



April, 2019

Lenawee County Visioning Progress Update

From January through March 2017, MSU Extension facilitated civic forums across Lenawee County to gather input from residents to shape a countywide strategic plan. Forums took place in Blissfield, Cambridge, Hudson, Adrian, and Tecumseh. Almost 250 Lenawee County residents attended these forums and provided valuable input. Over 150 students attended a special forum for high school students, and an additional two forums gathered input specifically from college students, one each at Siena Heights University and Jackson College.

Participants at each forum took part in facilitated discussions that asked them to identify Lenawee County's strengths, as well as challenges facing the county and its residents. They then brainstormed possible opportunities to enhance those strengths or address the challenges. Finally, facilitators asked participants to envision their ideal future for Lenawee County and describe what would be different about it.

While residents discussed wide ranges of items across the forums, a few themes were apparent. First, participants mentioned **natural resources, education, and identity** as strengths at every forum. Lenawee County residents identified education, in particular, as one of the county's greatest strengths, at each forum. Identity captured a number of items, most having to do with a strong sense of community, the small town feel that exists in the county, being family friendly, and supporting other members of the community. High school and college students identified mostly similar strengths as the overall sample of participants

On the challenges side, residents recognized **collaboration, infrastructure, and retaining youth** as some of Lenawee County's greatest challenges at every forum. In most cases, these were the first three challenges identified. Challenges identified by high school and college students as most important included **drug problems**, availability of **mental health services**, and a lack of **things to do** and places to gather outside of school.

Through summer and fall of 2017, issue specific working groups formed to set goals and develop action plans for each of the priority areas identified in the civic forums. One Lenawee steering committee members facilitated these groups and effort was made to ensure diverse participation in the working groups. Developing measurable and achievable goals was an emphasis of this process. These serve as a starting point and as they are accomplished, new goals will be identified to continue making Lenawee County a great place to live, work, and play. These groups focused broadly on the topics of:

- Placemaking
- Workforce Development
- Entrepreneurship
- Collaboration and Communication
- Promotion and Marketing
- Infrastructure
- Lifestyle Choices

Each group came up with a set of goals that to be pursued countywide in Lenawee County. The following pages details the goals each working group developed and progress made in 2018.

- **Placemaking**

The Placemaking workgroup separated goals into two areas for primary focus: Arts and Culture, and Natural Resources. Those goals are below, along with progress towards those goals.

Arts and Culture goal: Increase participation in the arts by providing exposure and access to youth and underserved populations.

One strategy that has been pursued is to increase access and participation by promoting and growing the “The Crew” group through the Croswell Opera House. Throughout 2018 The Crew has been active and attracting the under 40 crowd to attend and support arts and culture in Lenawee County.

Natural Resources goal #1: Promote outdoor recreation destinations and parks in Lenawee County

The first step toward reaching this goal was to invite municipalities to promote their parks on the Lenawee County website. Further work is ongoing to better promote parks throughout Lenawee County.

Natural Resources goal #2: Connect Lenawee through bike routes, trails, non-motorized pathways and waterways

Municipal leaders throughout Lenawee County and the Lenawee County Road Commission have met multiple time with representatives from Adrian Kiwanis and other groups. These groups are working together to extend the Kiwanis Trail through grant funding and secure matching funds to extend the trail to Cal Zorn Park in Tecumseh.

- **Workforce Development**

The Workforce Development working group developed a broad set of goals, which emphasize both short and long-term improvements in workforce development efforts in Lenawee County. Those goals are:

1. Put information on the county website that includes businesses, efforts that enhance and identify the county’s skilled and trained workforce, trends, and future needs.
2. Create an easy to understand resource – helix – for educational outreach that outlines career pathways available in Lenawee County.
3. Increase and track participation in MI right Future/Align.
4. Improve Communication and Outreach.
5. Better utilize tech education facilities; increase apprenticeships and OJTs.
6. Collect certification data and disseminate it.
7. Produce, disseminate, and update an asset map.

- **Entrepreneurship**

The Entrepreneurship working group’s goals focused on supporting entrepreneurs in the business startup process and ensuring that Lenawee residents are aware of resources to assist in this process.

Those goals are:

1. Build a pathway that takes entrepreneurs through a process which moves from idea through executed business startup and includes both structural elements and processes.
2. Market this new pathway and entrepreneurial resources.

- **Collaboration and Communication**

The goals for Collaboration and Communication emphasized connecting with communities throughout the county and improving communication in order to promote and enable increased collaboration. The goals are:

1. Involve all communities in the county, both geographically and culturally, in efforts to improve collaboration.
2. Effectively communicate the value and impact of collaborative efforts.

For 2018, two objectives were prioritized for completion.

Objective #1: Develop a communication plan that includes a variety of forms of media.

Specific plans include monthly reviews of progress made by other Priority Area working groups, quarterly reports to be shared with the County Commission, a monthly column in the Daily Telegram, and guest appearances on WLEN and WABJ radio to share progress made towards strategic goals.

Objective #2: Develop a plan for engaging communities in collaborative efforts, building on things they are already doing.

Specific efforts towards this objective have included engaging county commissioners and providing them with regular updates to share at Township Meetings.

- **Promotion and Marketing**

The Promotion and Marketing working group developed four primary goals, as well as a number of subsidiary steps to help them achieve those goals.

The four overarching goals are:

1. Create a brand and slogan to represent Lenawee County.
2. Develop marketing campaigns for other priority areas (working group topics).
3. Create a survey for Lenawee County residents to see where they gather their information.
4. Create a marketing campaign for how to market events, attractions, parks and recreation for residents.

Progress towards goals:

Goal #1: The working group identified three key steps towards achieving *Goal 1*, "Create a brand and slogan to represent Lenawee County." The first step was to develop a survey asking Lenawee residents "What is Lenawee to you?" This was completed in early 2018 and efforts continue towards using the feedback from the survey to identify and develop an image of Lenawee County and build a brand from that.

Goal #2: Some progress has been made in developing marketing campaigns for other Priority Areas. Goals from other priority areas are being reviewed in order to develop marketing campaigns for each topic.

Goal #3: A survey was developed for Lenawee County residents to gather information on where they find information about what is going on in the county. Survey responses will be used to improve marketing and share information from each priority area related to progress on goals.

Goal #4: Significant effort has been made towards creating a marketing campaign for promoting events, attractions, and parks and recreation. Specific campaigns have been developed around the Pure Michigan Passions (Arts and Culture, Craft Beer and Wine, Golf, Lake Effect, Scenic Route, Snow Day, Trails). Efforts in this area have included developing a co-op radio campaign focused in Arts and Culture and Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation, through a partnership with the Adrian, Tecumseh, Blissfield, Lenawee Now, and Irish Hills.

- **Infrastructure**

- **Lifestyle Choices**

The Lifestyle Choices working group developed three long-term goals focused on the health and wellness of Lenawee County residents. Those goals are:

1. By 2023, improve the quality of life for Lenawee County seniors.
2. By 2023, reduce overweight and obesity incidence in Lenawee County residents.
3. By 2023, reduce opioid addition and abuse in Lenawee County.

Initial steps towards reaching these goals has focused on assessing community physical and emotional well-being in Lenawee and engaging residents in prioritizing their health and the health of their community. In late 2017 a Lenawee County Health Assessment was completed and the results were presented to the community in April 2018.

Additionally, a media campaign was developed to engage residents in championing their own health.