

Public Services

Strengths

- Fire department *
- Ample fire protection – three departments
- Police department *
- City utilities (electric, water and sewer)
- Schools *
- Public Safety Building
- City electric
- Ownership of electrical plant
- Imagination
- Industrial park
- Ample utilities available
- Area wide library
- Hospital *
- County level zoning
- Availability of ETRAN
- Recreation facilities
- Emergency services

Weaknesses

- Not enough sidewalks (safety)
- Bike lanes (lack of)
- Township roads
- Road drainage
- Road maintenance
- Public transportation
- Lack of educating the public on voting, utilities, services.
- Internet service in rural area
- Inadequate ambulance service
- Not enough recycling
- Youth programs and centers
- No entertainment
- Lack of cable coverage
- Future water and sewer needs
- Township police protection

Barriers/Threats

- Library access

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- Cable
- Internet connection and access
- Poor communications (between City and Townships)
- Lack of cooperation
- Confusing of providers of utilities and services
- Funding **
- Distance to provide services
- Residential growth puts strain on utilities
- Government regulations

Opportunities

- Fire departments – should work together
- Regional fire department (grant opportunities)
- Friends of the Library
- Expand library services
- Schools and facility use
- Excellent government cooperation
- High spots for wireless
- Expand hospital services
- Expand TV and internet cable
- Manufacturing
- Continue to pursue cooperative agreements in many areas
- Area wide planning
- Planned growth

Natural Resources

Strengths

- Ground water
- Mineral springs
- Rivers **
- Drains
- Individual development done well
- Visually appealing
- Relatively clean
- Diversity and abundance of wetlands, parks, etc.
- Managed forests, rivers
- Forests, woodlands *
- Trees
- Environment one of Eaton Rapids best assets
- Open space **
- Large lots
- Parks
- Animal (wildlife) population *
- Fresh air

Weaknesses

- High water (flooded)
- Poor drainage
- Limit access
- Lack of effective control of development
- Salt on roads
- Lack of awareness of potential help
- Trails
- Trespassing via river
- Wild domestic animals
- Illegal dumping

Threats/Barriers

- Lack of assistance to landowners
- Growth for housing (unplanned)
- Subdivision
- Selling farm land for development
- Population growth
- Water flow vs. new builds

* Repeated comment

- High water
- Traffic, runoff problems
- Loss of hunting opportunities
- Salt and other non-point sources
- Sedimentation
- Gravel pits (future)

Opportunities

- Connect townships with trails
- Bike paths
- Connect ERPS with community in natural resource education
- Education on natural resources in school, community and farms
- Improve pond at Spring Brook – maybe a fountain for aeration
- Permeable pavement
- Government grants for buffers
- Federal grant
- Boat launch or canoe
- Grants for river walk or canoes
- Control or directing development
- Plan – preserve open space
- Purchasing development rights
- Generation of power (wind or water)
- Wildlife tourism

Economic Development

Strengths

- Manufacturing
- Industrial park *
- Centralized location
- Proximity to State Capitol
- Good infrastructure
- Motivated leadership
- COG is together
- Willingness to partner
- M-99 (4 lanes)
- M-99/50
- Good land use mix
- Municipal electric
- Coffee shop
- Easy/quick access to utilities
- Skilled workers
- Work force, especially blue collar
- Master land use plan
- Area growth plan
- Concentration of age groups

Weaknesses

- Lack of marketing
- Downtown building vacancies *
- Downtown not vibrant
- Lack of retail
- Lack of major highways west and south
- Lack of funding opportunities *
- Lack of vision
- Lack of coordination of ideas
- Uncoordinated economic development plan
- Grant research and application
- No railroad access
- Distance to freeways
- Lack of SBA
- Limited qualified employees industries
- Lack of secondary educational opportunities
- Limited space for commercial/industrial growth

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- Lack of parking
- Walking problems
- Poor vehicular traffic patterns

Threats/Barriers

- River limits
- Highway development resistance to change
- Poor State economy limits funding
- Lack of funding
- Soft economy
- Weak economy
- Proximity to Lansing
- Retail opportunities
- Lack of action plan
- Government regulations
- Changing job market
- DEQ, etc. restriction on river
- MDOT
- Distrust of government
- Out of town spending
- EDA and LFDA

Opportunities

- Utilization of buildings
- Riverfront development
- Enhance M-50 and M-99 corridor (captive audience)
- Affordable housing
- Utilization of available grants downtown
- Proximity to major super centers
- Close relationship with MEDC
- Grants
- Keep and promote present employers including schools and hospital
- Improve quality of life
- Involvement of community (citizens)
- More grants
- Area economic development plan including government, schools, hospitals, business
- Common big idea
- Pursue brownfield opportunities

* Repeated comment

Agriculture

Strengths

- Still good farmland
- Diversity in land and crops
- Natural drainage and irrigation
- Close to main roadways
- Good roads, recent improvements
- Year round transportation
- Good access to agriculture areas
- Ethanol plants – now in area
- Access to alternate fuel markets
- Close to Farm Bureau – co-ops
- Open space/agriculture keeps people in Area
- Encourage agriculture zoning/good zoning
- Remaining green/natural space
- Nearby grain elevators *
- Nearby equipment dealers
- Extension agency help

Weaknesses

- No local storage (elevators)/elevators gone *
- Younger generation – not a farming lifestyle
- Conglomerates
- Farm economy is done
- Sale of farmland/development
- Property more valuable for housing than agriculture
- Cost of land
- Closeness to Lansing Area = more development
- Lack of money for PDR
- Implement dealers – gone/parts not available *
- Agriculture revenue in community is down
- No rails
- No livestock
- Lack of nearby livestock processors
- Lack of public open spaces

Threats/Barriers

- Industrial expansion
- Residential expansion

* Repeated comment

- Tax structure encourages development – agriculture vs. residential
- Proliferation of “10-acre” home lots

Opportunities

- Ethanol – starting to learn and use more/corn production/bio diesel/ soybeans
- Encourage bio-fuel plant
- Alternative heat/corn burners
- Programs – for those who want to farm/lease to buy/ apprenticeship (when not in family)
- Agriculture in schools – curriculum
- Land donation from farmers – land trust/reservation
- PDR – federal grants for keeping young in FFA
- TDR – Accomplish several things: 1) preserve good agriculture land, 2) cluster houses, 3) use land division more efficiently, 4) preserve open space, 5) private transfers
- Increase agricultural support programs
- Preserve agriculture base
- Promote farming, large-lot homes
- Promote markets with Lansing, agro-tourism, organics, etc.
- Need better prices from farm commodities
- Dedicate land for public access
- Encourage implement dealer open here
- Gravel pit development
- Sod farms, landscape, trees

Quality of Life

Strengths

- Island *
- Walkable *
- River/water **
- History
- Quaint old architecture
- Historic downtown
- Small town atmosphere **
- Openness/Agriculture area
- Open space *
- Green space
- Mature trees
- Nice yard sizes
- Bridges
- Good schools *
- Improved schools
- Near lots of urban benefits
- Centrally located
- Lots of assets
- Safe
- Blank canvass (lots to work with)
- Churches
- Recreation programs
- Pretty place
- Natural resources
- People- friendly
- Bedroom community
- Community activities (festivals)
- Community development/improvement projects

Weaknesses

- Store front appearances
- Lighting (sterile) – poor lighting on islands
- Poor development on river front
- Blocks back from downtown
- Gaps in sidewalks
- No good way to bring in people from townships
- Lack of pathways

* Repeated comment

- Lack of things to do
- Lack district library (of size)
- Not all connected
- Not up to other community standards
- Lack of recreational opportunities
- Lack of gathering place
- Not a lot available for youth
- Limited opportunities for seniors
- Funding available
- Attractive retail
- Business developer
- Need public transportation
- Lack of business in town (retail)
- Too many “offices” on Main Street
- Lack of parking
- Library (building and programs)
- Storm sewer issue downtown (flooding)
- Public transportation (from here to outside areas)
- Heavy traffic flow
- Lack of retail
- Lack of enforcement of ordinances (code) for clean-up

Threats/Barriers

- Lack of money
- Downtown Main Street is a state highway
- “clickish” society
- Stuck in “no money” thinking
- Lack of follow through
- Difficulty in making plan inclusive
- Poor communication
- Access to interstate
- Funding problems
- Lack of vision
- Distinct/separate community
- Bedroom community – people are living here by shopping/working elsewhere
- River contains the potential growth of the downtown
- Lack of funding for everything
- Increase in traffic/traffic patterns
- Annexation – proposed expansion of industrial complex

Opportunities

- Historic district – adds funding
- Red Ribbon Hall
- Additional grant funding
- Miller Farm – asset for development
- King Street School – for sale, reuse/redevelopment
- Hall Street Building – development opportunity
- Lots of developable park land. Possible to tie together with bike paths, etc. to bring people/groups to the area
- People – bring us together
- Improve communication
- Develop larger library serving all
- Grow downtown for hub and service area (gathering place)
- Build on small/unique shops
- Implement the plans
- Development based on amenities, culture, history
- A general desire for the small town environment
- Grants (small business, recreation, preservation)
- Continued cooperation
- Tapping that traffic flow
- Small town department stores retail, clothing)
- Tapping into our history
- Land use restrictions – to preserve natural features/green space
- Available properties in the downtown for development
- Enhance and promote existing resources, activities

Recreation

Strengths

- Waterways
- Open lands
- Parks
- School facilities/pool
- Community commitment
- Adult programs
- Ball fields abundance
- Playground of Dreams
- Good athletic complex at school
- Soccer fields
- Natural resources (river space)

Weaknesses

- Underdeveloped waterways
- Non-sport active
- Intramural sports
- Transportation around town/facilities
- More needed and gyms
- Limited access to river
- Lack of hiking trails
- Lack of swimming facilities
- Facility accessibility (number of areas)

Opportunities

- Examine successful recreation programs
- Canoe launch
- Sand box volleyball
- Low cost family recreation
- Outside basketball
- Volleyball courts
- Skate park improvement
- Festivals/tournaments
- Miniature golf facilities
- Water slide
- Driving range/batting cages
- Go cart, etc.
- Laser tag

* Repeated comment

- Swimming pool
- Paint ball fields
- Bowling alley
- Walk/bike/hike/ski trails *
- Boat livery
- Canoe portages
- Active preservation of nature
- Better facility maintenance
- Go after grants
- Upgrade river walk
- Man made lakes
- Canoe launch
- Expanded river usage
- Cross country skiing
- Movie house/band shell
- Publicity/marketing
- Parks/river parks
- Inline skate park
- Rail to trail
- Go cart track
- Adult programs
- Bike trail
- Camping facilities
- Access to existing facilities (school)
- Nature trails
- Develop current facilities or land

Housing

Strengths

- A lot of housing
- New apartment structures
- High rate of home owners
- New-builds in townships
- Open space/trees
- Low tax rates in town
- Transforming old buildings into housing
- Good parcel size on new development in townships (keeps open space)
- Affordable
- Variety –all income groups, home types *
- Lot of apartments in city
- Nice homes
- Nice development (medium sized structures)
- Not a lot of trailer parks
- Location – a variety of good places to work, a good central location
- Choice of rural or apartment living
- Open space in city
- Choice within city
- Affordable housing
- Close to each other in city – there are “neighborhoods”
- Neighbors looking out for each other
- Safe neighborhoods

Weaknesses

- Utility costs in city
- Age of stock in city
- Traffic
- Ugly houses coming in from north (M-99)
- Potentially leaning toward a low scale
- Houses not maintained
- Code enforcement **
- Historic homes not kept up
- Lack of senior housing
- Too many slumlords
- Eyesores mixed in – poor first impression coming into town
- Lack of knowledge about funding sources
- Lack of hotel space

* Repeated comment

- Not enough affordable housing for low to moderate income
- Not enough housing for elderly (assisted living)
- Not kept up – some houses/apartment
- Not very many condos

Threats/Barriers

- Lack of funds
- Transitioning from residential to commercial
- Age of dams
- Code enforcement
- Finding funding
- Lack of investors
- Lack of people to buy homes with jobs to pay for them
- Lack of promotion
- Transportation
- Lack of available building site in the city
- Finance - cutbacks

Opportunities

- Rehabilitation/infill, some are available for purchase **
- Connecting homeowners with funding **
- Many of the houses in bad shape are in spots primed for development
- Open space preservation/cluster development *
- Condos *
- Continued care facilities
- Nice housing and commercial along river
- Finding funding
- Good tax base – more attractive to investors and home owners for affordability
- Inter-jurisdictional cooperation
- Land available for good housing
- Walkable downtown – can ride bike to school
- Lots of fire departments – helps insurance rates
- Land available in townships that is in close proximity to city
- collaboration

* Repeated comment

Transportation

Strengths

- Whittum Rd. used for bypass
- Traffic control
- E-Tran **
- Narrow in Main st. (safety)
- Good road
- River – boating/recreation
- Roadways to N/S/E/W
- New lights – Kinneville
- Recreational – bike
- Agriculture utilization
- Wide shoulders
- No major interstates
- Less congestions/slower

Weaknesses

- Gravel roads used as bypass
- Speed limits
- MDOT communication
- Lack of public transport
- Carpool
- Rails to Trails – old tracks gone
- Poor drivers (ability)
- Lack of paved roads
- Moving towards congestion
- Hard to get in/out of town – time
- New roadway development restricted
- Waverly Road Bridge access
- Lack of bike lanes
- Noise of semi's/tractors through town
- Maintain Bridge (Waverly/Knight Columbia)

Threats/Barriers

- River crossing *
- Individual v. carpool
- MDOT – control of highways
- No right turn lanes
- Lack of funding *

* Repeated comment

- Redirecting traffic through town
- M-99 and M-50 - bypass – location
- Threat to farmland
- Improvements brings traffic

Opportunities

- Culverts added – new development
- Improvement of ex roads
- Updated bridges – pull traffic from city
- Partnering with neighboring school districts – sharing resources
- Bringing business into area – more opportunities for co-op programs
- Development – commercial/residential
- Bike trails
- Improve environment/health
- Better access
- Federal grants available

Education

Strengths

- Facilities *
- Teachers and staff
- Good administrators and school board
- Forward thinking curriculum development
- Working relationships with neighboring school districts (#4)
- Forward thinking superintendent and district – good leadership
- Cooperation with private and charter schools
- Working well together within district
- Highest number attend vocation educations at LCC in high school
- Schools communicate with each other
- Small town education – citizens support schools more
- Early childhood programs
- Schools remain active in communicating with families and community
- Schools are active (Relay for Life)
- Good Superintendent
- Committed to kids
- Produce a large number of highly educated students. Graduate more students than area.
- Great alternative education program
- Community schools 0shared locations, closeness of population
- Teachers have investment in kids. “unit” “cohesion”

Weaknesses

- Funding – state issue (materials, teach out of pocket expenses)
- Declining enrollment – dropping young families *
- Attitude of accepting “average”
- Structural deficits
- Entrenched teaching habits (poor practices)
- Transportation – size of district – long bus rides (even close to town)
- Non-resident teachers
- Not in LCC district (or community college). Students who attend pay higher rate
- Library system
- Nothing in area for continuing education for adults
- Too dependent on property taxes

Threats/Barriers

- Low expectations

* Repeated comment

- Funding *
- Young families leaving area
- Perception of the area
- Little to draw people to area
- State funding
- Unfunded mandates
- Declining enrollment
- Housing (affordable) market
- Cost of doing business – insurance, retirement
- Internet access (high-speed whole area)
- District for C.C.
- Library – inability to access library outside of city

Opportunities

- Adult/community education – non-credit classes
- Partnering with colleges and universities – learning centers at LCC
- More integrated and broader pre-school programs
- Mentoring programs – utilizing senior community members and high school students pairing with youth
- Strengthening ties with business community (need more business in area)
- Schools of choice
- Exit surveys – why are people leaving? Graduates (what was good/bad)?
- Promoting the schools – mass mailings, updated websites, articles, advertising on buses, creativity, etc.
- Market safety
- Unite the community – 2 counties, many villages, townships, etc.
- Working with other school districts
- New facilities – could do adult/higher education classes at them
- Provide more job shadowing experiences. Not everyone goes to college
- Wireless internet – community wide
- More opportunities to take electives to try new things
- Computer lab in this building – goal was to use for community use – sits empty, no one to staff
- Intra-district (or district-wide system) library – Lansing/Charlotte
- Outside tutoring – need facilities for use by entire area
- Performing arts and theater – opportunities for arts outside of school
- Gyms are used every night – classrooms need to be utilized
- Provisions of programs for youth that do not achieve as high? Need to help kids that fall between the cracks.

Health

Strengths

- Good hospital
- Good doctors
- Good dentists

Weaknesses

- Hospital can't provide all the needed services (ex: must go out of area for knee transplants and births)
- Don't have as many specialists as we need (ex: need: ear/nose/throat, dermatologist, and cardiologist (more often))
- Ambulances not staffed full-time
- Many people with no health insurance

Threats/Barriers

- Services we do have are not available to everyone (ex: those with out insurance)

Opportunities

- Grow hospital and specialists
- Get community healthier
- Healthy U
- Better use of school facilities for health/increase pool facilities for health and therapy
- Opportunity for partnerships between hospital and school facilities