

MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Directors Report
September 23, 2014

MEA has just concluded its placemaking surveys in Mackinac County. Rebecca Bolen evaluated results from both the survey monkey and dot voting programs. She has illustrated these results in a series of pie charts (attached) created for the MEA Board to review. Taking into account conclusions drawn from the surveys, MEA has been asked by MEDC Community Assistance Specialist Jen Tucker to consider and answer a series of questions that will inform the next steps to be taken by MEDC. Based on MEDC feedback MEA will have 2-3 actionable placemaking initiatives to develop. Rebecca will be coordinating this effort for MEA.

As the MDARD Economic Development Specialist for the UP Donna LaCourt is presently working with the DNR to support Walther Farms establish a 7,000-acre potato farm in Mackinac County. In addition Walther Farms requested MEA to identify those organizations in Mackinac County best suited to represent stakeholders interests in a potential potato farm development. MEA Vice Chairman, Dean Reid has reached out to various representatives from pertinent organizations and focus group has been assembled to discuss the concerns of stakeholders at a meeting scheduled for October 7, 2014 in St. Ignace.

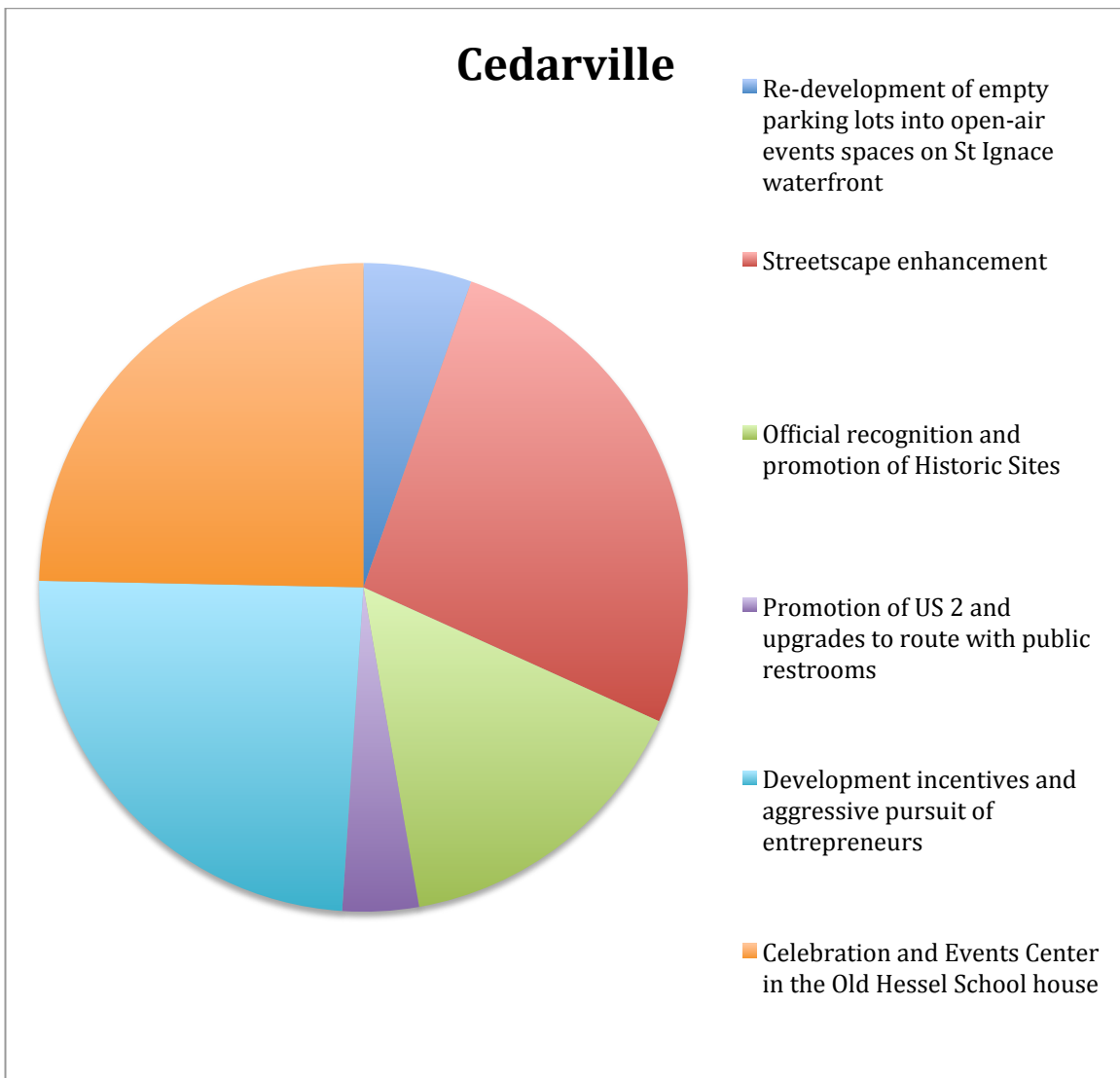
In mid-July MEA was contacted by Anand Gangadharan of Novi Energy in Novi, MI. His company develops energy solutions and provides a broad range of energy management and infrastructure development for government, industrial commercial and utility customers. Anand described an energy project he hopes to develop in Mackinac County and asked MEA for their assistance in identifying and securing the appropriate property, and obtaining support from Newton Township. The Project Proposal entails building a 300 MG electric power generating plant utilizing natural gas as fuel. Novi Energy is dedicated to optimizing clean burning modern technologies and, with an investment of over \$300 million, Novi Energy would employ 15-17 full time employees in Mackinac County. MEA was instrumental in securing an option on property that was suitable for Novi Energy to develop. MEA also facilitated arrangements for a special meeting of the Newton Township Board to pass a resolution supporting the Novi Energy proposal. MEA prepared letters of support from both Newton Township and MEA to accompany the Novi Energy Proposal filed July 25, 2014. Novi Energy has indicated that it will be 6 mos. before they know if their proposal has been accepted.

At a reception in August I had an opportunity to meet the newly installed President of Lake Superior State University, Tom Pleger. We talked briefly about the need for career and vocational education opportunities in Mackinac County and the UP. Tom expressed interest in learning more about Northern Michigan's recently launched Mobile CNC FAB LAB providing CNC (computer numeric control) training at public schools, private companies, Michigan Works and higher education institutions throughout the northern lower Peninsula of Michigan. With information gleaned through discussions with all Superintendents/Principals in Mackinac County and input from former ISD President of the Eastern UP, Pete Everson, I will be meeting with Dr. Pleger to discuss the current

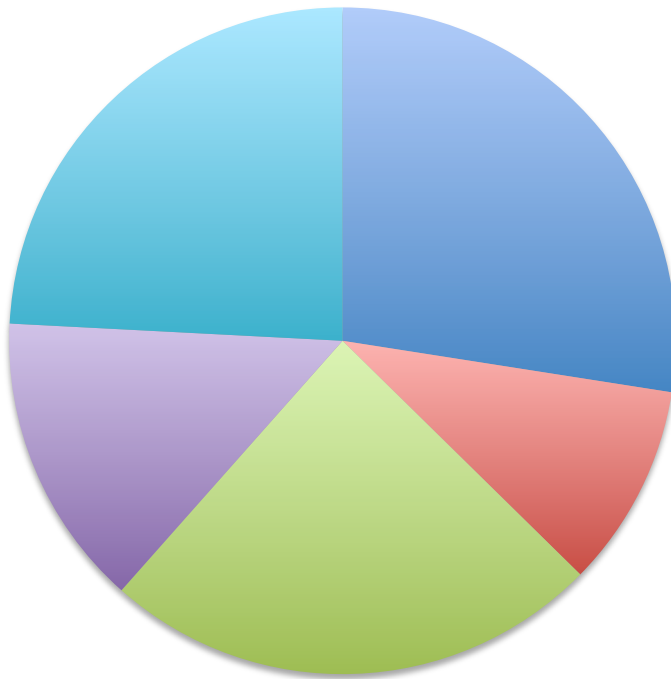
challenges associated with establishing effective career and vocational opportunities in the UP, and the potential for a broad based collaborative effort to study innovative learning models.

At an informal dinner of the MEA Board on August 11th a recommendation was made to address constraints faced by Board members from the west end of the county and on Mackinac Island to attend MEA Board meetings. There was consensus surrounding the idea of establishing a small task force of interested individuals in Curtis and on Mackinac Island to meet and discuss economic development challenges specific to their respective locales. This would give MEA better guidance in developing initiatives to address the needs of these outlying communities. Based on suggestions offered by Bud Chamberlain MEA has reached out to several key people in Portage Township who are eager to take next steps.

PLACEMAKING SURVEY RESULTS:



St Ignace



- Re-development of empty parking lots into open-air events spaces on St Ignace waterfront
- Streetscape enhancement
- Official recognition and promotion of Historic Sites
- Promotion of US 2 and upgrades to route with public restrooms
- Development incentives and aggressive pursuit of entrepreneurs
- Celebration and Events Center in the Old Hessel School house

Total



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