

Van Buren Township

Strategic Plan:

Leveraging Location for Economic Development and Community Growth

May 2014

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Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

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SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, is the only organization in Southeast Michigan that brings together all of the region's governments to solve regional challenges.

SEMCOG strengthens local governments and regional decision making by:

- Providing data and unbiased analysis for informed decision making affecting Southeast Michigan and its local governments;
- Promoting the efficient use of tax dollars for both long-term infrastructure investment and shorter-term governmental efficiency;
- Delivering direct assistance to member governments in the areas of transportation, environments, and community and economic development;
- Solving regional issues that go beyond the boundaries of individual local governments; and
- Advocating on behalf of Southeast Michigan in Lansing and Washington.

Van Buren Township Strategic Plan: Leveraging Location for Economic Development and Community Growth

May 2014

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Abstract

The Charter Township of Van Buren Strategic Plan is a roadmap for the future of the township. Van Buren Township is a community with numerous assets and opportunities provided largely by its strategic location close to two major airports, two interstate freeways, two major research universities, and numerous cultural and retail centers. It is home to Belleville Lake, many parks and recreation opportunities, and prime undeveloped land available for economic development. Van Buren is a diverse community in many ways – demographic, land use, jobs, geography, and development patterns. This diversity – and its location are major assets for future growth.

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Executive Summary

The Charter Township of Van Buren Strategic Plan is a roadmap for the future of the township. It leverages the township's assets as a basis for future development, identifies improvements in public amenities and services, and develops a strategy for building more community engagement. Van Buren Township is a community with numerous assets and opportunities provided largely by its strategic location close to two major airports, two interstate freeways, two major research universities, and numerous cultural and retail centers. It is home to Belleville Lake, many parks and recreation opportunities, and prime undeveloped land available for economic development. Van Buren is a diverse community in many ways – demographic, land use, jobs, geography, and development patterns. This is one of its main strengths.

The Strategic Plan was developed by Naheed Huq and Ginger Juncker, SEMCOG staff, at the request of Township Supervisor, Linda Combs. This was a two-stage process with a budget discussion on August 20, 2013 with elected officials and department heads and a day-long board retreat on February 8, 2014. The budget discussion identified some of the financial and organizational issues facing the community, including the future loss of revenues from the landfill located in Van Buren Township, and opportunities for collaboration between departments on issues such as purchasing and human resources. SEMCOG provided detailed financial data, including comparisons on expenditures with other townships in the region.

The board retreat took a more holistic approach to developing a vision for the community by evaluating the opportunities and priorities and aligning these with its strengths and assets. The board worked closely with SEMCOG on a series of exercises to develop a strategic plan based on their values and priorities for the community and creation of a mission statement to help focus on key strategies for achieving the community's true potential. The mission statement developed for the township is:

Van Buren Township is a premiere lake community to live, work, and play where the township provides excellent services to enhance and sustain the quality of life

The exercises helped the board identify priorities through consensus. While many issues were raised during the retreat, it was acknowledged that not everything could be addressed with the same effort or within the same timeframe. The following issues were identified for immediate action:

- Address the LDFA bond issue in Grace Lake
- Ensure the township planning processes meet current and future planning needs
- Enhance Van Buren Park by making it available and accessible to all
- Develop an economic development plan for the township
- Leverage the township's strategic location by marketing economic development opportunities

As there are several overlaps in these areas, it is suggested that the township combine some of them and also focus on issues that help implement the mission statement. These include:

- Increased collaboration with neighboring communities
- Increased collaboration with the Van Buren Downtown Development Authority
- Aligning community services with resident needs

The Van Buren Township Strategic Plan is focused on the future by addressing current challenges and developing the processes and structure for successful growth. It is not a comprehensive guide to development; rather, it identifies board priorities for immediate action. The plan is just the first part of a process of improvements that will help address some critical issues. It will require collaboration and coordination among the township board, department directors, and partner organizations to enable further development and effective implementation of the plan. The priorities provide township departments and directors with a strong framework that enable them to make professional decisions to implement strategies developed by the board.

Van Buren Township: Background, Data, and Trends

The Charter Township of Van Buren is a community with numerous assets and opportunities provided largely by its strategic location close to two major airports, two interstate freeways, two major research universities, and numerous cultural and retail centers. It is home to Belleville Lake, many parks and recreation opportunities, and prime undeveloped land available for economic development. Van Buren is a diverse community in many ways – demographic, land use, jobs, geography, and development patterns. This is one of its main strengths.

Van Buren Township is part of the tri-community area that includes Van Buren Township, Sumpter Township, and the City of Belleville. These three communities, known as the Belleville area, share a rich history and continue to partner on many important endeavors. These include a shared Chamber of Commerce, shared school district, festivals, recreation programs, and a museum. There is also considerable collaboration on public services between all three communities, as well as with other neighboring communities.

Population

The township has been growing for the last 20 years. From 2000-2010, it grew by 22 percent, resulting in a population of 28,821 in the 2010 Census. Since 2010, the township has continued to grow – although at a slower pace. SEMCOG data shows the December 2012 population as 29,246.

The population is diverse in terms of race. In 2010, 63 percent of the population was white and 29 percent black. This makes the township less diverse than Wayne County, but more diverse than the Southeast Michigan region.

Van Buren Township is aging at a faster rate than the county or region. It is estimated that between 2010 and 2040, the population aged above 65 will increase by 153 percent. At the same time, the population with school-age children is forecast to decline by 13 percent. In 2010, 33 percent of households had children – this is consistent with the county and region.

Residents of Van Buren Township are more affluent than Southeast Michigan and considerably more affluent than Wayne County. Ten percent of households were in poverty in 2010, compared to 13 percent for the region and 19 percent for the county. However, between 2000 and 2010, poverty increased by 4.3 percent, and median household income in the township declined by 19 percent – consistent with both the county and region – largely attributable to the great recession.

Housing Growth and Tenure

Van Buren's population growth has been accompanied by a growth in housing development. More than three-quarters of the housing stock was built after 1970, and about 22 percent was built in the last decade, making it fairly new. The housing stock ranges from million dollar lakefront homes to single-family subdivisions, apartment complexes, and manufactured housing parks. However, housing development has slowed down significantly in the last eight years. (See Appendix G for residential building permits issued by the township.)

Housing tenure in the community is similar to county trends, with 58 percent owner-occupied and 31 percent rental.

The median value of an owner-occupied home was \$143,000 in 2010 compared to \$107,700 in Wayne County. Housing accounts for 52 percent of the township's state equalized value, with industrial at 23 percent and commercial at 21 percent.

Economic Development

The township's location is one of its main assets for economic development. However, there are other assets, too. The board is open and welcoming to new business. There is active involvement from key economic development entities, including the Van Buren DDA, Wayne County EDGE, and VantagePort, a partnership for investment in and around Wayne County's Detroit Metro and Willow Run Airport system. There are also many available sites suitable for development of retail, industrial, and office uses. The demand for industrial land is expected to create 200,000 square feet of development annually – in warehousing, distribution, and green energy. These will complement existing businesses and leverage access to various infrastructure assets. There are many opportunities for expanding retail growth in the township to meet the needs of current and future populations. It is estimated that there could be up to 60 acres of retail development in the next 30 years. In addition, there could be about 50 acres of office development over the next 30 years within the Airport District. This is likely to be for flexible building development within mixed-use developments.

Van Buren Township Downtown Development Authority

The Van Buren Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is focused on enhancing economic growth along Belleville Road from Ecorse Road in the north to just south of I-94 in the south. The area includes both residential and commercial development. Despite the geographical limitations of the DDA, it has already made a significant impact on the community through strategic investments in quality infrastructure development in its area, including extended sidewalks, enhanced signage, landscaping, and redevelopment of the intersection of Belleville and Ecorse Roads. The DDA was actively involved in development of the new fire station and extension of Township Hall. Currently, the DDA is focusing on intersection improvements at Belleville/Ecorse Road for intersection improvements; regional retail and service development in a walkable setting at Belleville/Tyler Roads; and high-traffic service-drive convenience retail at Belleville/I 94.

Employment

Manufacturing provides the largest share of jobs in the community at 30 percent. The other main sectors for employment are retail at 13 percent; arts, entertainment, and recreation at 10 percent; professional, management and administrative at nine percent; transportation and warehousing at eight percent; and education and healthcare at eight percent. As the township looks to the future, it may want to look at attracting fast-growing sectors that can benefit from its location in terms of accessibility to major infrastructure assets, development-ready land, and business friendly planning processes.

Education Attainment

Education levels in Van Buren Township are consistent with the region with 27 percent of residents above the age of 25 holding a bachelor's degree or higher, and 35 percent having an associate's degree or some college. Only nine percent of residents did not graduate from high school, compared to 12 percent in the region and 17 percent in Wayne County. Education attainment and access to talent is a critical measure for many businesses for site selection decision making because technology improvements in most growing industry sectors/businesses require higher levels of education and training than in the past.

The vast majority of Van Buren Township is within the Van Buren Public School District with just a small portion in the southwest part of the community falling in the Lincoln Consolidated District.

Fiscal Conditions

Like just about every community in Michigan, the impact of the Great Recession and plummeting property values has reduced revenues and the township's ability to provide services in the same way as before. According to Munetrix (www.munetrix.com) in 2012, the township had a fiscal indicator score of three, which makes it a fairly low risk for default. However, revenues have declined since 2006, particularly net interest and investment income, licenses and permits, and transfers in. Revenues fell from about \$22 million in 2006 to about \$14 million in 2012. Expenditures have also fallen from over \$24 million in 2007 to about \$13 million. Police and fire department expenditures and general government have remained stable throughout, but there have been major reductions in capital outlay and special items, and public works. Crime figures have remained consistent over the last few years with just over 50 percent of crimes against property, about 20 percent against persons, and about 20 percent against society. (Appendices C, D, and E provide more detailed information.)

Van Buren Township's fund balance has been growing since 2010 after a few years of decline. However, there are future fiscal threats associated with planned termination of revenues from the landfill, and concerns about payments on the bonds taken out for the Grace Lake Corporate Center (formerly known as Visteon Village).

Fortunately, Van Buren has a tradition of collaborating with neighboring communities including the City of Belleville and Sumpter Township who share a chamber of commerce, library, and museum.

As the regional economy improves, it is anticipated that the township will benefit from development opportunities because of its location close to key economic development and quality of life assets. However, success will depend on the township's ability to align its processes and structures to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

During the board retreat and budget discussion, SEMCOG helped the township board and key personnel identify some critical issues that need to be addressed and processes that need to be aligned to help the community reach its potential.

Township Board: Goals, Values, and Mission

Strengths

SEMCOG led the board through a series of exercises to establish their values and goals for the township and create a mission statement that would reflect board priorities. The first exercise was to establish major skills held by individual board members, by asking them to work in groups and introduce each other. The results are below.

Name	Position on board	Objective for retreat	Major skills	Years on board
Sharry Budd	Treasurer	Plan and develop a strategic plan	Likes people, good listener, well known in the community	17
Linda Combs	Supervisor	Strategic planning	People skills, honesty	1
Phillip Hart	Trustee	Develop out-of-box ideas for implementation	Good listener, mediator, good reputation	
Jeffrey Jahr	Trustee		Legal experience	13
Brenda McClanahan	Trustee	Effective communications with fellow board members	Board experience (Former school board member)	1
Reggie Miller	Trustee	Plan for the future of Van Buren Township	Very active in the community and in Belleville, good listener, team player	1
Leon Wright	Clerk	Good ideas to improve the township	Good listener, negotiator	5

Values

The board was asked:

1. What board members value about Van Buren Township
2. What residents value about the township
3. What they wanted the township to be known for/reputation

Board Values	Resident Values	Desired Reputation
Diversity/heterogeneous community	School system	Feeling welcome and comfortable
Natural features	Presence and ambience of the lake	Great place to live, work, and play; a top 10 place to raise a family in Michigan; good place to live and raise children; family-friendly values
School district	Low taxes	Lots of amenities
The lake	Free trash pick-up and curbside recycling	Diversity of housing choices
Low taxes	Housing choices	Good education
Park system	Recreation programs	Green community
Easy access/proximity to I-94, I-275, Detroit airport, Ann Arbor parks system	Senior programs	Transportation opportunities
Housing choices	Public safety	Safe community (with good public safety)
Strong business community	Close proximity to freeways and shopping	Lake and recreation
Community involvement		
Cooperation with neighboring communities		
Community services and processes		
Public safety		
Location		

Assets, Opportunities, and Challenges

An analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT exercise) is essential to developing a strategic plan because it helps prioritize actions. The following tables identify the results of the board discussion organized by categories.

SWOT Exercise: Strengths and Weaknesses

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Physical/Natural	<p>Location providing access to rail, freeways, and airport</p> <p>Lakefront community</p> <p>Open space – creating opportunity for growth and economic development</p> <p>Infrastructure – for getting to shopping, post office, etc.</p> <p>Township hall building; can support community events</p> <p>Old township hall is now a museum for the tri-community area</p> <p>Park system (Van Buren Park is the largest of the community parks and has lake access) and the park system is connected to Huron Metropark</p> <p>Belleville Lake bridge</p> <p>New hotels</p> <p>Shopping in focal areas</p> <p>Trees – greenery</p> <p>Yankee Air Force Museum</p> <p>Willow Run Airport</p> <p>Fairgrounds</p> <p>Professional ball fields</p>	<p>The beach at Van Buren Park is limited in many ways – ADA access, difficult to expand, improve, and keep safe</p> <p>Community does not take advantage of the lake</p> <p>Lack of sidewalks at Belleville Road and Tyler Road intersection</p> <p>Sidewalks not cleared of snow</p>

<p>Organizational</p>	<p>Forward thinking board, not afraid to seek development</p> <p>Recognizing importance of planning/processes/procedures</p> <p>Tree ordinances</p> <p>Shared services with neighboring communities</p>	<p>Lot of ideas in the community, but no long-term planning</p> <p>Not doing focused planning</p> <p>No planning or preparation for growth</p> <p>Planning meetings are postponed or canceled</p>
<p>Education Related</p>	<p>Good schools</p> <p>New school buildings; high school is just two years old</p> <p>Access to charter school in Sumpter Township</p> <p>Wayne County Community College District</p>	<p>Reputation of the schools</p>
<p>Business/Economic Development</p>	<p>Low taxes</p> <p>Quality of public services</p> <p>Low water bills</p> <p>Business leadership</p> <p>Strong DDA (responsible for infrastructure improvements, fire hall, township hall. Has contributed \$45 million to improve the township)</p> <p>Strong Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Lack of identity for the Van Buren DDA area</p> <p>Lack of theatres or restaurants that would bring in outside dollars and revenues</p> <p>Lack of businesses and recreation activities</p> <p>Shopping is not destination shopping – need specialty or higher-end retail</p>
<p>Community Services</p>	<p>Free trash pickup – and allows low taxes</p> <p>Strong public safety department</p> <p>Excellent paid on-call fire department – most efficient in Southeast Michigan</p> <p>Recreation programs</p> <p>Senior programs</p> <p>Professional bass-fishing</p>	<p>No programs for teenagers</p> <p>Lack of programs to support aging populations</p> <p>Lack of central recreation center; recreation is offered by various organizations across the community</p> <p>Not enough organized sports</p> <p>Lack of public art and features to</p>

	competition	attract people to the community
Other	<p>Residents/community involvement</p> <p>Some members of the original families that located in the community are still active</p> <p>Four newspapers – Belleville Independent, Belleville Lake Courant, The View, Belleville Enterprise</p> <p>University of Michigan boat house – used by girls rowing team</p> <p>Proximity to Belleville (extension of Van Buren Township)</p> <p>Good relationships with City of Belleville and Sumpter Township</p> <p>Four cemeteries</p> <p>Many cultural events in the tri-community area – mainly arranged by community group and Chamber of Commerce (Strawberry Festival)</p>	<p>Low tax capture</p> <p>Lack of community identification (with Van Buren Township)</p> <p>Zip code is Belleville</p>

Based on the strengths and weaknesses identified, the board was then asked to discuss opportunities and threats facing the community. The results are provided in the following table.

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Enhancement to Van Buren Park by adding boat access, beach front improvements, concession stands, access to sand bar, expanded ADA access, parking, water park for those who cannot access lake (splash park)</p> <p>Enhance availability of Belleville Lake for all</p> <p>Provide transportation for residents/visitors to and from park</p> <p>Increase economic development with an outside mall</p> <p>Develop an outdoor movie theater; show old movies in the park</p> <p>Develop a long-term plan to attract businesses</p> <p>Design logo/sign with “Welcome to Van Buren Township” with sailboat and water</p> <p>Work in conjunction with and leverage the DDA</p> <p>Identify and execute a green energy project and then tell people about it</p> <p>Attract outside developers to build in the community</p> <p>Fix problem ordinances so we can execute on a good/proper planning system/process</p> <p>Fund activities for seniors</p> <p>Leverage technical capacity of the WCCCD</p> <p>Communicate existing programs to the community</p> <p>Lots of open/available space in the township</p> <p>Need economic development strategy and an additional economic developer (funding is available)</p> <p>Identify new revenue streams</p>	<p>LDFA bond issue</p> <p>Lack of cooperation from Wayne County</p> <p>Failed planned unit development (or planned residential development)</p> <p>Loss of revenue from landfill in 10 years</p> <p>Crime migrating into area</p> <p>Lack of funding for projects</p> <p>Location in flood plain makes the community subject to FERC regulations</p> <p>Township processes are too cumbersome or expensive for businesses and homeowners to take on projects</p> <p>Loss of business opportunities because of planning hoops</p> <p>Without a plan, the township loses ability to direct development as it would like to</p> <p>Not a good enough catastrophic emergency management plan in place</p> <p>People don’t know about the emergency heating and cooling centers</p> <p>Need external threat communication tools</p> <p>Living on community savings</p>

Collaborative Activities

With City of Belleville	With Sumpter Township
Dispatch School district Fire equipment Mutual-Aid Agreement Joint Chamber of Commerce	Mutual-Aid Agreement
With Wayne County	Other
CDBG Homeland Security Local Emergency Planning Committee Road salt sales Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project Alliance of Downriver Watersheds Wayne County Public Safety Communications System	Western Wayne Police Mutual Adi Western Wayne SWAT team Area Agency on Aging 1C Sewer agreements with South Huron Valley, Detroit, Rouge Valley, and Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority (YCUA)

Community Priorities

Prioritization Exercise

Each board member was asked to prioritize three issues among the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats that they felt were most critical for the community to address. The issues identified were:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Location (3)	Lack of sidewalks on Belleville and Tyler roads (2)	Enhance Van Buren Park (5)	LDFA bond issue (4)
Transportation access(1)	No teenage programs (1)	Increase economic development (external mall) (2)	Loss of revenue from landfill in 10 years (3)
Lakefront community (1)	Planning process (4)	Attract developers from outside the community (1)	Not enough funding for community projects (1)
Opportunity for growth (4)		Hire economic developer (funding available) (2)	Loss of ability to direct development without a plan (1)
Landfill (2)			Lack of a good emergency management plan that people know about (1)
Quality of services (1)			
Strong public safety department (2)			
Recognition of the importance of planning			
15	7	10	10

From these choices the 11 priorities with more than one vote were listed and each board member was given two votes to indicate their priorities for the community.

Priority	Number of votes
Strategic location	1
Improve planning process	5
Enhancements to Van Buren Park	2
Increase economic development	1
LDFA bond issue	5
	14 total votes

The results indicate the extreme importance to the board of improving the planning process and addressing the LDFA bond issue. In addition, both economic development and strategic location are closely tied together; it is suggested that the board also consider implementing other goals related to the mission statement. These include

- Increased collaboration with neighboring communities
- Increased collaboration with the Van Buren Downtown Development Authority
- Aligning community services with resident needs

These have not been developed fully in this plan, but SEMCOG is willing to work with the board at a later date to develop implementation strategies if the board desires.

Priority Action Steps

Priority 1: LDFA Bond Repayment Issue

Goal	Resolve bond repayment issue related to the LDFA infrastructure improvements
Strategy	Ongoing
Champion/co-champion/support	Linda Combs/ Phil Hart/ Board members
Performance metrics	The issue needs to be resolved as soon as possible
Partners	Attorneys, principles; the State of Michigan may also be able to assist on financial advice
Challenges	Timeframe, external pressures

In the early 2000s, the township bonded for infrastructure improvements in the Local Development Finance Authority area in the northeast part of the community. However, the Great Recession has led to a significant decline in property values – particularly within the LDFA area – resulting in lower revenues for the community and concerns about bond repayments. The township is currently addressing these challenges. However, as the economy improves, there is cause for some optimism that the tax base will expand with additional development. The availability of development-ready land in the LDFA area and elsewhere in the township close to major infrastructure makes the township an attractive location for industrial and commercial development.

Priority 2: Township Planning Process

Goal	Ensure township planning processes meet current and future planning needs
Strategy	<p>Review and streamline planning processes for developers and residents</p> <p>Review long-term plans and ensure that ordinances are in place to support plans</p> <p>Link plans to budgets</p> <p>Create a sense of identity through zoning</p> <p>Identify short-term goals and actions to implement plans</p>
Champion/co-champion/support	Supervisor Linda Combs/Clerk Leon Wright/trustees
Performance metrics/timeframe	Complete review of existing ordinances and other processes that impact development and business attraction within six months
Partners	Planning commission, economic development director, economic development staff, McKenna Associates
Challenges	Staffing and board resources to undertake this initiative

The Township Master Plan is being updated in 2014. This provides an excellent opportunity to consider the board priority to *Ensure township planning processes meet current and future planning needs* as part of the update process. As the region recovers from the recession, and large-scale development begins again, having a master plan that is clear is critical to being able to attract business. At the same time, the zoning regulations need to be flexible to allow the types of development that may be proposed in the township to take advantage of its location, quality of life, and demographic trends. The willingness of township personnel – both elected and appointed officials – to work closely with developers and explain the regulations can make a huge difference for business decision making.

Priority 3: Van Buren Park

Goal	Enhance Van Buren Park by making it available and accessible to all
Strategy	Add boat access, beach front improvements, concession stands, access to sand bar, expanded ADA access, parking, water park for those who cannot access lake (splash park)
Champion/co-champion/support	Trustee Phil Hart, Trustee Leon Wright, Trustee Reggie Miller
Performance metrics/Timeline	Develop and complete plan within 90 days so that development can begin as soon as possible
Partners	Parks and recreation Commission, Township Parks and Recreation Department: Jennifer Wright and Jennifer Zaenglein; Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Challenges	Funding and prioritization of projects

Van Buren Park is a 101-acre park located on the south I-94 Service Drive between Belleville and Rawsonville Roads. The township purchased the park, as well as Belleville Lake and French Landing Dam, from Detroit Edison in 1973. The park is a full-service recreation facility for township residents, and provides access to the beach on Belleville Lake. It also houses the University of Michigan boathouse. There have been some recent upgrades with restrooms; active sport areas including basketball courts, hiking trails, and sand volleyball; as well as other improvements to provide ADA access to the park and beach. The park is open all year, which allows visitors to take advantage of seasonal recreation including nature trails, cross-country skiing, and special events such as concerts, camps, and fall colors.

The improvements to Van Buren Park in the strategic plan will help further enhance the park's importance as a focal point for community events. By expanding ADA access, the park will be accessible to all.

Priority 4: Economic Development

Goal	Develop and execute an economic development plan for the township
Strategy	<p>Create an environment that is attractive to business and creates jobs</p> <p>Be proactive about approaching and connecting with developers</p> <p>Develop a packet of information for developers to show opportunities in Van Buren Township</p> <p>Focus on retaining current businesses</p> <p>Partner and align with DDA on economic development</p> <p>Review and analyze regional trends for economic development</p> <p>Identify how and where to locate and attract businesses</p> <p>Market community and sites</p>
Champion/co-champion/support	Supervisor Linda Combs, Treasurer Sharry Budd
Timeline	Develop an outline of the plan within six months
Performance metrics	Completion and execution of the plan
Partners	VantagePort, MEDC, Wayne County EDGE
Challenges	Staffing, funding

Priority 5: Leverage Locational Advantages

Goal	Leverage Van Buren Township’s location by marketing locational advantages
Strategy	<p>Develop a marketing brochure, tour-of-area video, develop new signage and logo to communicate economic development opportunities based on assets and access</p> <p>Identify external groups to connect to that will help market the township, including MEDC, Wayne County, and VantagePort</p> <p>Review how township decisions impact overall quality of life – e.g., fishing or no fishing</p> <p>Leverage relationship with Belleville and Sumpter to attract new developments including a new restaurant on the lake</p> <p>Make more use social media</p>
Champion/co-champion/support	Clerk Leon Wright, Supervisor Linda Combs
Timeline	Six months for development of marketing materials
Performance metrics	Inventory of assets, inventory of existing materials (e.g., DDA), connect with other stakeholders
Partners	DDA, parks and recreation team, post office
Challenges	Budget

Planes, trains, and automobiles... Van Buren Township has it all – plus boats of all sizes on 25 miles of shoreline on Belleville Lake. (http://vanburendda.com/location_proximity)

Van Buren Township’s strategic location is key to its future economic success. Its proximity to Metro Airport in Romulus and Willow Run Airport within the township; direct access to key freeways and rail lines make it a key location for the transportation, distribution, and logistics industry. I-94 runs east-west across the center of Van Buren and I-275 passes through the northeast part of the community. Willow Run Airport is located on more than 2,000 acres in the northwest corner of the community. This is one of the largest cargo airports in the country. Detroit Metro Airport is Michigan’s largest airport and connects the township to business opportunities and tourists from all over the world. There are two Norfolk Southern rail lines that cross the township. The one in the north links Detroit and Canada in the east with Ann Arbor and Howell in the west. The other passes through the southern part of the township connecting Detroit and Canada in the east and Fort Wayne, Indiana to the southwest. All of these are essential assets for economic development.

At the same time, the township has strong partners in Wayne County, VantagePort, and the DDA in both attracting new development and marketing the location of other economic assets in the township.

Conclusions

Van Buren Township has many assets on which to build for a successful future. Its location, land available for development, pro-development policies, commitment of the board, excellent services, and natural environmental features provide an excellent location for economic development.

The strategic plan focuses on leveraging its location and natural resources for creating a premiere community with excellent community services and quality of life. The board identified economic development as a key goal, but also the need to address financial and planning challenges that could impact future growth. The priorities of the board are to focus on location and economic development, enhancements to Van Buren Park, improvements to the planning process, and addressing financial challenges related to the LDFA bond issue and future revenue reductions from the landfill.

The strategic plan provides a guide to community officials for addressing the challenges identified in a realistic and collaborative manner. Some of the strategies are short-term, while others will take longer to implement. However, early successes in developing a plan for economic development and reviewing the township planning process will establish a framework for addressing other related issues. Developing a plan for Van Buren Park is the first step of a much longer process which will include obtaining funding and state approvals where necessary, design issues related to planned improvement, and finally, construction. The LDFA bond issue will require more discussion among the board with legal and financial advisors, but needs to be addressed as soon as possible to enable the community to move on. In terms of leveraging locational advantages, the township has two main assets. The first is the new township website. It is well designed and a key tool for leveraging the community's assets including location. Secondly, the existing relationship with the DDA is another major asset of the township. The DDA has been an integral part of several developments in the township including the fire station, township hall, and website. All of these provide a strong foundation for further collaboration.

While the board identified five priority actions for immediate action, it is clear that there is much more to do. The mission statement identifies issues that are important to the board and residents. The focus is on leveraging the township's proximity to Belleville Lake, providing excellent services, and sustaining the quality of life. Some of these can be addressed as part of the review of the planning process and enhancements to Van Buren Park, but the desire to provide excellent services is as much a financial concern as a planning concern. By addressing the LDFA issue, encouraging economic development, and possibly more housing development, the community's financial situation should improve thereby enabling more opportunities to provide additional services – in particular for seniors and youth in the community.

Van Buren's location is the basis to its ability to attract economic development and develop a "premiere lake community...." By developing a marketing strategy to leverage its locational advantages, the township will be able to leverage existing partnerships with agencies and organizations that bring additional resources to the community. Wayne County EDGE, VantagePort, and the Van Buren DDA, in particular, all have resources and existing materials that the township can access for marketing economic opportunities. These three organizations should be part of any discussion on this issue. The community's new website is also an excellent resource.

Van Buren Township is in a strong position to create a successful future. The leadership provided by the board, strong relationships with neighboring communities, partnerships with MEDC and Wayne County Economic Development will all be major assets for leveraging its location for economic development and community growth.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the board to consider as they implement the priority action steps.

<p>L DFA Bond Repayment Issue</p> <p>Address as soon as possible</p>
<p>Township Planning Process</p> <p>Ensure that the update of the Master Plan focuses on streamlining planning processes for developers and residents by simplifying language and offering flexibility that aligns with the board’s vision for the township</p>
<p>Van Buren Park</p> <p>Ensure that the plan for Van Buren Park aligns with the Parks and Recreation Plan and coordinates with various state agencies on meeting safety requirements and funding opportunities</p>
<p>Economic Development Leverage Locational Advantages</p> <p>Collaborate with the Downtown Development Authority to ensure alignment on business development and infrastructure</p> <p>Work closely with Wayne County EDGE and VantagePort on business attraction to the community; work closely with DDA and other partners to use existing resources to market Van Buren Township for economic development</p> <p>Prioritize hiring of new staff in the Planning and Economic Development Department to create capacity for implementing the strategy</p>
<p>Other</p> <p>While champions for each of the issues will lead the efforts, they should leverage the professionals within various departments to ensure implementation is timely and effective</p> <p>Provide department heads with flexibility to implement strategies and empower them to work across departments, where possible, to create more holistic solutions to implementing strategies</p> <p>Consider carrying out a resident survey to evaluate satisfaction on key services and help prioritize future investment in community services.</p>

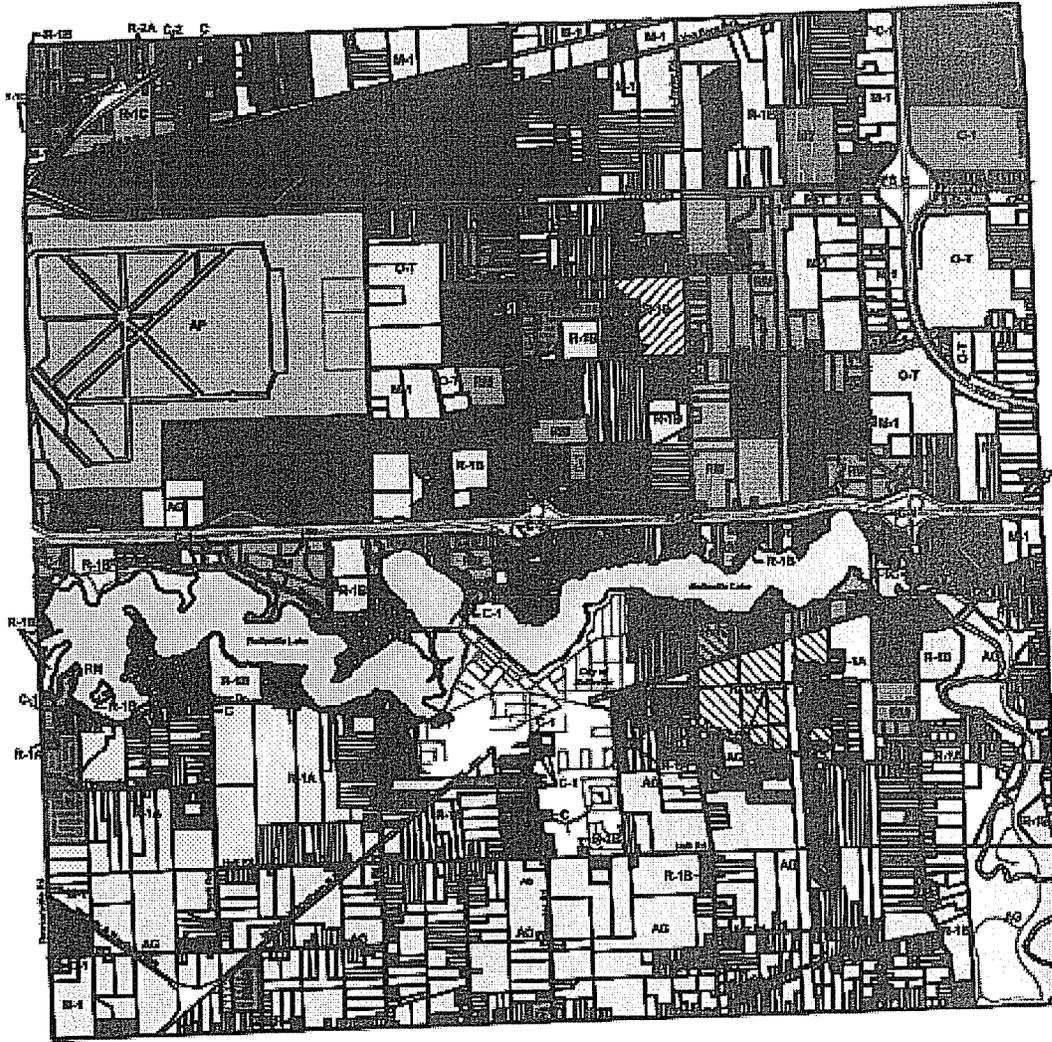
Appendix A: Van Buren Township Profile

	Van Buren Township	Wayne County	Southeast Michigan
Population			
2010 Census population	28,821	1,820,650	4,704,809
2040 population forecast	30,265	1,656,931	4,742,083
Households Characteristics, 2010			
Households with children	33%	34%	32%
Population above 65 in 2010	2,550	230,703	610,665
Population above 65 (forecast 2040)	6,451 (+153%)	370,433 (61%)	1,130,643 (+85%)
Households in poverty	10%	19%	13%
Median household income	\$54,077 (-19 since 2000)	\$42,241 (-21% since 2000)	\$53,242 (-19 % since 2000)
Race, 2010			
White	63%	50%	69%
Black	29%	40%	22%
Hispanic	3%	5%	4%
Level of Education			
Bachelor's and above	27%	20%	28%
Associate's or some college	35%	31%	31%
High school graduate	29%	32%	28%
Housing Tenure, 2010			
Owner occupied	58%	55%	63%
Renter	31%	30%	27%
Vacant	11%	14%	10%
Land Use, 2008*			
Single family residential	34%	43%	44%
Agricultural	13%	3%	27%
Industrial	15%	11%	4%
Park, recreation, and open space	4%	7%	7%

Source: SEMCOG Community Profiles (www.semco.org)

*Based on digital parcel files based on assessed property class

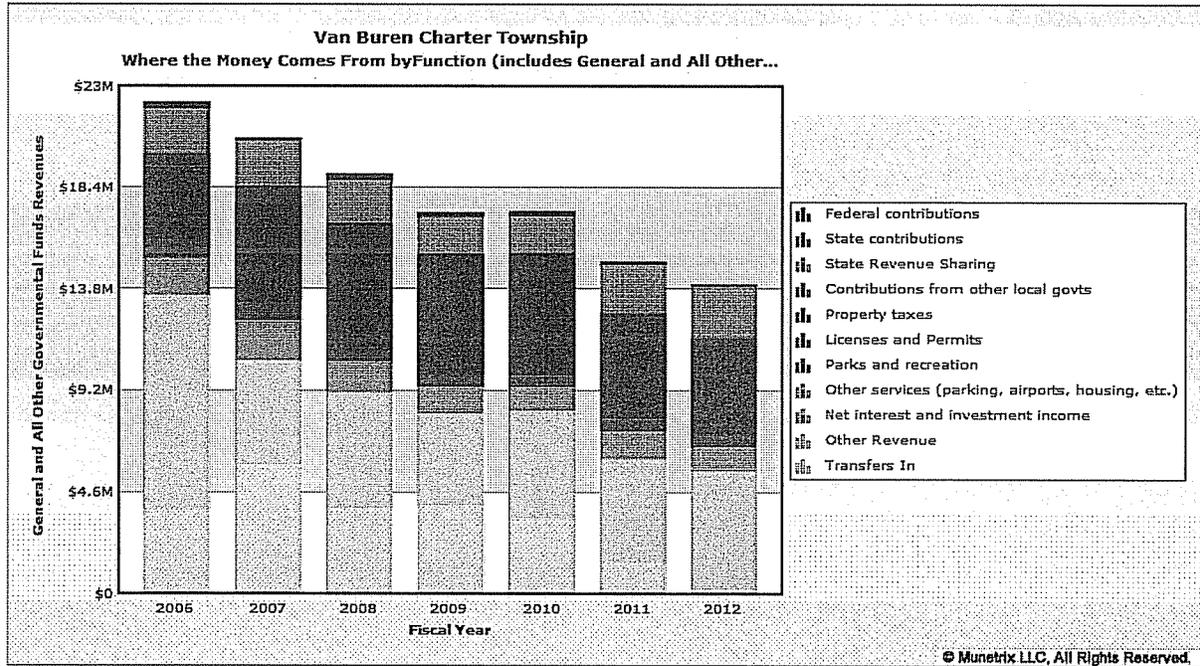
Appendix B: Zoning Map



Zoning Districts			
	AG-A Agricultural and Estates - A		C-2 Extensive Highway Business
	AG Agricultural and Estates		F-F Freeway Service
	R-1A Single Family Residential		O-T Office/Technology
	R-2A Single Family Residential		M-1 Light Industrial
	R-1B Single Family Residential		M-1 Industrial Transportation
	R-1C Single Family Residential		M-2 General Industrial
	RM Multiple Family Residential		AP Airport
	RMH Mobile Home Park		<small>Planning is required to be a general judgement.</small>
	C Local Business		<small>Consent is required to be a Planned Residential Development (PRD) agreement.</small>
	C-1 General Business		<small>Consent is required to be a Planned Unit Development (PUD) agreement.</small>

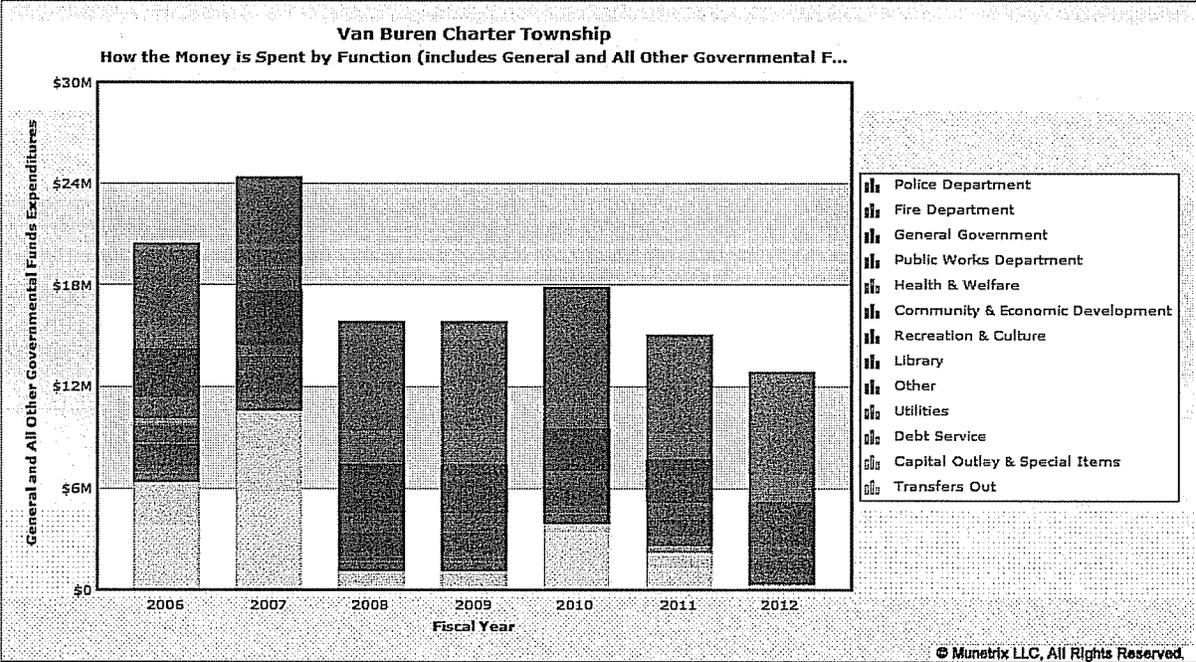
Source: http://208.55.143.246/Development/zoning_map_07.pdf

Appendix C: Where the Money Comes From



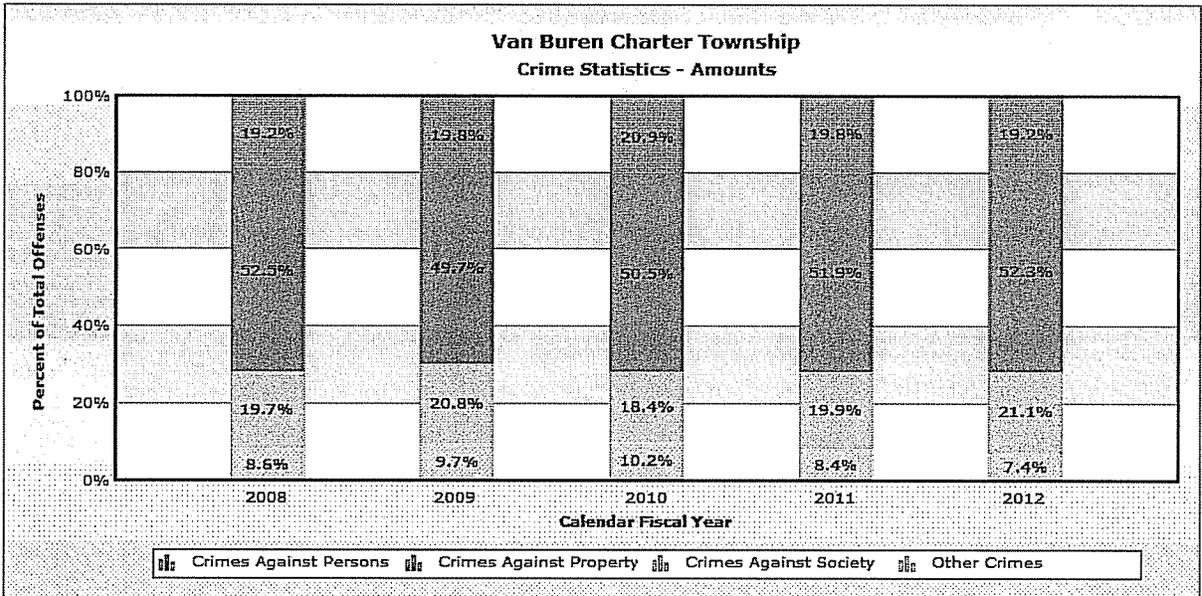
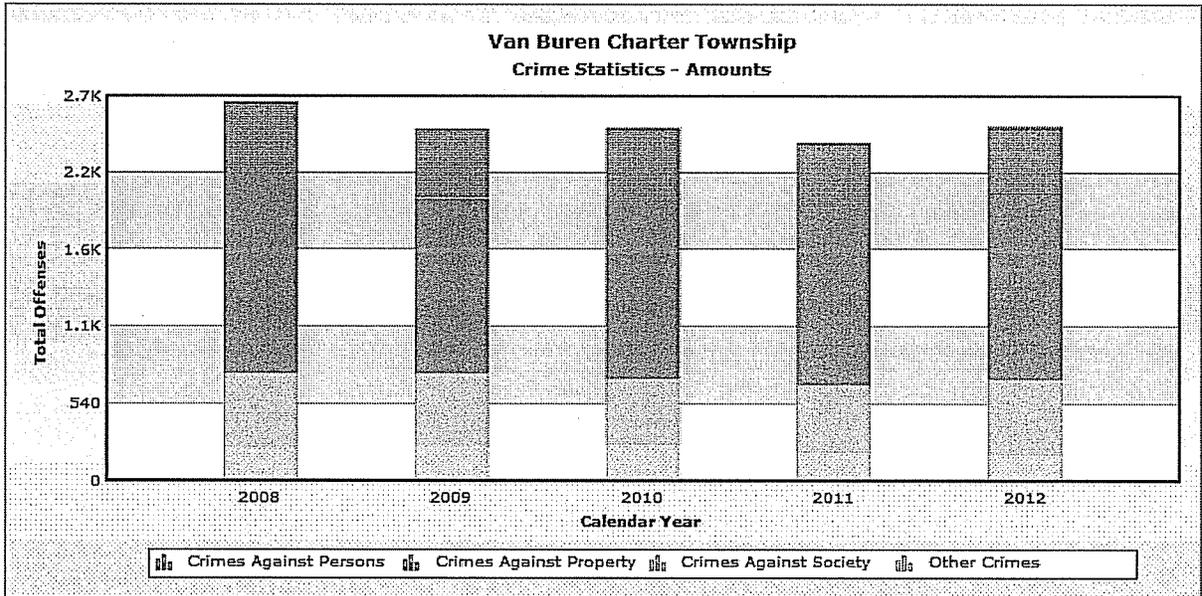
Source: Munetrix

Appendix D: How the Money is Spent



Source: Munetrix

Appendix E: Public Safety Trends



Source: Munetrix

Appendix F: Shared Services

<u>Shared Services Name</u>	<u>Primary Purpose</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Scope</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Data Owner</u>	<u>Number of Partners</u>
<u>Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC)</u>	Collaboration	Independent Authority	Internal	Existing	2005	Wayne County	45
<u>CLEMIS - Courts and Law Enforcement Management Information Systems</u>	Police	Contractual	Region	Existing	1976	Oakland County	99
<u>Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness</u>	Homeland Security	Joint Venture	Internal	Existing	1981	Wayne County	44
<u>Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)</u>	Homeland Security	Joint Venture	County	Existing	1987	Wayne County	41
<u>Road Salt Sales</u>	Collaboration	Contractual	County	Existing	1998	Wayne County	12
<u>Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project</u>	Collaboration	Contractual	County	Existing	1992	Wayne County	49
<u>SEMCOG</u>	Collaboration	Contractual	Region	Existing	1968	01 SEMCOG	158
<u>The Detroit Region Aerotropolis</u>	Collaboration	Independent Authority	Region	Existing	2006	Ypsilanti Township	9
<u>Traffic Signal Maintenance</u>	Public Works	Contractual	County	Existing	1981	Wayne County	32
<u>VantagePort - The Detroit Region Aerotropolis Development Corporation</u>	Economic Development	Independent Authority	External	Existing	2011	Wayne County	12
<u>Wayne County Public Safety Communications System</u>	Homeland Security	Contractual	County	Existing	2013	Wayne County	27
<u>ADW - Alliance of Downriver Watersheds</u>	Water	Joint Venture	County	Dropped	2006	Wayne County	27
<u>Restoring the Rouge from Mowed Down to Grown Up</u>	Quality of Life	Contractual	Region	Dropped	2010	Wayne County	40
<u>Toxics Reduction within the Rouge and Detroit River Areas of Concern</u>	Water	Contractual	Internal	Dropped	2011	Wayne County	58
<u>Wayne Dam Removal and Stream Restoration Project</u>	Water	Contractual	Internal	Dropped	2012	Wayne County	40

Source: Munetrix

Appendix G: Van Buren Township - Residential Building Permits 2000-2014

Year	Single Family	Two Family	Attach Condo	Multi Family	Total Units	Total Demos	Net Total
Totals for 2000	411	0	22	0	433	10	423
Totals for 2001	333	0	180	0	513	18	495
Totals for 2002	242	0	159	0	401	2	399
Totals for 2003	258	0	46	0	304	9	295
Totals for 2004	398	0	106	0	504	4	500
Totals for 2005	365	0	8	0	373	5	368
Totals for 2006	117	0	19	0	136	2	134
Totals for 2007	61	0	14	0	75	1	74
Totals for 2008	24	0	1	0	25	0	25
Totals for 2009	19	0	0	0	19	3	16
Totals for 2010	10	0	0	0	10	2	8
Totals for 2011	22	0	0	0	22	4	18
Totals for 2012	16	0	0	0	16	2	14
Totals for 2013	9	0	2	0	11	1	10
Totals for 2014	5	0	0	0	5	1	4
2000 to 2014 totals	2,290	0	557	0	2,847	64	2,783

Source: SEMCOG

**SEMCOG Officers
2013-2014**

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