



For Immediate Release

Economic Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Marquette County

March 1, 2022. Marquette County. As Marquette County begins to emerge from the turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the region's leaders take stock of the wide-ranging impacts that have resulted and the ways it has changed daily life across the community. Beyond the loss and extraordinary challenges it put upon our healthcare system and its workers, the economic impacts of the pandemic are still observable; from the strain of supply chain challenges, to a reduced regional workforce, to finding affordable child care for working households. As of February, cases continue to trend downward, and the region begins to transition back into a relative sense of normalcy despite the ongoing circumstances.

As a result of the 2020 CARES Act, the Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission (CUPPAD) received funding from the U.S. Economic Development Authority (U.S. EDA), to produce and implement an economic recovery and resiliency strategy for the region. This strategy is intended to guide a response to economic challenges caused by the pandemic and build greater resilience to resist future disruptions and take advantage of the coming waves of technological advances, for example, the arrival of electric vehicles and remote working.

"We're at a pivotal moment right now where we can reflect upon the events that transpired and present a strategy for the future that will help guide our economic recovery, then take decisive steps to protect our region from future shocks." Says Ryan Soucy, Senior Planner at Central Upper Peninsula Planning & Development, better known as CUPPAD. "One of the big takeaways from the pandemic is that there are always going to be times of uncertainty and disruptive changes that challenge our systems. Do we go back to business as usual, or do we adapt and invest the infrastructure, innovation drivers, and cultivation of a talented workforce that could make the region more resilient?"

Over the past year, CUPPAD facilitated numerous ad-hoc steering committee meetings comprised of partner organizations, including Northern Michigan University, Lake Superior Community Partnership, the Innovate Marquette SmartZone, and Superior Watershed Partnership among many others. The steering team worked with consultant firm TIP Strategies, Inc. to understand the region's competitive advantage, then develop objectives which could help capitalize on its unique position. Among many possibilities, a coordinated approach to growing the outdoor recreation industry was identified. Through the process, dozens of organizations, business leaders, and local officials were engaged through interviews and roundtable discussions to further analyze issues of local importance. The strategy is intended to complement the recently published Marquette 2040 County Master Plan, as well as the 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Central U.P.

The Marquette County strategy will serve as a template for the other five counties served by CUPPAD; Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Menominee, and Schoolcraft, which will collectively become the Central U.P. Economic Resiliency Plan. This will give each county the personalized and nuanced approach to economic recovery and resilience that they require.



“A great deal of effort went into the planning and even more focus will be required during implementation. As the technology and innovation resource for the Central Upper Peninsula, we will ensure we do our part to carry these critical initiatives forward”, states Joe Thiel, CEO at the Innovate Marquette SmartZone. “I personally can't wait to see how much economic growth and resiliency will come from the completion of these goals. I am very optimistic we can resolve identified issues and create amazing opportunities for generations to come.” Northern Michigan University and the Innovate Marquette SmartZone were among the many specialized community contributors to the plan’s strategic direction.

Action steps for implementation will soon be developed with well-defined benchmarks for success. The plan for each county in the central region is anticipated to be completed before the end of 2022. The Marquette County Economic Recovery and Resiliency Strategy, as well as soon to be developed strategies for the rest of the Central UP are available for viewing at: <https://cuppapad.org/ceds/>

###