Regional Housing Study

High-quality, affordable housing is a prerequisite for all aspects of the economy, from employment to community viability. At the same time, regional housing planning can set the stage for local government programs and initiatives such as target market analyses, housing rehabilitation programs, and placemaking – tasks that might not be financially attainable using only local resources.

WUPPDR last completed a housing study in 1978. A new study is needed to target programs and initiatives, as well as to possibly assist in obtaining housing grant funds. Data collection and assessments will begin soon, in cooperation with the other regional planning agencies in the Upper Peninsula. For more information, contact Erik Powers.

The Westerly View

News & Happenings From the Western Region

Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region

Volume 8, Issue 3  Spring 2015

WUPPDR Awarded Regional Prosperity Initiative Funding

WUPPDR is pleased to announce that it has been awarded funding from the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget for a second year of the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI). All three regions in the U.P. were funded and are working collaboratively on coinciding projects. The RPI was begun by the State of Michigan in 2014 as a means to encourage regional collaboration of organizations in a time of dwindling resources, overlapping goals, and competing priorities. Last year, WUPPDR facilitated RPI as a general stakeholder input and planning process to improve communications, identify priorities, and identify potential projects to promote the regional economy. The lead participants were known as the Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Collaborative, and that group’s involvement will continue this year. In 2015, six projects will be undertaken through RPI – all are outlined in this issue.

Economic Development Service Delivery Introduced

Last year, the RPI Economic Development Subcommittee began discussions on how to better deliver economic services to the western six counties of the U.P. After identifying needs and opportunities, WUPPDR, in association with Michigan Works!, introduced a service delivery concept that emphasizes collaboration and efficiency. Partners include: Northern Initiatives, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Small Business Development Center, Michigan Works!, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, MTEC SmartZone, Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance, and WUPPDR. This previous fall and winter the partners presented the concept of delivering economic development services more effectively and efficiently to individual counties through existing Michigan Works! service centers. It was also featured in the winter issue of The Westerly View.

Economic Development Service Delivery is a priority project for RPI 2015. The partners recently participated in a kickoff meeting to discuss goals and objectives of the project. The goal is to support and plan for sustainability of a system for delivering economic development and business assistance services from several organizations via a single point of contact in each of five counties (Houghton and Keweenaw Counties share a service center). Partner collaboration will enable better delivery of services, which allows users improved access to information they need, no matter where they are in the western U.P. For more information, contact Kim Stoker.
Connect Michigan Technology Action Plans

Internet connectivity was identified as a major issue facing the region during RPI 2014. The state of broadband infrastructure in the Western U.P. is often cited as an inhibitor to development and prosperity in the region. Residents and businesses alike need reliable, fast, and economically viable service to remain relevant in today’s digital economy.

Working with Connect Michigan (Connect MI), WUPPDR will complete Technology Action Plans for each of our six counties. Through an assessment process, data about existing infrastructure will be collected and presented in the plans. Connect Michigan is working to plan for broadband mapping and expansion of access to across the state. More information about the program can be found at www.connectmi.org.

For more information, contact Erik Powers.

State Trunkline Road Maintenance Study

During RPI 2014, a Transportation Subcommittee explored the different arrangements for state trunkline (highways beginning with “M” and “U.S.”) winter road maintenance from county to county in the region. Some counties, cities, and villages plow the trunkline under contract with MDOT, and some do not. This disparity leads to real or perceived inefficiencies. The Subcommittee determined it was more appropriate for WUPPDR to complete the study. This will allow increased flexibility and control over the deliverable and a greater capacity for work using the same amount of money. This project is a natural fit with WUPPDR’s many other transportation planning activities.

The main components of the study will be:
- Inventory and profiles of MDOT, 6 road commissions, and 19 cities & villages
- Analysis of the current situation, including efficiencies & deficiencies in services
- Alternative service delivery methods, with case studies
- Legal and policy review

For more information, contact Jerald Wuorenmaa.

Regional Chamber Alliance

The Western U.P.’s six counties have a tradition of working together as a region to promote and present to the Western region as a place to do business. Some of U.P., and the July 2014 event the chambers have overlap was held in Houghton – out- picing service areas. All of the side of Baraga County for chalms share a number of the first time. The October goals common to the region’s event was held in Silver City prosperity. But each cham- and the January 2015 event bers is also unique and wants in Ironwood. Chambers in to retain their community focus all six counties are now par- and identity.

The opportunity for im- At the July 2014 Thirsty provement communication be- Thursday, Cheryl Fahrner, rate the Regional Chamber between the chambers was rec- ognized even before RPI. In Keweenaw Chamber of 2012, the Baraga County Commerce, proposed devel- opment of a Regional Cham- ber Alliance that would help working events and invited facilitate communications to the Ontonagon County produce results on a regional Chamber. In 2014, Thirsty level. The Alliance concept WUPPDR is helping to facil- itate communications to the chambers through RPI and will continue to play a role as the Alliance evolves. For more information, contact Jerald Wuorenmaa.

Career & Technical Education Asset Mapping

An Education Subcommittee programs are often a cost- was formed last year to ex- plore the intersection of effective, career-oriented option for those not seeking plore the intersection of adult education, K-12 education, and workforce development degree. Intermediate School their conversations Districts, community colleges focused mainly on career & universities presently technical education (CTE) – offer CTE programs, but programs that emphasize gaps and overlaps in services exist. To address this need modern technologies, and WUPPDR is collaborating career preparation. CTE on a U.P.-wide CTE Asset

WUPPDR Commission Meeting Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 17</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 21</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Annual Meeting-Iron County</td>
<td>Iron County, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 21</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Full Commission</td>
<td>Houghton, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Executive Committee (via video)</td>
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