

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATES, INC.
Urban Planning Consultants

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

St. Clair County, Michigan

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Part I: Analysis of Economic & Community Development Problems & Opportunities

Potentials For Economic Development

Relation of CEDS to Other Documents

The U.S. Economic Development Administration requires a community to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Formerly, the U.S. EDA required communities to prepare an Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP). St. Clair County prepared and adopted an OEDP in 1994. This CEDS is based upon information contained in the 1994 OEDP and the County Master Plan (described below), as well as up-to-date information obtained from recent U.S. Census data, the Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County, and various local communities.

County Master Plan Incorporated by Reference

In April 2000, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission adopted a new Master Plan for the county. The new Master Plan replaces the previous plan that was prepared in 1974. The Master Plan consists of a number of Technical Reports, one of which focuses on the economy. The Economy Technical Report contains a wealth of information about the economy of the county including: population and income, labor force employment and unemployment, employment by sector, unique/special employment characteristics, housing and real estate sector, trade influences, related land use policies and problems, etc. The Economy Technical Report of the adopted St. Clair County Master Plan and other pertinent sections of the Master Plan are hereby incorporated into this CEDS by reference.

CEDS Committee Structure

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission is an established planning group representative of the community and so is qualified to serve as the CEDS Committee. The County Planning Commission acts in an advisory capacity to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, provides technical assistance to local planning commissions, and serves as an intergovernmental coordinating body for federal, state, and regional programs. The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission was originally established in 1950 and exists in its current form pursuant to a resolution of the Board of Commissioners under Act 282, Public Acts of 1945, as amended. The planning commission has eleven (11) members appointed by the Board of Commissioners for three-year terms. By statute, the members represent a broad cross-section of the economic, governmental, social life, and development of the county: agriculture, recreation, education, government, transportation, industry, and commerce. In addition, the membership represents all of the seven (7) geographic county commissioner districts, with three at-large members and one representative of the County Board of Commissioners. The commission meets in the County Administration Building at 200 Grand River Ave. Blvd, Port Huron, the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00 P.M. The CEDS Committee will be assisted by a Economic Development Technical Advisory Committee and an Economic Development Working Group.

Economic Development Assets, Problems and Opportunities

St. Clair County possesses many economic development assets. However, the county also faces problems or obstacles that stand in the way of economic development that must be overcome to achieve success. The economic base analysis, completed by the University of Michigan through the former Community Growth Alliance described in the 1994 Overall Economic Development Program, identified eight assets and twenty liabilities/problems (see Charts A, B, and C in Appendix). This section of the CEDS will take a closer look at the potentials or opportunities for economic development and the liabilities or obstacles to realizing those same opportunities.

ANALYSIS OF POTENTIALS

St. Clair County is in a unique position compared to other counties of the region due largely to the existing transportation system. Two major interstate highways meet in the urbanized area of the county with one, I-94, heading southwest to the metropolitan Detroit area and the other, I-69, taking a westerly course toward Flint, Lansing and Chicago.

The St. Clair River, a connecting waterway of the Great Lakes and part of the St. Lawrence Seaway System, serves as an important link to the east coast of North America for the entire mid-western United States. In addition, the river services local transportation needs including recreation, ferry connections to Canada, shipment of local agricultural products and receipt of some construction material such as gravel, sand and stone.

International Commerce:

Connections to Canadian marketplaces are made over, across and under the river. The Blue Water Bridge connects I-94 and I-69 to their Ontario counterpart, Highway 402. Bridge capacity was expanded several years ago by the addition of a second span and by the expansion of customs, immigration, and truck inspection facilities. The Blue Water Bridge has the second largest volume of truck crossings of all border crossings between the U.S. and Canada in the eastern United States. Total crossings truck and automobile have increased from 3 million in 1985 to 5 million in 1998 an increase of 67%. Rail connections are facilitated through a modern new tunnel that recently replaced an existing 100-year old rail tunnel that was not able to serve the newer type of tall freight cars. The new tunnel dramatically reduces the need to break apart trains and sort freight cars, thereby eliminating a prior cause of delay in cross-border shipments. St. Clair County lies on the main Canadian National Railway Line (Grand Trunk) linking Toronto and Chicago and, via other Canadian National Railway lines, provides service to the interior of Mexico. During the last 10 year period for which data are available, rail traffic at the tunnel increased by 56%. A portion of this increase can be attributed to the increase in trade between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Rail systems are well developed and readily available to most industrial parks in the county. A regional passenger station and large switch yard are located immediately west of the City of Port Huron greatly easing links between local users and national and international markets or suppliers. A new CSX rail switching yard was recently constructed in St. Clair Township to replace an existing switching yard on the St. Clair River waterfront in downtown Port Huron on land that is slated for redevelopment.

St. Clair County's International Airport recently was upgraded to include an Instrument Landing System (ILS). This and other improvements that are underway or planned will enhance the value of that facility immensely. Currently, the airport's primary function is that of corporate and customs clearance traffic. Upgrading has made the airport more reliable during inclement weather and it is hoped commercial freight traffic and perhaps limited commuter service will result as well. For example, during a shutdown of truck traffic to the Blue Water Bridge, over thirty air freight deliveries from Canada in a single day were made, illustrating the potential for the airport as well as importance of reliable transportation links across the border.

With increased commercial border activity there exists a potential for several new businesses which capitalize on the needs of this traffic. An interview with the Port Huron Customs Service Port Director revealed that commercial truck traffic at the border has more than doubled since 1980. Additional improvements are planned for the Blue Water Bridge to increase truck inspection capacity. Trade between Canada and the United States has increased due to the Free Trade Agreement that has reduced tariffs and other barriers to trade. Such trade is expected to increase further over time as both economies expand and as the full effect of the trade agreement is felt.

New businesses that could benefit from the traffic and existing transportation links include: customs brokers; central inspection warehouses; commercial examination stations; bonded warehouses and foreign trade zones. Custom officials have received numerous inquiries from Canadian manufacturers or transport companies as to the status of these facilities in the Port Huron area. Locally the economy benefits from tariff deposits in local banks and numerous job opportunities. Millions of dollars in tariffs is collected at the U.S. border and subsequently deposited in local banks.

The Free Trade Agreement and proximity to Ontario mean more than jobs in the transportation industry. The opportunities for the exchange of raw materials, finished products and other forms of commerce exist and are ever increasing.

Several Canadian and other foreign firms have invested in this county constructing manufacturing plants which, for the most part, supply the automotive industry. This reinvestment of foreign funds was one of the potential projects identified by the former CGA during their economic base analysis as well. Officials of St. Clair County Community College (SCCCC) have recognized the importance of, and potential for, international trade to this region by establishing a new area of study. This International Studies program researches, coordinates and study international commerce issues under the direction of staff instructors. In addition, efforts are being made to solidify joint projects with Lambton College, in Sarnia, Ontario, through their partnership with SCCC. Also, the Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County operates an International Trade Office.

Labor Force:

Information gathered from the U.S. Census indicates that a significant portion of working people who reside in St. Clair County commute on a daily basis to a job located outside the county. One perspective on this phenomenon is to view the out-commuters as a potential labor pool for employers who start-up or expand a workplace in the county.

Approximately 27,877 persons, or 36.5% of all workers with their home in the county reported their workplace as elsewhere in Michigan. This trend of out of county work trips has accelerated since 1990 when 20,918 persons or 30% of the labor force left the county for employment elsewhere in Michigan. A very much smaller number of persons (4,900 in 1990) are believed to enter the county each day for work from outside areas (the flow of workers between Southeastern Michigan counties will be revealed in greater detail when more data is released from Census 2000).

How and why does this imbalance occur? Families moving into St. Clair County for the benefits a rural, waterfront, or small-town setting may retain their jobs in the former county. Established St. Clair County residents may choose to commute to higher-paying jobs in other counties due to a lack of acceptable job opportunities locally.

Overall, the number of workers living and working in the county increased by 6,580 over the decade (a measure of internal job generation and economic growth). The increase in out-commuting was somewhat greater, estimated at

6,959 jobs. Over the decade, employment in the county increased 16%, compared with a 33% increase for out-commuters.

Travel to work loads the highway network; it consumes energy and takes time. Traffic congestion and the need for road improvements are likely to follow. It takes 45 minutes or more for 24% of St. Clair County workers to get to their workplace. About 10% of all workers carpool. Less than 1% use public transportation.

In addition to this untapped potential, there are a relatively large number of available unemployed workers. With continued use of existing job training programs, as well as facilities such as the Community College, private colleges, and Intermediate School District, a portion of this group of workers can become a valuable resource.

Industrial Parks:

As mentioned earlier in this report, a number of industrial parks are under construction, awaiting public utilities, on the drawing board or in use with improved land available. The potential for and future capacity available is certainly great, although realistically not all will see use or even significant use. One positive aspect of the abundance of land will be reduced cost. Even without this savings, costs for land developed are considerably lower than that of highly competitive markets simply because of the amount of vacant land. The location factors associated with some of these parks will make them much more valuable than others. As such, the needs of businesses will have a bearing on the types of parks which will be developed.

Foreign Trade Zone:

The Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County is the grantee of Foreign Trade Zone Number 210, covering the U.S. Customs Port of Port Huron. The FTZ designation allows companies importing parts and supplies the opportunity to delay, defer, reduce or even eliminate U.S. duties. This is accomplished by completing a portion or all of the manufacturing process within an approved foreign trade zone. Examples of manufacturing within the foreign trade zone include cleaning, inspection, mixing, processing, repairing, storing, and testing. The FTZ can save a company time and money, lowers insurance rates, improves fiscal control and avoids waste. This foreign trade zone helps to diversify the St. Clair County economy and offers a creative, local solution to a global business challenge. In an age where tariffs and duties are being lowered, a foreign trade zone may be most important to those companies which import products into the United States which are still subject to tariffs. The FTZ is currently being utilized by a German-owned machine tools firm involved in the factory automation industry.

Cost of Business:

Related to the availability of industrial park land is the overall cost of doing business within the county. In addition to the cost of land being lower, labor costs are low as well. Hourly manufacturing wages in 2000 were as follows: Basic unskilled - \$10.80–\$11.38; Intermediate/Moderate Skill - \$9.25–\$16.63; Skilled

Trades - \$12.25–\$20.12/hr. In that the cost of doing business is lower it follows that the cost of living would be lower as well.

Availability of Water:

The abundance of fresh water throughout the county directly influences opportunities for two industries, manufacturing and tourism/recreation. Those compatible manufacturing processes, which require water in abundance, represent potential new employers. Care must be taken, however, to preserve this asset in that it also is a major attraction creating opportunities for recreation and tourism.

Plastic Industries:

St. Clair County's proximity to raw materials needed to support the plastics industry is yet another opportunity for significant growth/investment. A great many plants have and continue to locate in this area with pipelines recently installed directly linking suppliers in Ontario and producers in the U.S. The vast majority of these plants supply the automotive industry of southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario or other manufacturers of durable goods such as furniture, appliances, etc.

As stated earlier, this list of assets is by no means all-inclusive. Attached in the Appendix (Chart C) you will find a copy of the goals and potential projects identified by the CGA and University of Michigan in their economic base analysis. They identified some of the same potential opportunities discussed above and others not mentioned but of equal importance.

Obstacles To Development

As mentioned briefly above, the former CGA identified a “laundry-list” of obstacles to development through its strategic planning process. However, since the time they were recognized, steps have been taken to reduce or eliminate some of those weaknesses. The following discussion represents those obstacles identified during the drafting of this CEDS report.

COORDINATION/COOPERATION:

In past years, a number of individual or local projects have been undertaken. Most, if not all, are quite successful and important to the local unit of government in which they are situated. However, a common thread to all projects is their regional impact and/or implications. Every business or industry employs people who are recruited from a region. Moreover, dollars spent on construction, maintenance, supplies, operations and labor affect the region as well as the local economy. For these reasons, planning, financing, provision of utilities, training, and other efforts must be coordinated better with increased communications between jurisdictions and agencies taking place.

Currently there are a number of agencies throughout the county working toward the same goal, but many times in an uncoordinated manner. If better cooperation and communication existed, negative impacts could be reduced and, perhaps

through these same combined team efforts, our recruitment and placement rates would be higher.

This unified approach is especially true in the locating of large industrial parks that are often established on community fringes. These projects create a potential for adverse impacts on surrounding land uses (often in an adjoining jurisdiction), traffic problems, and at times place excess demands on public services and utilities. These fringe developments are classic examples of the need for a coordinated effort.

INFORMATION:

This report, as well as the County Master Plan and University of Michigan Economic Base Study, present a great deal of information regarding social and economic characteristics or trends of the county. It however, is far from complete due to the lack of current data, reporting formats and the need for targeted surveys. Often, throughout this report, firm conclusions have been difficult to draw. This is largely caused by a lack of knowledge and incomplete analysis capabilities. With better information and analysis planning, recruitment and placement efforts can be targeted at select industries saving valuable resources and increasing opportunities.

COMMUNITY GROWTH ALLIANCE:

The Community Growth Alliance, a state-sponsored comprehensive economic development initiative, was disbanded due to cuts in state funding in the early 1990's and a change in direction of state economic development policies. The CGA, through its strategic planning efforts, identified many of the county's shortfalls and, with broad-based support, had begun to reduce those barriers to development. The CGA was the first successful attempt at bringing all of the county's key players together in an effort to create an environment capable of and receptive to development efforts. Fortunately, since the dismantling of the CGA, the EDA of St. Clair County has been able to expand its mission from primarily serving Port Huron and Marysville to promoting economic development throughout the entire county. In addition, the EDA of St. Clair County is broadening its involvement from primarily industrial development, to all aspects of economic development.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Inadequate local and county roads, particularly a complete network of all-season roads capable of carrying heavy truck traffic, lack of public water and sanitary sewerage facilities or capacity all encourage developers to look elsewhere. Funding is always the central concern especially for those communities which cannot secure Federal or State assistance in extending lines or expanding capacity. Many of those cities or villages that used federal grant programs to rebuild or update water and wastewater treatment plants possess the capacity for additional flows but for a number of reasons this capacity continues to sit unused even if the demand exists.

LACK OF COMMITMENT OR PRIORITY:

This obstacle, a lack of commitment or priority, is related to that of cooperation and infrastructure as well. A comprehensive countywide economic development program cannot exist without a firm commitment from both legislative leaders and private sector business leaders. If economic development is to be successful, both funds and time must be dedicated toward that end. Those communities which have made it a priority: Port Huron, Marysville, Fort Gratiot and St. Clair, have been extremely successful.

An added benefit of making economic development a priority is that it encourages planning or management of that growth. Those successful communities mentioned above find themselves prepared for the pressures of growth, absorbing it rather than trying to force a fit. This makes better use of our resources, which often are at a premium, especially in the area of utilities.

LACK OF OPPORTUNITY:

One of the assets identified above was the county's labor force including those 27,877 individuals that, according to the 2000 census, leave the county each day for work. Individuals are without work generally because no opportunity exists and workers leave the county because no acceptable opportunities exist for them either. Until this problem is corrected not only are potential jobs lost but the problem continues to be aggravated by forcing skilled, educated workers to move elsewhere for employment. (In theory, this is somewhat of a self-correcting problem insofar as businesses locate where labor is available and workers locate where the businesses are.) The CGA Strategic Plan identified a "Brain Drain" along with lack of skilled labor as a liability yet listed the labor force supply as an asset. This brings us to the next obstacle: education.

EDUCATION:

According to the 2000 Census, the labor force that resides in St. Clair County numbers 82,376 workers. While this represents a relatively large number, the supply of skilled labor, educated youth and adults are a concern. Reviewing the 2000 Census educational attainment data and comparing it with counties in Southeastern Michigan and the State as a whole, shows a high percentage of high school graduates (similar to the region and the state), but fewer college graduates with a Bachelor's degree or higher. The data support the hypothesis that college graduates are moving away to find suitable employment ("brain drain"), and not moving into the county in comparable numbers. This reflects the skill and wage mix of jobs offered locally vs. elsewhere.

The county as a community has an economic interest both in providing education and training for its labor force and in attracting employers that require workers in the higher-skilled and higher wage occupations.

In recent years, through community college affiliations with the University of Michigan at Flint, Saginaw Valley State University, and Walsh College, students can obtain a four-year degree at the community college's campus. Establishment

of a 4-year college was found not to be feasible due to the presence of a number of 4-year colleges in nearby Wayne and Oakland counties. St. Clair County does have the facilities to provide vocational training as well as community college degrees. In addition, specialized training programs can be set up for employers as needed.

Of St. Clair County's population age 25 or over, 82.8% has graduated from high school (includes equivalency). This is an increase from 10 years ago (74.9%), however when ranked with other counties in Southeast Michigan, St. Clair County is at the regional average, 8 percentage points below the lead counties and next to the last.

St. Clair is the lowest the 8 counties with college graduates (Bachelors degree or higher) at 12.6% in spite of an increase over the decade (10.7% in 1990). The region's average in 2000 was 24.5%. The presence of the St. Clair County Community College is evident in the percent of the population with Associates degrees: 7.8% in 2000 vs. 7.0% in 1990.

Formal education is one indicator of labor productivity. Education and training of the labor force is a matter of concern. It is essential, if the county is to adapt, evolve, and achieve its potential for higher levels of economic activity.

HARD CORE UNEMPLOYED:

As with any community, a certain portion of the unemployed consists of persons with problems or characteristics that make it very difficult or impossible for them to find stable long-term employment. Included in this category are persons with various illnesses, drug or alcohol addictions, criminal histories, anti-social behaviors, mental illness, developmental disabilities, and the like. The county and various local non-profit agencies operate a multiplicity of programs to designed to help these persons overcome such obstacles and find success in the labor force. While many will be able to do so, others unfortunately are likely to remain chronically unemployed.

Part II: Development Strategy

This portion of the CEDS serves as a summary, consolidating economic and social trends that result from the analysis of data gathered and the identified development potentials found in the previous sections. Projects, programs and further studies will be identified which result from, or are suggested through, this analysis. Projects that have been proposed by communities will be discussed in regards to how they fit the development strategy. Economic development strategies that are an outgrowth of information gathering efforts and observations provide a sense of direction to economic development activities. After reviewing goals and policies, strategies and more specific activities are proposed and followed by an action plan.

Goals and Policies

The establishment of goals and policies is a vital step in the process of creating an economic development program which addresses both immediate and long-term objectives. These goals and policies provide a standard by which all proposed projects can be measured and prioritized. In this respect the greater the number of expressed goals met by a project the higher priority it should receive in that its beneficial impact will be greater. Hopefully, other organizations or agencies within St. Clair County involved in economic development will share many of the same goals and policies.

GENERAL ECONOMIC GOALS:

- To encourage the provisions of economic opportunities for individuals throughout the County.
- To encourage a healthy, vigorous economy with the provisions of income, employment, goods and services maintained at acceptable levels.

- To support, encourage and maintain a diversified economic base balancing efforts among agriculture, construction, manufacturing, utilities, trade and service industries.
- To encourage economic activities that utilize regional resources and that can be supported by the regional trade area.
- To encourage and promote diversified employment opportunities which provide employment of the unemployed and underemployed.
- To encourage and promote education efforts aimed at: increasing high school completion rates; vocational training programs; and technical training.
- To encourage and promote the development and expansion of affordable housing opportunities for all members of the labor force.
- To encourage and promote the efficient use of existing infrastructure supporting commercial and industrial facilities.
- To encourage the efficient and effective use of financial assistance programs which support development or expansion of employment opportunities, use of/and protection of natural resources and the expansion of the economic base.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND POLICIES:

It is the goal of the CEDS to provide for sufficient amounts of industrial land serviced by adequate transportation facilities and public utilities in areas which are compatible with existing land uses and site-specific capacity characteristics.

To this end, it is the policy of the CEDS to strive to:

- Recognize the diversity of industrial uses and support adoption of appropriate standards for their location and development;
- Encourage the development of planned industrial districts, for both light and heavy industry, within selected areas which have adequate public facilities and services available;
- Encourage industry which would employ currently unemployed or underemployed residents of the County
- Support existing and planned industrial districts by discouraging scattered industrial land uses;
- Recommend the designation of areas suitable for long-range future industrial uses in comprehensive plans and support programs to reserve such areas for future industrial use.
- Promote and encourage industries which make efficient use of natural resources and have a minimal adverse impact on these resources.

- Build on the county's proven locational advantages, by continuing to attract industrial employers in sectors in which the county has had a long-term track record of known success such as automotive parts manufacturers, plastics, and electric-generating plants.
- Attempt to further diversify industrial employment by attracting industries from other industrial segments, with higher wage rates, such as but not limited to: medical goods and advanced manufacturing.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM GOALS AND POLICIES

It is the goal of the CEDS to strive to promote a pattern of strategically located commercial areas which are in harmony with surrounding land uses, compatible with the site specific capacity of the land, convenient to patrons and realistically related to market demands. It is further the goal to promote the continued development and strengthening of the tourism sector.

To this end, it is the policy of the CEDS to strive to:

- Promote and encourage diversity of commercial types and adopt appropriate standards for their development;
- Encourage commercial areas which are suited for such uses and centrally located as to serve their targeted population;
- Encourage the vitality of/and investment in central business districts within the urban communities;
- Encourage and promote the provision of-adequate amounts of land in commercial zoning categories which relate, realistically, to market demands for goods and services;
- Obtain a full understanding of the tourism industry within the County in order to encourage, effectively, expansion of this industry.
- Encourage enhanced cooperation between various agencies in the county with responsibilities for tourism and economic development for the purpose of developing coordinated goals, policies and programs that will most effectively maximize growth of the tourism sector.
- Improve existing tourist attractions and develop new ones that can be related to coordinated themes such as: waterfront, history, shopping, boating, entertainment, architecture, famous historical figures (e.g., Thomas Edison), etc.

AGRICULTURE GOALS AND POLICIES

It is the goal of the CEDS to strive to provide for the preservation of agricultural land, to protect both its value in production and the agricultural lifestyle it fosters,

and to strive for the growth of the agricultural processing industry within the County.

To this end, the following objectives are established:

- Encourage enterprises that would process regional agricultural products.
- Encourage methods for upgrading the productivity of agricultural land.
- Preserve agriculture as a way of life vital to the cultural and economic vitality of the County.
- The County Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service and the local U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Service Center, should identify those areas of the county where agriculture and agricultural businesses can be sustained over the long term.
- The County Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service and the local U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Service Center, should cooperate with appropriate agencies to increase public awareness of the value that agricultural businesses play in the county's economy and in defining the character of local communities and our county.
- The County Planning Commission should assist local communities in developing ordinances, programs, and other tools to protect and advance agricultural businesses.
- The County Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service and the local U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Service Center, should encourage the continued operation of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Initiative that was recently established to encourage local units of government and farmers in jointly developing land use policies and tools to preserve agricultural land.
- Promote agricultural land and open space preservation for qualified lands under the state Act 116 Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program.
- Promote agricultural land preservation through the State's Purchase of Development Rights Program. The County should also assist townships with participation in the program by providing a portion of the required matching funds. In the longer term, the creation of a county-based Purchase of Development Rights Program should be considered and pursued if needed.
- Promote agricultural and open space land preservation by encouraging use of the recently enacted open space development option by local units of government and land developers.
- Recommend agricultural zoning standards scaled to the character of the agricultural resource.

- Encourage accessory recreational uses on agricultural property, such as horseback riding, hunting, fishing, etc., provided they do not conflict with neighboring agricultural uses or require extensive governmental services.
- Encourage diversification of the agricultural economy to include consumer-oriented or high value-added uses such as greenhouses, flower and herb production, specialty crops, U-Pick fruit farms, cider mills, Christmas tree farms, farm-based bed and breakfast lodgings, and the like.
- Protect agriculture and other open space uses from the intrusion of urban density uses and public sewer and water facilities through the use of land use policies such as urban growth boundaries, urban-rural boundaries, and/or urban services districts.
- Discourage urban-type development speculation on prime agricultural lands.

MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The CEDS Committee and the agencies that are part of the CEDS Program in the County shall adhere to the following management policies:

- Encourage and involve staff with other interested agencies and organizations in a coordinated and cooperative approach to county-wide economic development;
- Maintain and make available to interested organizations and agencies an informational data base dealing with economic activity, labor force trends and developmental concerns;
- Continually monitor the County's economy with special attention to trends which impact the labor force and employment opportunities;
- Review, on an ongoing basis, the activities and regulations of local units of government to determine if they comply with the goals of the CEDS and take steps to advise them of such.

Suggested Projects and Activities

The Development Strategy attempts to identify economic development activities which are an outgrowth of data compiled and analyzed. Other projects included come from the CGA Strategic Planning and Economic Base Study (mentioned earlier and found in Appendix Chart A), or are projects initiated by local government officials. The order of presentation should not be taken as a ranking of relative importance or priority.

INDUSTRIAL PARKS:

St. Clair County appears to be well positioned to capture industrial growth. From 1990 to 1995, the number of manufacturing jobs in the core Metropolitan Detroit

area (Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb) declined by 0.5% and grew in the State of Michigan by only 1.8%. Whereas, during the same period, manufacturing jobs in St. Clair County increased by 28.6%. This rate of increase was also higher than Sanilac (18.6%) and Lapeer (24%). Looking at a longer period, manufacturing jobs in the county increased by 3,889 or 42.5% from 1991 to the cyclical peak in 1997 (see Appendix, Chart D). Since that time, manufacturing jobs have leveled off and held steady (showing a decline of less than 1%). The value of industrial real property in the county has increased by 212% since 1981, reflecting a high level of investment in plants and equipment, although a significant portion of this increase reflects the construction of several Detroit Edison electric generating plants in the early 1980's. These factors along with increased interest in individual sites and locational advantages will continue to "fuel" a steady employment increase. As such, continued public and private industrial park sites throughout the county should be considered a priority strategy for the future.

Public and private industrial parks or major industrial districts in the "urbanized" areas of the county, including the cities of Port Huron, Marysville, St. Clair, Marine City, and the County Air Industrial Park, along with established parks in outlying areas of the county, such as the City of Yale Industrial Park, should all receive priority support. These established parks and districts are all found within those areas of the county that are densely developed thereby availing themselves of the concentrated resident labor force, and presence of necessary infrastructure. Even the out-county park in Yale offers the advantages of public infrastructure and concentration of labor force. In addition, all of these parks are reflective of, and consistent with, the County's Industrial Goals as a part of this report's recommended development.

Several new industrial parks and expansions or improvements to existing parks are being proposed by the county or by local communities within the "urbanized" area of the county. All of these sites are found within areas of the county that are densely developed and offer a concentrated resident labor force, and the presence of public infrastructure (this infrastructure, however, may not be present at the site, although readily available, and therefore may be the subject of a funding request). Communities included in this category include the county government itself, City of Port Huron, City of Marysville, City of St. Clair, City of Marine City, and City of Yale. These projects are all supported by the goals of this Program and, as such, should be considered a Program strategy priority.

Industrial areas outside of these parks (as listed below or in the previous 1994 OEDP) should not be actively supported or promoted in such a manner as to undermine the expressed policy and objectives of this report. In addition, industrial sites found outside of established parks, or scattered throughout the County, should not be given policy, promotional or public financial support at the expense of these established or planned park sites.

During the next twelve (12) to twenty-four (24) months steps should be taken to encourage the further development of these established parks within present physical and environmental limitations.

Expansion of existing and creation of new parks should be in a manner consistent with program policy and objectives. All of the existing parks benefit from public utilities and needed infrastructure being present or readily available reducing economic, social, and environmental costs. Development of these parks should pose little adverse impact on surrounding land uses or public utility systems which have been planned or constructed in anticipation of increased demands.

PROPOSED LOCAL PUBLIC WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT FACILITIES PROGRAM:

Specific economic development projects for which EDA and other funding assistance may be sought are listed below. Additionally, all are supported by adopted program goals and reflect immediate, short-term or longer-term development needs. The CEDS Committee may elect to assign priority ratings to projects when considering funding needs.

County of St. Clair: (Project Title—Air Industrial Park Sewer Extension & Road Improvements):

The County plans to extend public sewer service to the Air Industrial Park to replace the on-site lagoon treatment system that was installed as a temporary measure in 1977 when sewers were unavailable in Kimball Township. The lagoon system is reaching the end of its useful life and capacity. The presence of a lagoon system restricts the type of employers that the county is able to attract to the park because of effluent pre-treatment constraints. The public sewer line is to be extended from its present terminus at Allen and Ravenswood Rds. south one-mile to Smiths Creek Rd. where a force main will be constructed across airport property to the existing lagoon site. A pump station will be installed and connected to the force main. The existing lagoon will be disconnected, demolished, and the site restored. In addition to the sewer work, several industrial park internal roads that are in a state of disrepair will be resurfaced at a cost of \$200,000. Also a storm water detention pond (\$465,000) and a storm water collection system (\$835,000) need to be provided. The cost of the project is estimated to be \$2,129,000.

Estimated Project Budget

Federal.....	\$1,064,500
Local – Park Sewer Fund.....	\$200,000
Local – County General Fund.....	\$864,500
TOTAL.....	<u>\$2,129,000</u>

County of St. Clair: (Project Title—Regional Industrial Park):

This particular park would encompass approximately 500 acres potentially across multiple governmental jurisdictions and possibly involve more than one continuous parcel. Various potential sites are currently under consideration for development that will result in over 100 jobs in the short-term and several thousand jobs when fully developed. The park may include sites for both light and heavy industry. Assistance through EDA will be sought for required roadway, public water and sanitary sewer improvements including project pre-engineering

and final design. The following cost estimate was prepared in 1994. An updated cost estimate will be required. MDOT, CDBG, EDA and other funding will be sought.

Estimated Project Budget

Federal.....	\$5,600,000
Local	\$1,400,000
TOTAL.....	<u>\$7,000,000</u>

City of St. Clair: (Project Title—City Industrial Park):

The City of St. Clair is developing an approximately 90-acre industrial park at the northeast corner of Range and Yankee Rds. This park lies directly north of the existing Christian B. Haas Industrial Park that is nearly fully developed. The park will consist of 16 lots averaging 5 acres each. Larger lots can be configured if necessary prior to the park’s completion. Eight of the lots have direct access to CSX rail service. The park presently contains one existing industrial tenant. The city recently awarded a construction contract in the amount of \$380,400 to install the first 1,200 lineal feet of internal roadway as well as sanitary & storm sewers to service the first four lots. Additional work will be necessary to extend the roadway and utilities to the remainder of the lots at an estimated (preliminary) cost of \$860,000. An updated plan and cost estimate will be required for this additional work. MDOT, CDBG, EDA and other funding may be sought.

City of Marine City: (Project Title—City Industrial Park):

The City of Marine City is requesting assistance with the acquisition and development of a 40 acre certified level I industrial park. It will be necessary to secure the land and construct roads, public water and sanitary sewer to serve the proposed lots. The cost of this project was estimated in 1995 to be \$516,000. An up-to-date cost estimate will be need to be prepared. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be sought for this project.

City of Marine City: (Project Title—Plank Road Reconstruction & Sewer/Water Extensions):

The City of Marine City in recent years has expanded its City Limits to the west along the north side of Plank Rd. The road serves several industries that have since developed in this area. This section of road, under the jurisdiction of the St. Clair County Road Commission is in a severe case of disrepair. This project proposes to reconstruct the road to a Class A industrial park standard. Sewer and water lines must also be extended to serve an additional 10 acres of recently annexed land. No cost estimates have yet been prepared for this project. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be requested in the future.

City of Marine City: (Project Title—King Road Extension):

There is a need to provide a more direct truck route linking I-94 with State Highway M-29 through the city. The extension of King Rd. from Chartier Ave. south to Shortcut Rd. and M-29 has been identified as a planned project in the City’s and county’s Master Plans for decades. This project includes the acquisition of 100 to 150 ft. of right-of-way and construction of a three to five land roadway

with enclosed drainage, curb and gutter. The extension of this roadway will not only provide an improved truck route to the City’s Thompson Rd. Industrial Area, but will also open up and provide direct access to additional industrially zoned land adjacent to the extended highway. Updated cost estimates will be required. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be requested in the future.

Estimated Project Budget

TIFA Bonds	\$500,000
Sewer Fund Bonds	\$234,125
Special Assessment Bonds.....	\$200,000
TOTAL.....	<u>\$934,125</u>

City of Marine City: (Project Title—DeGurse Ave. Road Improvements/Reconstruction):

There is a need to improve/reconstruct segments of DeGurse Ave. through the DeGurse Ave. Industrial District. While portions of the existing roadway have enclosed drainage, curb and gutter, the western segment leading to King Rd. and Marine City Highway has a narrow and substandard two-lane cross-section with open ditches and without curbs. Portions of the existing segment having curbs and enclosed drainage are deteriorated and in need of reconstruction. The project will consist of widening and reconstruction to a Class A industrial park standard roadway complete with curbs and enclosed drainage. Large truck now have difficulty making turning movements to and from the narrow roadway. The purpose of the project is to improve the marketability of the industrial district and to improve traffic safety. No cost estimates have yet been prepared. MDOT and/or EDA funding may be requested in the future. The balance of the project will be financed using a combination of special assessments and the major street fund.

The City of Port Huron: (Project Title—Industrial Park Expansion, Phase IV):

The City of Port Huron is proposing to expand its Industrial Park by 90 acres. This expansion is expected to create 18 additional sites on property being assembled by the City of Port Huron at this time. The City has spent approximately \$1.5 million dollars acquiring the property to date, and is expected to complete acquisition in 2003. The City's existing 288-acre park is now nearly fully developed with only three sites remaining and the City feels this expansion is necessary if it is to be in a position to respond to industrial development opportunities in the near future. Following completion of land assembly, the City is prepared to immediately move forward and match any federal assistance for infrastructure development that becomes available. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2004.

Estimated Project Budget

Federal.....	\$1,200,000
Local	\$ 800,000
TOTAL.....	<u>\$2,000,000</u>

The City of Yale: (Project Title—Roadway Construction and Water Main Extension to Industrial Park):

The City of Yale needs to construct approximately 350 lineal feet of internal roadway and water main to service lots within its existing 26 acre industrial park. Several industrial firms have contacted the City and are interested in purchasing land and constructing facilities if the lots can be improved. The estimated cost of the improvements is \$180,000. MDOT and /or EDA funding may be requested for this project.

The City of Yale: (Project Title—Roadway Construction and Utility Extensions to Industrial Park):

The City of Yale plans to extend public sewer and water service to serve the remainder of the industrial park: included are sewer and water extensions along Gordon Drive, M-19, and Oatman Rd. Additionally, the internal road is to be extended north and looped to tie into Gordon Drive, including provision of water and sewer lines to serve all lots. Oatman Rd. is to be paved to extend to the east boundary of the park. This project may include the purchase of additional land by the city within the park boundaries. Cost estimates for these improvements have not yet been prepared. MDOT and/or EDA funds may be requested for this project.

City of Marysville: (Project Title—Industrial Research/Office Park)

The City of Marysville has designated approximately 120 acres of land along Range Road (an all weather road currently connecting numerous industrial parks and sites with I-94) as industrial research and office park. The primary goal of the community is to attract users that have a principal function of research, design and pilot or experimental product development. Other uses permitted within this district include light industry and service related activities. The site is served by public utilities (water and sanitary sewer) along with gas and electric. Federal assistance may be requested in the future upon identification of a potential park client.

MARKETING OF INDUSTRIAL SITES

The Economic Development Alliance of St. Clair County will serve as the principal marketing agency for sites within the existing and planned industrial parks that have been identified above. The EDA of SCC will continue to aggressively market the sites using a set of practices that have successfully brought leads, prospects and new plants to industrial parks throughout the county.

They will assist in obtaining and maintaining certification of industrial parks through the joint Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Michigan Economic Developers Association certification program. Currently, three industrial parks in the county carry this certification. They are the Port Huron Industrial Park, Christian B. Haas Industrial Park and the St. Clair County Air Industrial Park. Of these, the Port Huron and Haas parks are virtually full, attesting to the importance of this designation. The Air Industrial Park just

recently (2002) received this designation. Additional improvements to the Air Industrial Park, as described above, are planned.

The EDA of SCC will continue to maintain an up-to-date marketing brochure, a major portion of which is devoted to the industrial parks. The brochures, as well as other marketing materials and information, will be sent in “fulfillment packages” to leads and prospects that have been identified from marketing initiatives such as advertising, trade shows, and multiplier referrals.

To promote the county as a location for industry, EDA of SCC will continue to undertake an ambitious schedule of marketing events that are carefully arranged around target industry segments. Target industries currently include: automobile and automobile parts manufacturing, plastics, medical goods design and manufacturing, advanced manufacturing (machine tools, robotics, factory automation, etc.), and electricity generation facilities.

In its marketing efforts, EDA of SCC will participate individually and with partners, such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Detroit Regional Economic Partnership. They will exhibit or attend such events as the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Annual Exhibition, Medical Design and Manufacturing Shows in Minneapolis and New York, plastic industry trade events in Cleveland and Chicago, advanced manufacturing events in Detroit and Chicago, and auto parts specialty events in Detroit and Hamilton, Ontario. They will carry out marketing support activities around these events, including receptions, seminars, target industry advertising, direct mail and direct company visits as often as possible.

A constant flow of leads and prospects within our target industry segments will continue to be generated by the EDA of SCC marketing program. In addition to maintaining an inventory of modern, fully-serviced industrial sites, marketing is the key to successful attraction of new business to St. Clair County.

TECHNICAL STUDIES

The following three items are technical studies which are encouraged and may be financed by EDA, if criteria can be met. The funds requested would be used to research an area of potential economic growth with the intent of generating future projects and programs. The three opportunity sectors are: US/Canada border activity; tourism and convention; and food processing.

Border Activity:

The increase in traffic, particularly commercial, at various border crossing points in St. Clair County create an opportunity for businesses which take advantage of commercial traffic. These include free trade zones formed but not well-utilized, customs brokers, bonded warehouses, centralized inspection sites and centralized examination sites servicing both rail and truck traffic. The potential for employment, investment in property development and local deposit of tariffs to be further expanded should be capitalized upon.

A detailed study of the need for and impact of such businesses should be undertaken involving officials and business leaders from both sides of the border. The report would inform and educate community and business leaders as to the scope of such ventures and allow the area to capitalize on needs of the commercial traffic.

Tourism and Convention Activities:

Relatively little is known about the tourism industry or the extent of convention activity in St. Clair County either. There are a number of activities or events which take place throughout the County with the potential of drawing a great many visitors/participants and some which currently draw thousands into the area. Convention facilities do exist in the Port Huron area that could capitalize on their site-specific amenities and regional setting. An obstacle to increased convention business is the fact that a first class hotel is not available within walking distance of the convention facility. Attempts in the past to interest national hotel chains in such a location were unsuccessful. Agri-tourism as a sector should not be overlooked.

An independent study should be made of both the tourism and convention sectors of the County's economy. Although solutions to the problems identified may turn out to be more appropriately addressed by the private sector, the County's CEDS Committee can be in a position to assist in analyzing data, identifying trends and planning strategy or programs which work toward implementing solutions.

There are certain areas of the county which can be more successfully targeted for tourism development than others. Identification of these areas, followed closely by some action to reserve the site for future use and development, would be appropriate.

Agricultural Products—Processing and Distribution:

The economic base study conducted by the University of Michigan states that “St. Clair County has an above average amount of agricultural economic base activity compared to the other counties in the State”. It goes further by indicating how high the county ranks in production of grains, beans and livestock but that the counties to the north are the richest agricultural areas of the State. Given St. Clair County's location, between the producers to the north and consumer markets to the south, food processing is an obvious and logical industry for the county. The exceptional transportation system, interstate highways, state highways, rail connections with Ontario and international port facility, all strengthen our opportunity for this activity to be successful and experience continued growth. Steps should be taken to capitalize on these locational advantages and further explore the interest and/or need for such facilities whether they be processing, packaging, warehousing or international trade. While these factors are being looked at, a profile of site requirements should be developed allowing specific potential sites within the county to be identified. Care should be exercised to assure the potential sites and projects are acceptable from an environmental standpoint (processing plants place great demands on water resources and at times waste disposal systems).

Part III: Action Plan

An action plan attempts to establish steps to be taken toward goals expressed above. This work plan is specific to the CEDS Committee that operates under limited authority, generally advisory in nature.

Action Plan Steps

The CEDS Committee will appoint an Economic Development Technical Advisory Committee and an Economic Development Working Group to assist the CEDS Committee in its work. The recommended composition of which is as follows:

Economic Development Technical Advisory Committee

- EDA of St. Clair County
- County Tourism Bureau
- Cities and urban townships with existing or planned industrial parks or other significant economic development resources, programs, or projects
- Chambers of Commerce
- Downtown Development Authorities
- County Government
- Public Utilities with an active involvement in economic development
- Agri-Business

Economic Development Working Group

- County Administrator
- County Planning Commission, staff representative(s)
- EDA of St. Clair County, staff representative(s)
- Consultants, as needed

The Economic Development Working Group will determine the mechanism for maintaining and updating the CEDS plan.

The Economic Development Technical Advisory Committee with the assistance of the Working Group will update the CEDS plan on an annual basis with oversight of the CEDS Committee and coordinate adoption of the plan by the CEDS Committee and the County Board of Commissioners.

The Working Group will serve as staff to the CEDS Committee.

The County Administrator, or his designee, will serve as the county's principal staff liaison with other economic development organizations, such as local municipalities, economic development corporations, downtown development authorities, federal and state governments, EDA of St. Clair County, County Tourism Bureau, Chambers of Commerce, private economic development interests, and other miscellaneous bodies.

The Working Group will assist the county government, local governments and others in defining and organizing economic development projects that will benefit the county, and assist them in assembling project development teams (e.g., project planning, project engineering, grant writing etc.) so as to be able to actually carry out such projects with first priority given to projects listed in this CEDS plan.

The County Administrator, subject to approval by the Board of Commissioners, will prepare and submit a grant application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration to extend public sewer service to the county's Air Industrial Park and to resurface deteriorated internal access roads within the park.

Staff of both the EDA of St. Clair County and the County Planning Commission will monitor economic development conditions and activities in the county with oversight from the CEDS Committee.

The EDA of St. Clair County will evaluate and refine its strategic marketing plan and will market the county to targeted prospects.

The CEDS Committee will review the performance of various economic development activities and programs within the county, and report (at least annually) in writing to the County Administrator, who shall in turn communicate such findings and recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners.

The CEDS Committee will support and assist, in any way possible, the development, expansion, and marketing of the industrial parks and industrial facilities mentioned in the previous section.

The CEDS Committee will work with those lead agencies which will be conducting the studies found under technical assistance projects, such as: border activity; tourism/convention; and, agricultural processing. Staff assigned to the CEDS Committee may assist as requested in the areas of data analysis and conclusions.

The CEDS Committee will take an active role in economic development planning at the county level. Their emphasis will be one of economic development planning from a county perspective.

The CEDS Committee will take an active role in promoting adherence to its goals through periodic review of the community and economic development activities, plans and plan implementation of the county and the various local governmental units within the county.

The CEDS Committee will establish, refine, and evaluate goals and policies and establish priority ranking for economic development projects.

Part IV: Performance Measures

In order to be able to determine if economic development actions recommended in this plan are effective in achieving the goals and objectives set forth in the plan, it is necessary to establish a system of performance measures.

Progress in achieving some goals may be easier to measure than others. Some benefits (such as increasing the number of jobs) can be objectively measured, while others (such as improving the quality of life) are more subjective.

This is the county's first economic development strategy in which performance measures have been included. Therefore, it may be desirable to start out by establishing a few simple, measurable goals rather than more elaborate and complex performance measures.

The health of a local economy is dependent upon the export of the output of goods or services from the local area to the larger outside world. The export function is of fundamental importance because it represents the "money earning" portion of the economy. This export sector can be based on tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, exported services, or any combination thereof. Jobs that produce goods or services for export are classified as "basic employment."

St. Clair County's economy has historically been characterized by a relatively large manufacturing sector. Jobs within the manufacturing sector of an economy are nearly always considered as basic employment. In many respects, past economic development efforts of the county have been focused on increasing the number of jobs in manufacturing. These efforts have generally been seen as having been successful. However, many of the newer industrial jobs have been in what are known as "second tier" supply firms that are not able to offer the type of higher industrial wage jobs common in the Metropolitan Detroit area. While the county recognizes the need to broaden its economic development programs to include other sectors, such as tourism, wholesale trade, and agriculture, its main

economic development efforts over the next several years will continue focus primarily upon industrial development.

Measures

For the reasons set forth above, the following measures will be used to judge the county's progress in meeting its economic development goals:

- ✓ The Port Huron Industrial Park is nearly full and the ability to expand it further appears to be limited. Therefore, St. Clair County will attempt to replicate the City of Port Huron's very successful industrial development program on a countywide basis by **providing an inventory** of fully serviced lots in modern industrial parks, and by maintaining an inventory of one or more speculative industrial buildings that are ready for immediate occupancy by prospective employers.
- ✓ In order to **maintain** St. Clair County's share of 1.58% of the state's total **manufacturing employment** into the future, the county will work to provide 13,019 in the manufacturing sector by 2005 and retain at least 12,447 manufacturing jobs in 2010.
- ✓ The county will not simply attempt to maintain its current share of the state's manufacturing jobs, as described in the previous performance measure, but will work aggressively to extend the trend of St. Clair County's ever increasing relative share of such jobs. St. Clair County's share of state **manufacturing employment**, which has increased from 1.04% in 1990 to 1.58% in 2000, will further increase to 1.89% in 2005 and 2.24% in 2010. Employment in the manufacturing sector will therefore be **expanded** to 15,597 jobs by 2005 and 17,651 jobs by 2010.
- ✓ The county will bolster the **Air Industrial Park** as a prime location for light industry and air-oriented firms by extending public sewer service to the park and resurfacing internal roadways that are in disrepair. The county will seek grant funding from U.S. EDA or other appropriate sources for a portion of the cost.
- ✓ The county will expand the availability of higher wage manufacturing employment by attracting a new "**first tier**" automobile industry supply firm by 2005, further strengthening its reputation as a good location for automotive suppliers.
- ✓ The county will help **diversify** its manufacturing employment base and **increase average industrial wages** by attracting a "medical goods" or "advanced manufacturing" employer" by 2005.
- ✓ The county will retain its equalized real **industrial tax base** (year 2000) of \$768,167,863 and will **expand** it (in real dollars) by a percentage not less than the forecasted growth rate of the county's population (4% by 2005 and 7.25% by 2010).

- ✓ The CEDS Committee by 2005 will undertake a **comprehensive study** of the **tourism sector** of the economy, will establish and adopt written goals and objectives, and will prepare an action plan listing specific steps that can be undertaken to increase employment in the tourism sector.
- ✓ The county will begin to permanently **preserve** 1,000 acres of **land for agricultural production** by 2005 by encouraging and assisting local farmers to participate in the State of Michigan's Purchase of Development Rights Program.

Part V: Community Participation

Citizen participation is important in the development of any plan. Citizens are a valuable source of ideas and information that could easily be overlooked if steps are not taken to provide a mechanism for public input.

Prior to the adoption of this plan, a draft was reviewed by the CEDS Committee, an eleven (11) member citizen panel (described above). All meetings of the CEDS Committee are open to the public and a specific point in the agenda of each meeting is reserved for citizen participation. The plan was adopted by the CEDS Committee at their meeting of October 16, 2002. The minutes of the meeting are included in the appendix of this report.

Following adoption by the CEDS Committee, the CEDS Plan was referred to the County Board of Commissioners Committee on Public Works.

The Committee on Public Works reviewed the CEDS Plan at their meeting of November 6, 2002 and recommended its adoption to the County Board of Commissioners. Meetings of the committee are open to the public. Minutes of the meeting are included in the appendix.

This CEDS Plan, with the County Master Plan incorporated by reference, was adopted by the County Board of Commissioners at their meeting of November 13, 2002. A copy of the resolution of adoption is included in the appendix. Meetings of the Board of Commissioners are open to the public and a specific point on each agenda is reserved for citizen participation. A public hearing was held by the Commission on this date. A notice of the public hearing was published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county prior to the public hearing. A copy of the notice is included in the appendix.. Minutes of the public hearing are included in the appendix.