



Kalkaska Community

DESIGNING AND ACHIEVING OUR POTENTIAL!

July 2016

Reviewed and Updated: July 2026.

The Kalkaska Community is located at the crossroads, both geographically on US-131 and M-72, and figuratively in terms of the direction it needs to take to achieve its potential. Community leaders know that the future of the Kalkaska community (Village, Townships, and County) will depend on how they partner and collaborate together. Today, community leaders refer to the atmosphere as “balkanized,” where groups work in isolation with narrow vision and minimal leadership. They contend that this condition often thwarts opportunities for economic advancement. As a result, employment opportunities are lost, taxable valuation—often a result of economic development—is never realized, so residents are relegated to commuting to work, sometimes spending more of their monthly income on fuel than food.

However, Kalkaska is well positioned. It has sewer, water, broadband and wi-fi networks. It is located at the convergence of federal and state highways, with a freight-class rail line that is not frequently found in other Northwest Michigan communities. In addition, it has a community hospital, K-12 public school system, and access to recreation facilities and regional trails. A barrier that impedes progress is not lack of effort or creativity, but lack of cooperation and collaboration. Today, economic development requires that all entities, governmental, non-profit, and for-profit, work together. Community leaders are optimistic that the community stage is set for this to occur. If they are correct, Kalkaska will achieve its potential.

VISION

What we want to become as a community.

VALUES

What guides us along the path to achieve the vision. In the Kalkaska Community, these values include:

INGENUITY

Identifying an opportunity and figuring out how to leverage it.

TRADITION

Looking forward but holding on to past best practices.

HARD WORKING

A long history of working with natural resources, renewable and non-renewable.

WELCOMING

Residents and visitors call Kalkaska home.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Strong commitment to residents, business owners, and the Public School.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The steps and actions that we need to take to reach the Vision.



HONING IN ON A GAME PLAN

The Leadership Team met on March 24, May 12, June 23, and July 20 to focus on a game plan that was attainable based on local resources. Noting that the Community Master Plan contained over 100 action strategies, the Leadership Team established that priorities as an outcome of this process needed to be based on consensus, acknowledgment of the community's capacity, and ability to achieve successful results. Concurrent with this process, Networks Northwest, as part of the Regional Prosperity Plan, was working with communities along the US-131 corridor from Cadillac to Petoskey to develop locally crafted economic development strategies. Kalkaska, like Cadillac, Mancelona, Fife Lake, and Petoskey, participated in the program and prepared a strategy. The key takeaways from that effort are outlined below:

- A. Achieve RRC Certification
- B. Update the Zoning Ordinance
- C. Provide Support for Small Business Infrastructure
- D. Review and update existing incentive policies
- E. Update industrial site plan regulations
- F. Support Corridor Improvements
- G. Increase Community Engagement Events
- H. Improve way finding signs

On July 20, 2016 the Leadership Team met with Community Leadership at All Seasons Resort to discuss priorities and prepare a game plan that would advance community and economic development initiatives for the greater Kalkaska community. The key outcome of this meeting recognized and affirmed that in order for economic development to occur, the Village, Townships, County, and major employers needed to work collaboratively for the overall good of the County. Although this acknowledgment of collaboration may seem simple, economic development is often highly competitive among municipalities, resulting in duplicative efforts and squandering of limited fiscal resources.





GAME PLAN

Strategic priorities are based on the actions needed to move the community closer to its vision. The priorities must also be tailored to the capabilities and capacity of the community, because an overwhelming variety of action items and objectives can produce the unintended consequence of organizational paralysis, resulting in no action at all.

As a result of the July 20 meeting, the group discussed six focus areas for the greater Kalkaska community. The overarching topic was how to coordinate economic development inquiries, and how to marshal the appropriate resources to respond to those inquiries.

Other items of discussion included the need for a County Land Bank, establishment of a County Brown-field Authority, and the possibility of exploring Redevelopment Ready certification with MEDC.

FOCUS AREAS

Economic Alliance

Logistics Hub

Railroad Square

Kalkaska County Library

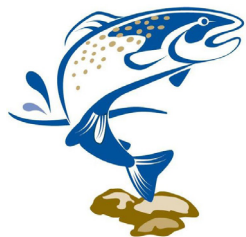
Trail Town

US-131 Marketing & Branding

TARGET INDUSTRY MARKET ANALYSIS

A target industry market analysis was conducted in 2015-2016 to identify opportunities for the reuse or redevelopment of potentially high-impact industrial properties in the Village of Kalkaska. The study analyzes industry clusters and development patterns, trends, and priorities in the context of site selection criteria for high-growth industries. Recommendations for some of the top target industries for Kalkaska include sand mining, food processing, and sawmills and wood processing.

In addition to identifying site selection factors and assets that the Village can market to business and industry, the market analysis also identified some potential actions that Kalkaska can take to better position itself as a destination for new investment. While its locational, natural resource, and transportation assets will be important draws for economic development, the Village must nevertheless take proactive steps to package and enhance these assets to distinguish itself from other communities (page 7; US-131 ED Strategy; Networks NW).



LOGISTICS HUB

According to the Euro-Platforms Group (January 2004), an association representing logistic and freight villages, a logistics hub is a center or specific area designated to deal with activities related to transportation, organization, separation, coordination, and distribution of goods for national and international transit on a commercial basis by various operators. These operators may own, lease, or rent the buildings and/or the facilities of the hub. These include warehouses, storage areas, distribution centers, offices, trucking, and shipping services.

The hub must be equipped with facilities necessary to carry out the above functions. Also, to ensure synergy and commercial consistency, it is best if the logistics

hub is managed by a single body, preferably under a partnership between government and private interest.

Kalkaska is well positioned to become a logistics hub, with easy access to US-131 connecting Northwest Michigan with Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. Of its total 268 mile length, 62% (168 miles) is freeway. Paralleling US-131 in Kalkaska is the Great Lakes Central Railroad. The GLCR stretches from Ann Arbor north to Cadillac with branches to Thompsonville, Traverse City, and Petoskey. The primary commodities hauled by GLCR include grain, sand, and plastic. The railroad interchanges with the Canadian National and Huron Eastern in Durand, CSXT at Anne Pere and Howell, the Ann

Arbor Railroad at Ann Arbor, and the Mid-Michigan Railroad at Alma.

In a report prepared by the Inter-American Development Bank (April 2012), employment opportunities stemming from logistic activities were noted to range from low to high skilled jobs to support the operations of logistics activities.

A diversified logistics service market strengthens local expertise and improves the performance of freight distribution. The Target Industry Market Report prepared for Kalkaska noted that top target industries included sand mining, food processing, and sawmills and wood processing. These are all commodities that utilize freight and truck transport.





RAILROAD SQUARE

In 2015, the Kalkaska community convened at its annual celebration and weighed in on how a parcel of Village property known as Railroad Square should be reused. The community envisioned the property as a public space, and suggestions included pavilion, bandshell, outdoor theater, open outdoor event space, and a community information center.

Repurposing this property for a flexible outdoor space to accommodate events, food trucks, and festivals will serve as another vital anchor for the downtown.

The photo below illustrates the size of the site and its potential to serve as a hub for community activity.





KALKASKA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Kalkaska County Public Library is a critical anchor to the downtown and a valuable asset to the community. However, it is small and as a result cannot provide the programming and circulation capacity found in 21st century library facilities.

A 2008 Harris poll found that library visitors continue to view the library as a critical fixture in their communities. The poll estimates that 92 percent of Americans “view their library as an important educational resource” while 70 percent “consider it a pillar of the community.” Seventy one percent consider it a community center, 70 percent a family destination, and 69 percent a cultural center. Young people are still very much drawn to the library, including 40 percent of 18-30 year olds who are likely to visit the library when faced with a problem.

Great downtowns provide a varied mix of destination uses that attract visitors who may otherwise not frequent downtown. The greater the mix of uses, the more vibrant it will be. Libraries are known to draw tourists and local suburbanites; they also help contribute to public safety and quality of life (Making Cities Stronger; Jan. 2007).



Studies show that libraries generate frequent repeat foot traffic to neighboring businesses without competing for sales, and in fact increase sales for adjacent and nearby businesses. In downtowns, libraries also create “economically vibrant urban spaces” and contribute to an 18-hour downtown with activity in the mornings, afternoon, and evenings for different library patrons (Making Cities Stronger; Jan. 2007).



TRAIL TOWN - KALKASKA

The July/August 2016 edition of the Michigan Municipal League "Review" noted that according to a 2014 MDOT study, bicycling had a total annual impact of \$668 million dollars on the Michigan economy. Further, \$38 million was spent on bicycling-related events and vacations.

Communities that become bicycle friendly have a greater chance at capturing those dollars. The Iceman Mountain Bike event is an example of the economic impact that bicycling can bring to a community.

Community leaders are currently collaborating with MDOT, MDNR, TART, Northern Michigan Mountain Bike Association, and North

Country Trail to develop a trail head within the Village limits. These regional trails, in turn, would connect with the Intra-Village Trail providing access to community facilities, downtown, and parks.

Part of the regional trail plan is a crossing over the Boardman River and connection to the numerous trail facilities within the Boardman Watershed.

Canada Tourist Commission Study on Mountain Bikers

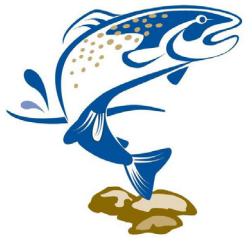
75% are male.

70% are 25-45 years of age.

55% with annual incomes greater than \$80,000.

Average stay is 3 to 5 days.



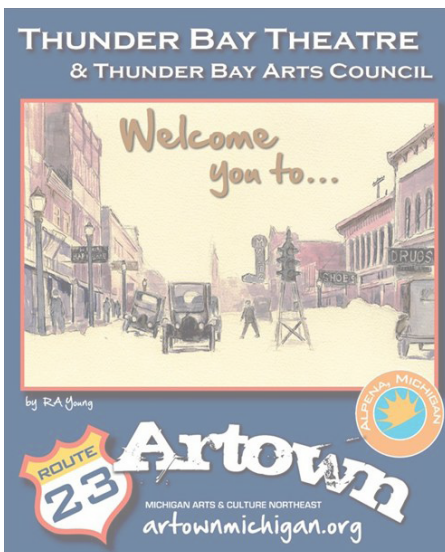


US-131 MARKETING AND BRANDING

A recommendation that appeared in the US-131 Economic Development Strategy involved the establishment of a US-131 coordinated marketing and branding effort by US-131 communities. The report cited the success that the Heritage Route 23 has had on northeast Michigan. Along this route, 45 municipalities have embraced regional marketing, showcasing over 1,400 attractions.

A coordinated regional marketing campaign, including a central-

ized web site and Facebook page, would provide communities and businesses access to visitors, tourists, and prospective residents. In addition, this venue is economical and provides benefits to small businesses without access to these resources.





Economic Development Plan

Goals	Action	Responsible party	Time Frame	Progress
Become RRC Certified	Work with the MEDC and DDA to obtain Redevelopment Ready Certification.	Planning Commssion, Village Council, DDA	1 year	In process.
Update the Zoning Ordinance	Review zoning ordinance to identify opportunities for streamlining development/zoning review procedures.	Planning Commssion	1 Year	In process.
Provide support for Small Business Infrastrucutre	Provide and maintain affordable and accessible high-tech infrastructure available to emerging enterprises.	Village Council, DDA	5 Years	In process.
Review and update existing incentive policies	Promote existing revolving loan fund opportunities to make capital.	Village Council	5 Years	In process.
	Consider brownfield tax incentives to encourage redevelopment/reuse of industrial sites as appropriate.	Village Council	2-3 Years	In process.
Update industrial site plan regulations	Develop planning standards for industrial development that provide flexibility while ensuring quality site planning.	Planning Commission, Village Council	3 Years	In process.
	Encourage and support industrial expansion on public and private property.	Village Council	ongoing	In process.
Support Corridor Improvements	Encourage and support improvements to Kalkaska's "gateway" commercial corridors.	Village Council, DDA	ongoing	In process.
Increase Community Engagement Events	Promote recreation opportunities, festivals, and community events.	Village Council, DDA	ongoing	In process.
Improve way Finding Signage	Develop consistent recreation- or natural resources-oriented signage, streetscape amenities, or public art installments that serve as a brand for the Village.	Village Council	5 years	In process.

