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DICKINSON COUNTY ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE STRATEGY

PREPARED FOR DICKINSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN



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TIP Strategies, Inc., is a privately held economic development consulting firm with offices in Austin and Seattle. TIP is committed to providing quality solutions for public sector and private sector clients. Established in 1995, the firm's primary focus is economic development strategic planning.

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INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

The Central Upper Peninsula of Michigan boasts of remarkable assets. Despite its distance from major urban centers, its natural beauty, higher education institutions, and emerging technology assets stand out both within Michigan and the nation. Facilities and attractions such as the Pine Mountain Ski Resort, the Marshfield Clinic, and the expanse of trails and outdoor recreation opportunities further distinguish the region.



Image courtesy CUPPAD

As forestry and mining decline, the Upper Peninsula is moving rapidly to facilitate a broader economic recovery. This recovery will rely not only on technology, but also on tourism and an expansion of homegrown businesses. There are, as elsewhere in the nation, significant headwinds. These include not only the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but a limited housing supply and the continued out-migration of talented young people.

Dickinson County is an important manufacturing hub for the region. A commitment to greater resiliency is crucial to a broad and equitable recovery. This plan seeks to assemble relevant data, provide a set of strategies that are specific and actionable, and a robust implementation schedule. The approach we have taken relies heavily on regional collaboration and on-going community leadership. This plan sets the stage for positive economic change to happen.

ABOUT THIS WORK

TIP Strategies (TIP) was engaged by the Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission (CUPPAD) to prepare an economic recovery and resilience strategy plan for Marquette County and this work serves as the starting point for a larger effort that will encompass the six counties served by CUPPAD: Alger, Dickinson, Delta, Marquette, Menominee, and Schoolcraft in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (the UP). This plan will focus on Dickinson County (the County).

Once finalized, the six county-based strategies can be aggregated and incorporated as a component of the region's comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS).

The planning process was conducted in three phases: discovery, opportunity, and implementation. Due to the travel and in-person meeting limitations caused by COVID-19, all client meetings and stakeholder engagements were conducted by phone and/or virtually.

- 1. DISCOVERY:** Conducted over 12 individual interviews with economic development stakeholders in Dickinson County and the central UP. Facilitated six roundtable discussions with important constituencies and attended various events to better understand relevant topics and roles.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS FACILITATED

- Community Development, Redevelopment, and Community Image
- Broadband Access and Infrastructure
- Workforce and Education
- Housing Development
- Tourism Businesses
- Quality of Place

MEETINGS ATTENDED

- Alliance Infrastructure and Housing Coalition Meetings
- City Council and Planning Commission Meetings

- 2. OPPORTUNITY:** Identified major priorities for the strategic plan. Created a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. Vision, mission, and strategies were developed based on input from discovery.

3. IMPLEMENTATION: Developed strategies, action items, tactical recommendations, and suggested performance metrics.

The County should not view this strategic plan as a static document, but rather as one that invites revisions and amendments as conditions change. Now, more than ever, stakeholders should take a dynamic approach to implementation—one that revisits this plan on a regular basis to measure progress and to re-prioritize strategies and actions as needed.

THE CHALLENGE

Dickinson County and the Central Upper Peninsula region stand at an economic crossroads. It's abundantly clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted economies throughout the country and around the world. In times of great economic distress, communities must focus on both near-term recovery and long-term resilience to weather the storm. The County and the region cannot afford to carry on with business as usual.



Image courtesy CUPPAD



Image courtesy CUPPAD

Even without the crisis, the central UP has significant problems to address, compounding the urgency of the situation. The need for economic diversification has never been greater. The ongoing decline of traditional resource-based industries, like ore mining, has already caused significant closures and accompanying job losses, a downward trend that is projected to continue.

At the same time, the overall population of the region has also been declining, making an increased emphasis on talent development, retention, and attraction critical if the region is to move forward. However, housing availability and affordability are growing challenges for new and existing residents in Dickinson County, driven in part by the area's sizable percentage of seasonally occupied homes.

An important part of building up the local workforce is ensuring that those workers' needs can be met. The market for affordable and accessible childcare has supply and demand problems, including a lack of licensed providers, which can lead directly to women disproportionately leaving the labor force. Improving access to economic opportunity is an essential element of a resilient economy. Bolstering workforce diversity helps form a stronger foundation for equitable and inclusive practices, which can make the region more resilient and more appealing to outsiders.

Finally, ongoing and effective collaboration among the region's economic development organizations (EDOs) must be strengthened and maintained. Historically, the regional planning process has been fragmented and duplicative, leading to concerns about overplanning. A more collaborative approach will be required to address Dickinson's challenges and leverage its strengths.

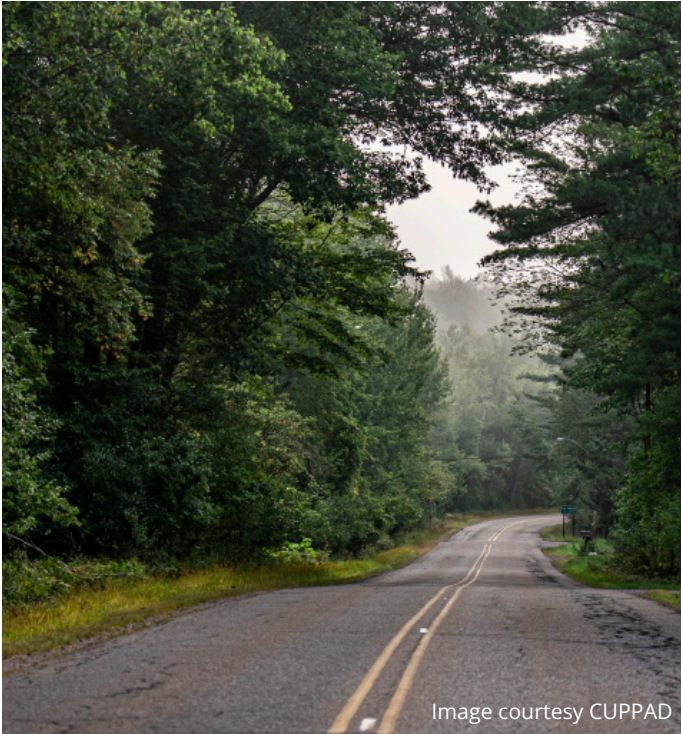


Image courtesy CUPPAD

THE RESPONSE

The Dickinson County Economic Recovery and Resiliency Strategy builds on unique assets and opportunities within the region that can be leveraged for long-term prosperity. It lays out strategies and actions that will address the region's economic challenges effectively by leaning on these existing strengths. To foster new investment, jobs, and businesses, the region can utilize its renowned outdoor recreation assets and natural amenities, casting a wide net to bring in both tourists and new residents. The extensive Dickinson Trail Network, state-of-the-art healthcare facilities, and the engineering intensive manufacturing industry could all play a substantial role in this effort. The attraction (and retention) of remote workers is a major opportunity as well, but will require greater investments in housing and broadband infrastructure, marketing the advantages of the UP to these potential remote workers.

Perhaps less well-known but equally important is the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Dickinson, which stands ready to grow. The Dickinson Area Economic Development Alliance is a critical facet of entrepreneurial and small business growth in the area. There are resources available for new startup creation, but leadership needs to implement strategies to cast a wider net for both home-grown and external entrepreneurs.

A challenge mentioned above is the need for greater regional collaboration to tackle difficult problems like housing affordability and the preservation of natural assets and resources in the wake of increased tourism. Organizations like CUPPAD and the Dickinson Area Economic Development Alliance in conjunction with city and county officials, have the necessary tools available to actualize economic recovery and resiliency and the desire to work together more closely, if they can turn that desire into action.

To implement and sustain the strategies outlined in this plan, leadership must make use of all available funding sources. In this regard, the region has several advantages. Via the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), federal funding is flowing to the UP from agencies like the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). These funds can help support existing and new projects and programs. Pursuing other opportunities, like state grants, could supplement this influx of fiscal support.



Image courtesy CUPPAD

COMPETITIVE POSITION



ECONOMIC CONTEXT

TIP prepared a targeted assessment of factors that define the region's overall competitiveness and are of greatest concern to economic decision-makers. Some of the most significant trends from that analysis, which looked at demographics, employment sectors, workforce characteristics, housing, and regional connectivity, are presented here. The full results were delivered in electronic format (Tableau) and were posted to the [CUPPAD website](#).

Strong Fundamentals in Dickinson

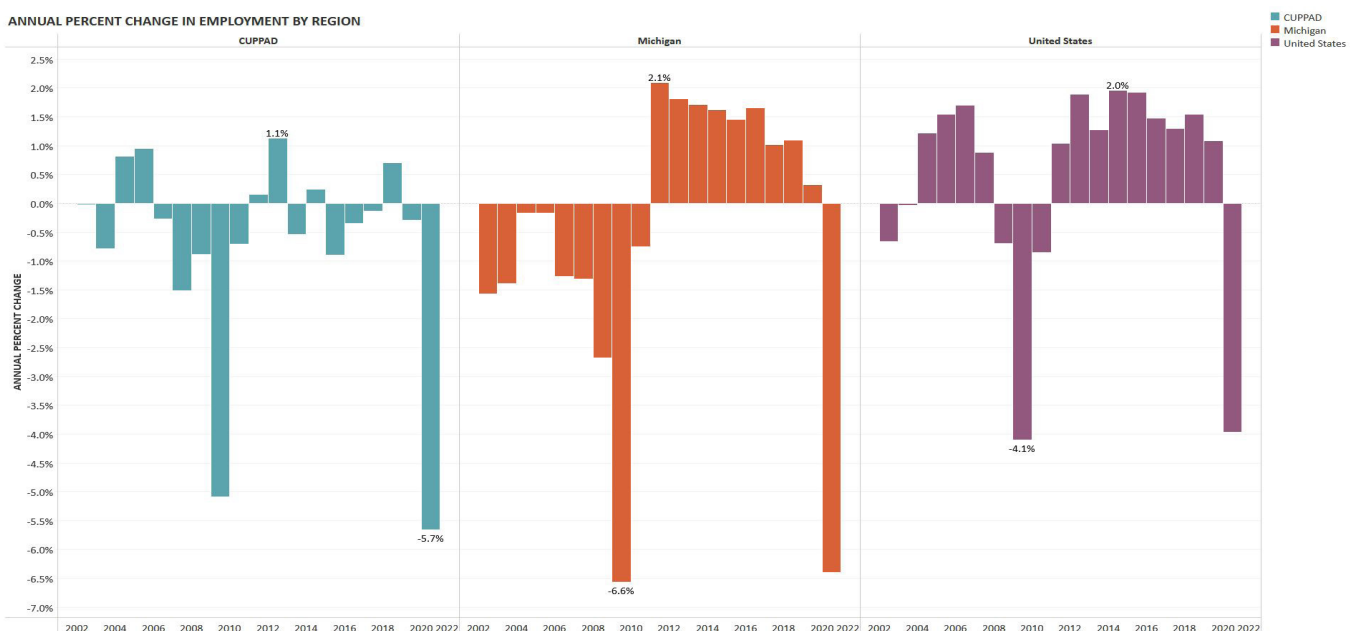
The six-county region served by the CUPPAD Regional Commission has struggled to keep pace with the economic diversification and growth of the state and the nation. Despite these struggles, the central region has several assets that could provide opportunities for revitalization. The city of Iron Mountain is the largest city and the economic center of the County. Dickinson County has the third largest regional labor force and houses about 14,000 jobs. The County is generally more educated than the state average (33.2 percent of its population are high school graduates compared to the state average of 28.9 percent), with almost 20 percent of the population attaining at least a bachelors degree

(compared with just 25 percent of adults in the central region). Some of the most significant assets is the presence of higher learning facilities such as Bay College and the Dickinson ISD Career and Technical Education Center.

The Impact of COVID-19

Even before the pandemic, the region was experiencing a degree of economic decline. The Great Recession hit the region hard in 2009, causing employment in the central UP counties to drop more than 5 percent, and it has not significantly recovered since then. All central UP counties saw a 5 to 6 percent decrease in employment from 2019 to 2020 (over 4,000 jobs in total), on par with state and national trends. It remains to be seen if the pandemic drove an increase in remote work, but the region had low work-from-home rates (3 to 4 percent) in 2019, which trailed the national average of 5 percent. The ability to work from home is closely related to the availability of broadband infrastructure. Although Dickinson County is on par with the region and the state for share of households with computers and internet connectivity, the rest of the region falls behind: more than 15 percent of households do not have a computer, and almost 25 percent do not have reliable internet access.

FIGURE 1. ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT BY REGION



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); Economic Modeling Specialists International (Emsi) 2021.2—Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Notes: The CUPPAD region includes Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, and Schoolcraft Counties in Michigan. Minimum and maximum percentage change years are labeled.

An Aging Region

The region as a whole is generally aging as families are having less children and college graduates are migrating out of the area. Senior citizens make up about a quarter of the population in Dickinson County, with a median age of 47 compared to a median age of 40 in Iron Mountain. Fewer than 21 percent of central region households have children (this can be as low as 15 percent in Dickinson County), compared to 26 percent of Michigan households and 28 percent of US households. Following this trend, the population of Dickinson County will continue to age while young people chose to relocate due to a place with more opportunities or advantages.

Affordability Gaps and Outdated Housing

Dickinson County shows the same housing trends as much of the UP and the central region in that most housing structures are single-family housing built before 1960. The city of Iron Mountain, however, has a much higher proportion of multifamily housing (19 percent) than the region overall (14 percent). Iron Mountain has also seen the least new developments or housing constructed within the last 20 years at only 3 percent versus 10 percent for the central region. Housing occupancy rates in Dickinson County are actually higher (79 percent) than the average of the region (73 percent), suggesting that housing could be more affordable and more plentiful in the County than in other areas in the central UP.

FIGURE 2. AGE PROPORTIONS, 2019
Population by share of broad age groups

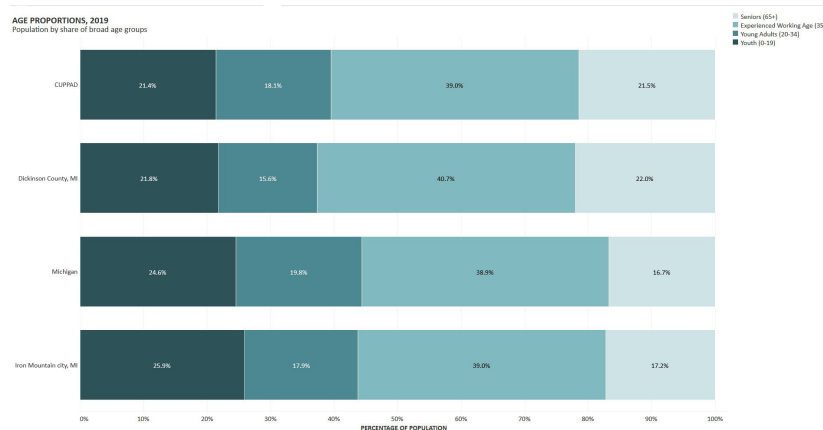
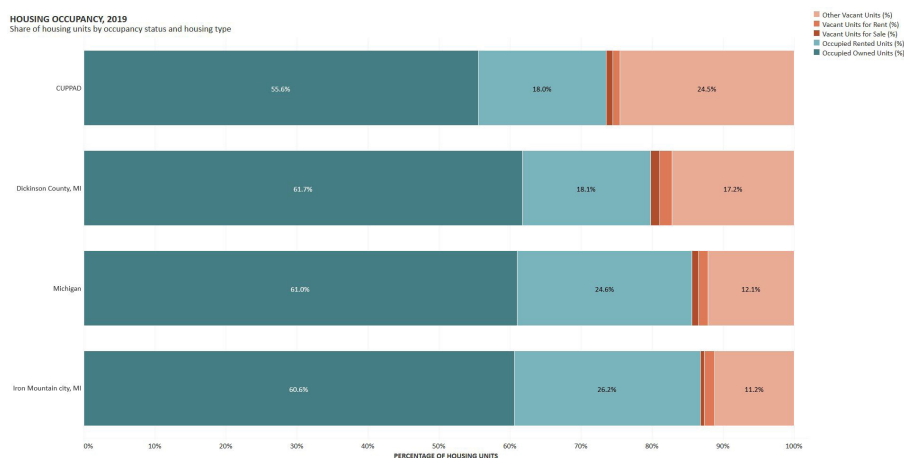


FIGURE 3. HOUSING OCCUPANCY, 2019
Share of housing units by occupancy status and housing type



Sources: (Both) American Community Survey, 2019 5-year sample; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Notes: Share of units that are vacant and for rent or for sale is estimated using homeowner and rental vacancy rates. The share of other vacant units includes the remaining vacant housing units that cannot be identified as for sale or for rent. A housing unit is considered vacant if it is unoccupied for more than two months (e.g., vacation homes and cabins).

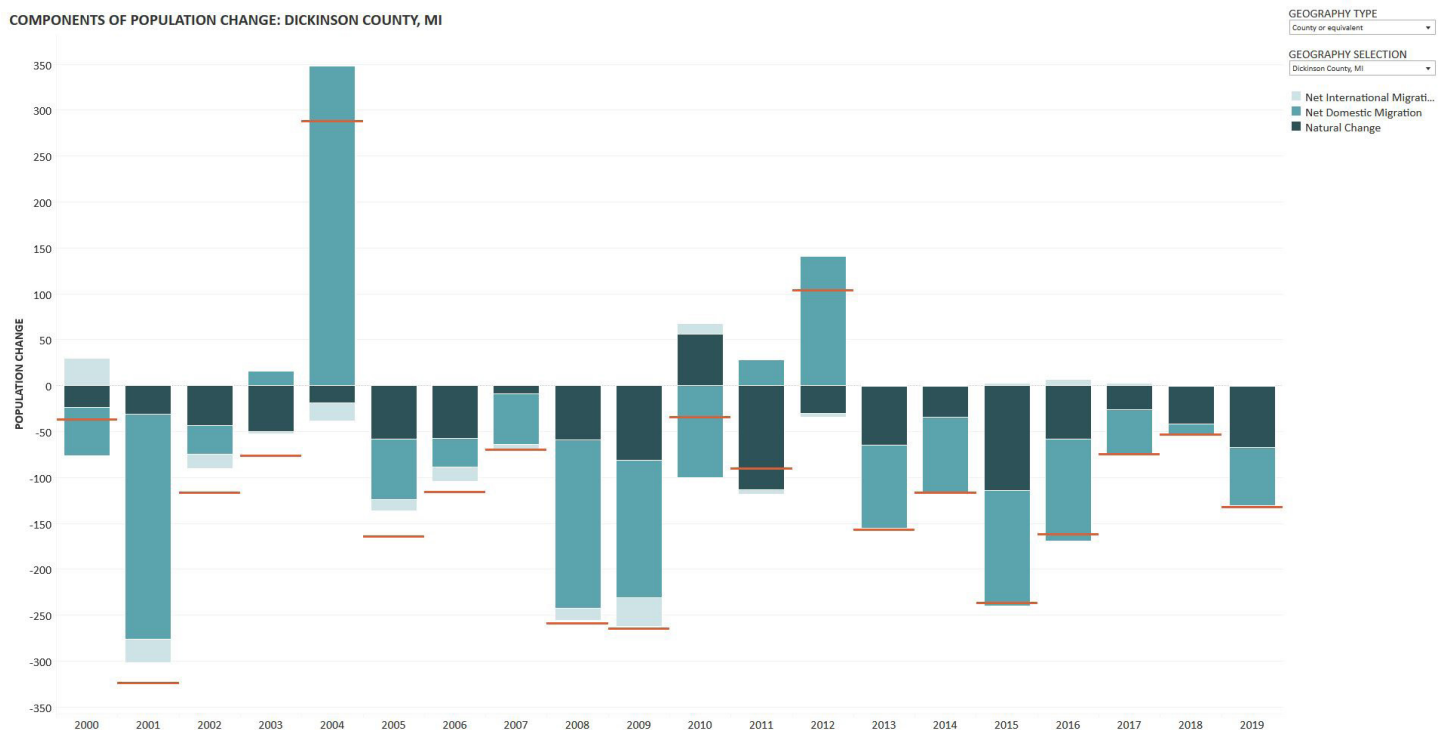
Living on the Border

Dickinson County is unique in its regional positioning in the UP. The County shares a border with neighboring state Wisconsin, which means the two areas share in much of the economy, trends, and assets of the other. This positioning is unique in the central region, making Dickinson County advantageous in economic development opportunities. The County serves as a destination for commerce and recreation from both Wisconsin and Michigan. Furthermore, the County is a logistics powerhouse on the border, serving as a package and mail hub for much of the Upper Peninsula. The County is also home to some of the last active railroad systems in the area, increasing the number of mail and goods making their way into the central region.

Population Decline and Stagnation

While Michigan has seen a modest population increase over the past 30 years, the central region has struggled to retain population. From 1981 to 2019, the total regional population declined from 184,500 to 167,700, with every county losing residents. Dickinson County saw a significant decrease in the early 2000's, largely due to the closure of mining operations, and hasn't fully recovered. However, the population has stabilized in the last 5 years, but hasn't grown either.

FIGURE 4. COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE: DICKINSON COUNTY



Sources: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program; Moody's Analytics; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Notes: Natural change is the difference between annual births and deaths. The 2010 components are estimated based on a 12-month projection of the second quarter (the period between the Census and the mid-year estimate) that is not seasonally adjusted. Total population change includes a residual (a change in population that cannot be attributed to any specific demographic component), which is not shown here but is included in the net population change shown by the tan bars (—).

Industry Strengths and Weaknesses

Though overall regional employment is on a slow downward trend, some sectors have shown modest gains in recent years, such as transportation, warehousing, professional services, and corporate operations.

Despite significant setbacks—such as mine closures that resulted in the loss of nearly 800 jobs in the region since 2001 (with over 400 positions shed in 2015 alone)—there are some strong sectors present in the region. Manufacturing is by far the most dominant sector in Dickinson County, employing over 2,600 workers. The sector also employs nearly 8,000 more workers in the surrounding 5 counties in the central region. In total, manufacturing accounts for almost 30 percent of the jobs in Dickinson County and only 9 percent of jobs in the region. While not as prominent, construction employs nearly 2,000 workers, making it the second most

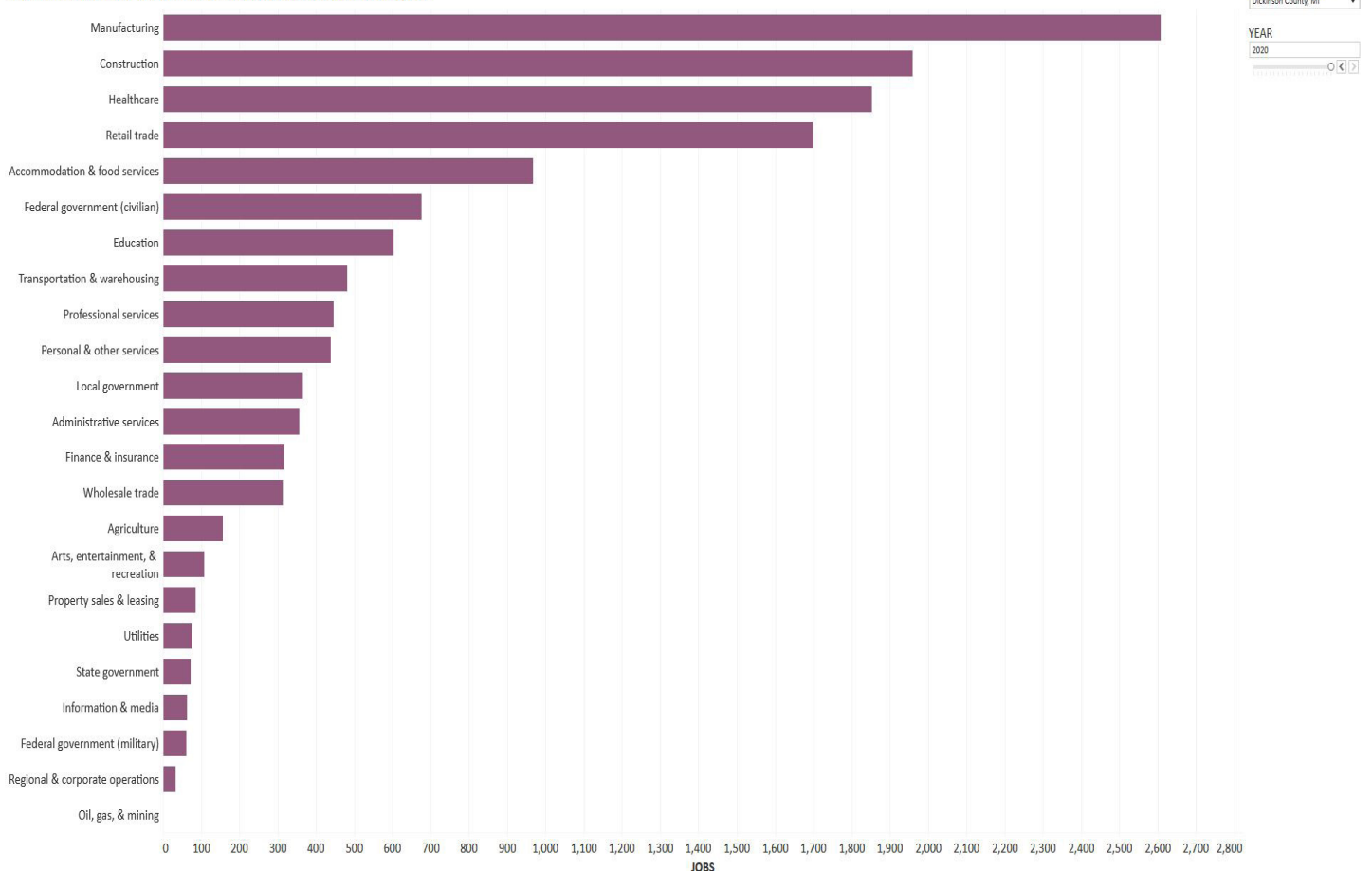
employed industry sector. This sector rebounded well in the central UP counties after 2008 and saw employment gains through 2019. With their abundant healthcare training facilities, it's no surprise that healthcare is the third highest employing industry with about 1,800 jobs.

However, there is cause for concern in other industries. While retail, accommodation and food services, and education are among the largest across the region, these positions have also seen consistent declines in Dickinson County before and after the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Modest job gains in retail, accommodation and food services, and education occupations in the same period have been outweighed by those losses, contributing to the overall downward employment trend.

FIGURE 5. 2020 EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR, DICKINSON COUNTY

2020 EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR: DICKINSON COUNTY, MI



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); Emsi 2021.2—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Occupational Migration Flows Vary by Sector

Dickinson County tends to import its workers in production, construction, and transportation (material moving), while exporting food service, education and training, and military workers. The exporting of workers stay in the range of under 50, meaning the flow could easily be reversed. The high numbers in the import of workers is a real strength for Dickinson County. The demand for housing construction and renovation cited previously suggests construction occupations will play a key role in the economic future of Dickinson County and the region. The current demand for workers in the

skilled construction trades exceeds available supply in most counties, but is a net positive for Dickinson. Furthermore, the County is ranked 10th most occupationally diverse county in Michigan

SWOT ANALYSIS

The following figure provides a summary of Dickinson County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). The SWOT analysis was developed based on direct input from internal and external stakeholders and the economic context analysis.

FIGURE 6. DICKINSON COUNTY SWOT

 <h3>STRENGTHS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing regional tourism industry • Natural outdoor recreation assets • Quality of life/place • Bay College and Career Technical Education facilities as an economic driver and talent pool • Growing entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem • Menominee River • Hydrogeneration and solar power facilities • Strong work ethic among Yoopers 	 <h3>WEAKNESSES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of economic diversification • Housing availability/affordability • Low commerce and retail options • Limited childcare services • Presence of underperforming and blighted commercial space • Inadequate infrastructure to meet demand • Aging population • Short construction season
 <h3>OPPORTUNITIES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting new residents and remote workers • Mine and brownfield remediation/redevelopment • Outdoor recreation • Mailing and logistics hub • International Ski Federation Alpine Ski World Cup • Manufacturing powerhouse • Clean energy infrastructure • Expanding broadband and fiber-to-home infrastructure • Growing entrepreneurship and innovative ideas 	 <h3>THREATS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure is inadequate and difficult to maintain • Increasing scarcity of affordable housing • Labor/talent shortage, especially in the service and trades sectors • Absence of regional collaboration on shared challenges and opportunities • Short construction season and high cost of materials • Mine-scarred properties

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN

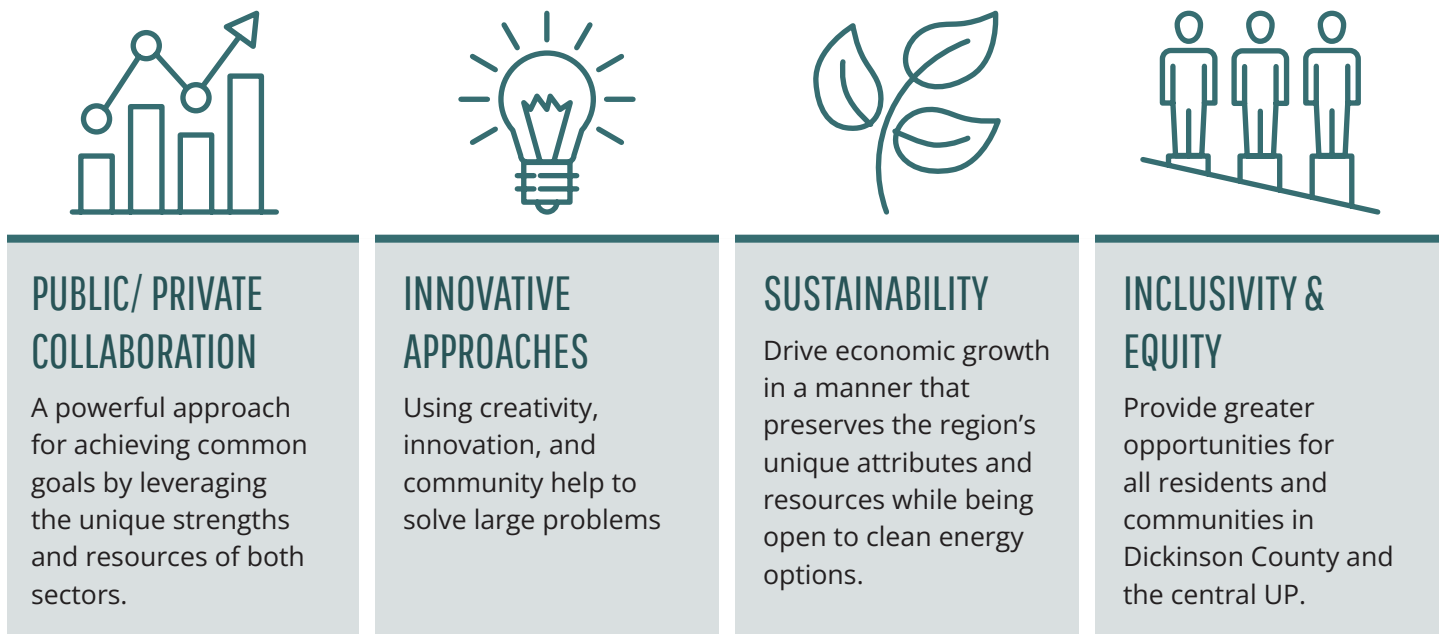
Image courtesy CUPPAD

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

GUIDING PRINCIPLES. Guiding principles reflect the values of a community. In the context of an economic development strategy, they are a set of statements expressing how a community defines economic development. These principles guide every action to achieve the excellence that is being sought. This

strategic plan's guiding principles are designed as crosscutting themes and reference points for the goals and strategies. Each principle is forward-looking and helps point the community toward growth and improvement. A set of core guiding principles is essential for evaluating bold ideas and potential strategies that could improve the economic future of Dickinson County.

FIGURE 7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES



GOALS. The *Dickinson County Economic Recovery and Resilience Strategy* is built around five major goals. The set of strategies and tactics assembled under each goal is meant to provide an actionable plan for strengthening, broadening, and expanding the County's economic base over the long term.

CUPPAD and the TIP team are confident these goals and the associated strategies represent the right recommendations for local leadership to implement at scale and enhance economic prosperity in Dickinson County. Although distinct economic facets, these five goals will work in tandem, producing synergies that lead directly to a more prosperous and sustainable economy for the County.

FIGURE 8. GOALS

- 1. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP—** Drive the County and the region into the future.
- 2. TALENT ATTRACTION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT—** Align the needs of employers with the supply of skilled workers.
- 3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SITES—** Ensure the sustained capacity of the region's economy with critical developments.
- 4. QUALITY OF PLACE—** Enhance the brand perception of the region for residents and visitors.
- 5. REGIONAL POSITIONING AND MARKETING—** Extend the Midwestern and national reach of the community's assets.

GOAL 1. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Drive the County and the region into the future.

Economic development efforts in 2021 and beyond cannot rely solely on established industries and ways of doing business as usual. Promoting and supporting disruptive innovation is a vital part of future economic growth, and the accompanying culture of entrepreneurship is its driving engine. Traditionally reliant on sectors like tourism and mining, the local business environment is in dire need of vibrant growth in new areas.

New initiatives like the establishment of an UP Outdoor Recreation Innovation District have the potential to accelerate the county's economic progression by building on existing assets to foster a more diverse, resilient, and sustainable economy. An innovation district is a specified geographic area where established companies cluster with startups, incubators, and accelerators to foster business creation and commercialization that leverage the district's economic assets. In the Central UP Region, the outdoor recreation industry is exactly the kind of existing asset that could drive innovation and entrepreneurship in this sort of ecosystem, with abundant natural resources (like proximity to the Great Lakes and expanses of scenic, undeveloped land), and available activities for all four seasons.

The actions recommended under this goal are designed to build on existing entrepreneurial infrastructure in the county, while aggressively moving forward new initiatives. Dickinson County already possesses valuable assets that can push the community toward a more innovative and entrepreneurial economy, but there is work to be done to enhance and actualize these assets more fully. Bay College, Dickinson Chamber of Commerce, and the Dickinson Area Economic Development Alliance can help to form this backbone. If leadership can more effectively capitalize on these strengths, the central UP is poised to become a formidable force for innovation and entrepreneurship in the upper Midwest.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- 1.1.** Establish an innovation and entrepreneurial network or district to help entrepreneurs and small business owners navigate, accelerate, and innovate.
 - 1.1.1.** Coordinate with local and regional partners such as Bay College, Northern Michigan University, Dickinson Chamber of Commerce, the Dickinson Area Economic Development Alliance, Northern Initiatives, and the Innovate Marquette Smartzone to form best practices and a startup plan.
 - 1.1.2.** Utilize this new designation with regard to unique tax incentives targeted at small businesses in the outdoor recreation space.
 - 1.1.3.** Pursue state and federal grants along with local partnerships to drive development throughout the new district.
 - 1.1.4.** Identify and collaborate with local entrepreneurs who could take advantage of the new district designation.
 - 1.1.5.** Map all available public and private sites within the district that are ready for development or redevelopment and display them in a one-stop-shop web portal.
 - 1.1.6.** Create a revolving loan fund to help outdoor recreation businesses access capital, particularly new and emerging concepts that traditional lenders are less likely to finance.
 - 1.1.7.** Establish a business education and acceleration component with a co-working space.
 - 1.1.8.** Expand the entrepreneurial network to include Veterans resources.
- 1.2.** Leverage Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce and the Dickinson Area EDA to foster the growth of the region's entrepreneurship and innovation

ecosystem. Focus on cultivating innovations in sustainability, accessibility, and creativity, with secure connected platforms intertwined in all innovation bandwidths.

- 1.2.1.** Support regional and UP partners in establishing three world-class innovation hubs designed for small businesses and startups to develop and test innovative products in the following industries.

DETAILS

- Outdoor recreation. Support the development of the regional outdoor recreation innovation district.
- Sustainability. Keep up to date on the development of the Sustainability Hub for Innovation & Environment (SHINE) institute at NMU, including an entrepreneurial incubator and accelerator, and look to them as the example.
- Tech-art and creative. Establish the ground zero development at a centrally located and frequently used facility within the County, such as the Dickinson County Community Theater or The Braumart, including an entrepreneurial incubator and accelerator.

- 1.2.2.** Create a multifaceted venture fund focused on product innovations and technologies developed at the three innovation hubs by small businesses and startup ventures in the community.
- 1.2.3.** Facilitate ongoing communication and resource sharing with the other 20 SmartZones in Michigan to further inform best practices.
- 1.2.4.** Advocate for the continued and increased financial capacity and resources of DAEDA and others through funding opportunities with state partners, such as the MEDC.
- 1.2.5.** Expand, through the Vanbassador program, SmartZone, and Invent@NMU

outreach efforts to the K–12 school system, to build the next generation of young entrepreneurs.

- 1.2.6.** Collaborate with local business leaders to create a venture capital network map.

- 1.3.** Create a soft landing space and support program within Dickinson County for young emerging businesses located inside and outside of the community. See the Ann Arbor SPARK text box on page 15 for a description of a similar program in development in Michigan.

- 1.4.** Collaborate with NMU Center for Rural Health, the MSU Product Center, and UP Food Exchange to drive local innovation in the value-added processing industry.

- 1.4.1.** Support the agribusiness and food processing industries with new and maintained support resources, particularly training and mentorship in entrepreneurial development.

- 1.4.2.** Develop a platform that catalogs and connects commercial kitchen and equipment available for rent.

- 1.4.3.** Grow awareness of nearby Wisconsin based resources, such as the Kitchen and Business incubator at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.

- 1.4.4.** Construct or redevelop a local facility that houses and incubates local food-based businesses.

- 1.5.** Facilitate collaboration between InvestUP and local EDOs to foster a regional voice in innovation.

- 1.5.1.** Assess the area's specific competitive advantages and business climate to establish the communities' position in the region.

ANN ARBOR SPARK

For more than 15 years, Ann Arbor SPARK has served the greater Ann Arbor, Michigan, region, which includes Washtenaw and Livingston Counties. SPARK is a nonprofit economic development organization that fosters regional growth through business attraction, retention, and creation. The bi-county area has a long history of tech development, due in large part to the presence of the University of Michigan. Capitalizing on this, SPARK has created a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem within the region.

In 2020, SPARK's entrepreneurial services team assisted more than 267 innovation startups through their programs and facilities, which include fully equipped coworking spaces across two innovation centers (SPARK Central and SPARK East), mentorships with regional business leaders, a2Tech360 (an annual tech and entrepreneurial conference), entrepreneur bootcamp, student internship programs, and funding programs specifically for nascent companies. In addition to federal and state funding, SPARK manages SPARK Capital, the statewide coinvestment fund that provides up to \$250,000 for qualifying companies.

SPARK has also created a soft landing program for young emerging companies located outside of the Ann Arbor region. The program includes providing companies with market-entry work, meeting areas, and conference spaces.

A full case study on Ann Arbor Spark is featured in Appendix B.

Source: <https://annarborusa.org>.

- 1.5.2.** Advance national awareness of the identified strategic growth areas in the region, including technology research, development & testing, advanced precision manufacturing, large equipment manufacturing, and outdoor research & testing. (See Appendix A for more information on strategic growth areas.)

- 1.6.** Partner with local and regional organizations to design reverse-pitch competitions to engage central UP businesses and organizations with needs for innovation.

DETAILS

In a reverse-pitch competition, established businesses pitch a challenge to entrepreneurs and solicit solutions. Businesses and communities have their challenges addressed while entrepreneurs benefit from establishing connections and increased awareness about their startups.

- 1.6.1.** Connect such competitions to the development and growth of the proposed innovation district, including the application of technologies to make the districts more accessible, sustainable, and attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors.
- 1.6.2.** Focus competitions on finding solutions to regional issues, such as sustainability, housing, and other community challenges, through social entrepreneurship.
- 1.7.** Support youth entrepreneurship programs at the local level to foster a culture of innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurship education is especially important for helping the County's low-income and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) youth to develop skills and knowledge that will support their future success and benefit their communities.

DETAILS

The National Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education provides resources and technical assistance for entrepreneurial education (<https://www.entre-ed.org/>).

- 1.8.** Increase business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts on emerging innovative sectors, such as outdoor recreation product manufacturing, logistics, clean energy production, and food and beverage production.
- 1.9.** Tell entrepreneurial success stories. An important component of building an entrepreneurial culture is making residents aware of how entrepreneurship can help to drive the economy. This message is best communicated by raising awareness of business success stories, both internally and in target markets.
 - 1.9.1.** Utilize social media aggressively to publicize successes.
 - 1.9.2.** Market success stories through existing entrepreneurship networks and regional partner organizations, such as IMQT, InvestUP, LSCP, Invent@NMU, and the SISU Innovation Institute at NMU.



Image courtesy CUPPAD

GOAL 2. TALENT ATTRACTION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Align the needs of employers with the supply of skilled workers.

To create a growing economy, organizational leadership must both expand the local labor force and train its existing workers for the economic drivers of the future. Dickinson County runs the risk of continuing its trend of population stagnation if it does not successfully recruit and retain residents. Similarly, it runs the risk of relying too heavily on increasingly outdated occupations and sectors. The purpose of the following talent attraction and workforce development strategies is to counteract these risks.

Certain local initiatives and institutions (such as DAEDA, Bay College, and the Tourism Association of the Dickinson County Area (TADCA)) are already making valuable contributions to the county's talent and workforce development efforts. The recommended strategies emphasize the need for their capacity and services to develop and expand. Making workers and employers aware of existing statewide programs managed by Michigan Works! and others should also be a priority. State initiatives like the Business Resource Network (BRN) and Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) provide greater financial support and wraparound services that enable low-income adults and students to meet personal needs and manage life challenges so they can reliably participate in workforce training, hands-on work experiences, and internships. For many low-income and disadvantaged youth, the ability to complete job training programs depends on overcoming financial and life barriers. Greater access to services, such as mentoring, academic tutoring, or housing and transportation assistance, is vital to overcoming these barriers for students looking to participate in work-based learning programs. Increasing participation in these services can help employers by reducing turnover and helping to create a more stable workforce.

Other strategies would be new for Dickinson County, such as incentives targeted at attracting remote workers, which is a necessary tactic in the post-COVID climate of pervasive work-from-home opportunities. If the county wants to be the home for these (often high-wage) workers, actions like this would have a major impact. The development of a pipeline of talent is critical to the growth and vitality of emerging industries

in the region, including the outdoor recreation cluster. As such, workforce-related component projects of the Build Back Better grant application are included in this strategy. The K-12 school system will also play a pivotal role in workforce development if properly utilized by collaborating closely with industry, particularly in trades. Talent attraction and retention also depend significantly on quality of place improvements, as outlined in Goal 4, Quality of Place.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- 2.1.** Introduce talent attraction initiatives and new resident employment services within institutions like DAEDA and tourism campaigns such as "Visit Dickinson".
 - 2.1.1.** Work with Bay College and other CTE leadership to create and maintain a location, employment, and contact information database of alumni.
 - 2.1.2.** Create a welcome guide for new and potential residents and have this readily available on the website or websites.
 - 2.1.3.** Support a story-sharing initiative on local news, publications like UPword, and on social media to share success stories of people who returned to the area or who are new transplants.
 - 2.1.4.** Research and analyze similar incentives strategies in communities nationwide that have resulted in significant in-migration of remote workers, such as the Tulsa Remote cash grant program in Oklahoma.
 - 2.1.5.** Create a rebate initiative that pays for new remote workers' broadband internet service for the first six months of established residency in Dickinson County.
 - 2.1.6.** Support and encourage local coworking spaces by marketing them to the greater region and state to support the traveling workforce.

2.2. Address the insufficiency of the retention of existing residents.

- 2.2.1.** Collaborate with local employers to identify wage/cost-of-living gaps that drive employees to higher-wage jobs outside of the region.
- 2.2.2.** Support the talent recruitment efforts of local employers by providing them with marketing resources that effectively promote Dickinson County to potential employees. Marketing materials should cover topics of interest, including housing, education, entertainment, and recreation.

2.3. Utilize Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! to develop the talent infrastructure and career pathways for the outdoor recreation cluster and other sectors critical to the region's economy.

DETAILS

Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! promotes and addresses the needs of businesses for current and future work-ready talent, in support of a strong and resilient economy.

<https://upmichiganworks.org/>

- 2.3.1.** Provide localized and regionwide data and company connections.
- 2.3.2.** Support upskilling for current or new talent in electrification occupations via workforce development funding.
- 2.3.3.** Leverage current and focused collaborations to help existing UP businesses find ways to diversify their current customers and products.
- 2.3.4.** Build and support a talent pipeline utilizing existing tools, partnerships, strategies, and the Talent Pipeline Management process from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation.
- 2.3.5.** Work with education providers to identify and fund development of programs that provide the skills needed in a new industry.
- 2.3.6.** Develop career pathways to increase

opportunities in jobs that will increase income levels for prosperous employment.

2.4. Create a digital ambassadors program that utilizes a network of connectors who share positive stories about the region online and through social media. Local young professionals should be a primary source for ambassadors.

- 2.4.1.** Coordinate with LINK UP and other local business development organizations to drive this program forward.
- 2.4.2.** Provide information and marketing resources to educate ambassadors about the opportunities in the region.
- 2.4.3.** Use a digital talent share application tool to engage these ambassadors and push content to their networks.
- 2.4.4.** Capitalize on alumni stories from local schools such as Bay College, trade colleges, and local schools.

2.5. Leverage the resources, networks, and skills offered by the DAEDA to support talent and industry attraction.

- 2.5.1.** Work with DAEDA and local employers to create a conference and meeting strategy to targeted occupations and professional member organizations, especially those connected with product manufacturing and outdoor recreation.
- 2.5.2.** Leverage existing major events, such as the FIS World Cup, Brew Fest, and Tour de Dickinson, to market the region to visitors as a relocation destination.

2.6. Promote the formation and expansion of industry sector councils to ensure the critical workforce and business competitiveness needs of each sector are addressed.

- 2.6.1.** Work with the Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! and regional educational institutions to organize/expand sector councils in critical industries, such as manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and outdoor recreation.

- 2.6.2.** Pursue state and federal funding for technical assistance trainings tailored to the region from industry leaders in the identified sectors.
- 2.7.** Expand work-based learning experiences for youth, especially in critical occupations.
 - 2.7.1.** Work with the K-12 school system to develop new experiential education initiatives at all levels.
 - 2.7.2.** Coordinate with career/college counseling departments in high schools to promote apprenticeship and/or mentorship models that can be completed before graduation.
 - 2.7.3.** Collaborate with major area employers to host annual internship fairs in local high schools to expand student awareness of specific occupational opportunities.
- 2.8.** Expand the reach of the Manufacturing Talent Consortium and events like Manufacturing Day to better inform young adults about opportunities in the industry.
- 2.9.** Leverage the economic value of Bay College by raising awareness of new degree programs for in-demand skills.
 - 2.9.1.** Market these mission-critical programs aggressively in mail literature to prospective students.
 - 2.9.2.** Assess the capacity and resources of these specific programs and evaluate the need for additional faculty and support staff.
- 2.10.** Partner with Michigan Works! and Pure Michigan Talent Connect (mitalent.org) to increase awareness of their Business Resource Network (BRN) and the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) youth initiative (<https://www.mitalent.org/business-resource-network>).
- 2.10.1.** Provide more information to companies on benefits of participating in a BRN and support services through Success Coaches.
- 2.10.2.** Provide more information to incoming and graduating students on Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) program through Michigan Works! organizations (<https://gstmiworks.org/jmg/>).
- 2.11.** Provide greater financial support and wraparound services to enable low-income adults and students to participate in workforce training, hands-on work experiences, and internships.
 - 2.11.1.** Provide wraparound case management and support services, such as the Pathways Out of Poverty program, to sustain participants through training, including training stipends or part-time work, childcare and transportation support, and connections to necessary human services, including healthcare.

*This will require intensive collaboration between human service organizations to unify case management and focus community resources on helping participants make it through training.
 - 2.11.2.** Provide greater financial support and wraparound services to enable low-income students to participate in hands-on experiences and internships.

*For many low-income and disadvantaged youth, the ability to complete job training programs depends on overcoming financial and life barriers. Greater access to services, such as mentoring, academic tutoring, or housing and transportation assistance, is vital to overcoming existing barriers to students being able to participate in work-based learning programs.

GOAL 3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SITES

Ensure the sustained capacity of the region's economy with critical developments.

Economic growth and prosperity in the central UP is significantly impacted by the quality of the region's infrastructure and sites. First-class infrastructure is essential for retaining existing employers and residents and for competing for new investment. Workplaces, destinations, and cultural amenities mean little if a community does not have the ability to access them effectively. Likewise, geographic location and other competitive advantages are eroded if not accompanied by sustainable and intentional redevelopment of sites to accommodate new economic needs. To attract and retain both talent (as outlined in Goal 1, Innovation and Entrepreneurship) and businesses, efficient and reliable infrastructure must be a priority for local decision-makers. In this regard, Dickinson County needs work.

Whether it's broadband connectivity, commercial air travel, railway development, or the public bus system, significant adjustments need to take place to carry the county forward. However, the county does possess the wherewithal to make these adjustments if leadership can coalesce around shared needs and opportunities. This expanded collaboration will more effectively influence the various local and state political decisions that affect the development and funding of new and improved infrastructure. Although partially out of the County's control, federal grants (e.g., ARPA) also present an exciting opportunity to make these strides, and EDOs in the area should pursue these aggressively via well-structured and comprehensive applications wherever possible. The recommendations under this goal will form the catalyst of a brighter economic future for Dickinson County by improving its local transportation, digital accessibility, and the flow of goods and dollars.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

3.1. Maintain and expand broadband infrastructure across the central UP, using federal and state funding.

3.1.1. Produce a comprehensive review of potential outside funding sources, such as ARPA and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, known as IIJA.

3.1.2. Work with local broadband installation providers and state entities, like the Michigan Highspeed Internet Office (MiHI), to facilitate first/last mile service to rural areas in the region.

3.1.3. Evaluate and consider alternative delivery mechanisms, such as aerial or Starlink services, to address the challenges of digging trenches in rocky terrain.

3.2. Support the proposed Lake Superior Community Partnership initiative to establish a regional site development readiness program.

DETAILS

This initiative will engage local governments, property owners, and other partners to identify and resolve site-specific needs relative to zoning, infrastructure, tax abatements, or incentives that impact economic development opportunities in the Upper Peninsula.

3.3. Accelerate brownfield redevelopment and recover lands for reuse by utilizing the resources and expertise of other national land revitalization and brownfield initiatives (e.g., the US Environmental Protection Agency Partnership for Sustainable Communities, Groundwork USA, RE-Powering America's Land).

3.4. Collaborate with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Build Ready Sites Program to expand and enhance the available stock and pipeline of shovel-ready industrial developments.

3.4.1. Increase competitive applications for the program's Build Ready Sites Grant initiative, which awards up to \$75,000 per project with a required local match.

3.4.2. Continue efforts to apply and receive certification from the Michigan Redevelopment Ready Communities

program.

- 3.5.** Improve the generation, affordability, and reliability of renewable energy resources.
- 3.5.1.** Generate a comprehensive study of the region's existing renewable energy assets and future opportunities, following guidance from the UP Energy Task Force.
 - 3.5.2.** Set a goal of growing the region's renewable energy production to 10 percent of all energy sources by 2025.
 - 3.5.3.** Support the development of electric vehicle charging stations throughout the county to meet growing demand and to support the region's connected EV initiatives and projects.
- 3.6.** Better leverage Dickinson County's suite of incentives and programs that are available.

DETAILS

Examples of potential tools include the following.

- Tax increment financing (TIF) local districts
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) federal program
- Historic tax credit (HTC) local and federal programs
- New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) federal program
- Community development financial institution (CDFI) local loans
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) federal loan program
- Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program (Section 108) federal loan

- 3.7.** Better leverage Dickinson County's Opportunity Zone in Iron Mountain for new investment.
- 3.7.1.** Increase awareness of funding opportunities through state and local programs.
 - 3.7.2.** Have Opportunity Zone information

readily available for potential developers.

- 3.8.** Increase the number of commercial flights into and out of Ford Airport.
- 3.8.1.** Continue to renovate existing terminals as necessary.
 - 3.8.2.** Promote the airport to existing airlines as a prime destination in the Midwest.
 - 3.8.3.** Explore the use of financial incentives for airlines to add flights.
- 3.9.** Continue to support and facilitate the expansion and/or upgrades of essential infrastructure, utilities, and sites.
- 3.9.1.** Support the Pine Mountain expansion and upgrades.
 - 3.9.2.** Generate a county-wide comprehensive terrain survey to identify specific landscape challenges and possible solutions.
 - 3.9.3.** Seek expertise of engineers, architects, infrastructure specialists, and more to generate possible solutions.
 - 3.9.4.** Assess other non-traditional utility options such as decentralized systems like solar power or wind turbines.
 - 3.9.5.** Leverage modern technologies to overcome obstacles posed by the rocky terrain. Drones, LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) surveys, and GIS (Geographic Information System) can provide accurate mapping and data for planning purposes. Additionally, advanced construction techniques like prefabrication or modular construction can help streamline the process and reduce costs.
 - 3.9.6.** Seek community involvement: Involve the local community in the planning and implementation process. Their knowledge of the terrain and their needs can provide valuable insights and ensure that the solutions are tailored to their specific requirements. Encourage community participation through town hall meetings,

workshops, and feedback sessions.

- 3.9.7.** Establish a maintenance and upgrade plan to ensure the longevity and functionality of the utilities and infrastructure. Regular inspections, repairs, and improvements are essential to keep the systems operating effectively, improve the generation, affordability, and reliability of renewable energy resources.
- 3.10.** Create a connected network along the Dickinson Trail Network.
 - 3.10.1.** Evaluate potential funding streams (grants) to support the initiative.
 - 3.10.2.** Install wireless infrastructure at key access points along the trail.
 - 3.10.3.** Install electric charging stations at the same key access points.
- 3.10.4.** Utilize the new network for data collection regarding usage.
- 3.11.** Develop a comprehensive strategy around public transportation in the region.
 - 3.11.1.** Evaluate the funding and capacity of the public bus system with a particular focus on the expansion of the driver workforce.
 - 3.11.2.** Collaborate with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), tribal leaders, local EDOs, and the Dickinson Iron Community Services Agency to generate a mobility management plan to improve local public transit over the next 5 years.
 - 3.11.3.** Ensure that all improvements to public transit are made with accessibility for the elderly and those with special needs in mind.



GOAL 4. QUALITY OF PLACE

Enhance the brand perception of the region for residents and visitors.

Economically successful communities across the nation have one thing in common: people want to move there, and then they want to stay. Fostering a vibrant local culture depends on significant investment in all the facets that make a place desirable for current and potential residents. This approach means more than simply creating a favorable impression. Natural beauty is, of course, important, but it is not sufficient to achieve the level of national branding that Dickinson County seeks. Underpinning all the other goals in this plan is the quality of place that the County needs to create to be a truly thriving and attractive community.

It is no secret that Dickinson County and the central UP are home to some truly exceptional cultural and natural assets. Outdoor recreation tourism certainly represents a significant part of the local economy. However, there are other areas within quality-of-place considerations that need a substantial boost. Notably, housing availability and affordability ranked at the top of the list of immediate and long-term challenges in every stakeholder input session held with the consulting team. Without adequate housing options, the county is destined to remain a largely seasonal destination, rather than a year-round home. In addition, other amenities, like trails, parks, and venues, need to keep pace with the development of competing areas in the upper Midwest and the nation.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- 4.1.** Foster greater regional collaboration to expand the availability of diverse housing options across all price points and geographies.
 - 4.1.1.** Generate a comprehensive housing stock and affordability evaluation to inform all relevant strategic planning.
 - 4.1.2.** Explore new tax incentives for new home construction, such as the Housing TIF program.
 - 4.1.3.** Collaborate with Bay College to drive increased student housing development on or near campus.
 - 4.1.4.** Develop a strategy for the zoning and construction of workforce/middle-class housing, specifically.
- 4.2.** Invest in outdoor recreation and experience opportunities that bring year-round and repeat visitors.
 - 4.2.1.** Expand and further the connections of the Dickinson Trail Network (DTN).
 - 4.2.2.** Market the trail to all communities along the route.
 - 4.2.3.** Work with local hotels to include information about the trail in all check-in materials.
 - 4.2.4.** Collaborate with accessibility-focused nonprofit organizations to ensure the trail is usable by all individuals.
- 4.3.** Invest in other quality-of-place assets and amenities (e.g., parks, cultural, sports venues).
 - 4.3.1.** Identify publicly owned underutilized sites and pursue their redevelopment for arts and/or cultural amenities.
 - 4.3.2.** Reach out to the local artist community and commission public art for shared spaces (murals, sculptures/installations, etc.).
 - 4.3.3.** Collaborate with the Great Lakes Sports Commission to evaluate existing sports-related assets and new opportunities for venue and event expansion.
 - 4.3.4.** Create a comprehensive map of existing public third places (spaces where people spend time between work and home), such as parks, recreation centers, and libraries, to enhance advocacy efforts to maintain sustainable investment.
 - 4.3.5.** Expand existing quality of life programs such as low-income assistance, solar power development, home weatherization, trail building, coastal resiliency, and sustainable tourism.

- 4.4.** Expand lodging capacity and options for incoming recreation tourists to meet demand.
 - 4.4.1.** Survey local hotel management to evaluate staffing/workforce needs required to expand and sustain capacity.
 - 4.4.2.** Reach out to Airbnb to request access to travel data on tourists who stay in their properties.
 - 4.4.3.** Set ambitious goals of a 10 percent increase in total hotel rooms and a 10 percent increase in average annual occupancy over the next 5 years.
- 4.5.** Communicate the availability of relief funds for households through the Superior Watershed Partnership (grant from the Michigan Energy Assistance Program).
- 4.6.** Coordinate with major local employers and EDOs to prioritize and meet the employment needs of trailing spouses (individuals who follow their partner because of a work assignment).
- 4.7.** Expand capacity of local childcare services by lobbying for revised licensing regulations to alleviate the burden on working parents.
 - 4.7.1.** Advocate at the municipal and state levels for adjusted legislation regarding permitting for childcare that encourages the formation of new service providers.
 - 4.7.2.** Explore new tax incentives and financial support for childcare providers who operate their small businesses out of their own homes. Appendix B contains a case study on an initiative that provides capital and business development services to childcare businesses serving low- and moderate-income families in rural counties in Minnesota with plans to expand to Michigan.
 - 4.7.3.** Dedicate incoming federal grant funding (if disbursed) to subsidize the cost of childcare services.
- 4.8.** Support LSCP efforts to serve as an urban programs connector to build an effective bridge between Michigan's urban and rural economies by serving as a liaison to industry and economic development partners throughout the state.



[Wikimedia Commons](#)

GOAL 5. REGIONAL POSITIONING AND MARKETING

Extend the Midwestern and national reach of the community's assets.

Even if Dickinson County follows through on all the actionable recommendations in the other four goals in this plan and creates the conditions necessary for sustainable economic growth, it will need something further: effective external communications. Successful communities are *known and recognized* as such. How a city, county, or region is perceived by outsiders is as important as the reality it creates. To accomplish that level of recognition, local leaders must support and expand marketing efforts in creative ways. The following strategies and actions are targeted at that precise goal.

A common theme that arose in the stakeholder input process is the need for a more collaborative, coordinated, and focused brand messaging of Dickinson County and the central UP to nonresidents. Some marketing efforts already exist but could be strengthened, aligned, and their reach extended by facilitating ongoing planning efforts among organizations like CUPPAD, the DAEDA, TADCA, and other local EDOs. Furthermore, large-scale, national-level tourist events, like the FIS World Cup, present a critical opportunity to bring more attention (and people) to the community. With more targeted outreach, Dickinson County certainly can capitalize on its unique natural attractions.

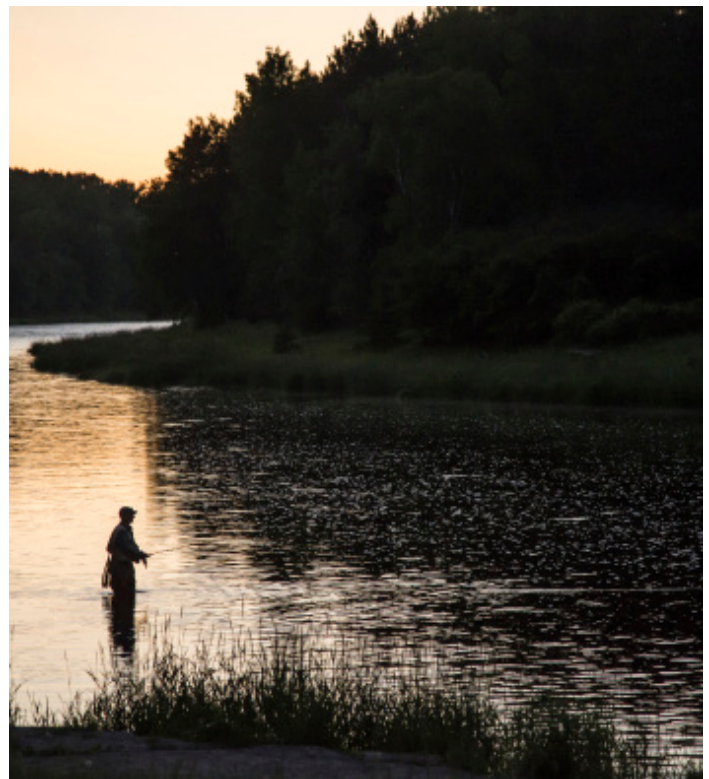
STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- 5.1.** Develop a regional marketing campaign targeted at national tourists (specifically repeat visitors) and entrepreneurs looking for outdoor recreational opportunities.
 - 5.1.1.** Collaborate with the state's Pure Michigan initiative to develop region-specific messaging.
 - 5.1.2.** Survey local homeowners who reside in Dickinson County seasonally to create and maintain a database of average occupancy during peak tourism periods.
 - 5.1.3.** Encourage local hotels and other lodging venues to conduct outreach to previous visitors.
- 5.2.** Increase awareness of the Dickinson Trail Network (DTN).
 - 5.2.1.** Operate the DTN Passport Challenge or similar program with local partners on at least a biannual basis.
 - 5.2.2.** Grow the program by seeking additional volunteers.
 - 5.2.3.** Work to make more trail connections between existing UP networks.
- 5.3.** Grow awareness of large annual tourist events.
 - 5.3.1.** Identify and recruit vendors and partners who would benefit from exposure at these events.
 - 5.3.2.** Coordinate with other similar events' decision-makers across the nation.
 - 5.3.3.** Publicize the successes of these events through print and social media.
- 5.4.** Enhance the efficacy, messaging, and reach of the Tourism Association of the Dickinson County Area.
 - 5.4.1.** Assess the effectiveness of existing tourism and community marketing through a program such as the First Impressions Tourism Assessment from MSU Extension and follow recommendations for improvements.
 - 5.4.2.** Evaluate the possibility of new revenue streams, such as grants available through the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), dedicated to expanding capacity, staffing, and initiatives.
 - 5.4.3.** Seek private sector involvement and resources to contribute to the content and funding for the organization's continued outreach.
 - 5.4.4.** Continue collaboration with the Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL) to drive progress in accessibility efforts.

- 5.4.5.** Take ownership of diversifying the tourism industry by directing would-be visitors to underutilized attractions.
- 5.4.6.** Generate a comprehensive map of major tourism assets to be featured on TADCA's public-facing website.
- 5.4.7.** Coordinate messaging throughout the City of Iron Mountain and Dickinson County for a blended, cohesive, collaborative message that tells the story and shapes the area's identity.
- 5.4.8.** The message should communicate the vision of the community and what it is to become as an affordable attractive place for workers and families.
- 5.4.9.** Share information and strategies with regional partners such as Travel Marquette, Visit Escanaba, and the Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL) to coordinate a successful and inclusive campaign.
- 5.5.** Increase coordination and function of local government through the development of a county-wide strategic plan that acknowledges the interconnectivity of local actions as well as those of economic development and community service organizations.
- 5.6.** Align and coordinate regional marketing efforts to develop and implement consistent messaging.
 - 5.6.1.** Ensure ongoing collaboration between the InvestUP, CUPPAD, and other local EDOs on marketing efforts.
 - 5.6.2.** Ensure social media accounts are updated with correct information
 - 5.6.3.** Leverage community and higher education leadership in marketing the county and region to young people.
 - 5.6.4.** Create an economic development magazine that showcases the area's successes and opportunities.
 - 5.6.5.** Enlist the help of local creative businesses such as Mountain Media House for a unique and pertinent perspective.
- 5.7.** Actively manage Dickinson County's Wikipedia description to ensure that it accurately reflects the county's economic strengths and opportunities.

WIKIPEDIA

When searching for information on communities using an online search engine, such as Google, Wikipedia entries often rank near the top of the search results. Consequently, Wikipedia is frequently the first (and sometimes only) source of information people will use to learn about a community. Currently, the Dickinson County description on Wikipedia is generic and offers little in terms of interesting information about the community for either businesses or visitors. To maximize the value of this free marketing resource, a local organization should be designated to register with Wikipedia to update and introduce new content and photos to the Dickinson County page.





STRATEGIC GROWTH AREA ANALYSIS

In developing the *Dickinson* County Economic Recovery and Resilience Strategy, TIP identified strategic growth areas the region must support and enhance to build a sustainable and thriving economic landscape. Strategic growth areas consider traditional sectors that can be defined using the existing industry classification systems, as well as activities and technologies that do not align neatly with these structures. This more flexible terminology enables targeting efforts to encompass strategic projects that can support multiple areas of activity and enhance innovation and entrepreneurship.

The strategic growth analysis plays to Dickinson County's already apparent industry strengths and potential for new opportunities for growth and development. Recent years have seen the increased demand for quality medical services housed locally. Access to services has the potential to increase and become simplified, especially with the expansion of broadband and telehealth services to the home or community center. The market for real estate construction and development has soared, making this a prime opportunity for development of housing of all types and access. Dickinson County has been a leader on the manufacturing front, with their ample facilities and training opportunities. This area can grow as demand for trained employees grows. Forest and wood production is another important area of strategic growth where Dickinson excels. Growing responsibly and sustainably, especially in the realm of natural resources, is crucial for the health and resilience of the local economy and ecosystem.



FIGURE 9. CENTRAL UP ECONOMIC POTENTIAL
Strategic Growth Areas

