

CEDS Meeting #3 Notes

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Steering Committee Meeting 1 Summary

Date: December 11, 2:00-3:00 PM

Place: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Committee Attendees: Angie Close, Jason Grueneberg, Sara Guild, Paul Millan, Tony Pharo, Holly Tomlanovich, Tommy Wartman, Kimm Weber

Staff Attendees: Dennis Lawrence, Eric Sonnleitner

Meeting Overview:

- The meeting started off with an overview of Meeting 2
- Committee & Staff members proceeded to finish conducting the SWOT Analysis by identifying Opportunities & Threats. An overview of this discussion is available at the end of this summary.
- Committee & Staff members then reviewed the goals, objectives, and policies section as well as the Action Plan.
 - Most goals from previous CEDS updates were deemed to be still appropriate for the Region and were left unchanged.
 - Changes determined by the Committee included adding an objective stating the need to continue maintaining and improving our water, sewer, and street networks (Goal 6), and adding an objective that captures the need to ensure we have the capacity for emerging technologies (Goal 7).
 - The Action Plan was deemed to still be appropriate for the Region, with minor changes to reflect changes that have taken place in the Region since the last CEDS update.
 - Changes included changing Action 5 in Goal 2 to reflect Central WI Economic Development Fund (CWED) effectively replacing the North Central WI Development Corporation as the regional source of revolving loan funds in the Region.
- The meeting closed with an overview of the next steps of the process, which involve the plan review process, and the anticipated adoption of the plan in late January 2026.

SWOT Analysis Notes

- The Committee discussed Opportunities & Threats at this meeting after discussing Strengths & Weaknesses at the prior meeting. A brief overview of Strengths & Weaknesses was provided at the start of this discussion.
- Topics discussed during Opportunities discussion:
 - Current trend of people leaving urban areas for rural areas is an opportunity for the Region to attract workforce
 - The Region has an opportunity to capitalize on the Region's timber resources and existing construction affiliated businesses to help address housing shortages
 - The Region has an opportunity with the Service Industry & Trades, as there will be an increased need for service-related jobs and services as the Region's population ages.
 - Tourism provides several opportunities for the Region, including: the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway, Sand Valley, and the premier destinations for outdoor recreation and visiting that the Region can offer. Vacation Rentals by owner also provide an opportunity (and a threat) to the Region.
 - The central location of the Region makes it an ideal location for events, and can increase the desirability of the Region for prospective residents.
- Topics discussed during Threats discussion:
 - Vacation rentals by owner was listed as both an opportunity and a threat to the Region. If not properly regulated, these can harm the Region's environment, especially in regards to proximity to lakes and waste/septic disposal & management
 - Reliance on seasonal tourism is a threat to the region, especially during the winter months, as many seasonal tourism activities are dependent on the weather
 - Lack of shipping facilities in rural areas
 - The national economic uncertainty can lead to unpredictable funding
 - The clustering of renewable energy sources can lead to the conversion of productive farmlands into renewable energy generation sites, and can lead to a loss of natural habitats within the Region.
 - The potential impact of data centers on the electrical grid poses a threat to the Region's infrastructure.
 - Health care access issues such as a lack of dental, vision, & behavioral health care pose a threat to residents, especially in rural areas. Health care facilities are mostly concentrated in the more urbanized areas within the Region, which can lead to long waits & commutes for appointments. The lack of healthcare staff also poses a threat to the Region.
 - Lack of childcare access poses a threat to the Region in terms of attracting & retaining residents and workers, which can negatively impact the Region's employers.

- There is an increased need for alternative transportation options in the Region.
 - The Region has a high dependence on vehicle ownership
 - There is a lack of on-demand transportation services available in the Region.
 - There are high costs associated with vehicle ownership
 - The impact of a lack of transportation alternatives can lessen the Region's ability to support aging in place
- There are water quality and access concerns that threaten the Region in the future if not properly mitigated, especially in regards to contamination issues like PFAS.