

Foundations of Practice

*Community Development
Core Competencies for
Extension Professionals in
the North Central region*

Community Economics



Scott Loveridge



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

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Scott's prior positions include Peace Corps Zaire Extension Agent, Extension Specialist with the University of Minnesota, and Extension unit leader and Regional Research Institute Director with West Virginia University. As Community Development Extension Leader for Michigan State University, he coaches [Extension teams](#) working on Community Development, Economic Development, Leadership Development, Land Use, State and Local Government, Urban Programs, and Tourism Development. Scott's research focuses on local economic development policy.

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Why Community Economics

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All communities NOT created equal

- Different resource endowments
- Different growth trajectories
- Understanding how community's economy works can help steer
- Change is constant

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Learning Objectives

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Basic Strategies for Fostering Greater Economic Growth in the Community

Promises and Pitfalls of each Strategy

Possible Roles for Extension Professionals in each Strategy

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Case Studies

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Chelsea

Frankenmuth

Holland

Kalamazoo

What are the stories of successful communities in your area?

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Role of Educator--Overall

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Help community understand its strengths and weaknesses

Help community learn to develop capacity to plan and implement

Teach about strategies, tried & true as well as emerging

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Other Main Players

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State Development Agency

Small Business Development Center Network

Chamber

Local Development Authorities

Local Governments

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Six Strategies

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Attracting Manufacturing

Business Retention & Expansion

Downtown Development

Tourism & Recreational Development

Developing Entrepreneurs

Strategic Planning for Economic Development

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Attracting Manufacturing

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Strategy Basics

- Identify land for development
- Make site improvements
- Develop recruitment “packages”
- Identify possible industries
- Attend trade shows and make other contacts with target industries

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Attract Manufacturing

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Attracting manufacturing seems to be the only strategy that many communities pursue

Attracting manufacturing is popular because it seems to offer “quick fix”

In reality, attracting manufacturing is a multi-year process with real pitfalls

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Case Study: Crawford County, Ohio

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270 acre industrial park

\$115K donations for down payment on acreage

Found needed to extend water and sewer, requiring add'l funding. \$283K raised through donations

\$1.1M loan for water and sewer

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Crawford County continued

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\$184K from State for highway extension

\$13K archaeological study

Build 70,000 sq foot spec building on site

Purchase add'l 12 acres

New building used as warehouse for four years

Time from initial fund raising to first non-warehouse jobs: six years.

Overall: site work started in 1990 and site is still not fully occupied in 2008. Board is struggling to service the debts.

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Crawford County

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Not quite a “classic” story because Crawford County attracted some good-sized firms.

“Classic” is no firms at all.

Fairmont, West Virginia example.

What are some good/bad examples in your area?

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Educator Roles in Attracting Manufacturing

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Teach people about possible pitfalls of the strategy

Teach people about long term nature of a strong attraction program

Help the community use attraction as a way to gauge strengths and weaknesses of the community. If a prospect looks and does not come, why not?

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Educator roles, continued

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Serve as the local EDA attraction “point person”

- Problems with this role
 - Moves you from educator to “doer”
 - May make you unpopular as park “sits”

Teach grant writing and related workshops

Board development for park manager

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Attraction is Not Always Bad. When to Use Attraction?

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When a major facility is idled through plant closure or military base shut down

When you are going to grow anyway...good to manage the process

As a complement to other strategies

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Data Sources

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Site Selection magazine is a trade publication that lists major relocations by state. This will help understand state's comparative advantage and typical number of large projects in your state. This helps assess odds of success. Have similar communities been successful?

Your state development agency will have a comprehensive list of incentive programs and where they've been used (and for which companies)

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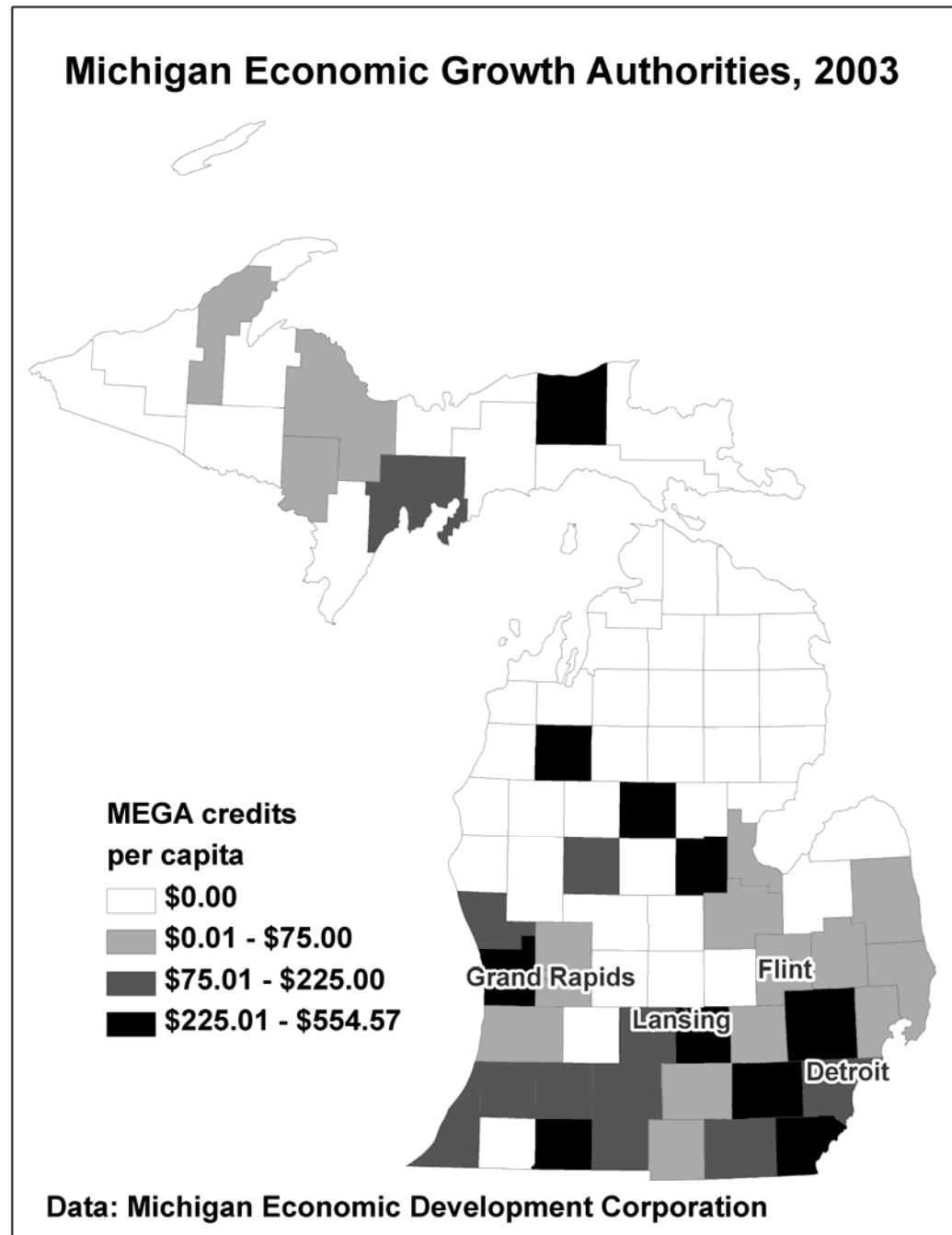
Can Everyone Really Recruit?

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Business Retention and Expansion - Basics

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2 Types of BRE Program:

1. Lone Ranger
2. Volunteer Visitor

Lone Ranger: Visits business and fixes the problem. Not recommended for Extension professionals.

Volunteer visitor: Survey of businesses, committee reviews the survey, may fix problem but also looks for broader, community-wide issues

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BRE More Basics

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Most frequently applied to the manufacturing sector, but also has been applied to retail and agriculture.

Volunteer visitor program allows many roles: overall leader, task force member, visitor.

Challenge is to prioritize individual and community-wide issues and sustain momentum to address them

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BRE Advantages

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If done well, BRE is typically the most efficient local economic development strategy in terms of jobs created or saved per dollar invested.

BRE can help pull the community's leadership together on issues.

BRE can be well received by businesses who feel that new firms are favored over the "old reliable" firms.

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BRE Caveats

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BRE may not be the place to start if you are new in the community. The leader must have very strong social networks to keep Task Force moving. If you are new, look for a champion who is well established as leader, but make sure s/he is NOT leader in name only.

BRE may not help if the community needs to move from one industry to another. Can't reverse economic fundamentals.

If community has local economic developer, need that person's buy-in.

Mistake to "mix" business types. Focus on one of following:
manufacturing, retail or agriculture

Important not to create false expectations that program will fix all problems; important to get leadership buy-in before launch

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Extension Roles

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Task Force leader (seasoned people only)

Task Force member

Facilitator for strategic planning sessions

Connector to outside resources for follow-up on survey
issues

Visitor (all Task Force members should also visit.)

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Case Study: Grafton, West Virginia

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BRE visit revealed local greenhouse with 200 full time employees was considering going out of business

Main problem: costs.

Secondary problem: lost inventory due to overdosing with fertilizer, fungicides, and pesticides. Dead plants, excess use of chemicals.

Solution: BRE Task Force worked with local community college to develop training program to increase worker math skills. Workers completing the program got a raise. New skills enabled workers to accurately compute application rates, reducing costs.

Win-Win-Win-Win: Company's costs went down, Employee wages increased, town kept tax base, and local community college got more students.

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Resources

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Business Retention and Expansion International Training Course

American Business Disk (for business lists...most small communities underestimate the number of local businesses)

State Development Office (may assist on visits to largest businesses; can help inventory programs available for follow up)

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Downtown Development Basics

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Physical enhancements to downtown area

Preservation of historic (or just interesting looking) buildings

Marketing of the downtown through advertising and events

Coordination among downtown merchants

Develop “brand” for town

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Towns with Brands

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Branson

Las Vegas

Orlando

Many smaller towns have regional brands:

- Traverse City, Michigan (Cherries)
- International Falls, MN (Coldest place)
- What about your state?

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Downtown Development Advantages

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Can turn an eyesore into a source of community pride

Good for the environment. Re-uses existing infrastructure—tendency to build outside of town otherwise.

Creates a sense of *community identity*

Double benefit: can attract newcomers but can also make the place more pleasant for residents

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Downtown Development Cautions

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Build it and they don't come

- Tendency to put physical improvements ahead of marketing and creativity, e.g., brick road in Albion
- Can't offset wholesale population loss from a broad geographic region (but can help make sure your town declines less than the next town over)

Creating a sense of "sameness" instead of a sense of place.

May gentrify place, with newcomers outnumbering the long term residents.

- Hardware store replaced by souvenir shop
- Extreme seasonality, with souvenir shop closed in off season

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Downtown Development More Cautions

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Tastes and Preferences Change

- Forty years ago, downtowns were covering up old facades to look more modern.
- Twenty years ago, Antique malls
- Now
 - Internet shopping
 - Electronics
 - Gen X & Y not as interested in history?

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Downtown Development

When to Use It

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Basic Infrastructure is Sound

Proximity to Potential Markets

- Data: State sales tax
 - Caveat: Big box data

Uniqueness of Place

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Downtown Development Extension Roles

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Charette

Facilitation: Identification of assets and planning

Historic preservation workshops

Grant-writing workshops for infrastructure

Formation or revitalization of downtown association

MainStreet Program

Possible role for Master Gardeners

First Impressions program

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Tourism & Recreation Development Basics

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Tourism versus Recreation

- Tourism: generally coming from somewhere else
- Recreation: generally from the area (parks, walking trails, non-professional sports)

Tourism and Recreation are synergistic:

- Recreational facilities can be used by tourists. (Golf)
- Tourist-oriented facilities can be used by locals. (Restaurants)

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Tourism Development Basics

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Inventory current visitor activities

- This is usually surprising as there are typically more visitors than people imagine
- Important to distinguish between business visits and leisure visits.
- Recognize that business visits can lead to leisure visits

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Tourism Development Basics

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Inventory current tourist assets (including under-utilized assets). What do the locals like to do in the area? There a good chance tourists would like it, too! Examples: County Fair, Local Trail System

Develop Marketing plans, esp. State Tourist Office web sites, brochures at visitor centers (these are very low cost)

Attempt to coordinate marketing across various assets (difficult but can be cost effective)

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Tourism Development Basics

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Assist Individual Businesses with Marketing Plans

Conduct hospitality training for workforce

First Impressions program if the main tourist asset is a
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Tourism Development Advantages

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Tourism sector has been growing in recent years

Tourism sector may grown even more quickly now due to state of the US dollar

- Reduced US travel to foreign areas

- Increased Foreigner travel to US (Canada already huge and response to drop in the US dollar has be rapid.)

Tourism can keep a town livable if restaurants are declining due to population shifts

Tourism can bolster support for local amenities such as parks and golf courses

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Tourism Development Advantages

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Tourism development can help attract manufacturing firms!

Tourism development can attract retirees or other “lifestyle” immigrants

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Tourism Development Caveats

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Requires shift in “mind set” for more traditionally oriented economic developers

Myth: All tourism jobs are low wage

Myth: Tourism doesn’t bring in dollars

Myth: There’s nothing here to attract visitors

Reality: Like downtown development, can lead to extreme seasonality, but planning & creativity can help offset this.

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Tourism Development Caveats

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Rural Tourism can be very fragmented...leads to difficulty in coordinating efforts

Local tourism businesses may see each other as competitors and find it difficult to cooperate

“Mom and Pop” businesses have limited ability to pay for promotional efforts and staff development activities such as hospitality training

Leaders may over-react to gas price increases; gas price is a small percentage of total expenditures on a regional tourism experience

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Tourism Development: When to Use It

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When the community has undiscovered assets

When infrastructure is under-utilized

When tourism efforts are fragmented

Assets/Partners in Tourism Development

- MainStreet program
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- State Travel and Tourism Agency (for promotional efforts, but also may have data)
- Tourism/Recreation faculty at local universities

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Tourism Development Case Study: Octagon Barn, Tuscola, Michigan

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Tuscola County is in Michigan's "thumb"---no four lane highways and not on the way to anywhere. No large cities.

Octagon barn built by local businessman for his race horses in 1800s

- Largest octagon barn in US
- Wood frame construction

Property became part of State Park

State Park wanted to tear barn down due to decay.

Local group convinced State Park manager to allow them to purchase land and buildings (barn, shed and house)

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Octagon Barn

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Raised funds and recruited volunteers for barn restoration.

Fund-raising included arts and crafts festival (crafters rent exhibition space on the property)

Funds also purchase antique farm equipment and antiques for the house.

Festival currently attracts 10,000 visitors every year. Barn also attracts school groups and other tours.

“Friends of the Octagon Barn” non-profit has a balance of over \$250K with an operating budget of about \$100K for full time caretaker and routine maintenance.

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Recreation Development

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Focus on parks, trails, sports facilities, libraries

Identify gaps

What is market able to pay?

What is public willing to support?

Most public recreation now supported with combination of taxes and user fees.

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Recreation Development Advantages

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Great benefits to the community

May reduce out-migration (if this is a problem)

May help industrial recruitment efforts

May help tourism development efforts

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Recreation Development Caveats

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May be tough to “sell” to the community in current anti-tax environment

Large property owners may mount campaigns against it

User fees may be difficult to enforce for some types of facilities

Requires careful assessment of costs and use; expert help is recommended

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Extension Roles

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Facilitate public discussion/priority setting

Connect to university resources for analysis/business planning for new activities/facilities

Help form new associations to lead recreation development efforts

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Example

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In Michigan, Extension has helped several communities establish linear parks (in most cases, rail trails, but also riverways) to create recreational activities for local residents. The trails are also marketed for tourism.

The Pere Marquette Rail Trail web site provides examples of mission statement and Michigan State University studies about the trail, its users, and attitudes of owners of property along the trail. <http://www.lmb.org/pmrt/>

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Entrepreneurial Communities: Basics

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Establish “community systems” to create and grow entrepreneurs

No one-size-fits-all recipe; systems will vary by community, but common theme is to encourage more people to start businesses and to help businesses get to the next stage of their growth

A difference between this and BRE is focus on owners of small-to-medium sized businesses with growth desire and potential, rather than existing large businesses or just any existing business.

Common approaches

- Business advocate or coaching
- Youth entrepreneurship
- Peer-to-peer networking/problem solving
- Business incubators
- Focus on entrepreneurs rather than businesses

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Entrepreneurial Communities: Advantages

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Strategy requires no special location advantages; if a region has people, it is possible to work on improving entrepreneurial systems.

Location may not be optimal for a particular business, but a business that succeeds in a less-than-optimal location will probably stay in the community.

Not hard to convince people that more entrepreneurship is a good idea...in principle.

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Entrepreneurial Communities: Disadvantages

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Because it is both newer and somewhat fluid, the strategy may be viewed as duplicative of existing services such as:

- Business visitation programs
- Small business development center services

In fact, it is complementary.

While everyone will agree it is good, funding is sparse.

Strategy has a long gestation period before payoff; community support may dwindle when results are not immediate. Some businesses may not even realize they've benefitted.

Some aspects require "culture change" that may not be easy. For example, getting schools to re-orient basic skills training towards entrepreneurship under current "teach-to-the-test" policy regime

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When to Use Entrepreneurial Communities

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When need to transition local economy from its traditional strengths.

-In Michigan, for example, the strategy is most critically needed in areas that traditionally focused on manufacturing. These areas lack a “culture” of entrepreneurship because, since the 1920s, it has been possible to get an excellent manufacturing job with a high school diploma. So family and community systems for entrepreneurial development atrophied.

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Data:

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A basic indicator can be percent of workforce employed by businesses in the 1-4 employee size range (available from Census Bureau's County Business Patterns). If less than 20% of workforce is employed by small business, community may be ripe for this strategy.

Loveridge (2007) developed a list of 41 questions to ask to assess community entrepreneurship systems. (Walzer, N. ed., Entrepreneurship and Local Economic Development Systems. Lexington.)

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Roles for Extension

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Conduct assessment using 41 questions

Develop incubator

Connect community to SBDC and Land Grant Value-added center

Help form peer networks

Serve in “coaching” role

Introduce youth entrepreneurship program via 4-H

Develop community recognition systems, eg., “Companies to Watch”

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Strategic Planning for Economic Development: Basics

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Convene community leaders for planning

Engage broader set of stakeholders in issue identification...look at data as well as opinions

Process inputs; convene additional meetings to determine which strategies enjoy support

Develop action plans around priority strategies

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Strategic Planning: Advantages and Disadvantages

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Can complement other strategies or help identify which strategy fits community best

Low cost

A way to achieve consensus in the community

Product may “sit on shelf” if buy-in is not real.

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Extension Role

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Facilitate or bring in outside facilitator

Conflict resolution

Resource identification for action teams

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Overall data sources

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Using Employment Data to Better Understand Your Local Economy,
Martin Shields, http://cecd.aers.psu.edu/pubs/using_employment_data_to_better.htm

www.econdata.net

SETA Office of Social and Economic Trend Analysis, Iowa State,
<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/>

American FactFinder, U.S.Census,
<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html? lang=en>

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Reflection Questions

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Which of the strategies discussed today has been tried in your area?

What obstacles are likely to be encountered in implementing the strategies in your area?

Who, locally, would support each strategy?

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Add'l Readings

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Loveridge, Scott, and George W. Morse, *Implementing Local Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Programs*, [Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development](#), Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania. 1997.

Shaffer P., and Loveridge S. (eds.) 2000. *Small Town and Rural Economic Development: A Case Studies Approach*. Praeger.

Walzer, N. (ed). 2007. *Entrepreneurship and Local Economic Development*. Lexington Books.



Next Session

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Community Demographics

October 14 and 15, 2008

1:30 to 3 p.m. CST



Andy Lewis

The ability to understand the demographic profile and trends in a community is essential to identifying issues and sustainable alternatives.

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