



... Moving Forward ... Working Together

TO: Village President and Council
FROM: Debbie Powell, Village Manager
Joshua Prusik, Community Development Fellow
DATE: March 29, 2021
SUBJECT: Approve the 2021-2025 Village of Cass City Economic Development Plan

As part of the Village's intent to become a Certified-Level Redevelopment Ready Community and of the Village Council's strategic goal of economic development, the Village Manager and the Community Development Fellow have worked for several months to craft an economic development plan. This plan focuses on four strategic areas:

- Business Retention and Development
- Re-Envisioning and Restoring the Downtown Core
- Diversifying Housing Opportunities
- Improving and Expanding Mobility

The vision of the Economic Development Plan is as follows:

The Village of Cass City strives to grow a diverse, modern economy while retaining the small-town charm and agricultural roots for which the community is known. This economy will support small, medium, and large local businesses, prioritize a socially vibrant public realm, and provide a walkable, livable community for a talented workforce.

This plan is the result of months of work and discussion, which has secured support from the citizens of Cass City, this Council, the DDA/EDC, the Planning Commission, the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and the leadership of the Tuscola EDC.

Therefore, we request the following:

MOTION: Adopt the 2021 – 2025 Village of Cass City Economic Development Plan.

Village of Cass City
Economic Development Plan
2021 - 2025

Prepared by:

Joshua L Prusik

CEDAM Fellow for the Village of Cass City

March 2021

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OVERVIEW

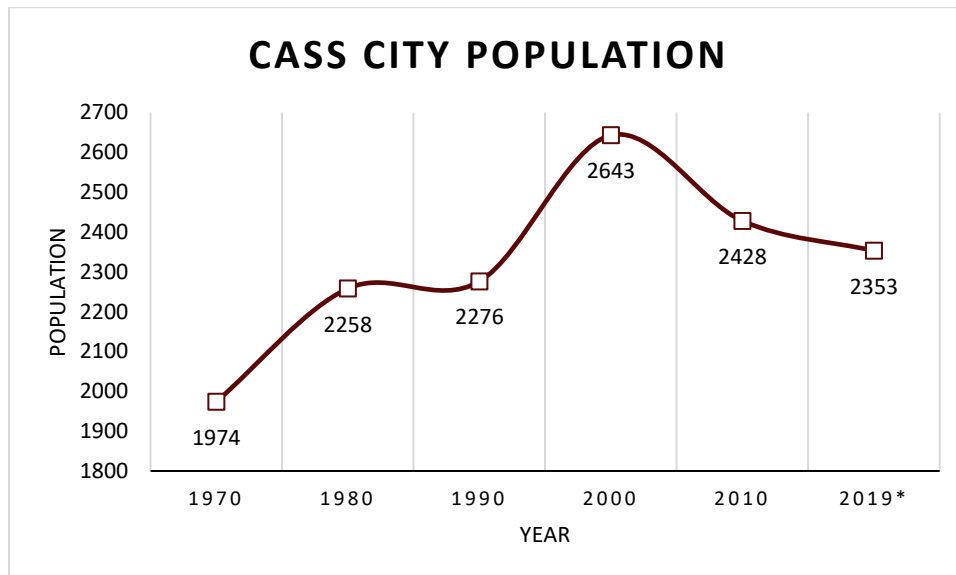
Summary of Key Information

The information outlined in this section comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, utilizing various U.S. Censuses (1970 – 2010) and the 2006 – 2010 and 2015 - 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Data Profiles. All data discussed is estimated – margin of errors may be found in the original census reports and ACS data profiles.

Population

In 2000, the Village of Cass City had a population of 2,640, which dropped to 2,428 (-8%) in 2010. As of 2019, the Village of Cass City had an estimated population of 2,353 (-3% from 2010). Figure 1 illustrates population trends from 1970 – 2019 based on available data. More information will be available in May 2021, when results of the 2020 Census are made public.

Figure 1: Population Trends in Cass City 1970-2019*



*Data labeled as 2019 is based on the ACS 2015 – 2019 results.

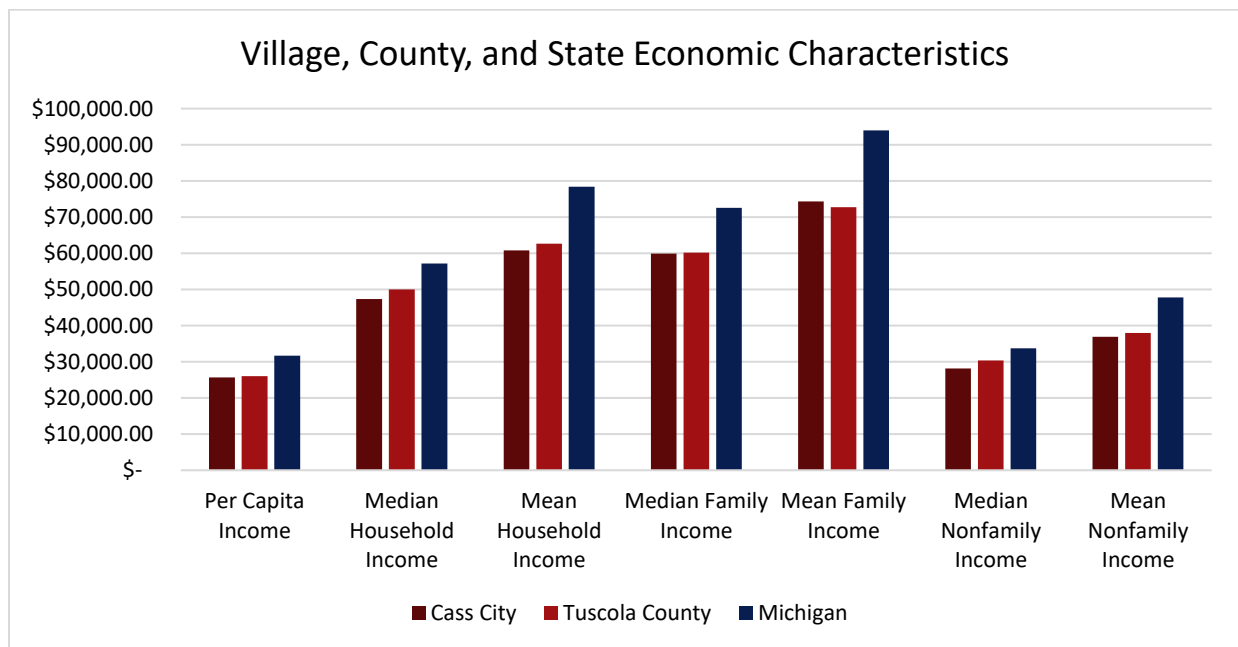
From 2015 – 2019, the median age in Cass City was 47.3, which is higher than the median age of Tuscola County (44.6), Michigan (39.7), and of the United States (38.1). The age breakdown of residents is as follows: 16.5% of the population is under the age of 18, 30.3% are between the ages of 18 and 44, 26.2% are between 45 and 64, and 26.9% are 65 and over. The estimated total households within the Village are 953, with an average household size of 2.34. Of these

953 households, 487 identify as a married-couple family (51.1%), 230 have one or more people under the age of 18 (24.1%), and 165 (17.3%) are an individual over 65 living alone.

Individual and Household Economic Characteristics

For 2015-2019, the Village of Cass City had a median household income of \$47,344 and a mean income of \$60,830. The median family income was \$59,785 and the mean income for families was \$74,374. Out of 953 households, 643 (67.4%) had income from earnings, 424 (44.5%) had income from Social Security, 270 (28.3%) had income from retirement funds. The median value of owner-occupied units in the Village is \$81,600. Most owner-occupied households do not have mortgage payments (55.8%), which is high compared to the State of Michigan average of 39.9%. For those renting in Cass City, the median monthly rental payment is \$578, lower than the Michigan median of \$871. Figure 2 (below) draws comparisons between several economic metrics in the Village of Cass City, Tuscola County, and the State of Michigan.

Figure 2: Village, County, and State Economic Characteristics



Education and Labor Force

Current educational enrollment of residents in the Village of Cass City consists of 398 people, 191 that are enrolled in preschool through grade 8, 105 enrolled in high school (grades 9 through 12), and 102 people that are enrolled in college or graduate school. Table 1 describes the educational attainment of Cass City residents over the age of 25 and provides a comparison with the overall population of Michigan by percentage of residents.

Table 1: 2015 – 2019 Educational Attainment Ages 25+

Educational Attainment	People	Cass City Percentage	Michigan Percentage
Less than 9th grade	28	2%	3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	165	9%	6%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	609	35%	29%
Some college, no degree	441	25%	23%
Associate's degree	172	10%	9%
Bachelor's degree	231	13%	18%
Graduate or professional degree	116	7%	11%
High school graduate or higher	1569	89%	91%
Bachelor's degree or higher	347	20%	29%

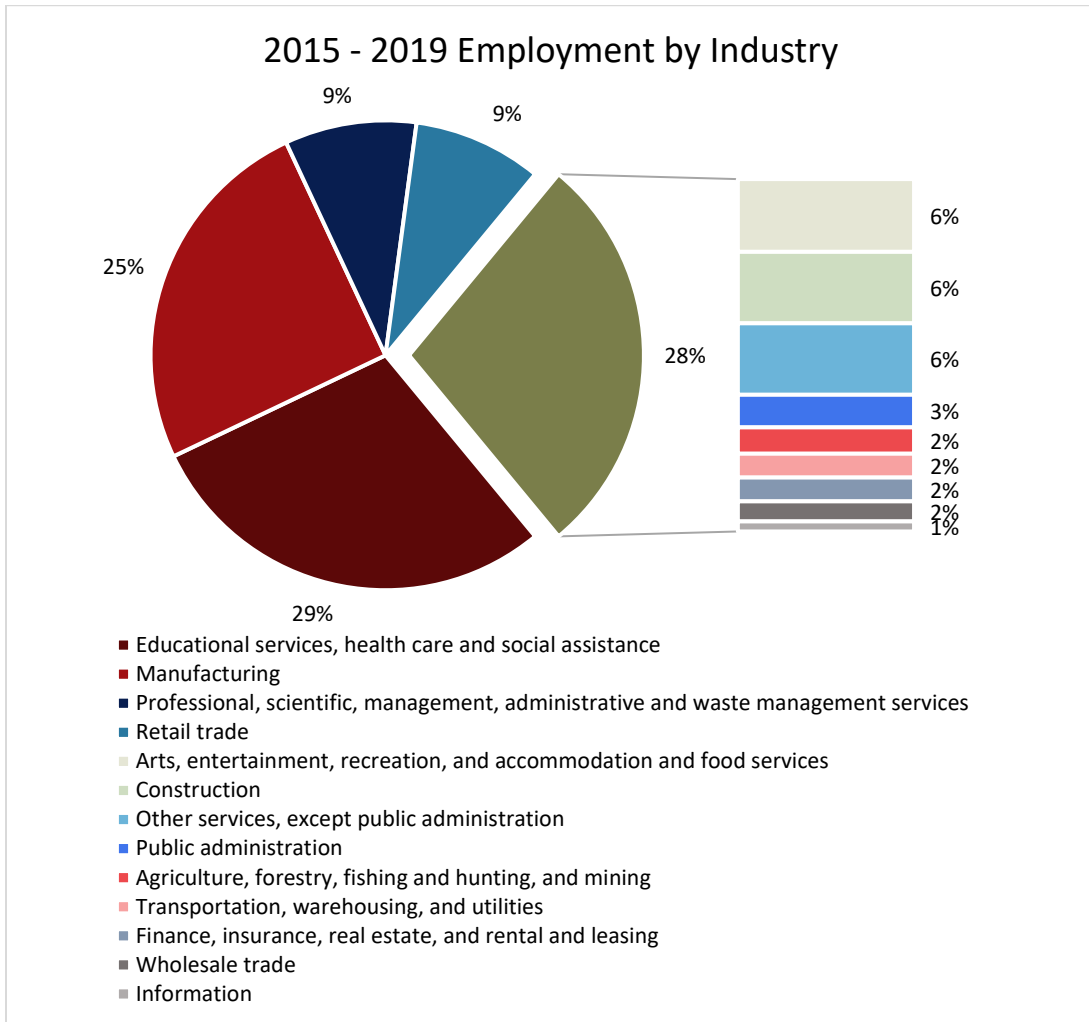
From 2015 – 2019, the estimated total labor force within the Village was 1,098, down from 1,265 in 2010. The largest industries for workers in Cass City are educational services, health care, and social assistance (29%) and manufacturing (25%). These numbers mark a shift in the Village’s local economy since 2010, as summarized in Table 2. It is important to note that this table does not necessarily indicate industry job growth or loss, but rather the share of the total economy held by each industry.

Table 2: Cass City Employment Share by Industry 2010 vs 2019

Industry	2006 - 2010	2015 - 2019	Percent Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2%	2%	0%
Construction	6%	6%	0%
Manufacturing	17%	25%	+8%
Wholesale trade	6%	2%	-4%
Retail trade	11%	9%	-2%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	3%	2%	-1%
Information	2%	1%	-1%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3%	2%	-1%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2%	9%	+7%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	34%	29%	-5%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	7%	6%	-1%
Other services, except public administration	3%	6%	+3%
Public administration	4%	3%	-1%

Figure 3 shows the allocation of Cass City’s workforce by industry for 2015 - 2019. Four major sectors are represented, along with a category of “other,” which is then broken down by industry for ease of interpretation.

Figure 3: 2015 – 2019 Employment by Industry



The 2015 – 2019 unemployment rate in Cass City was 8.7%, compared to 5.4% for Tuscola County and 5.9% for Michigan. This is an increase from the 2006 – 2010 unemployment rate of 5.7% in Cass City.

Housing

The current housing stock of the Village is estimated at 1,120 units. From 2015 – 2019, it is estimated that 953 of these units are occupied and that 167 (14.9%) are vacant. 710 (74.5%) of units are owner-occupied and 243 (25.5%) are renter-occupied. The homeowner vacancy rate is 2.5% and the rental vacancy rate is 15.1%. Figure 4 illustrates the total housing stock in the Village from 1980 – 2019. Figure 5 shows the total number of units by the year that they were built.

Figure 4: Total Housing Units in Cass City

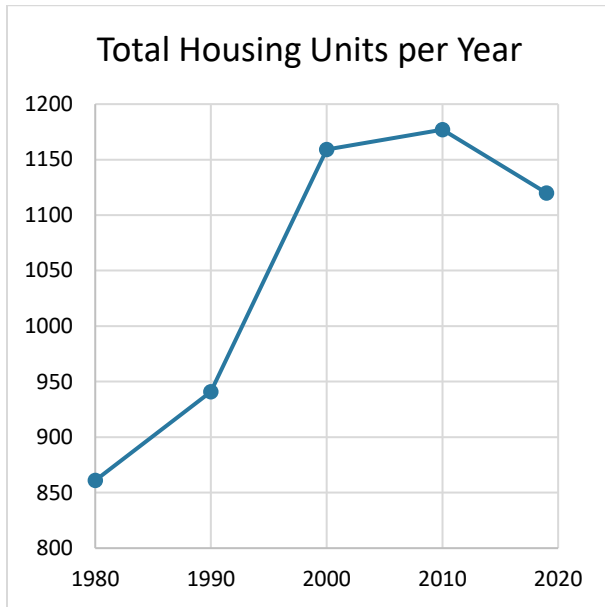
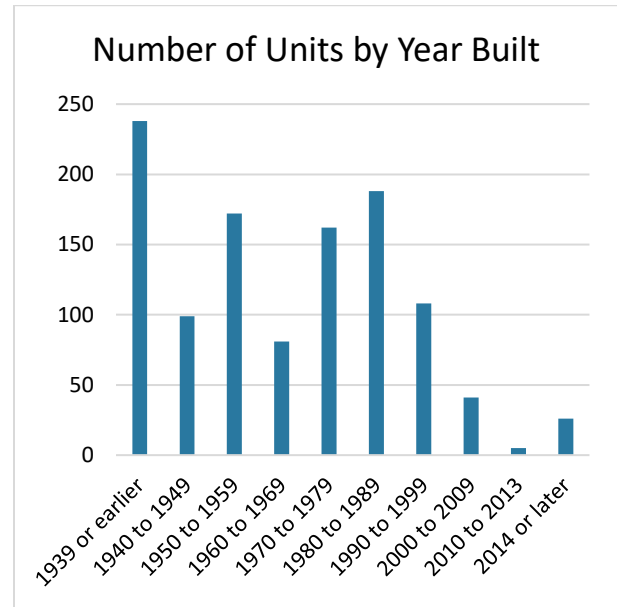


Figure 5: Number of Housing Units by Year Built



The total housing stock in the Village peaked in 2010 at 1177 units, falling to 1120 in 2019. Most units in the Village (68.8%) are described as 1-unit detached, 7.0% are 1-unit attached, 5.7% are mobile homes, and the remaining 18.5% are multi-unit. The average household size in the Village is 2.34. Most housing units in Cass City contain two or more bedrooms. Table 3 describes housing units in Cass City by and total bedrooms.

Table 3: Number of Bedrooms per Housing Unit

Number of Bedrooms per Unit	Units	Percentage of Total Housing Stock
No bedroom	22	2%
1 bedroom	94	8%
2 bedrooms	329	29%
3 bedrooms	490	44%
4 bedrooms	151	13%
5 or more bedrooms	34	3%

Market-Study Based Data

As a part of the 2019 Master Plan process, the Village’s consultant, McKenna Associates, conducted a retail market gap analysis. Their findings highlighted business opportunities within 5-, 15-, and 30-minute drive time intervals from Cass City’s Downtown. McKenna concluded that most categories have unmet demand within a 5-minute drive of the Village’s Downtown, but not necessarily enough demand to generate new stores. Opportunities outside of the 5-

minute drive may have enough demand to drive business development. It should be noted that this analysis specifically referenced that the economic data utilized was based off ESRI retail averages, and did not consider local history, culture, and creative entrepreneurship. The identified opportunities from the analysis are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Retail Gap Market Analysis

5-Minute	15-Minute	30-Minute
Food and Beverage Store	Auto Parts Store	Beer, Wine, and Liquor Store
General Merchandise Store	Automobile Dealer	Clothing and Accessory Store
	Beer, Wine, and Liquor Store	Jewelry Store
	Clothing and Accessory Stores	Restaurant
	Electronics and Appliances	
	General Merchandise Store	
	Gift Store	
	Grocery Store	
	Hobby Store	
	Office Supplies Store	
	Restaurant	
	Small Department Store	
	Sporting Goods Store	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PROCESS

Much of the Village’s Economic Development Strategy builds upon past public participation efforts, policy decisions, and plans from the Village’s administration. This section identifies and summarizes previous efforts that have contributed to this plan and utilizes the Village’s Public Participation Plan to create a timeline to get input on new components from key stakeholders.

Village of Cass City Existing Policy

2000 Downtown Plan

On October 12, 2000, the Village Council was presented with a Downtown Action Agenda by their consultant, HyettPalma. This Action Agenda for the Downtown was based upon discussions with members of the public and private sectors of Cass City, data collected by Village Staff, and the results of a market analysis completed for the Downtown.

The information collected was used to determine specific policy actions for the Downtown, which included:

- Pedestrian-friendly Streetscape Improvements
- Better Signage and Landscaping for Public Parking Lots
- Better Upkeep of Properties
- Historic Preservation
- Business Retention and Development Efforts
- Increasing Marketing Efforts

A [full copy of the 2000 Downtown Plan](#) is available on the Village's Website.

2012 DDA Plan Update

The Village's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) updated their Downtown Development and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan in June of 2012. The plan outlined priorities and estimated costs for projects from 2011 – 2031 (see Appendix A) This plan drew attention to a few specific priority areas, including:

- Village Street, Alley, and Sidewalk Improvements
- Streetscape Enhancements
- Parking Expansion and Rehabilitation
- Promotions and Identity Building

A [full copy of the 2012 DDA Plan](#) is available on the Village's Website.

2019 First Impressions Tourism Report

The First Impressions Tourism Report is a summary of observations from assessors out of Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), focused on identifying their most positive and most negative impressions about Cass City. Positive aspects included the Thumb Octagon Barn, the Rawson Memorial Library, the prosperous hospital and park areas, and the potential of Cass City's historical assets and proximity to the Cass River. Their negative comments focused on a lack of food options, shops, and attractions, as well as the need for storefront development and event promotion. Key challenges outlined by the assessors included a lack of investment and high number of Downtown vacancies, too much parking, and a lack of local cultural identity.

The [full 2019 First Impressions Tourism Report](#) is available online from MSUE.

2019 Master Plan

In April of 2019, the Village adopted a 5-year master plan, intended to guide the visions of Cass City community members into policy and land use decisions. This effort was the result of Village officials, staff, and consultants collecting data, conducting surveys, and holding discussions with

community members. The document contains an Action Plan section, which was voted on and approved by the Village Council after a lengthy public engagement effort, that serves as the policy basis for much of this Economic Development Plan. The following are a few key priority areas identified in the plan:

- Promote the Development of Local Business
- Adopt a Complete Streets Policy
- Encourage Non-Motorized Transportation
- Encourage a Mix of Housing Types
- Create a Lively Downtown Environment
- Develop and Enforce Property Maintenance Standards

The full [2019 Master Plan](#) is available electronically on the Village’s website.

2021 Marketing Plan

The Village staff approved a marketing plan in early 2021 that sets forth operations on how the Village will work with various partners to promote the Cass City area, focusing on attracting businesses, consumers, investors, and to market priority redevelopment sites. This marketing plan, required as a part of the RRC Best Practices, set forth the following strategies, and more, for the Village:

- Promote a Village and Regional Brand
- Partner with Realtors to Show Spaces
- Promote the Importance of Shopping Local
- Showcase and Promote the Village’s History and Features
- Support Entrepreneurs and Business Owners
- Promote the Affordability of the Area

The 2021 Marketing Plan is available at the Municipal Building.

Capital Improvement Plan

The Village’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a tool approved by the Village Council and utilized by Village staff to coordinate the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a six-year period. The current plan, approved for 2021 and planned through 2026, describes the priority areas of the Village, including the Municipal Building, Main Street electrical upgrades, the Village’s parks and facilities, and various sidewalk, street, and other infrastructure improvements.

The [2021 – 2026 CIP](#) can be found on the Village’s website.

Redevelopment Ready Communities

Following a resolution passed by the Village Council in 2017, Cass City began to pursue certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities program (RRC). This program sets forth several best practices, including the Economic Development Strategy, that are required for certification. As a part of this process, the Village has committed to updating several policies, which include:

- Concentrated Development Standards
- Promoting Housing Diversity
- Promoting Nonmotorized Transportation Infrastructure
- Create Placemaking Provisions for the Downtown
- Create Historic Preservation Standards
- Identify and Promote Key Redevelopment Sites

More [information about the RRC Program](#) and the [specific Best Practices](#) may be obtained from MEDC's Website. The best practices for the Village's Economic Development Strategy may be found at the end of this document (see Appendix B). Cass City's specific information from the RRC audits may be obtained by contacting Village staff.

Development Public Engagement Findings

McKenna Associates conducted a survey as part of the 2019 Master Plan public engagement process. Their survey generated 463 responses that are summarized in the 2019 Master Plan. It should be noted that 51.6% of those respondents identified as living in the Village and less than one-third of respondents reported working within the Village.

Based on the survey results from summer 2018, only 9% of respondents felt that Cass City had become more of a place they wanted to live over the past 5 – 10 years, compared to 54% who felt that it had become less of a place they wanted to live. When asked what people would like to see or see more of in Cass City, they responded that a grocery store [opened fall of 2020], expanded shopping and dining options, Downtown vibrancy (including the appearance of the district), and recreational, youth, and entertainment activities were top priorities. Many respondents also identified that they were willing to drive to neighboring communities for an increased number in store choices, convenience, choice, and price.

Additional Stakeholder Engagement

In accordance with the Village's Public Participation Plan, Village staff and boards will review the Economic Development Plan and seek input from key stakeholders prior to adopting the

plan. This process will be divided into three distinct phases. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, most feedback will be gathered virtually.

Phase 1 – January 2021

The Village Council, DDA, Planning Commission, and MEDC Planner were provided with early review copies of the Economic Development Plan for discussion at January meetings (January 12, January 13, January 20, and January 25). On their January 13 Committee of the Whole Meeting, the Village Council identified Economic Development as one of their goals for the year and provided input on the plan. Feedback from other boards and committees was submitted to the Community Development Fellow on a rolling basis and revisions were compiled for consideration.

Phase 2 – February 2021

Partner and Stakeholder Review occurred in late January and early February 2021. Key economic development partners, such as the Chamber of Commerce’s Board of Directors (January 27) and the Tuscola County EDC’s leadership (February 5), were provided copies of the plan for review and input was received. Additionally, a draft copy of the Economic Development Plan was posted on the Village’s website and promoted through the Village’s social media channels, with feedback directed to the Community Development Fellow through the month. The survey provided to the community received a total of ten responses, most from Village residents. Of those responses submitted, 71% of respondents felt that the strategy addressed the most important economic issues in Cass City, 29 percent reported the strategy “maybe” addresses these issues, and 0% felt that the strategy did not address the most important economic issues. Most respondents felt that “Re-Envisioning and Restoring the Downtown Core” was the most important goal, followed by “Business Retention and Development.”

Phase 3 – March 2021

The finalized draft of the Economic Development Plan was submitted to the Village Council at the March 10, 2021 Committee of the Whole Meeting and asked to provide feedback directly to the Community Development Fellow. The finalized draft of the Economic Development Plan was subsequently prepared and included in the packets for the March 29, 2021 Village Council Meeting. To satisfy the best practices from MEDC, the Village Council needs to adopt the plan through a motion at the March 29, 2021 meeting. Upon adoption of the plan, it will be posted to the Village’s website.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

The Village has undertaken several efforts to engage residents and other stakeholders in identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities in the community. These efforts include public engagement as a part of the 2019 Master Plan update and the Village's participation with other partners in the MSU Extension First Impressions Tourism Assessments program. The findings from these efforts are summarized below, along with input from other Village stakeholders.

Strengths

- Small-town feel
- Connection to family
- Quality of public safety
- Affordability
- Proximity to regional attractions
- Regional positioning
- Nearby farming communities
- Public parks and recreation facilities
- Hills and Dales medical complex
- Architectural features

Challenges

- Access to post-secondary education facilities
- Downtown traffic and noise pollution
- High rental vacancy rate
- Economic restructuring
- Broadband infrastructure
- Consumer behavior
- Aging community
- Large fixed-income population
- Concentrated workforce

Opportunities

- Industrial park availability (6.7 acres)
- Downtown vacancies
- Large medical and manufacturing workforce
- Increase in telework jobs
- Unique redevelopment properties
- Large agricultural community
- Cass City Farmers Market

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

The foundation for the economic development vision can be found in the Goals and Objectives section of the 2019 Village Master Plan and are restated below for reference. As the Village is taking the initiative to separate out economic development as a specific priority, articulating a more vivid and precise idea of that the Village plans to accomplish provides more clarity for stakeholders involved in the process.

Master Plan Vision:

Commercial / Business Areas

Cass City will have a stable downtown business area that is complemented by a small highway commercial node to serve the needs and desires of Village residents in a safe, pleasant, and harmonious environment.

Industrial and Research & Development

Develop an industrial base of quality businesses that contributes to Cass City's overall well-being.

Economic Development Plan Vision:

The Village of Cass City strives to grow a diverse, modern economy while retaining the small-town charm and agricultural roots for which the community is known. This economy will support small, medium, and large local businesses, prioritize a socially vibrant public realm, and provide a walkable, livable community for a talented workforce.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The outlined economic development goals and their objectives below provide the ways that the Village will work toward accomplishing its economic development vision for the community. Many of the specific objectives described come directly from or build upon existing policies and programs set forth by the Village Council, the Planning Commission, or the Downtown Development Authority. The objectives that tie back to existing decisions made by the Village's policy bodies are identified with an asterisk [*] that follows each objective.

For the objectives that aid the overall goals or vision but do not come from previous policies, public input and Council review will be sought prior to adopting the Economic Development Plan, guided by the Village's Public Participation Plan.

Business Retention and Development

The Village of Cass City will be known in the region as a community that values and supports their businesses, takes pride in their entrepreneurs, and provides the talent, space, and infrastructure needed to scale up one's business. Cass City has been shaped by homegrown businesses and strives to emphasize the power and value of "local" in economic development decisions. Prior to suburbanization, big box stores, and e-commerce retail outlets, the Cass City economy was powered by local growers, artisans and craftspeople, and a collection of family-

owned mom and pop shops that serviced the region. While times have changed, there is an opportunity to capitalize on “local” and support Cass City’s entrepreneurs and bolster the economy. Priority objectives should focus on providing a supportive environment for these entrepreneurs, establishing a recognizable brand to build community identity, and expanding “by-right” opportunities in key commercial areas.

To best retain businesses and a talented workforce, the Village will put emphasis on building relationships with their local businesses, communicating with them on an on-going basis through a Recruitment and Development Program. To counter the “brain-drain” that has hit rural communities over the past decades, Cass City will establish relationships with post-secondary educational institutions, ensuring that graduates from the local schools are able to remain in or return to Cass City while completing the next steps in their professional development.

Objectives:

- Ensure the Community has Access to Modern and Reliable Internet
- Develop a Local and Regional Branding Identity for Businesses*
- Develop and Provide Business Welcome Kits*
- Manage a Business Recruitment and Development Program*
- Ensure Access to Post-Secondary Education
- Expand and Clarify Permitted District Uses*
- Identify and Market Priority Economic Development Sites*

Re-Envisioning and Restoring the Downtown Core

Downtowns provide the economic, cultural, and social heart of a community. The most successful downtowns provide character and liveliness throughout the day and night by ensuring that the district has a wide mix of uses. Cass City’s economy will be powered by a vibrant Downtown engine that preserves the Village’s historic character and emphasizes the high-quality services, one-of-a-kind restaurants, and unique goods available from mom-and-pop shops and local producers. All new developments in the Downtown will be made to the highest and best land use available.

Cass City’s Downtown has untapped potential that is worth both public and private investment. Many historic buildings in the Downtown are underutilized, leaving both storefronts and residential opportunities vacant. Furthermore, the Village’s alleys throughout the Downtown provide a unique community asset and they should be specifically focused on as a key revitalization tool. To extract more value from its Downtown, the Village will focus on efforts

that bring vibrancy to the area, such as encouraging a diversity of uses, protecting historic features, and setting out a clear vision for the look and feel of the Downtown core.

Objectives:

- Develop Plans for Alleys and Corridors
- Support Placemaking Activities and Downtown Vibrancy*
- Recommend Downtown Design Standards*
- Identify Underdeveloped and Underutilized Properties*
- Encourage Expanded Dining Hours
- Engage in Traffic Calming*
- Set Standards for Historic Preservation*
- Partner with Realtors to Ensure Leasing Opportunities are Highlighted
- Ensure Downtown Anchors have Succession Plans
- Adopt an Outdoor Dining Ordinance*
- Provide Standards for Artisan Production and E-Commerce

Diversifying Housing Opportunities

Providing a variety of high-quality housing options is a central component to ensuring Cass City's economy attracts both a talented workforce and residents looking in "age in place." Cass City will ensure that current and prospective residents have an appropriate mixture of housing types and that the local policy encourages pride in ownership that drives the timely maintenance and upkeep of properties.

At present, the Village has a high demand for housing stock. However, the high rental vacancy rate (15%) and overall decrease in population indicate that existing properties are either underutilized for housing or that properties are not meeting the criteria of market demands. To ensure that all existing housing opportunities are maximized, the Village should continue its efforts to inventory and inspect rentals in the Village and to guarantee all properties in the Village are maintained to a high standard.

Objectives:

- Ensure Downtown Residential Units are Fully Utilized*
- Enact and Manage a Rental Registration and Inspection Program*
- Expand "By-Right" Residential Zoning to Include a Mixture of Housing Types*
- Continue Blight Enforcement Activities*

Improving and Expanding Mobility

Residents and visitors of Cass City will be supported by a safe, well-managed transportation network that accommodates current and future needs. The Downtown and residential areas will reap the economic, social, and health benefits of promoting alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and biking. The process to achieve this goal will be guided by the Village's Complete Streets Policy, which will prioritize the safety and mobility of residents partaking in all modes of transportation.

Cass City's wide streets are now underutilized and present an opportunity for the Village to extract more value out of existing infrastructure costs. Working with MDOT and the County Road Commission, the Village should explore opportunities for a "road diet" in the Downtown to expand walking and biking opportunities, which would in turn calm traffic, reduce noise pollution, and increase economic activity for Downtown shops and services.

Cass City will strive to implement a Village-wide sidewalk system, connecting everything from residential areas, to the Hills and Dales medical complex, to the Municipal Park. In addition to increasing the pathways for economic activity, this strategic investment in walkability will pay off for homeowners, as a direct correlation has been made between increasing walkability and raising property values.

Objectives:

- Adopt a Complete Streets Policy*
- Investigate Public Transit Options*
- Promote Walkable and Bikeable Infrastructure*
- Maintain and Enhance Existing Public Pathways*
- Reduce and Provide Flexibility in Parking Requirements*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLBOX

Summary of Tools in Master Plan

The 2019 Village Master Plan outlines several funding sources and tools that may be used for the purposes of economic development. These are listed below; further information may be found in the 2019 Master Plan document.

- Capital Improvement Plan
- Dedicated Millage
- Special Assessments
- Bond Programs
- Tax Increment Financing
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Michigan Recreation Grant Passport Program
- Community Development Block Grants
- Donations and Foundations
- Lease or Contractual Agreements

Additional Economic Development Tools

In addition to the tools listed above, there are additional tools that will prove useful to the Village on the specific objectives outlined in the economic development goals section.

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development [administers a variety of grant and loan funds](#) that the Village and partners may apply for. These include the Agricultural Preservation Fund, the Food and Agriculture Investment Fund, the Rural Development Fund, and Value-Added and Regional Food Systems grants.

Michigan Department of Transportation

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) provides [several grant opportunities](#) to support both vehicular and nonmotorized transportation. These include the Rural Task Force Program, the Small Urban Program, the Michigan State Infrastructure Bank, the Transportation Alternative Program, and the Transportation Economic Development Fund.

Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation

The Tuscola County EDC is the regional economic development entity serving the Cass City area, offering numerous ways to support local businesses and developers. The EDC is often the entity entrusted with managing and distributing funds from state programs, such as the Michigan Small Business COVID Relief Grant Program.

Their other programs and resources include:

- Small Business Counseling and Networking
- Revolving Loan Fund and Gap Financing
- Equipment Lease Program
- Emergency Grants
- Industrial and Manufacturing Business Retention Services
- Business and Site Location Services
- Assistance with Tax Abatements

USDA Rural Development Funds

The USDA Rural Development office [offers many programs](#) that can support the Village, its partners, residents, and entrepreneurs in the area. These programs include but are not limited to:

- Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants
- Rural Housing Site Loans
- Community Connect Grants
- Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants
- Rural Business Investment Program
- Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

ANNUAL REPORTING

Progress on the Economic Development Plan will be shared during the joint meeting of the Village Council, DDA/EDC, and Planning Commission, which typically occurs in November of each year. This brings the important act of evaluating progress on these outlined strategies into alignment with the annual reporting expectations of the Village’s Master Plan, Marketing Plan, Public Participation Plan, and other important documents. The Village will annually update the implementation matrices (pages 22 – 25) at the end of this document to showcase progress made on the strategy.

CLOSING

The Economic Development Plan for 2021 – 2025 sets forth a collective vision and an action plan for the various Boards of Cass City and stakeholders to follow to bolster community prosperity. As with any community effort, this plan requires the active engagement of all community members to accomplish these goals. It should be noted that the action plan and the included objectives are subject to change as the Village’s priorities and the economic context of the region continue to transform.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRICES

Business Retention and Development

Objectives	Responsible Party	Status	Estimated Completion
Manage a Business Recruitment and Development Program	Downtown Development Authority	Exploratory	September 2021
Expand and Clarify Permitted District Uses	Planning Commission	Ongoing	September 2021
Develop and Provide Business Welcome Kits	Downtown Development Authority	Exploratory	January 2022
Develop a Local and Regional Branding Identity for Businesses	Village Council	Scheduled	May 2022
Ensure the Community has Access to Modern and Reliable Internet	Village Council	Exploratory	May 2025
Ensure Access to Post-secondary Education	Village Council	Exploratory	September 2025
Identify and Market Priority Redevelopment Sites	Village Council	Ongoing	Continuous

Re-Envisioning and Restoring the Downtown Core

Objectives	Responsible Party	Status	Estimated Completion
Recommend Downtown Design Standards	Planning Commission	Scheduled	June 2021
Adopt an Outdoor Dining Ordinance	Planning Commission	Scheduled	June 2021
Provide Standards for Artisan Production and E-Commerce	Planning Commission	Scheduled	September 2021
Set Standards for Historic Preservation	Planning Commission	Scheduled	September 2021
Identify Underdeveloped and Underutilized Properties	Village Council	Scheduled	October 2021
Ensure Downtown Anchors have Succession Plans	Downtown Development Authority	Scheduled	December 2021
Develop Plans for Alleys and Corridors	Planning Commission	Exploratory	March 2022
Engage in Traffic Calming	Village Council	Exploratory	January 2024
Support Placemaking Activities and Downtown Vibrancy	Downtown Development Authority	Ongoing	Continuous
Encourage Expanded Dining Hours	Downtown Development Authority	Exploratory	Continuous
Partner with Realtors to Ensure Leasing Opportunities are Highlighted	Village Council	Exploratory	Continuous

Diversifying Housing Opportunities

Objectives	Responsible Party	Status	Estimated Completion
Expand "By-Right" Residential Zoning to Include a Mixture of Housing Types	Planning Commission	Scheduled	September 2021
Enact and Manage a Rental Registration and Inspection Program	Village Council	Ongoing	January 2022
Ensure Downtown Buildings are Fully Utilized	Downtown Development Authority	Exploratory	January 2023
Continue Blight Enforcement Activities	Police Department	Ongoing	Continuous

Improving and Expanding Mobility

Objectives	Responsible Party	Status	Estimated Completion
Reduce and Provide Flexibility in Parking Requirements	Planning Commission	Scheduled	September 2021
Adopt a Complete Streets Policy	Village Council	Exploratory	January 2022
Promote Walkable and Bikeable Infrastructure	Planning Commission	Exploratory	June 2022
Investigate Public Transit Options	Village Council	Exploratory	January 2023
Maintain and Enhance Existing Public Pathways	Village Council	Ongoing	December 2024

VILLAGE OF CASS CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPENDIX

Appendix A: Table of DDA Planned Projects 2011 - 2031

Table 1 List of Planned Projects by Priority and Estimated Cost Village of Cass City DDA 2011 - 2031		
Project Priority ^a	Project Description	Estimated Project Cost ^b
	<i>Village Street and Sidewalk Improvements</i>	
S,M, & L	Sidewalk Extension, Replacement & Enhancement	\$4,065,000
	<i>Streetscape Enhancements and Refuse Disposal</i>	
s & M	A. Street Trees and Landscaping	200,000
s	B. New Street, Alley, Walkway & Parking Lot Lighting	1,500,000
s	C. Refuse Disposal Enclosures	50,000
s & M	D. Street, Alley and Intersection Improvements	2,000,000
	<i>Parking Area Expansion and Rehabilitation</i>	
s & M	A. Parking Area Enhancements	90,000
s & M	B. Parking Area Rehabilitation	150,000
	<i>Promotional and Identity Building</i>	
s	A. Summer Cover at Rotary Park	75,000
s	B. Refurbish Outside Wall of Antique Mall	25,000
S,M, & L	C. Façade Improvement Program (6 years)	150,000
s	D. Rental Housing Rehabilitation Program (4 years)	250,000
S,M, & L	E. Seasonal Banners/ Decorations	250,000
s	F. Amish Hitching Posts in shady areas W. of Library	5,000
M & L	G. Acquire Cass Theatre & Perform Digital Upgrades	750,000
s	H. Marketing Plans & Material	20,000
s & M	I. Renovate Municipal Building	50,000
S,M, & L	J. Renovate & Refurbish Cultural Center	275,000
	<i>Consultation and Operational Expenditures</i>	
S,M, & L	A. Professional Services (\$10,000 annually)	200,000
S,M, & L	B. DDA Operations (\$20,000 annually)	400,000
	Estimated Total	\$10,505,000
<p>^a Project Priority Rank as follows: S = Short-Term (0-5 Years) M = Medium - Term (6 - 10 Years) L = Long -Term (11 - 20 Years)</p> <p>^b Actual project cost will depend upon the design and specification of project components and market conditions at the time of implementation</p>		

Best Practice Five: Economic Development and Marketing

5.1 Economic Development Strategy

More than ever, communities and their partners must understand how to leverage their strengths and address their challenges in a competitive market for talent and investment. A local economic development strategy guides those efforts.

CRITERIA: The community has approved an economic development strategy.	
ESSENTIALS EXPECTATIONS	CERTIFIED EXPECTATIONS
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The economic development strategy identifies the economic opportunities and challenges of the community. <input type="checkbox"/> The strategy addresses activities related to key economic development initiatives including business and talent attraction/retention, education and infrastructure. <input type="checkbox"/> The economic development strategy defines specific goals, actions, timelines and responsible parties for implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> The economic development strategy coordinates with a regional economic development strategy. <input type="checkbox"/> The economic development strategy is accessible online. <input type="checkbox"/> Progress on the economic development strategy is reported annually to the governing body.

5.2 Incentives Policies

Having clear economic development incentive policies creates predictability and assists communities in making the most efficient use of limited local resources when supporting proposed development projects.

CRITERIA: The community has adopted policies to guide economic development incentives.	
ESSENTIALS EXPECTATIONS	CERTIFIED EXPECTATIONS
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The community has adopted and/or reviewed formal policies for key economic development incentives within the past five years. <input type="checkbox"/> The policies and corresponding application materials are available online.