



Executive Summary

The City of East Lansing is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan and has identified economic sustainability as a major priority. East Lansing traditionally outlines its economic development goals and strategies in various city documents. A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is needed to assist the community in reaching its future economic goals. The city identified talent retention, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, and promoting innovation as its primary economic development goals. A long term goal for the city is to become Redevelopment Ready Certified by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

To create this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, our team compiled the goals and strategies of six current plans. From those, three themes were identified to serve as areas of focus: Quality of Place, Job Growth, and Talent Attraction and Retention. We then created a detailed community profile to better understand the local economy, its role in the region, and trends in the ever-changing global market. A specific focus was put on economic indicators that showed where East Lansing excels and where efforts need to be focused in order to improve. These economic indicators are also intended to be used to quantify economic improvement over time.

East Lansing was found to have a highly-educated workforce and to be a hub of economic activity. It is also home to Michigan State University and many other unique institutional assets, positioning it as a city with a truly innovative and entrepreneurial local economy. Data, in addition to peer research, was used to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as anticipate potential opportunities and threats to better understand how the East Lansing economy can be improved. It is also intended to be used by city staff, potential developers, and East Lansing residents to make informed decisions about the local economy.

In addition to the three major themes that addressed the goals of East Lansing stakeholders, five strategic objectives were established to guide the recommendations. These objectives were designed to develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, expand and diversify the local economy, attract and retain new residents, invest in placemaking and maintaining a high quality built environment and prioritize and support specific development and redevelopment opportunities. From these strategies, recommendations were developed using the collected data and identified goals to help East Lansing create a more innovative and sustainable local economy.