



## 21c3 Pilot Project SAULT STE. MARIE

### The “Ah-ha” Moment

We took the shell of a vacant factory in downtown Ann Arbor, added some tables, phenomenal art, and good food, then invited engaged leaders and major players from across the state to participate in a powerful conversation. The topic centered on what it will take to transform Michigan and reclaim our place as an economic powerhouse in the 21st century. It was hot and humid, but the fans were blowing and the ideas were flowing.

Beyond the building’s weathered walls, the city buzzed with trendy bistros and coffee shops. Young professionals zipped by on expensive bikes, laptops slung over shoulders, headed for important things. The upscale loft conversions next door were *sold out*. There was energy all around that opened people’s eyes to the potential of this dusty old building next to the train tracks. They could all see their own hometowns in the reflection of its cracked windows. Eyes opened wide at the opportunity to make old and forgotten places and spaces new and vibrant once again.

Their chance to create Better Communities. Better Michigan.

### The Pilot Program

Our Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3) was born from the public policy forums that featured such “ah-ha” moments. 21c3 identified eight key assets for creating vibrant places in a global, knowledge based economy. Experts from around the world agree that investing in communities is one of the most critical elements of any long-term economic development strategy. We believe this is especially true in Michigan, that “place” matters more than ever.

To prove it, we began our pilot project series. Five pilot communities have put theory into action to demonstrate the impact of these principals and their applicability regardless of size or location. They will help us learn more about leveraging a unique sense of place in a community to enhance quality of life and attract the people and businesses that will fuel the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

#### 8 ASSETS OF A 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY

1. Physical Design & Walkability
2. Green Initiatives
3. Cultural Economic Development
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Multiculturalism
6. Messaging & Technology
7. Transit
8. Education K-16



[www.mml.org](http://www.mml.org)

## Choosing the Pilots

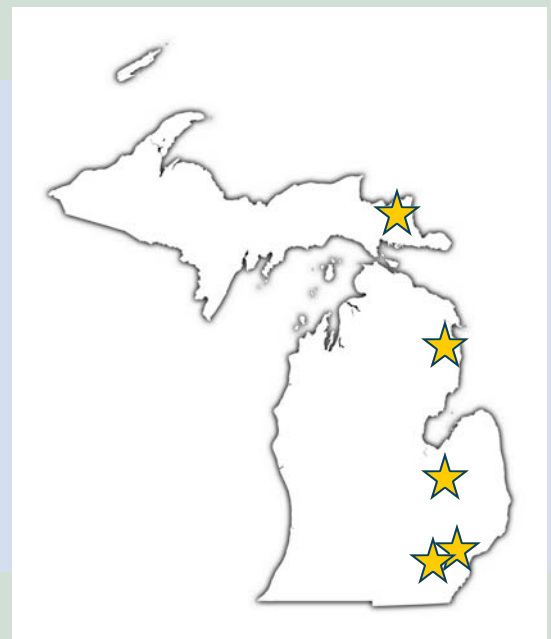
With the “8 Assets” in mind, we invited five communities statewide to serve as “Pilot Communities.” Their participation provided access to grant funds and technical expertise to work on a project related to one or more of the asset areas.

These pilot communities would be a real-world demonstration of the impact of an asset area, and will provide valuable peer lessons for communities across the state. We selected communities that already have considerable assets in place, where an infusion of a modest amount of money and considerable focused effort might just make a difference.

Sault Ste. Marie fit the bill with numerous assets in place in each area, and its visionary leadership willing to push forward with transformative change. The city accepted our invitation and joined four other distinguished communities as 21c3 pilot communities.

## **21c3 Pilot Communities and Asset Areas of Focus**

- ⇒ Alpena: cultural economic development
- ⇒ Lapeer: transit (non-motorized trail system)
- ⇒ Lathrup Village: physical design/walkability
- ⇒ Ypsilanti: entrepreneurship
- ⇒ Sault Ste Marie: K-16 education



## Testing the Assessment Process

The City of Sault Ste. Marie saw opportunity in several asset areas and wanted to be prudent in its selection of an area of focus. Luckily, we had a very rough assessment process in development, and the city graciously agreed to test the first iteration of it.

The 21c3 assessment process is intended to help communities understand the breadth and depth of each asset area, catalogue their relative strengths in each asset area and identify their opportunities for further development. This tool, once refined and finalized, will serve as a key component in future 21c3 technical services to be applied in communities statewide.

As applied in Sault Ste. Marie, it was intended to assist the city in making a well-informed and strategic decision about the asset area on which to focus the 21c3 grant project.



## Background

Sault Ste. Marie (the Soo) is the birthplace of Michigan, and home to Lake Superior State University (Lake State). The two entities have successfully collaborated on innumerable projects through the years. However, working together on a specific project is different from embracing a cohesive, integrated strategic plan for leveraging the education/community relationship within the broader context of economic and community development.

For some time, both the university and city have thought a stronger, more strategic-level collaboration would be mutually beneficial. Even better, the K-12 educational system and major employers in the area such as the hospital agree. This “A-team” of key stakeholders and community leaders astutely observed that Sault Ste. Marie is currently a “town with a university” rather than a “university town.” They all view that transition as a potentially powerful catalyst for the region’s economy and quality of life.

As such, all involved would like to see students more engaged with the Soo community, more active in the downtown district and eventually choose to make the area their permanent home following graduation. And conversely, all would like the community to be more active and visible in their support for and celebration of one of their most critical anchor institutions, Lake State.

Through the 21c3 pilot program, we are hoping the Soo can help other communities in Michigan learn how a town/gown strategy can be successfully integrated within its larger economic development plan to fully leverage the power of all the regional assets. Communities across the state have educational assets in place, ranging from K-12 systems, to technical schools and community colleges, to some of the nation’s best four-year colleges and universities.



LAKE SUPERIOR  
STATE UNIVERSITY



## Methodology

The project kicked off with a public invitation to the city to participate, followed by discussions with an internal project team. The city quickly concluded they needed more information before selecting an area of focus. Thus, the Soo became a test-case for the League's draft 21c3 comprehensive assessment tool.

The assessment process was carried out through group meetings, secondary internet research and direct personal interviews conducted by phone and in-person with various stakeholders on-site.



Considerable time was spent in the Soo and multiple site visits were conducted during the month of July. League staff met with municipal leaders as well as community stakeholders in group settings and individually. Unstructured interviews were conducted to obtain information concerning the asset areas as defined by the 21c3 project from a variety of perspectives. Site visits also provided the opportunity to formulate an impression of the community, as an outsider looking in, to better understand the assets and connections already in place, and the potential opportunities for further development.

*"The mission of the City of Sault Ste. Marie is to provide a sustainable small urban environment in an international setting for the well-being of its citizens by planning for and managing its physical development in an environmentally friendly manner, by fostering an economy to support its public and private infrastructure, and by nurturing historical, cultural, and recreational activities that enhance the quality of life within it."*



The report was presented in draft form and feedback from the stakeholders group was incorporated. The final report is organized to present a summary of each asset area, a brief description of the community's existing strengths as identified through the stakeholder interview process, and an initial list of potential opportunities that were revealed.

In addition to specific questions in each asset area, the site visits and interviews focused on some overarching questions that came out of the initial project meetings. These questions guided the research and helped to shape our understanding of the city and community.

- ⇒ Is Sault Ste. Marie a town with a university or university town?
- ⇒ How can the city and university better leverage one another for mutual advancement?
- ⇒ How can the city work more strategically with the hospital, and vice versa, and other key anchor institutions to create the type of "place" that is attractive to potential employees, students, residents, etc.?
- ⇒ How does the community's self-image impact development in the eight asset areas?
- ⇒ Does the community have strategic outlets through which to communicate a unified, consistent, strong, and positive message?

For purposes of this project, "community" is not necessarily limited by the physical boundaries of the city. However, our member and primary client is the City of Sault Ste. Marie.



## Findings

A separate page is provided for each of the eight assets and includes a more detailed description of the asset area, and a listing of assets and opportunities found through the initial assessment process. Key stakeholders, either current or potential, are also identified for each asset. It is our hope in asking "what did we miss" in each area that this document will continue to evolve through ongoing feedback and input from new perspectives and stakeholders.

## ASSET #1 PHYSICAL DESIGN & WALKABILITY

The physical design and “walkability” of a community helps create a “feel” or “sense of place.” A community’s connectivity can afford people safe and convenient access to the places they live, work, shop and play. Examples include a traditional downtown with easy access from historic and/or architecturally pleasing residential areas, mixed use development that encourages appropriate density, traffic and other infrastructure design features that value the human scale by considering the pedestrian, bicyclist and other non-motorized uses of the space.

The challenge is that oftentimes our streets are designed to move as many cars through a community as quickly as possible, without appropriate consideration for the pedestrian. But market analysis continues to show that preferences are changing, and more and more people want to live in neighborhoods with walkable downtowns, access to cultural, social, and entertainment opportunities, with a variety of transportation options. Walkability not only helps to create a strong sense of place, it promotes a strong local economy and healthy lifestyle .

*Key stakeholders:* City of Sault Ste. Marie, Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitor’s Bureau, Chippewa County Health Department, public school system, Lake Superior State University, Sault Tribe Healthy Community, War Memorial Hospital

*Designated staff:* Shared responsibility, city planning and engineering.

### ASSETS

- ⇒ Safe Routes to School
- ⇒ Encouragement for multi-use
- ⇒ Dense housing near downtown
- ⇒ Seating in public space
- ⇒ Ashmun Street lay-out is inviting
- ⇒ Available space in the downtown
- ⇒ Dan Burden reports
- ⇒ Special events in downtown area
- ⇒ Sault Tribe Health Community
- ⇒ Hospital programs
- ⇒ Complete Streets resolution
- ⇒ Hospital located downtown
- ⇒ Skate Park
- ⇒ Significant historic buildings
- ⇒ Waterfront
- ⇒ Considerable investment in capital improvement over the years (i.e. combined sewer overflow)
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Improving student connectivity to commercial areas/downtown
- ⇒ Walking and bike trail signage; way-finding
- ⇒ Implementation of Dan Burden plan
- ⇒ Promote downtown living among students
- ⇒ Building aesthetics & streetscaping
- ⇒ Outdoor dining
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

*Did you know...*

*Sault Ste. Marie is the first community in the Upper Peninsula to adopt a Complete Streets resolution!*

*And...*

*A one-point increase in “walk score” can translate to a \$3,000 increase in property value!*



## ASSET #2 GREEN INITIATIVES

Sustainability and green initiatives encompass a broad range of environmental issues, including developing “green jobs,” valuing our natural resources and leveraging them within our new economy. Recognizing that good environmental stewardship is not just a “feel good” effort, it has become a driver for economic success in the 21st century.

When people choose a place to call home, or consider a location for their business venture, sustainability is a factor in decision-making.

*Key Stakeholders:* MSU extension, Lake Superior State, University Chippewa/East Mackinaw Conservation District, Coast Guard, Sault Tribe, Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitor’s Bureau

*Designated staff:* Varies by project

### ASSETS

- ⇒ Recycling center
- ⇒ Energy audits
- ⇒ Mission statement
- ⇒ Wind energy for businesses
- ⇒ Green space
- ⇒ Park lands
- ⇒ Community gardens at Lake State and in neighborhoods
- ⇒ City composting
- ⇒ New wind energy ordinance
- ⇒ MSU extension activities
- ⇒ Hazardous materials recycling
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Education programming
- ⇒ Advisory group
- ⇒ Public recognition
- ⇒ Green policies
- ⇒ Green Communities Challenge
- ⇒ Education and outreach for community understanding of Green initiatives
- ⇒ Formal energy rating system, re: Energy Star, LEED
- ⇒ Coordination and cooperation among anchors
- ⇒ Eco-tourism
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### *FACT:*

*One job is created for every 10,000 tons put in a land fill, but **10 JOBS** are created by recycling that 10,000 tons!*

## ASSET #3:

### CULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cultural economic development includes all things interesting and fun, that make a place unique, and feed our appetite for fun. These may include social and entertainment opportunities, art galleries, museums, cultural attractions, celebrations of heritage and tradition, athletics, special events and myriad of others. An active and diverse complement of arts and culture activities are essential to a thriving local economy and high quality of life.

*Key Stakeholders:* Historical Development Commission, Historical Structures Management Committee, Sault Tribe, Sault EDC, artisans in the community, Theatre Guild

*Designated Staff:* No single group or person has been designated for this asset. City Planning and Development and the EDC are involved with aspects, as well as the Historic Structures Management Committee, Community Services Board, Historical Development Commission, and the Sault Tribe.

#### ASSETS

- ⇒ Significant history in the region (i.e. birthplace of Michigan)
- ⇒ Museums
- ⇒ Multiple Theatre Groups & Actor's Guild
- ⇒ LSSU Fine Arts
- ⇒ Sault Tribe
- ⇒ Kewadin Madgrial
- ⇒ Music
- ⇒ Festivals
- ⇒ Galleries
- ⇒ Strong community desire for arts and culture
- ⇒ Tourism industry
- ⇒ Historic Building Society
- ⇒ Park lands
- ⇒ Community use spaces
- ⇒ International city
- ⇒ Locks attraction
- ⇒ Sault Tribe
- ⇒ County Historical Council
- ⇒ Sault Arts Council
- ⇒ Eastern UP "Inland Seashore" initiative
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Public art/murals
- ⇒ Lake State and public school connections through art
- ⇒ Formal support networks for artists and cultural groups
- ⇒ Public art, performance, and community cultural activities
- ⇒ Eco-tourism for natural resources
- ⇒ Leveraging partnerships as an international city
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

*The Chase Marathon and Half Marathon in Fall 2010 is the first of their kind in the region! The Chamber saw an opportunity for development and "ran" with it!*





## ASSET #4:

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Growing jobs by ones and twos is key to creating strong local economies in the 21st century. Michigan's economic turnaround will be fueled by small start-ups and growth on main street, along with other sectors. Gone are the days of "hunting" large employers, now is the time for economic gardening strategies aimed at developing the talent and potential that already exists right at home.

Also central to success are social entrepreneurs, who act as change agents within a community, seizing opportunities others miss to create social value rather than profits. This type of entrepreneurial activity resonates especially with students and millennials looking to apply their optimism, energy, passion and skills for a positive, tangible impact.

*Key Stakeholders:* Sault EDC, Chamber of Commerce, Lake State, Sault Tribe, Convention & Visitor's Bureau

*Designated staff:* Sault EDC

#### ASSETS

- ⇒ Strong and active Chamber of Commerce
- ⇒ SBTDC coaching
- ⇒ LSSU product development center
- ⇒ K-12 schools student entrepreneur programs
- ⇒ Michigan Works!
- ⇒ EDC-one stop shop
- ⇒ Incubator
- ⇒ Strong entrepreneurial spirit
- ⇒ Ribbon cutting for new businesses
- ⇒ Sault Tribe active with the Chamber
- ⇒ "Buy Local" sentiment
- ⇒ Farmer's market
- ⇒ Lake State product development center
- ⇒ Smart Zone
- ⇒ "SIFE"-Students in Free Enterprise
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Networking among business owners
- ⇒ Partnership between tourism and the Chamber
- ⇒ Supportive programming & mentoring for new businesses
- ⇒ Follow-up with new businesses
- ⇒ Programming focused on women and minority owned businesses
- ⇒ Angel networks, microfinance, and venture capital
- ⇒ Student entrepreneurs
- ⇒ Internship networks
- ⇒ Better leverage library system, Lake State, and public schools
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

*Did you know:  
Small business is responsible for  
75 percent of all net new jobs!*

## ASSET #5:

### DIVERSITY/MULTICULTURALISM

Our global economy is fueled by the talent and ingenuity of people born not only here, but around the world. We are fortunate to have a national heritage built around immigration and diversity. It has helped to position us as one of the most entrepreneurial and successful economies in the world.

Embracing diversity and multiculturalism as a competitive advantage is key to creating successful 21st century communities. Places that are welcoming to all are most attractive to new businesses, and today's fluid, mobile, and global workforce seeks out places that embrace people of all religions, ethnicities, national origins and races. Further, a community that is open and accessible to all age groups, abilities and socio-economic status will have an edge over that which is single-dimensional.

*Key Stakeholders:* Sault Tribe, Lake State, Churches, Christian Freedom International, Sault Canada

*Designated Staff:* There is not yet a person or advisory group designated to handle this asset area.

#### ASSETS

- ⇒ Sault Tribe
- ⇒ LSSU art exhibits, rotating native American art collection
- ⇒ Tourism industry
- ⇒ Christian Freedom International
- ⇒ Active church groups
- ⇒ Community support for fundraising and international social service efforts
- ⇒ Cultural sensitivity training within police department
- ⇒ Affordable housing options within downtown area, including senior living
- ⇒ International exchange students with Sister City in Japan
- ⇒ Tribal events and powwows-River of History Museum
- ⇒ International employment recruiting
- ⇒ International Bridge
- ⇒ Lake State Cultural Museum
- ⇒ Age diversity
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Recruiting of ethnic shops, groceries, and restaurants
- ⇒ Encouraging entrepreneurship among ethnic groups
- ⇒ Advisory group for community in multicultural issues, needs, and services
- ⇒ Promotion of social /cultural events and programming
- ⇒ Timebank for volunteerism
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### *Consider this:*

*Nationally there is a shortage of 16,680 physicians in medically under-served communities. Immigrants represent 25% of physicians...*



## ASSET #6:

### MESSAGING & TECHNOLOGY

People communicate and engage differently today than they did ten years ago, or five years ago, or last year, or even last month! Next generation internet and communication technologies, known as Web 2.0, are connecting people and allowing them to share information in the virtual world in unprecedented ways. Social networking applications like Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube, as well as communication platforms like blogs are not just for kids anymore!

Local leaders who are committed to incorporating Web 2.0 strategies into their approach to messaging and networking with new demographics, businesses, cultural institutions and philanthropic communities are ahead of the game. These tools also help government achieve greater transparency and create new virtual meeting places where people across spectrums of society can share their input and ideas.

*Key Stakeholders:* Chamber of Commerce, City Clerk's office, Convention & Visitor's Bureau, Lake State student affairs, Library, Sault Tribe, Sault Canada

*Designated Staff:* Content on the website is controlled by the City Clerk, but there is not a person or advisory group established for social media, messaging and city branding.

#### ASSETS

- ⇒ Wi-Fi in select downtown shops and cafes
- ⇒ Websites available for the city, Chamber, and Visitor's Bureau, schools, Lake State
- ⇒ Lake State groups
- ⇒ Library web access for community
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

*WOW!*

*73,898 people "like" the  
"Michigan Upper Peninsula"  
Facebook page!*

*And...*

*3,000 are fans of the "I  
Love Sault Ste. Marie  
Facebook page!"*

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Downtown Wi-Fi, recruiting businesses to offer free web access
- ⇒ Integration of websites between city, Visitor's Bureau, and Chamber, shared calendars, cross-promotions
- ⇒ Social networking as a marketing and branding strategy
- ⇒ Improve access and searchability of high impact visitor items (bike trails)
- ⇒ Greater community connection and encouragement for internet use (Library, Schools, Lake State)
- ⇒ Adult education on social networking and computer use taught by Lake State students
- ⇒ Linkages between business sites, Visitor's Bureau and the Chamber
- ⇒ Consistent branding
- ⇒ Partnerships with Canada
- ⇒ Social networks among professionals
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

## ASSET #7:

### TRANSIT

Thriving local areas offer a range of transit options, from walking and biking to buses and other modes of mass transit. Transportation has become an integrated part of all conversations concerning economic development particularly in Michigan, where we share a border with Canada, and are surrounded by some of the most important waterways in the country.

Developing effective public transit options in Michigan is a necessary tool for attracting and retaining residents, workers and businesses. Research shows that people across the nation are choosing communities that offer various modes of transportation, with easy access to the places they live, work and play. Multimodal transit can be as complex as rail systems and as simple as trails and bike paths.

*Key Stakeholders:* Dial-A-Ride, Lake State student affairs and shuttles, Sault Tribe, Convention & Visitor's Bureau

*Designated Staff:* City Dial-A-Ride Transportation Manager

#### ASSETS

- ⇒ Bike trails, walking paths
- ⇒ Buses, airport, marina
- ⇒ Sidewalk improvement plans
- ⇒ Cohesive system of trails and bike paths
- ⇒ Dial-A-Ride
- ⇒ Financial support for transit
- ⇒ Trolley is owned by the city
- ⇒ Partnership with tribe on Complete Streets
- ⇒ Student shuttle
- ⇒ Snowmobile trails
- ⇒ Cross country ski trails
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Increased promotion and use of trails and pathways
- ⇒ Trolley use
- ⇒ Sidewalk improvement implementation
- ⇒ Complete Streets implementation
- ⇒ Regional multi-modal transportation plan
- ⇒ Student options/access
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

*Something to think about:*

*Every \$1 invested in public transit returns around \$6 in local economic activity!*



## ASSET #8:

### EDUCATION (K-16)

Education is key in competing in a global, 21st century economy, and educational institutions are anchor institutions within communities. From K-12 schools to community college and technical schools, to state universities, educational institutions bring innumerable opportunities to a community. They are the hub for not only learning, but sports, entertainment, arts and culture, healthcare, and recreation, and serve as engines of economic development.

Vibrant communities successfully collaborate with a full range of educational institutions to develop intellectual, human and physical capital. Collaboration can be as simple as sharing physical facilities such as ballparks and swimming pools, or as complex as formal town-gown strategic plans.

*Key Stakeholders:* Lake State, public school system, community college, Library, Sault Tribe, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, MichiganWorks!

#### ASSETS

- ⇒ Shared commitment and strong leadership
- ⇒ Strong cooperation among anchor institutions
- ⇒ Successful formal and informal collaborations on specific issues and special projects
- ⇒ Lake State continuing education coursework
- ⇒ LSSU financial aid workshops for community
- ⇒ LSSU/K-12 schools partnering on formal programs (i.e. robotics, ACT prep.)
- ⇒ LSSU Upward Bound and Gear Up programs
- ⇒ Strong parental involvement in K-12 schools, strong support for athletics
- ⇒ Rotary Club influence
- ⇒ Career centers in HS and Lake State
- ⇒ Volunteer Center, student engagement
- ⇒ Unified regional communication on public school happenings
- ⇒ Active library system
- ⇒ Opportunities for Canadian students
- ⇒ Blue Ribbon awards for public schools
- ⇒ Bay Mills Community College
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ⇒ Formal partnership/strategic plan between the city, Lake State, and public schools
- ⇒ Information sharing network among education groups and the city (re: festivals, cultural events, student life)
- ⇒ Facilities sharing in off-seasons
- ⇒ MichiganWorks! educational job training
- ⇒ Student ID discounts
- ⇒ Downtown living for upper-classmen
- ⇒ Coursework auditing for the community
- ⇒ See expanded list of ideas on page 15
  
- ⇒ What did we miss?

*Food for thought...*

*A person with a bachelor's degree can expect to earn twice as much as someone with a high school diploma...add another 20% for a Master's degree!*



## 21c3 Project Focus: K-16 EDUCATION

**Project Vision:** Transition Sault Sainte Marie from a “town with a university” to a vibrant university town in which students are fully integrated within the community and consider it their home, and the community engages the full range of opportunities provided through their key anchor institution.

### EXPANDED DISCUSSION

There has been a strong history of effective, project-based collaboration between the city and Lake State. Moreover, the school system and the hospital round out the “A team” of stakeholders that have regularly joined together to successfully complete innumerable projects over the years. However, working together on a specific project is different from embracing a cohesive, integrated strategic plan for leveraging the education/community relationship within the broader context of economic and community development.

The in-depth assessment process made clear that the K-16 education asset area has enormous untapped potential for the region. Given the strong foundation of successful collaboration, the commitment of these key stakeholders and the significant opportunity at hand, all agreed that it is time to move beyond project-based work and implement a comprehensive, long-term town/gown strategy that provides mutually beneficial outcomes for all.

Currently, Lake State is developing its own strategic plan, a component of which emphasizes collaboration and community focus. The university understands the importance of connecting its students and overall mission to the community at large. As well, the city recognizes the critical asset it has in the university. Both would like to better integrate students and leverage the university to enhance the quality of life and economic strength of the community.

For some time, both the university and city have thought transitioning from a “town with a university” to a “university town” would be a powerful catalyst for the region’s economy and quality of life. The K-12 school system and hospital agree, and all would like to see students and the university community more engaged with “the Soo” community, more active in the downtown district and to eventually choose to make the area their permanent home following graduation.



And conversely, all would like the community to be more active and visible in their support for and celebration of one of their most critical anchor institutions, “Lake State.” In contrast, where the university could be better connected to the community, the local school district has a solid history of strong, effective community involvement including extensive volunteerism and enthusiasm around sports and related activities. This existing foundation may provide a comfortable common-ground; bridging the community to the university through its K-12 educational system.

While the tribe is the largest employer in the area, the hospital has the largest payroll and is growing. The hospital has been a proactive and effective force in engaging K-16 education in the community with its nursing partnership with Lake State and its intern program with the school system. Like the school system, this key anchor institution may also play a lead role in cultivating town/gown relations and facilitating a more cohesive strategy for the community.

These key stakeholders, the city, Lake State, Sault Ste. Marie area schools and War Memorial Hospital are central to any successful long-term town/gown strategy. It is recommended that this small group continue on and engage a skilled facilitator with expertise in town/gown collaboration to develop a strategic plan with specific goals and objectives.

### **SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:**

We recommend that the stakeholder group move forward in developing a formal strategic plan for strengthening and better leveraging the education/community relationship in general, and “town/gown” in particular, as part of an overall economic development strategy.

If this recommendation is accepted, the League will assist in securing a qualified consultant to facilitate the process with the following potential activities and objectives:

1. Facilitate initial work session to discuss background information and finalize work plan.
2. Complete research as needed to prepare for strategic planning process.
3. Attend and facilitate one or more work sessions to:
  - ⇒ Identify and prioritize broad strategic goals for strengthening and better leveraging the education/community relationship in general and “town/gown” in particular, as part of an overall economic development strategy
  - ⇒ Specify outcomes, measurables or impacts sought
  - ⇒ Outline specific activities, projects and actions that will support achievement of goals
  - ⇒ Identify other stakeholders to engage for specific goals/projects
  - ⇒ Suggest messaging/public outreach and engagement strategies
  - ⇒ Recommend governance structure to create a sustainable model for ongoing plan implementation
4. Prepare and present a comprehensive report that details the process and methodology used, the strategic plan itself and recommendations for ensuring implementation and sustainability going forward.

*Suggested next steps, continued*

In addition to the core stakeholder group, the city may wish to consider expanding the work group to include Lake State student(s), community-at-large representatives, representative(s) from the business community and the Sault Tribe.

Careful consideration should be given to how the work group will be comprised; it must remain small enough to ensure effectiveness but broad enough to gather input from various perspectives. In any event, only those who are truly committed to and passionate about town/gown collaboration should be included.



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We welcome your thoughts on this report , and please let us know if you'd like to be involved in this exciting initiative! Please contact:

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OR

Kristen Claus, Economic Development Corporation Executive Director  
1301 W. Easterday Ave., Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
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