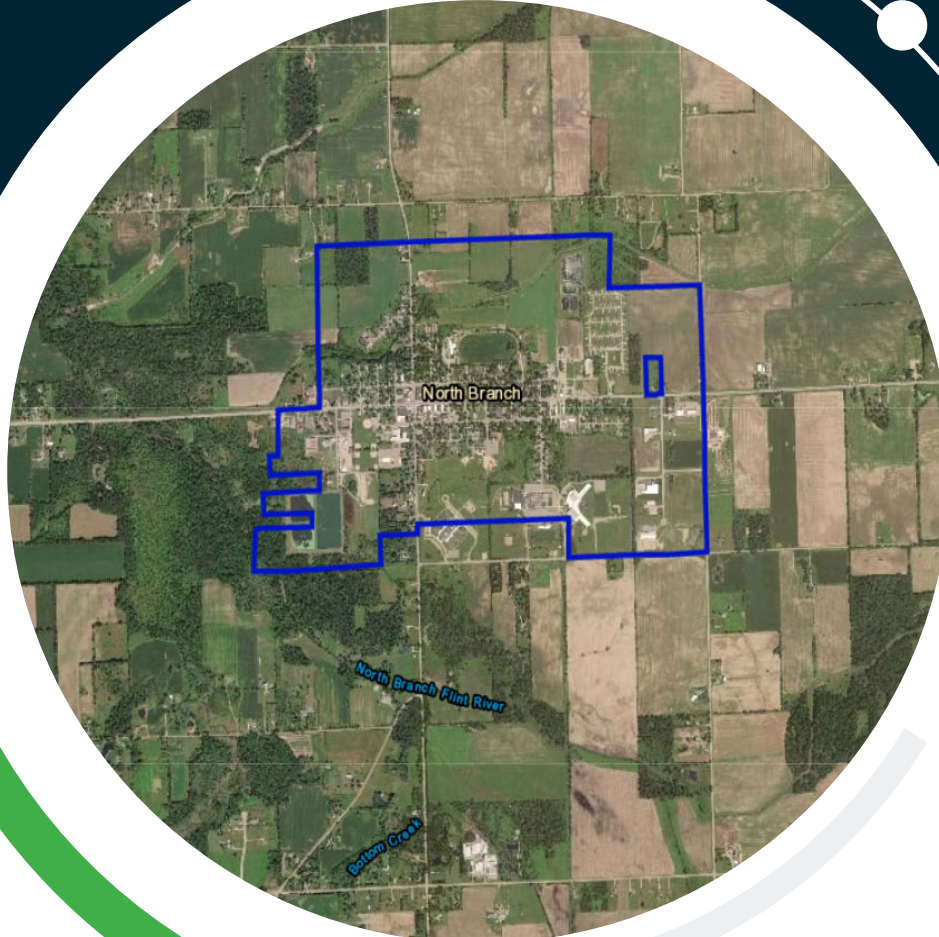


Village of
North Branch
Michigan

2020
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
+ COMMUNITY
MARKETING
STRATEGY**



NORTH BRANCH IS A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY, WITH A HOMETOWN FEEL THAT MAKES IT SPECIAL.

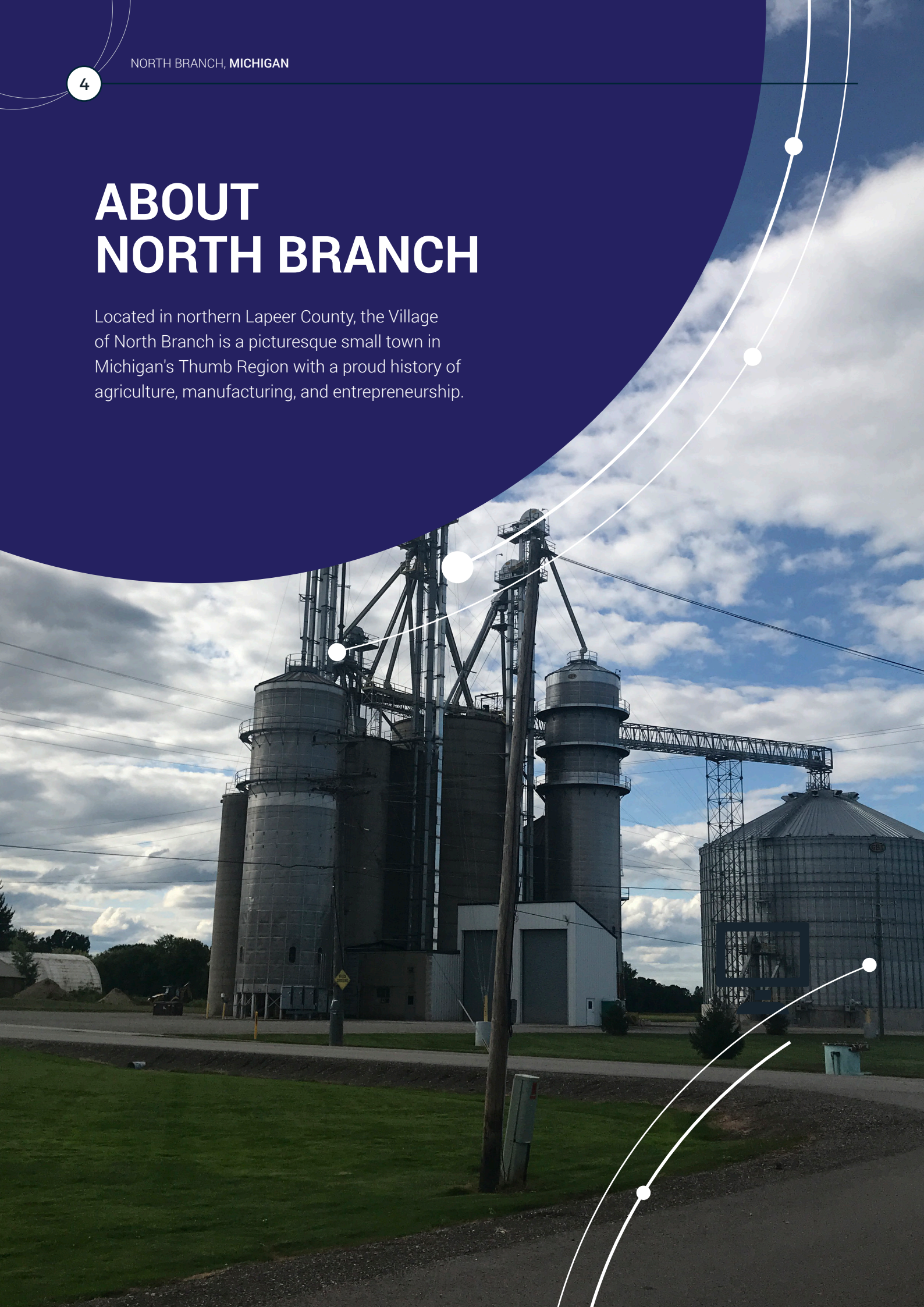


TABLE OF CONTENTS

About North Branch	04
Redevelopment Ready Communities	05
Economic Development Sectors	06
Location	07
Key Statistics	08
Public Engagement	13
Local + Regional Goals	14
Barriers to Growth	15
Risk Assessment	16
Strategic Objectives	17
Implementation Plan	20
Community Marketing Strategy	22

ABOUT NORTH BRANCH

Located in northern Lapeer County, the Village of North Branch is a picturesque small town in Michigan's Thumb Region with a proud history of agriculture, manufacturing, and entrepreneurship.



Redevelopment Ready Communities®

This Economic Development + Community Marketing Strategy is also aligned with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program. The RRC program supports communities as they incorporate predictability, transparency, and efficiency into their development efforts by utilizing the program's six [best practices](#) (below.) This involves planning for new investment and reinvestment, identifying assets and opportunities, and focusing limited resources. RRC empowers communities to shape their future by assisting in the creation of a solid planning, zoning and development foundation to retain and attract businesses, investment and talent.

The Village of North Branch sees RRC as being key to the Village's efforts and has committed to becoming a Certified RRC Community by creating this transparent, predictable, and efficient environment within the Village's regulatory authority.

Redevelopment Ready Communities® Best Practices

Best Practice One: Community Plans and Public Outreach

- 1.1—The plans
- 1.2—Public participation

Best Practice Two: Zoning Regulations

- 2.1—Zoning regulations

Best Practice Three: Development Review Process

- 3.1—Development review procedures
- 3.2—Guide to Development

Best Practice Four: Recruitment and Education

- 4.1—Recruitment and orientation
- 4.2—Education and training

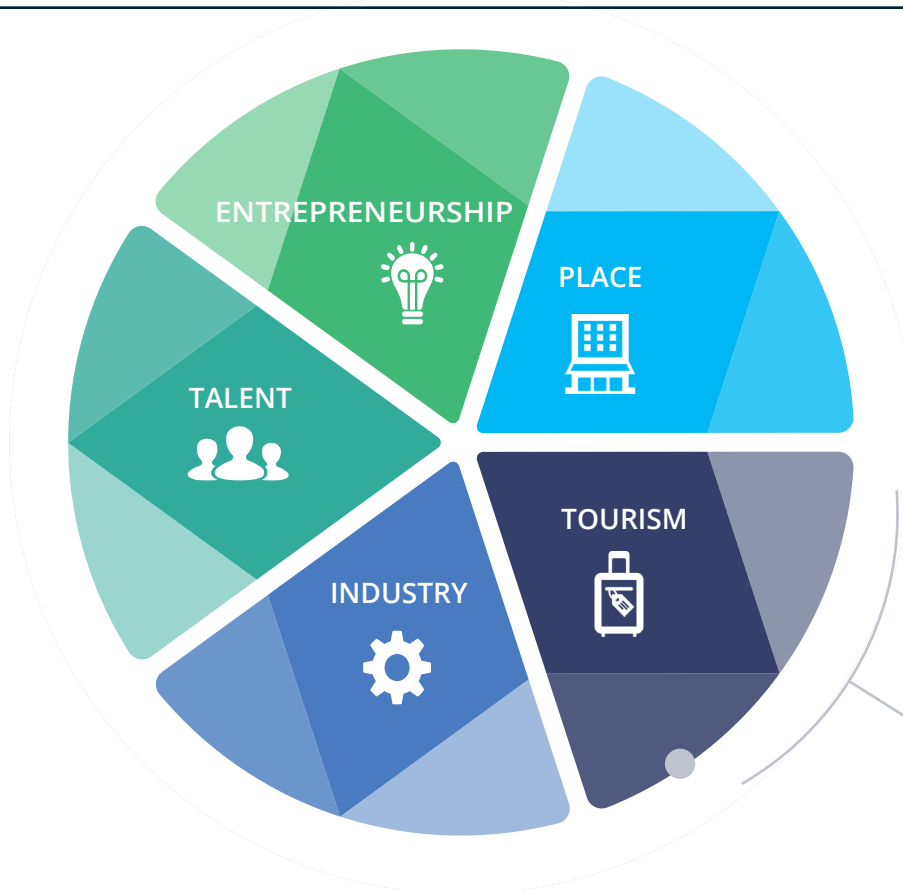
Best Practice Five: Community Prosperity

- 5.1—Economic development strategy
- 5.2—Marketing and promotion

Best Practice Six: Redevelopment Ready Sites®

- 6.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SECTORS

Economic development has evolved over the last several decades to emerge as a more holistic discipline focused on creating prosperous local and state economies. Originally focused on the recruitment and retention of industry, primarily manufacturing, economic development has become a much broader effort recognizing the importance of additional factors, such as the roles played by talent, tourism, place, and entrepreneurialism in the economic success of a community. For the purpose of this economic development strategy, these areas are defined below:

Talent

The available or needed people and skills enabling a community to be competitive in helping local businesses expand, attracting new business, or creating jobs themselves.

Place

This includes the physical areas that help define the character of a community. Downtowns, historic districts, neighborhoods and housing, and bike trails are all examples of Place. Place is a key factor in a community's ability to attract and retain Talent.

Industry

Best classified as "traditional economic development," Industry focuses on manufacturing, mining, or other value-added industries where the end products or services are sold outside the immediate local economy.

Tourism

The attraction of visitors, and their related spending, from outside the local area. Tourism has several forms, from recreation and leisure to business-related to agri-tourism. For this strategy, it is defined as recreation and leisure-related visits and visitors.

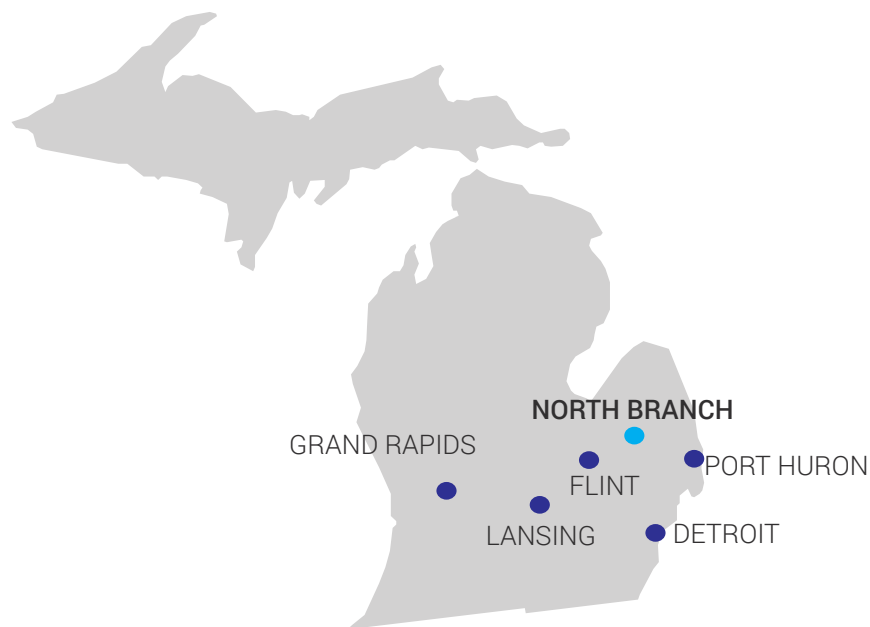
Entrepreneurialism

The development of entrepreneurs and small businesses is key to economic prosperity. In addition to their role as economic contributors, small businesses help retain money in the local economy. Nurturing these entrepreneurs can help grow them into larger businesses and contributors to the local economy.

This economic development strategy for the Village of North Branch touches these five areas. In addition, the Village recognizes that economic development is a team sport and requires cooperation from multiple groups to reach its goals.

LOCATION

North Branch, population 1,077, is located on M-90 in northern Lapeer County in Michigan's lower peninsula's "Thumb Region," roughly midway between the cities of Flint and Port Huron. The surrounding township is primarily rural with the county seat of Lapeer to the south. The Village serves as the primary town for almost a 15-minute radius.



Strategic Advantage

North Branch's strategic advantage is a high quality of life for those who enjoy small town living and low cost of housing. It's hometown feel gives everyone the sense of safety and security in knowing your neighbors and never needing to lock your doors.

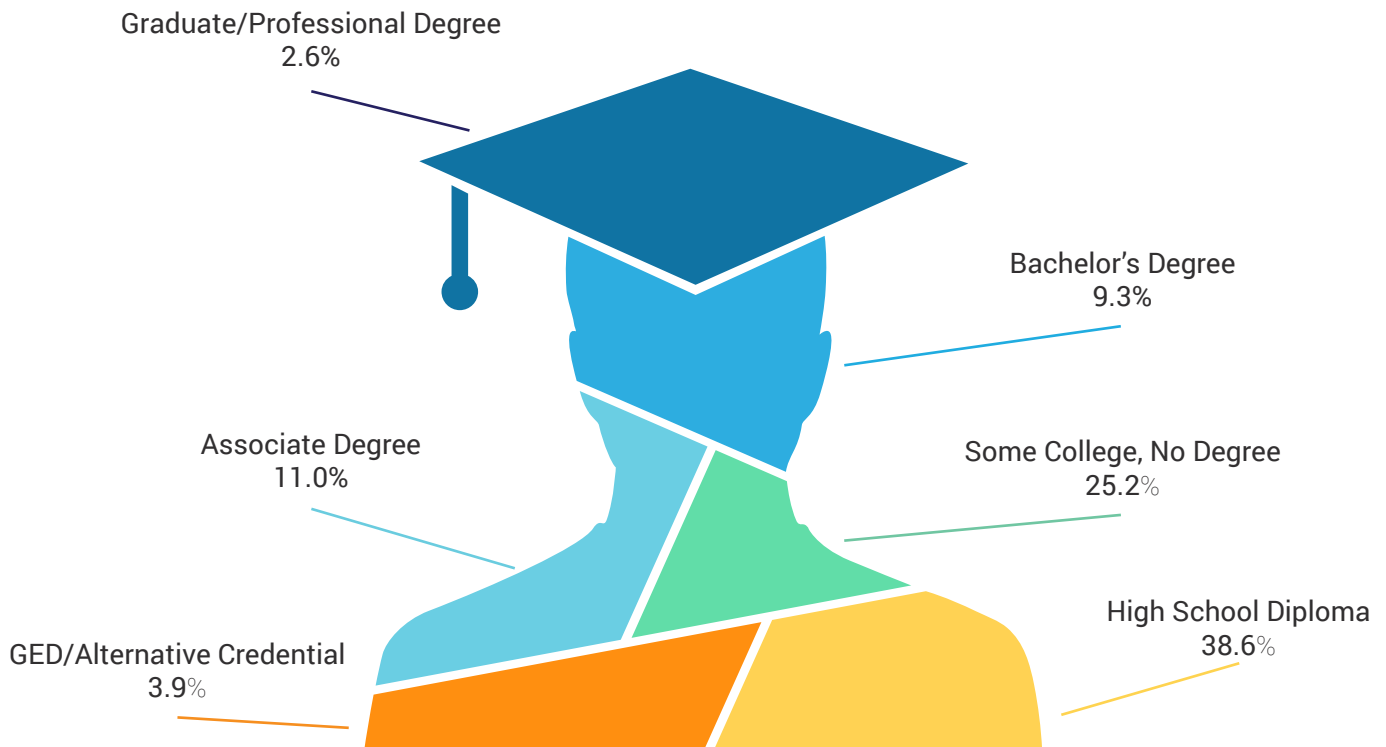
For businesses, the charming historic downtown provides a scenic backdrop while its sizeable industrial park offers economic opportunity with an extremely reasonable cost and excellent return on investment.

KEY STATISTICS

This section focuses on the key statistics prospective businesses are interested in to make a fair comparison of North Branch versus other areas. Primary statistical areas include population, educational attainment, household income, employment sectors, and retail leakage.

Statistics	North Branch	Lapeer County	Michigan
Population - 2019	1,077	89,772	10,097,897
Population - 2024	1,105	90,848	10,233,588
Average Household Income - 2019	\$66,463	\$73,495	\$55,885
Median Age - 2019	38.2	44.1	40.4
Average Home Value - 2019	\$154,230	\$211,874	\$213,282

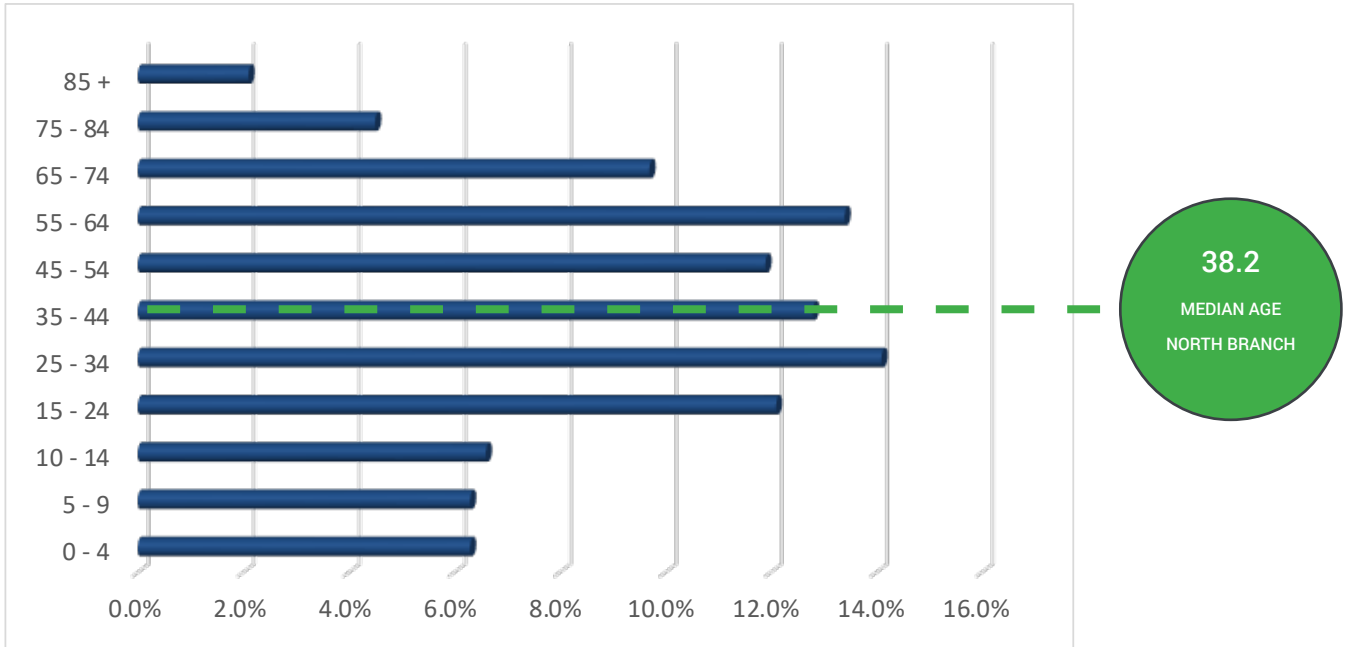
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

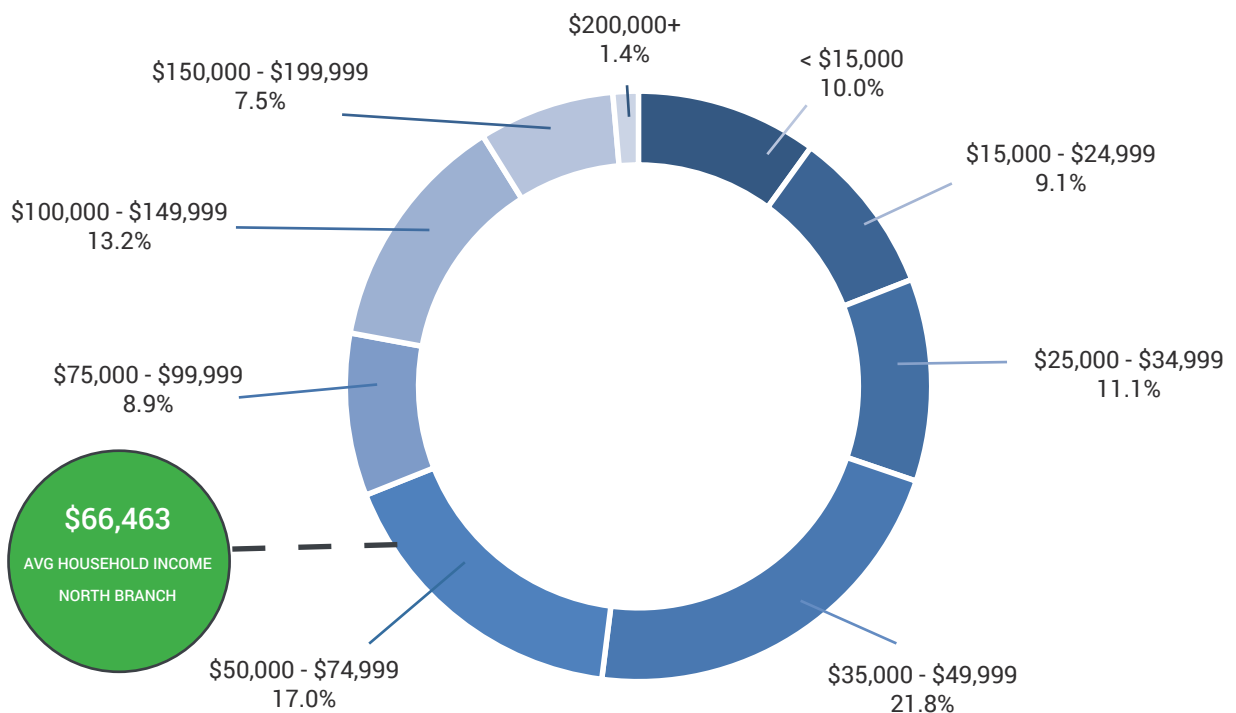
POPULATION BY AGE

2019 estimated percentage of residents by age grouping.



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

2019 estimated average household income by percent.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

2019 estimated employment by industry.

Industry	Percent
Agriculture & Mining	0.7%
Construction	0.6%
Manufacturing	10.5%
Transportation	5.9%
Communication	0.0%
Utility	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	2.8%
Retail Trade	14.6%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1.6%
Services	62.0%
Government	1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2024 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

KEY EMPLOYER- M.K. CHAMBERS COMPANY

Founded in North Branch, Michigan in 1957 by Merle K. Chambers, M.K. Chambers Company began as a family-owned custom thread rolling shop. With less than 1,000 sq. ft. of floor space to work in, the company and its five employees excelled in servicing the metalworking and fabricating industries.

M.K. Chambers has grown to become the leading manufacturing company it is today, with three separate plants totaling over 70,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing floor space. The company utilizes CNC turning, thread rolling and machining, as well as modern engineering and prototyping services to be the premier supplier of components to the automotive, medical, aerospace and military industries. (Source: mkchambers.com)



RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS + PROJECTED RETAIL GROWTH

When an area’s demand for retail goods and services does not match the supply, it creates what is called a Retail Gap. If there is more supply than demand in a geographic area, then one of two things (or a combination of the two) are occurring:

- 1) There may be a strong enough draw from a specific retailer/service provider or group of them that brings in additional from customers from outside the defined area and/or
- 2) there is an over-supply of a business type.

Conversely, if there is more demand for a good or service than what exists in the area’s supply, a gap (or leakage) is created. This leakage is money that leaves the area to spend in another area because the particular good or service is not available within the defined area. This leakage is the best potential source for the types of additional businesses the area may need. *The presence of a gap is not a guarantee of success for prospective businesses.*

Additionally, retail markets rarely stay the same over time. Some areas grow while others shrink. As a community seeks to help existing businesses expand and attract new, having an understanding of which areas are growing or shrinking is important to know.

The following are charts showing the market demand and highest leakage areas for the 5- and 15-Minute Drive Time Radii as well as projected growth between 2019-2024.

2019 RETAIL GAP	5-Minute			15-Minute		
	Demand	Supply	Retail Gap	Demand	Supply	Retail Gap
Total Retail Trade and Food + Drink	\$16,044,438	\$26,733,329	-\$10,688,891	\$136,412,738	\$91,150,599	+\$45,262,139
Total Retail Trade	\$14,290,614	\$24,077,779	-\$9,787,165	\$121,892,146	\$83,980,692	+\$37,911,454
Total Food + Drink	\$1,753,824	\$2,655,550	-\$901,726	\$14,520,593	\$7,169,907	+\$7,350,685

2019-24 RETAIL GROWTH	5-Minute			15-Minute		
	2019	2024	Growth	2019	2024	Growth
Total Retail Trade and Food + Drink	\$16,044,438	\$17,004,059	+\$959,621	\$136,412,738	\$148,296,192	+\$11,883,454
Total Retail Trade	\$14,290,614	\$15,124,856	+\$834,242	\$121,892,146	\$132,295,544	+\$10,403,398
Total Food + Drink	\$1,753,824	\$1,879,203	+\$125,379	\$14,520,593	\$16,000,648	+\$1,480,056

PROJECTED RETAIL GAP + POTENTIAL TARGETS

Using the data from the 15-minute radius of the Retail Gap Analysis and Projected Retail Growth Analysis, the chart below outlines the potential gap that will exist if each category remains static and demand is realized as projected. From there, industry sales per square foot were used for each category to project the maximum amount of total square footage that the market could absorb.

CATEGORY	2019 DEMAND (\$)	2019 SUPPLY (\$)	2019 GAP	2024 DEMAND (\$)	PROJECTED GAP	PROJECTED MAX. SQ FOOTAGE
Home furnishings stores (NAICS 4422)	\$1,632,060	\$26,260	\$1,605,801	\$1,791,830	\$1,765,570	8,368
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores (NAICS 44511)	\$14,801,372	\$8,966,834	\$5,834,538	\$16,149,915	\$7,183,081	14,366
Beer, wine, and liquor stores (NAICS 4453)	\$1,222,527	\$231,442	\$991,085	\$1,336,918	\$1,105,476	1,005
Pharmacies and drug stores (NAICS 44611)	\$6,722,115	\$990,758	\$5,731,357	\$7,394,381	\$6,403,623	10,312
Family clothing stores (NAICS 44814)	\$2,239,040	\$114	\$2,238,926	\$2,268,660	\$2,268,546	9,863
Full-service restaurants (NAICS 722511)	\$6,408,591	\$2,255,736	\$4,152,855	\$7,066,632	\$4,810,896	7,887
Limited-service restaurants (NAICS 722513)	\$5,178,932	\$3,450,185	\$1,728,746	\$5,699,795	\$2,249,610	11,248
Coffee shops (NAICS 722515)	\$382,759	\$123	\$382,637	\$421,078	\$420,955	990

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

On October 21, 2019 a community-wide Economic Development Summit was held to gain insight from the community on what residents, business owners, and other stakeholders feel are the downtown's biggest strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT.) Attendees provided more than fifty points of conversation and were asked to rank their top three choices in each of the four categories. These highest ranking responses (with total points in parentheses) for the SWOT are below and vision for downtown are below.



S

Strengths

What INTERNAL strengths does the Village have that are within the Village's control?

Schools (39)
 Small Town/Community (20)
 Bakery (12)
 Churches (12)
 Farms/Co-Op Elevator (11)
 Industrial Park (10)

W

Weaknesses

What INTERNAL aspects of the Village are holding it back from success?

Grocery Store/Produce (24)
 No Recycling (14)
 Lack of Entertainment (13)
 Lack of Volunteers (12)
 ATV/UTV Restrictions (11)

O

Opportunities

What EXTERNAL factors offer potential for the Village to thrive?

Police Officer (22)
 Farmer's Market (16)
 Housing (16)
 Parks + Rec (15)
 Media/PR/Social Media (14)
 Industrial Park Tenants (12)

T

Threats

What EXTERNAL factors put the Village's success at risk?

State/Federal Regs/Code Authority (17)
 Apathy (16)
 Fear (15)
 Inadequate Infrastructure (13)
 Drugs (12)

LOCAL + REGIONAL GOALS

For an economic development strategy to follow best practices put forth by the Redevelopment Ready Communities program, the individual objectives must tie back to one or more local goals as well as goals identified in the regional context. Each of the goals put forth in this strategy meets this criterion. In the Village’s adopted Master Plan (2018), it has identified several goals. These are:

Goal 1: Develop an overall, unified street grid pattern that provides convenient access to and from all areas of the Village.

Goal 2: Ensure that streets within the Village maintain a residential character, while still ensuring safe vehicular access and on-street parking areas where appropriate.

Goal 3: Improve M-90 so there is a balance between accommodating supportable volumes of traffic while maintaining its important role in defining a pedestrian-oriented and inviting atmosphere in the downtown.

Goal 4: Provide appealing alternate streets with downtown character that encourage vehicular and pedestrian traffic to disperse and provide more on-street parking.

Goal 5: Improve the safety and convenience of pedestrian circulation, including main road crossings, access between parking and buildings, and access from neighborhoods.

Prosperity Region 6, which encompasses the Village of North Branch and the thumb area of Michigan’s lower peninsula, has identified several goals for the region that impact economic development. These goals and their objectives are:

Economic Development: <i>Develop an ecosystem for creating, attracting, expanding, and retaining businesses throughout the region</i>	Quality of Life: <i>Create a unique identity and sense of community for the region</i>
1. Quantify available and qualified workforce; establish and improve upon training programs in the global marketplace.	1. Enhance the viability of downtown centers throughout the region.
2. Create industry targeted strategies including advanced manufacturing, information technologies, medical technologies, value-added agriculture, etc.	2. Encourage redevelopment in downtowns using private investment and philanthropy.
3. Better prepare the region for business inquiries by enhancing marketing materials, promotion, and business prospect/client responsiveness.	3. Improve the physical image of the region, especially along key corridors and community entryways.
4. Enhance the support network for start-up businesses.	4. Promote the region to former Michiganders and immigrants looking to return to the state and raise a family.
5. Support and embrace global engagement by making exports and trade a mainstream activity in Region 6.	5. Enhance the image of the region both internally and externally.

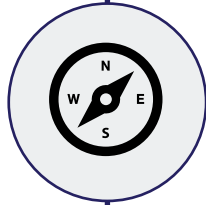
BARRIERS TO GROWTH

North Branch faces several key barriers to future growth. This strategy attempts to address each of these barriers, however, some may not have any remedy. In those instances, mitigation of these factors will be addressed. These barriers to growth are:



Curb Appeal

Like many communities, building conditions deteriorate over time. While the Village has and continues to improve the streetscape, emphasis must also be put on the proper maintenance and improvement of façades in the downtown area.



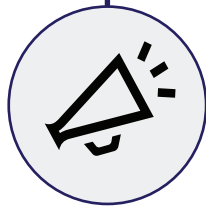
Remote Location

Much of Michigan's thumb region of the lower peninsula, immediate access to a freeway is limited. This creates logistical challenges for existing and potential businesses. However, within the region, North Branch could become a destination due to its number of restaurants.



Lack of Available Housing

Occupancy in the Village and surrounding community is high. Population is expected to increase but there is limited supply of housing.



Lack of "Brand Awareness"

North Branch does not have a strong brand identity with potential residents and businesses outside of the community. There are not currently any entities proactively marketing the community outside of the area.

RISK ASSESSMENT: CURB APPEAL

The Village of North Branch has enjoyed a relatively stable population over the least several decades with a projected slight increase in the coming years. This is very much unlike other rural areas in Michigan. The community's own larger employers, as well as proximity to large employers in Lapeer, Flint, and Port Huron also contribute to its locational attractiveness for those seeking a quiet bedroom community. However, several downtown buildings have fallen into states of disrepair and/or have used inappropriate building materials, causing their appearance to create a negative affect on both the community and businesses within. The state of downtown will have an impact on the community's ability to attract residents as a well as both downtown and industrial businesses.

"Several downtown buildings have fallen into states of disrepair and/or have used inappropriate building materials, causing their appearance to create a negative affect on both the community and businesses within."

This is not to say there are not also attractive buildings in the downtown. The building housing the Independent Bank is in excellent condition and art deco style former dealership that now houses a Subway franchise is also visually appealing. However, Independent Bank has made plans to close this facility and move to a newly-built building with a drive through near the edge of town. This will create a big vacancy in the downtown core. With the condition of several other buildings in the downtown in poor condition, it makes the most attractive building in town harder to market.

The Village has recently underwent some streetscape improvements, which are very positive for the community. However, attention to the buildings themselves is needed. This is not to say a large number of expensive renovations are needed. In fact, a number of smaller, less expensive improvements could make a big impact on several buildings.



The Independent Bank building is arguably the most attractive building downtown. However, with the bank moving to the edge of the village, will become vacant in the next year.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Given the risk assessment conclusion of curb appeal being the biggest threat to North Branch, these Strategic Objectives will focus on improving North Branch's appearance and the projects that can assist in their efforts.

Capacity- Before any other recommendations are made, the Village must recognize its limited capacity to execute projects due to a lack of staffing. Outside of public safety, the Village employs one full-time administrator, its Village Clerk. While the Village Clerk is quite capable in their capacity as clerk, there are many potential projects that could be undertaken but there is no staff to lead them. The Village should consider creating a private-public partnership and adding at least a part-time Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Director to help push projects forward.

PLACE

Improving the appearance of the community, especially the downtown, has several benefits.

- Attractive storefronts and buildings invites more investment. No one wants to invest in a property if surrounding property owners don't seem to care.
- Prospective industrial park users measure the economic health of the community by the condition of downtown.
- Improved appearance = improved pride in businesses and community members.

Façade Component Grants- In lieu of the larger scale traditional façade grants, breaking the grants into smaller component grants done by year could significantly lower the barrier of entry for businesses or property owners to participate. Each year could have a new focus based on the needs identified. All improvements should meet a minimum standard for appearance and character consistent with local code.

The key components the Village and its Downtown Development Authority (DDA) should focus on include:

Replacement/Refresh/Removal of Mansard Roofs-

This design fad of the 1970s and 80s was intended to protect pedestrians from rain and snow and make walking downtown more comfortable. Unfortunately, these roofs are not original to many buildings and do not age well. As they have gotten older they become unattractive and detract from both the building and businesses. Ultimately, these roofs should be removed and replaced with canvas awnings, such as the one in the photo to the right, which are easier and cheaper to replace when needed. At a minimum, a short-term goal should be for either a re-shingling or cleaning of these roofs.



Replacing the many mansard roofs in downtown should be a goal. These roofs should be replaced with canvas awnings like the one above.

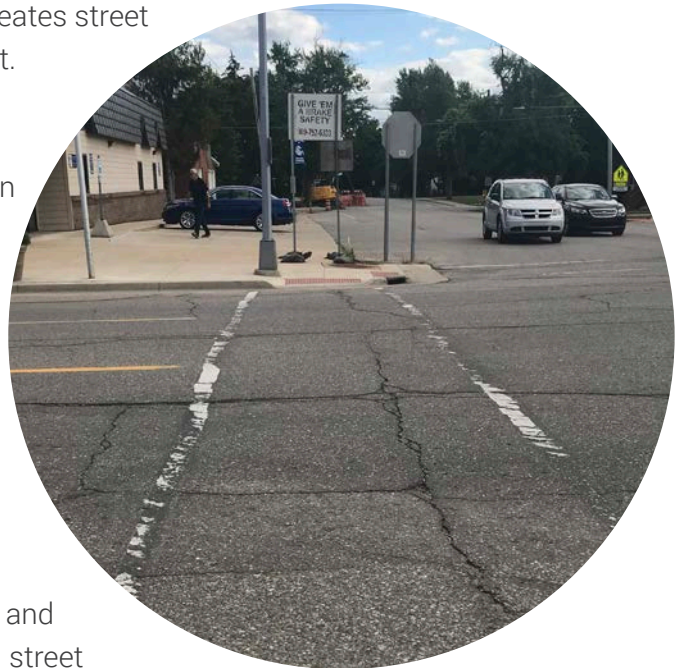
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES - CONT.

Signage- Many business signs in the downtown have become either dated or in a state of disrepair with letters falling off. Replacing these signs with high quality, pedestrian-oriented signs should be another priority component grant.

Outdoor Seating- Downtown is fortunate to have a number of restaurants. The village and DDA should be encouraging outdoor dining in warmer months, even allowing the use of alleys or sidewalk. Encouraging two-top or four-top cafe tables allows for additional capacity for the restaurants but also creates street life and makes the downtown appear more vibrant.

Lighting + Color- This is a more general category that could be used to address improved lighting on buildings or add color in general, such as flags, banners, or flower pots, anything that adds color and vibrancy to the downtown.

Continue Street + Streetscape Improvements- The Village recently completed repaving streets on several blocks south of M-90 near downtown. Repaving and streetscape improvements should be continued throughout the village. In addition, the village should consider widening sidewalks in and around downtown and improving pedestrian crossing. Since M-90 is the main street through downtown, coordination and potentially funding through MDOT will be required.



TALENT

North Branch has a long history of stable population with a slight increase in overall population expected by 2024. However, as the national and statewide trend of fewer people per household continues, it will be a challenge to maintain the same population with the same number of housing units. Furthermore, if the Village wants to see additional retail opportunities, it will need more housing units to justify it.

Encourage New Primary Housing- These options range from upper floor downtown lofts to traditional multi-family apartments to duplexes/triplexes, as well as single family housing, especially near the downtown area. Vacant or underused parcels should be prioritized for mixed-use or multi-family apartments.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES - CONT.

INDUSTRY

For a community of just under 1,200, North Branch has an impressive industrial park with several significant employers and available land with the ability to attract several more.

Update Marketing Materials- The Village currently has an outdated flier and map on its website regarding available property in the industrial park. This one-page flier should be updated to reflect the current status, and updated as needed. The Village currently works with the Lapeer Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) to promote the park. The LEDC recently produced a very good video to promote the park and is linked on the Village's website. The Village should consider embedding the video into its page, instead of a simple link. By linking to the video, it takes a website user to YouTube.com directly and away from other important information. Keeping a user on the page helps reduce confusion.

Annual Meetings with Industry- The Village President should make a point of meeting with all of the companies in the industrial park at least once a year. These meetings should be focused on what the Village can do to identify any issues they may have and how the Village can best assist these employers. As major contributors to the Village's tax base and employment, having an excellent relationship with each company should be a top priority.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

It is not enough to simply try to bring in businesses from another area to help grow the local economy. For North Branch to be successful, it must grow its own businesses, helping to create local wealth. This is done through supporting existing businesses and entrepreneurs.

Business Improvement Trainings- As much as empty storefronts need to be filled, keeping the existing businesses downtown (and potentially helping them expand) should be a top priority. The Chamber and DDA could partner to offer trainings on customer service, merchandising, accounting, marketing, and social media.

Entrepreneurship Trainings- In conjunction with the Small Business Development Center, trainings for people who are interested in starting a business should be held either biannually or quarterly. In addition, other business improvement trainings could also be held on topics like customer service, merchandising, accounting, marketing, and social media.

Market Data + Recruitment /Expansion- This data includes retail leakage statistics which calls out the areas where spending within the community is leaving to other markets or online competitors. These areas are the most likely to find success locally in recapturing these sales. This data should be shared with downtown businesses and property owners to help focus efforts in expansion and /or attracting businesses to fill these needs.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This implementation plan contemplates the proposed objectives and provides prospective timelines and responsible parties, including possibilities of partner organizations.

Task	Regional Goals	Responsible	Timeline	Budget	Source
Façade Component Grants	QoL-1, 2,3	DDA	Q4-2021 (Establish) Ongoing	\$10,000/year	DDA TIF
Streetscape Improvements	QoL-1,3	Village + DDA	Q4- 2023	\$1-2 Million	Village, MDOT
Encourage New Housing	QoL-1	Village	Q4- 2024	N/A	N/A
Update Marketing Materials	ED-3	Village	Q2-2020 (Establish) Ongoing	\$500	Village
Annual Meetings with Industry	ED-3	Village President	Ongoing	N/A	NA
Business Improvement Trainings	ED-4, QoL-1	Chamber + DDA	Q1-2021 (Establish) Ongoing	\$2,500	Sponsors
Entrepreneurship Trainings	ED-4, QoL-1	Chamber + DDA, Regional SBDC	Q1-2021 (Establish) Ongoing	N/A	SBDC
Market Data + Recruitment/ Expansion	ED-4, QoL-1	DDA	Q4-2020	\$1,500	DDA

TIES TO OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS

These strategies and plans tie to other critical documents. The chart below shows which projects tie to existing documents and what actions need to be taken to update those documents. Amending these plans to include these projects is an important step in making them happen. Documents like the Capital Improvements Plan are used on an annual basis to guide investments the Village makes in its infrastructure and community-owned assets.

Project	Tie To Other Planning Docs	Action Needed
Façade Component Grant	Capital Improvement Plan; DDA Tax Increment Financing Plan	Review and amend, if necessary to allow
Encourage New Housing	Zoning	Amend to include
Streetscape Improvements	Capital Improvements Plan; DDA Tax Increment Financing Plan	Amend to include

COMMUNITY MARKETING STRATEGY

An effective Community Marketing Strategy needs to assess a community's assets (people, places, culture) and help them to position themselves to effectively tell their story to multiple audiences in a compelling way.

This strategy contemplates ways the community can market to potential developers, residents, businesses, and tourists.

ASSETS

Below are the three assets that residents and stakeholders voted on through the community SWOT analysis and online survey as the biggest strengths in the community:



Downtown



Industrial Park



Hometown Feel

BRAND IDENTITY

The Village of North Branch, nor the North Branch community overall, does not have a defined brand, logo, or tagline. The closest it has is a logo that is used only on its website:



While well intentioned, the above logo is very busy with a lot of things going on in a small space. Making things more difficult, only one digital version of this logo seems to exist and it is in a low resolution format. Both factors make recreating the logo in any format very difficult.

To assist the Village and community with developing even just a basic logo and brand, Place + Main Advisors worked with the Village to create the brand and logos below.

Brand vs Logo

One of the biggest points of confusion in community marketing is the differences between what a brand is and a logo. To put it simply, a brand is the way people feel about a community, its reputation, and how it wants to represent itself. A community's brand is a reflection of its values and is shown in how people experience the community. A brand communicates a feeling or feelings about a community. A logo meanwhile, is a graphic that ties to the brand. A community can have several different logos and taglines depending on the situation. Taglines are two to five words summing up the brand or an aspect of the brand and are often presented with a logo.

North Branch's Community Brand

During public meetings, interviews, and field observation, several reoccurring themes kept repeating. These themes of "home," "small town," "farm country," "self reliance," and "American pride," were most prominent. From these themes, several taglines were created and discussed with the Village Council. The main tagline the council agreed to, "Homegrown. Hometown." could be applied to the overall community as well as any efforts to attract residents. An additional tagline has been developed to promote business recruitment. This tagline, "We Grow Business," would be used for promoting the industrial park and well as promoting empty buildings in the downtown area.

Community Logo- This logo is for community as a whole as people and businesses who identify as being from North Branch is not limited to those who are in the village boundaries.

North Branch
Homegrown. Hometown.

Village Logo- This logo is for the Village of North Branch as a governmental entity. It's uses could include letterhead, business cards, website, and other items that would require a government logo.

Village of
North Branch
Michigan

Industrial Park Logo + Business Tagline- This logo is for the Village's Industrial Park and business messaging. Its primary uses are for marketing the industrial park on fliers and signs and any recruitment marketing materials.

North Branch
Industrial Park
We Grow Business.

Typefaces (Fonts)- To create a consistent look and feel between the different logos there needs to be commonality in both font usage and color palate. For North Branch, the primary typeface is a clean sans serif font called Montserrat in the bold setting. This is intended to present a bold, straight forward and professional feel to the name "North Branch." The secondary typeface is a script-based font called Moonstone. This secondary typeface is intended to add a feeling of a personal touch, like a handwritten personal note at the end of a typed letter or card. This combination gives each logo both a professional and personal appearance, lending more weight to North Branch's brand of being somewhere people want to call "home."

Montserrat Bold
Moonstone Regular

Primary Typeface

Secondary Typeface

Colors- Like typefaces, having a commons color palate will help tie individual logos together in a common brand. For North Branch, two main colors that were selected were a deep blue and a green. It should be noted other colors can and should be used in conjunction with these colors and logos for different purposes, but for the logos itself these two primary colors (along with solid black) should be the main uses.



Main Color- Blue
C=100 M=100 Y=25 K= 25
R= 38 G=34 B= 98



Secondary Color- Green
C=75 M=5 Y=100 K= 0
R= 65 G=173 B= 73

COMMUNITY MARKETING

North Branch's primary need is for improved curb appeal, but there are also a few vacancies and pending vacancies to be concerned about. The community needs to have a plan to attract new residents and businesses. This section is intended to give direction to those efforts.

RESIDENTS

This is by far the most important of potential targets. North Branch's economy rests on its ability to attract talent for businesses, customers to buy things, and home owners and renters to pay taxes.

Targets- Most municipalities don't market to potential residents. Those that do often take a "one-size-fits-all" approach, meaning they don't know who would want to live in their community, let alone how to reach them. Understanding what type of socio-economic and lifestyle-oriented people may be interested in living in North Branch is the first step towards creating an effective strategy. Below is a breakdown of socio-economic and lifestyle types, referred to as Market Segmentation, using a system by ESRI called *Tapestry* for the Village currently.

Segmentation	Socioeconomic Traits	Market Profile
<p>Salt of the Earth (6B) Percent of Area: 70.3%</p> <p>Average Household Size: 2.59</p> <p>Median Age: 44.1</p> <p>Median Household Income: \$56,300</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steady employment in construction, manufacturing, and related service industries. Completed education: 40% with a high school diploma only. Household income just over the national median, while net worth is nearly double the national median. Spending time with family their top priority. Cost-conscious consumers, loyal to brands they like, with a focus on buying American. Last to buy the latest and greatest products. Try to eat healthy, tracking the nutrition and ingredients in the food they purchase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor sports and activities, such as fishing, boating, hunting, and overnight camping trips are popular. To support their pastimes, truck ownership is high; many also own an ATV. They own the equipment to maintain their lawns and tend to their vegetable gardens. Residents often tackle home remodeling and improvement jobs themselves. Due to their locale, they own satellite dishes, and have access to high speed internet connections like DSL. These conservative consumers prefer to conduct their business in person rather than online.
<p>Heartland Communities (6F) Percent of Area: 94.7%</p> <p>Average Household Size: 2.39</p> <p>Median Age: 42.3</p> <p>Median Household Income: \$42,400</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirees in this market depress the average labor force participation rate to less than 60% (Index 94), but the unemployment rate is comparable to the US. More workers are white collar than blue collar; more skilled than unskilled. The rural economy of this market provides employment in the manufacturing, construction, utilities, healthcare, and agriculture industries. These are budget savvy consumers; they stick to brands they grew up with and know the price of goods they purchase. Buying American is important. Daily life is busy, but routine. Working on the weekends is not uncommon. Residents trust TV and newspapers more than any other media. Skeptical about their financial future, they stick to community banks and low-risk investments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional in their ways, residents of Heartland Communities choose to bank and pay their bills in person Most have high-speed Internet access at home or on their cell phone but aren't ready to go paperless. Many residents have paid off their home mortgages but still hold auto loans and student loans. To support their local community, residents participate in public activities. Home remodeling is not a priority, but homeowners do tackle necessary maintenance work on their cherished homes. They enjoy country music and watch CMT. Motorcycling, hunting, and fishing are popular; walking is the main form of exercise. To get around these semi-rural communities, residents prefer domestic trucks or SUVs.
<p>Southern Satellites (10A) Percent of Area: 11.8%</p> <p>Average Household Size:</p> <p>Median Age:</p> <p>Median Household Income:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education: almost 40% have a high school diploma only (Index 140); 45% have college education (Index 73). Unemployment rate is 6%, slightly higher than the US rate. Labor force participation rate is 59.1%, slightly lower than the US. These consumers are more concerned about cost rather than quality or brand loyalty. They tend to be somewhat late in adapting to technology. They obtain a disproportionate amount of their information from TV, compared to other media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually own a truck; likely to service it themselves. Frequent the convenience store, usually to fill up a vehicle with gas. Typical household has a satellite dish. Work on home improvement and remodeling projects. Own a pet, commonly a dog. Participate in fishing and hunting. Prefer to listen to country music and watch Country Music Television (CMT). Read fishing/hunting and home service magazines. Partial to eating at low-cost family restaurants and drive-ins. Use Walmart for all their shopping needs (groceries, clothing, pharmacy, etc.).

COMMUNITY MARKETING - RESIDENTS

Potential Target Audiences- There are a number of potential types of residents for North Branch. Below are several types the Village should target for recruitment:

Target Audience	Source
Transferring/Recruited Employees	Industrial Park Businesses Lapeer Area Businesses
North Branch (and other nearby schools) High School Graduates	North Branch High School, Alumni, Targeted Facebook

Target Audience Messaging- Messaging to potential targets should vary based on the respective target. There may be overarching themes (affordability/value) but each message should be specific to each target.

Target Audience	Key Message
Transferring/Recruited Employees	High Quality of Life (Hometown Feel, Small Town, Good Schools, Restaurants)
North Branch (and other nearby schools) High School Graduates	Make a Difference in Your Hometown Available Jobs

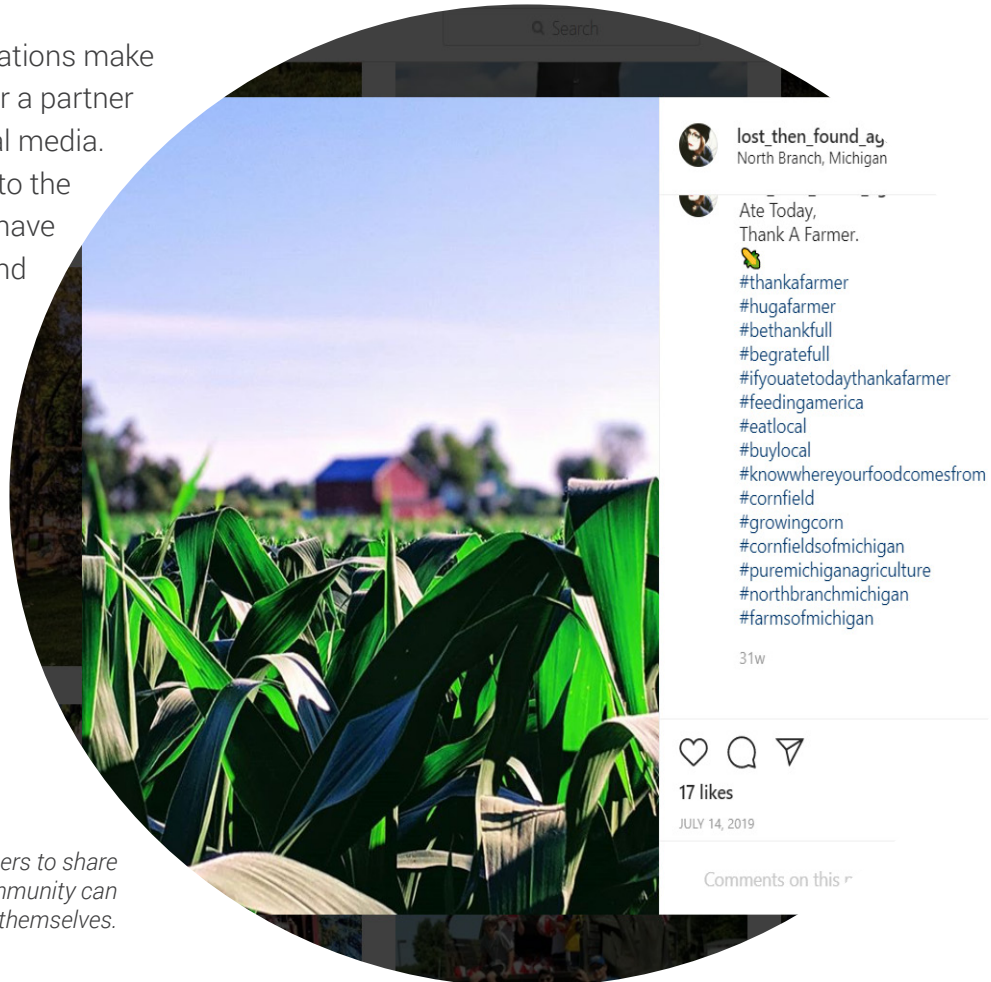
Medium + Channels- In order to have your message heard, you have to get your message in front of your targets in a format they will see. Below are the recommended mediums and channels of communication for each of the groups.

Target Audience	Medium - Channel(s)
Transferring/Recruited Employees	Printed Relocation Package, Website - Direct via Employers
North Branch (and other nearby schools) High School Graduates	Social Media- Targeted Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn Ads

COMMUNITY MARKETING - RESIDENTS

Social Media- These recommendations make clear the need for North Branch, or a partner organization, to be active on social media. Of the various channels available to the Village, it is highly encouraged to have a strong presence on Facebook and Instagram as these are the two most used by potential residents. Other channels like a LinkedIn page or YouTube should also be considered. Management of these channels should also be accounted for with a person or group who have knowledge of best practices and an ability to execute them on behalf of the community.

Social media sites like Instagram (right) allow users to share their photos of places, like North Branch. The community can use these same tools to promote themselves.



COMMUNITY MARKETING - BUSINESSES

BUSINESSES

Filling vacancies and underused commercial properties should be a top priority in recruiting businesses. The *Projected Gap + Potential Targets* section on page 12 outlines the market potential for various sectors. Typically, the larger the potential maximum square footage, the more likely it would be to be able to recruit that type of business.

Target Audiences- Based on the aforementioned *Projected Gap + Potential Targets* section, the following types of businesses are best recommended to pursue:

CATEGORY	PROJECTED GAP (BY 2024)	PROJECTED MAX. SQ FOOTAGE
Home furnishings stores (NAICS 4422)	\$1,765,570	8,368
Supermarkets and other grocery (except convenience) stores (NAICS 44511)	\$7,183,081	14,366
Beer, wine, and liquor stores (NAICS 4453)	\$1,105,476	1,005
Pharmacies and drug stores (NAICS 44611)	\$6,403,623	10,312
Family clothing stores (NAICS 44814)	\$2,268,546	9,863
Full-service restaurants (NAICS 722511)	\$4,810,896	7,887
Limited-service restaurants (NAICS 722513)	\$2,249,610	11,248
Coffee shops (NAICS 7225155)	\$420,955	990

Every effort should be made to make existing retailers in these areas (or complimentary) aware of the unfilled potential.

Target Audience	Key Messages
Businesses	Stable and Growing Community; Village is Pro-Business; High Quality of Life

Target Audience	Medium - Channel(s)
Businesses	Social Media; Recruitment Package

COMMUNITY MARKETING - BUSINESSES

Medium + Channels- Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet or easy route to recruiting new businesses, just hard work and hustle. However, there are a few ways to effectively recruit. These are:

Engage Local Commercial Realtors- Sharing the data in the *Projected Gap + Potential Targets* section with local commercial Realtors with actively marketed spaces will help give professionals in the real estate industry good information to help them lease or sell their contracted properties.

Collateral Materials + Recruitment Team- Creating a custom marketing brochure with market data from this strategy and available real estate will give collateral material for a recruitment team made of volunteers from the business community to identify successful businesses in the region and meet directly with them about coming to North Branch. Sending fellow business owners to recruit businesses is far more effective than sending Village or non-profit staff.

Feature Successful Businesses + Post Available Real Estate on Social Media- Using the power of social media to promote successful businesses and available properties does two things:

- 1) Promotes the Village as a place to do business.
- 2) Promotes the Village as place where people would want to live. This is one of those areas where promoting successful businesses like restaurants and retailers promotes both available real estate and makes the community look more desirable to potential residents.

The Village of North Branch can use its social media platforms to promote available real estate, but should also create a policy around when it does and doesn't to avoid conflicts or allegations of favoritism or unfair treatment.



COMMUNITY MARKETING - DEVELOPERS

DEVELOPERS

North Branch has a need to encourage additional multi-family development within the Village.

Target Audiences- There few traditional developers in Michigan's Thumb Region. Those who would be considered traditional developers are based on the Flint area and have been hesitant to venture out of that market. However, several options are potentially available to the Village:

Regional Builders- The Village should explore the desire of builders in the region of looking at North Branch and get an understanding of what they see as the challenges in the market. These builders are best equipped to jump from contractor to developer at a larger scale.

Local Investors- Many communities have people who have the means to take on smaller projects but not necessarily the "know how" to actually become small scale developers themselves. Fortunately, there are resources available to help educate through the process. Groups like the Incremental Development Alliance have Michigan chapters with other small developers to learn from.

Other Developers- It's difficult to understand who exactly may be interested in doing development in North Branch whether in the region, state, or elsewhere. It will be important to get information out on the Village's website and other channels to let potential developers not already identified know of the potential opportunities.

Target Audience Messaging- Messaging to potential targets should vary based on the respective target. There may be overarching themes (affordability/value) but each message should be specific to each target.

Target Audience	Key Message
Regional Builders	Stable and Growing Population; Local Employers and Close to Lapeer (Bedroom Community)
Local Investors	Stable and Growing Population; Local Employers and Close to Lapeer (Bedroom Community)
Other Developers	Stable and Growing Population; Local Employers and Close to Lapeer (Bedroom Community)

COMMUNITY MARKETING - DEVELOPERS

Medium + Channels- In order to have your message heard, you have to get your message in front of your targets in a format they will see. Below are the recommended mediums and channels of communication for each of the groups.

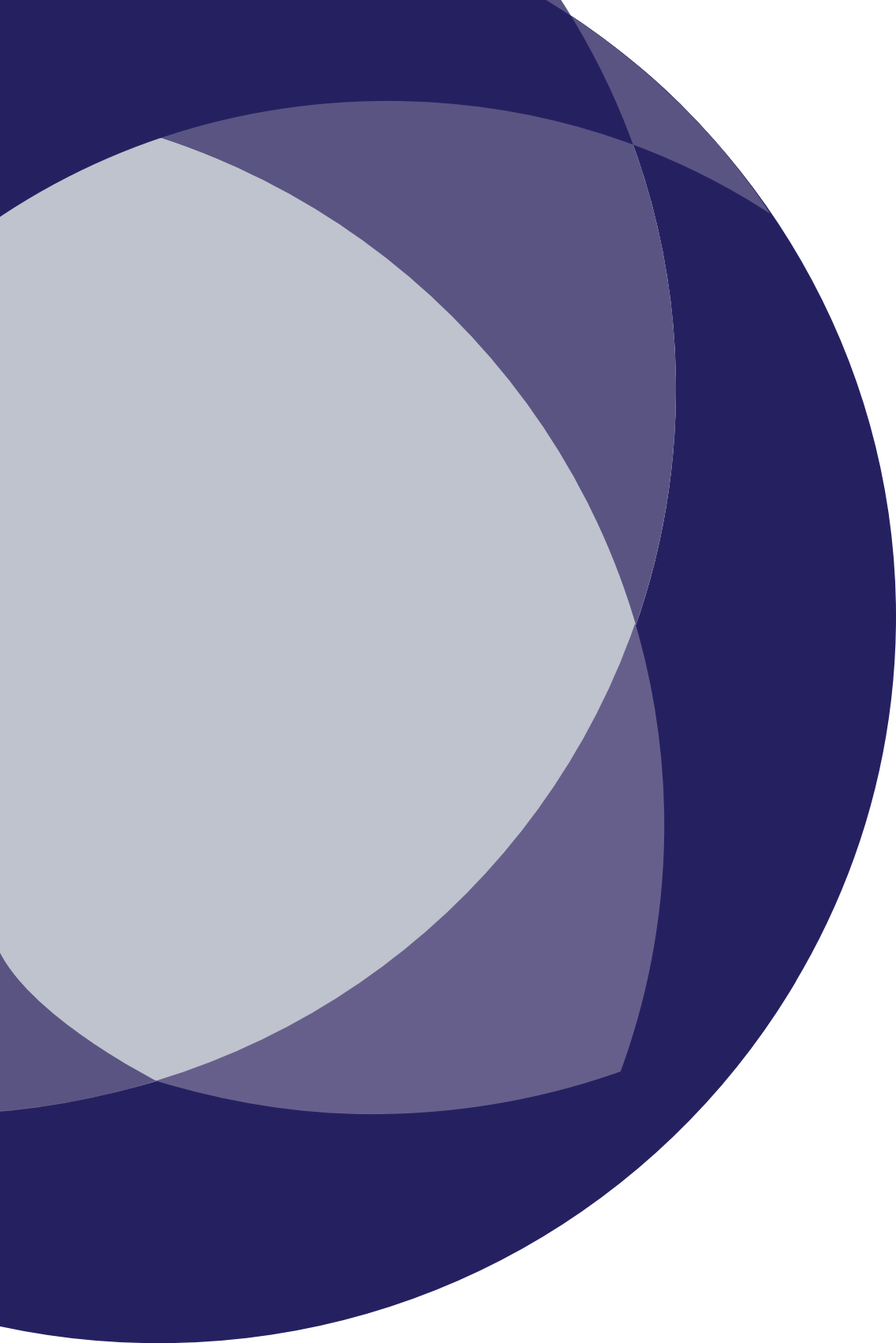
Target Audiences	Medium - Channel(s)
Regional Builders	One-on-one meetings; Request for Qualifications
Local Investors	Social media posts, One-on-one meetings
Other Developers	Request for Qualifications

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

One of the channels recommended is a Request for Qualifications, or RFQ. Unlike a Request for Proposal, or RFP, where municipalities look for a finished proposal from a prospective developer, an RFQ allows for a developer to simply supply their experience as a qualifier and opens the door for the community to help shape what the project would look like. Developers typically prefer the RFQ process versus RFP as there is far less expense without a guaranteed result. The Village can assist in the issuance of an RFQ on property it does not own as long as the current owner is willing to cooperate in the process.

Social Media Posts

This channel would simply ask people if they have ideas or interest in developing specific property. This is reliant on an audience of the Village's social media channels that includes both people from and connected to North Branch either through residency, past school affiliation, or through tourism.



This Strategy Created By:

PLACE
+MAIN
ADVISORS

Joe Borgstrom, Principal



Telephone
(517) 614-2733



E-mail:
joe@placeandmain.com