

MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Directors Report
July 14, 2014

On June 4, 2014 MEA and Mackinac County Planning Commission sponsored a Placemaking Workshop in St. Ignace. City, Township and County officials joined representatives from business and community organizations to learn about the role of placemaking in Mackinac County. Speaking to an audience of over 40 people Jen Tucker from MEDC and Jessica Flores from MSHDA took us through the steps to help identify our unique placemaking assets. Workshop participants offered a host of ideas to revitalize communities across the county. Based on specific feedback obtained during break out sessions MEA was able to create a list of priorities.

Following the workshop Jen and Jessica instructed MEA to gather public input on these priorities. They suggested we brainstorm with Mackinac County residents through Survey Monkey. They also recommended an innovative method for polling residents in individual communities called "Dot Voting". Thanks to Rebecca, MEA has distributed posters in all the communities listed above. In addition the survey has been transmitted to Chambers and other organizations for distribution. Before our next meeting MEA will tally the results and present the 2-3 goals that received the most support and can be accomplished in the next 2-3 years. Following the completion of these surveys, we will have the necessary public input for Jen and Jessica to come back and discuss funding sources for our priorities.

Next on MEA's grant docket is the USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant. Though the next filing date is not until 2/15 we will be gathering support letters from Mackinac County businesses in the coming months. Board members are urged to share names of businesses in the county that could benefit from access to a revolving loan fund.

Following discussions at our last MEA Board meeting I met individually with Pete Everson, Angie McArthur and Randy Schaedig to discuss the NCMC concurrent /dual enrollment proposal. Though there was consensus around the need for vocational and career education classes through Mackinac County schools all educators acknowledged the importance of developing a realistic and practical approach to meeting the need. There is interest to study various options through the Sault Career Center and to look at ways in which high school graduates could access career education opportunities after they have graduated.

The MI Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is presently in St. Ignace at the Old County Hospital site completing their "Brownfield Redevelopment Assessment". Their work constitutes a majority of Phase I and Phase II environmental assessment activities. Communication between Michigan Department of Community Health and Mackinac Straits Health System CEO Rod Nelson led to Beacon Specialized Living Services (Bangor, MI) consideration of the Old County Hospital site for the behavioral healthcare services the company provides. Given the need for residential and short-term adult foster care facilities in Mackinac County appropriate steps were taken to evaluate the suitability of the site for redevelopment. Once De Vere Construction assessed the property and

made their recommendations to Beacon, MEA began working with DeVere to coordinate the grant award secured by MEA through MI DEQ for their purposes. Their plan is to retrofit the 1994 addition of the old hospital for 15-20 patients and demolish the remaining buildings on the property. As such this constitutes the first Brownfield Redevelopment Project in Mackinac County.

Providing foster care for developmentally disabled, mentally ill and autistic adults
Beacon operates 25 such facilities across the state. They expect to employ 30-40 people in Mackinac County in full time jobs.

MEA has submitted the attached “EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant Development and Management Agreement” to the Mackinac County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) for consideration. In facilitating the preparation of the FY 2015 EPA Brownfield Assessment MEA has requested responsibility for implementing the grant. These implementation services would be funded by the EPA under Eligible Programmatic Expenses.