and trust ▪ Erratic weather – outdoor recreations – agriculture ▪ Fire – cost of ISO rating (hydrants at border) ▪ New county admin is hopeful (strength)
WISHES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our hospital was more visible (bad access / bad area / make modern hospital / specialize / maybe smaller/clean/neat/progressive/draw more/better doctors/nurses) ▪ The interchange was cleaned up ▪ More pedestrian connections in community ▪ Golf cart community (overlay a plan for connectivity – medical/tourism/restaurant/lakes) ▪ We had more of a presence – marketing plan/marketing committee ▪ Graduated care facility – prime location/access visible/cheap land/buy in when still healthy ▪ Sit down restaurant with a bar – socialize/family meetings/cocktails ▪ WIFI 	

In conclusion, the meeting attendees agreed that the people who reside, utilize services, do business, and own property in the DDA are largely happy with the area in which they live and work. Utilizing the SWOT analysis to set goals and define strategies to achieve the desired outcomes will help the community reach its fullest potential.

August 19th, 2015: Goals and Strategies

There were ten attendees present at the August 19th meeting. These included two MLUC representatives, two DDA representatives, and six members of the public. Doug Mansfield explained that the purpose of the meeting was to create a list of goals and objectives based upon the SWOT analysis previously conducted. The group identified three main goals for the DDA:

GOALS

- 1. Define Clam Lake DDA Identity, Purpose, and Presence**
- 2. Attract Meaningful and Locally-Founded Development**
- 3. Modify Zoning Ordinance to Reflect DDA Goals**

1. GOAL - Define Clam Lake DDA Identity, Purpose, and Presence.

- a. Strategy – Create Regional Name & Brand*
- b. Strategy – Create Community Message Board*
 - i. Website or signage
 - ii. Celebration of Clam Lake strengths/successes, advertise events/services, inform public of recreational/volunteer opportunities, etc.
- c. Strategy – Create and Adopt Form Based Code (examples to be provided)*
 - i. Cohesive design
 - ii. Aesthetically pleasing patterns
 - iii. Opportunity for public hubs/nodes – farmers market, amphitheater, event space, etc.
 - iv. Attract business where people can gather – restaurant/brewery/etc.
- d. Strategy – Increase and Improve Pedestrian Connections*
 - i. Identify existing and potential pedestrian patterns
 - ii. Connect to regional White Pine Trail system

2. GOAL - Attract Meaningful and Locally-Founded Development.

- a. Strategy – Identify Desired Land Uses*
 - i. Create Conceptual Site Plan (examples to be provided at the August 19th meeting)
 - ii. Illustrate possible land uses
 - iii. Exhibit potential of development in relation to existing systems

iv. Graphic representation reaches large audience

b. Strategy - Create Marketing Plan and Initiatives

- i. Cheap Available Land
- ii. Low Taxes
- iii. No Contamination
- iv. Easy Highway Access
- v. Varied Zoning
- vi. Good Schools
- vii. Safe Community
- viii. Cadillac Association

c. Strategy – Improve Relationship with Surrounding Jurisdictions and Institutions

- i. Work with incoming Clam Lake Township leadership
- ii. Cadillac City Council opportunity for collaboration at all-time high
- iii. Increase communication with Baker College and Munson Healthcare Cadillac Hospital

d. Strategy – Improve Technological Infrastructure

- i. Provide expected technological and communication infrastructure, including WIFI, etc.
- ii. Identify locations where infrastructure is necessary and feasible

3. GOAL – Modify Zoning Ordinance to Reflect DDA Goals.

a. Strategy – Define Land Uses Allowed by Right versus Special Land Uses

- i. Cohesive zoning districts
- ii. Reduce regulatory disincentives to attract desired development
- iii. Flexible zoning mechanisms
- iv. Streamlined, objective review process

The meeting concluded with discussion focused on the steps the DDA can take to implement these goals. It was agreed that the DDA director should be instrumental in the marketing strategy and process for available properties and needs the appropriate tools to do so. Tools such as a parcel inventory spreadsheet and property data checklist will standardize the lines of communication between potential investors, realtors and the DDA director, and help better market the valuable and developable properties in the DDA.

September 21st, 2015 Implementation Framework (Draft)

The following implementation framework is derived from the strategic visioning session performed with the DDA and general public on August 19th, 2015. At this meeting the DDA goals and strategies to achieve those goals were identified. Now it is time to provide the specific steps and tools to implement those strategies.

I. GOAL - Define Clam Lake DDA Identity, Purpose, and Presence

Strategy – Create Regional Name and Brand

Implementation 1 Develop a brand

- Current logo reads “A Natural Choice”. Discussion has related to Clam Lake offering the benefits of Northern MI without the hassle.
- Create a DDA mission statement.

Implementation 2 Update Township DDA webpage.

- Update contacts to match current DDA board/director.

Implementation 3 Create “Community Highlights” page on DDA website.

- Post upcoming events, employment/volunteer opportunities, classifieds, and “kudos” to local individuals, businesses, school teams, etc.
- Rotate a community “spotlight” featuring an outstanding local individual/business/service.

Implementation 4 Plan events to attract community members. E.g. “Friday Night Live” organized by the Traverse City DDA.

- Community members are community investors.
- Encourage strategic relationships between community businesses and DDA.
- Create opportunities for after-hours networking.

II. GOAL – Attract Meaningful and Locally-Founded Development.

Strategy – Create marketing plan and initiatives.

Implementation 1 Research and create a list of available properties identified by tax ID and/or address.

Implementation 2 Collect data about each parcel to eliminate the unknowns for a potential developer, including:

- Aerial photo;
- Infrastructure analysis;
- Future land use identified in Master Plan; and
- Conceptual site plan to demonstrate scale and feasibility of potential land use(s).

Implementation 3 Specifically target desired land uses and/or vendors according to the characteristic of the available parcels catalogued.

Implementation 4 Create standardized forms and processes to facilitate communication between property sellers, potential investors, and the DDA.

Implementation 5 DDA Director to meet annually with property owners on an individual basis to assess needs, goals, concerns, etc.

Strategy – Improve technological infrastructure, specifically Wi-Fi.

Implementation 1 Perform inventory of existing infrastructure locations and capabilities.

Implementation 2 Identify locations where infrastructure is necessary and feasible.

Implementation 3 Bid the installation and maintenance of required infrastructure.

Strategy – Improve relationship with surrounding jurisdictions and institutions.

Implementation 1 Contact Baker College and Munson Healthcare regarding collaborative opportunities. E.g. NMC Culinary School Restaurant in Kingsley, MI.

Implementation 2 2. Set up meeting with surrounding jurisdictions (City of Cadillac, Township Board, DDA, Wexford County, etc.) to establish team mentality through resolution.

III. GOAL – Modify Zoning Ordinance to Reflect DDA Goals.

Strategy – Identify desired land uses.

Implementation 1 Seek input from the community, including:

- Identify favorite land uses – recreational, commercial, etc.
- Identify locations where these uses occur in harmony with the land on which they are located as well as surrounding lands.
- Why do they work there?
- Identify favorite places in Clam Lake?
- What favorite land use(s) fits these places?
- Constitute land use by the land and not by zoning ordinance.
- Build what you enjoy using, here.

Strategy – Create and adopt Form Based Code overlay.

Implementation 1 Request bids and proposals for Form-Based Code district overlay project, to provide the following benefits:

- Predictable approval process.
- Harmonious aesthetic and function of built environment.
- Market dictates land uses.

Conclusion

Several of the implementation actions are immediate fixes, e.g. updating the Township website and creating a community highlights webpage. Other implementation actions will require more input and time to achieve but much of the leg work has been done. MLUC has provided the inventory base, parcel data template, and several conceptual site plans to demonstrate the feasibility of investing in the DDA.

Conclusion of Project

The strategic visioning process indicates that the users of the DDA are generally happy with the community in which they live, work, and retreat but recognize that the district is ripe for new development and are eager to ensure such development is compatible to the existing character and needs of the community.

The base model indicates that the DDA has an excellent foundation from which to attract developers, for example, high visibility from the highway corridor is a very marketable characteristic of currently vacant property. The character study demonstrates some room for improvement, in terms of identifying who and what Clam Lake DDA is to the surrounding community, with improved signage and standardized streetscapes.

The persons involved in the strategic visioning sessions, both individual interviewees and attendees of the public meetings, are largely positive about the current state of their property and the DDA as a whole. There appears to be consensus that the DDA needs to better communicate with potential future investors and a marketing initiative ranks high on the list of implementation actions.

Key documents, including base maps and inventories of the DDA infrastructure and land uses, parcel data template for marketing purposes, and future conceptual plans to demonstrate the feasibility of development, are included as part of this strategic plan. These will help the DDA to communicate with interested stakeholders and more effectively market the valuable and developable properties available in this promising district.