



## **Hesperia Community Assessment**

**August 18, 2021**

**Conducted by Julie Hales-Smith, North Coast Community Consultants**

**Sponsored by the Community Foundation for Oceana County partnering with the Village of Hesperia,  
The Right Place, the Chamber of Commerce, and Oceana County Economic Alliance**

A community assessment and visioning process creates a shared community vision that is aspirational and forward thinking. It is a collaborative process of giving the people who live, work and play in a place the opportunity to have a say about what they want their community to be like in the future. The Community Foundation for Oceana County initiated the community assessment for Hesperia in accordance with the Foundation's strategic plan to reach out more broadly across Oceana County and learn of the needs and aspirations of its many small, rural communities. In the past several years, the Foundation has sponsored assessments in both Shelby and Pentwater which have proven to be valuable. Hesperia in particular was chosen for this year because of the sense of readiness for this work. The assessment serves multiple purposes including resident engagement that results in shared goals, team building and a shared vision. The process also informs government master plans (Hesperia hopes to initiate a long-awaited update to its master plan in the near future) and helps to build relationships and trust. Finally, it gives the community a road map and starting point to assess progress towards the goals they have identified.

The assessment included a series of small group meetings with key stakeholders during the day, and an evening Town Hall meeting. The small groups functioned as focus groups in four specific areas: businesses and economic development leaders; nonprofits, churches and schools; Village and Township staff and elected officials; and youth and generational residents. Participation in both the focus groups and the Town Hall meeting was impressive – both the numbers of folks and their forthright, active discussion about a community they clearly love.

### **TOUR**

The assessment kicked off with a tour of Hesperia and surrounding areas conducted by Julie Burrell of The Right Place, Scott Rumsey, Chamber President and local business owner, and Mark Kraus, lifelong resident and Development Director with TrueNorth Community Services. They proudly ushered Julie Hales-Smith, consultant and Tammy Carey and Danielle Siegel of Community Foundation for Oceana County to the first of many cherished assets of the community – the school campus where the elementary, middle and high school buildings are clustered on this single site. The buildings are well maintained and welcoming – hoping for a successful and safe 2021/22 school year. The adjoining former Adult Education Facility was recently converted to a day care center, serving a dire need in the community for safe, dependable day care.



Featuring different types of housing in the area, we drove by the White River Estates, a 31 unit affordable housing development managed by Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids. The site appeared well kept, but very “lived in”. Next we saw the mobile home park, Evergreen Village built in 1975 and providing 99 sites for mobile homes. It also appeared well managed and tidy. We then travelled on to the Silverwood Manor Senior apartments. Built in 1995 and managed by the Stratford Group, the 16 units are intended for seniors and/or folks with disabilities and are subsidized for affordability. At present there are no vacancies in the development.

The tour then circled back around to the Weaver Park, one of several very nice parks in Hesperia. There we saw the pavilion and park area that hosts the famous 4<sup>th</sup> of July fest, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The playground could use some “updating” but the park is otherwise well kept. From the park we moved to another beautiful natural area, the dam and bridge over the White River, Vida Weaver Park. What potential this has! We saw the small island that was to have been a kayak launch (mired in complicated ownership issues) and the current wooden landing structure (that could use a coat of paint and probably more.) Our tour guides talked of their dreams for this entire space behind Ed’s Orchard Market, commenting on how much traffic the dam area sees with fishing and tourists admiring the natural beauty of the river.

Before returning to the library, we traveled south to the main street and saw on the west side of the street several nicely renovated store fronts, the work of a private developer. Work continues on two other storefronts adjoining the Antique Mart, which used to be the hardware store opened in the late 1800’s. The east side of the street is home to the Shelby State bank, Bob’s Drugs and several empty storefronts begging to be brought back to life. The downtown area might be small, but it houses all the essentials – an excellent grocery store, a pharmacy, a health care facility, a bank, a post office and a hair salon. And just blocks away you find the lovely, state of the art library and the school campus – all within walking distance.

## **COMMUNITY FEEDBACK<sup>1</sup>**

### **Focus Group #1: Business Owners, Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers**

When asked about challenges in the Hesperia community (includes the Village and surrounding townships), this group clearly identified three things: lack of communication across the community, lack of planning and vision at the leadership level, and proliferation of illegal drugs/drug use. The communication issue was multi-faceted – they said there is no trusted information source to let folks know what was happening in the community and hence, if there are opportunities to participate either in events or to volunteer for projects there is no way to reliably and broadly get the word out. Communication infrastructure – high speed internet and cell service – is also a barrier, and the need was compounded by the pandemic.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1: Community Feedback Tables for detailed listing of comments.



In regards to lack of planning and vision, the village master plan has not been updated for many years, there is no Planning Commission for the Village and the Council has faced difficulties in the past few years. The group noted that without a plan and visionary leadership the community will stall and never move ahead. The Village staff does its best but is frankly very limited in capacity. An additional challenge is drug activity, which seemed to be a cause of concern, and this group was not just depending on “hear say”; they personally witnessed evidence of activity and its impact on families in the community.

When asked about the strengths and assets of the community, this group was brimming with examples. They commented on the many wonderful businesses that already exist AND the great potential for more businesses in the affordable properties in the area. They also mentioned the library, school system and culture of neighborliness.

Discussion of what they would like to accomplish moved in a slightly different direction, with affordable and varied housing types becoming a main topic. Tied to this they wanted to bring more employers to the area and attract the young people back – but they acknowledged that without adequate housing, neither of these could be accomplished. They also wanted to create Hesperia as a destination and capitalize on the M20/120 crossroads that sees such high volume of traffic, especially in the summer.

#### **Focus Group #2: Nonprofits, Service providers, Churches and Schools**

This group also identified drug use as a problem – citing instances where kids in the school system have to go home to parents using drugs or even manufacturing them. They identified lack of attainable housing – starter homes, moderately priced homes, housing styles that would suit families and individuals throughout different stages of their lives – as a huge barrier, not just in attracting new business and industry, but allowing seniors to transition out of their large family homes, and bringing new families to the school system. They also touched on several themes that we heard in the first group – lack of highspeed internet and cell service, and the need for additional capacity in the Village staff. “We need someone whose sole responsibility is to move the Village forward.”

Major strengths echoed those mentioned by the first group – the library, school system, and a caring community. They also applauded the businesses in the downtown, commenting on all the basic needs that could be met downtown, and they identified the river as a huge asset.

Much of the discussion of what they wanted to accomplish focused on the next generation – wanting to get them more involved, more invested in the community. They suggested a graduation requirement that requires high school students to volunteer within the community and referred to several neighboring school districts that have such a policy.



### **Focus Group #3: Government Officials**

These elected and appointed officials took a different tack than previous groups when asked about challenges and problems. They zeroed in on the general lack of services and things to do. They mourned the loss of Kraus Variety Store, which was a big draw to the downtown. They noted that there are many empty storefronts in the downtown and little to draw folks anymore. Ironically, when the Classic Car Show recently was brought to the downtown and was indeed successful in attracting folks, allegedly there were complaints from several of the business owners that the show was “taking away from their business and left nowhere for customers to park.”

When asked about major strengths and assets, the responses were rapid fire – the beautiful parks, the flowers (thanks to the Beautification Committee), strong sense of community, the river and the wonderful natural resources, and potential to be a four-season playground. They saw Village leadership evolving with new, fresh perspectives. In other words, this group was readily optimistic and seemed to “see the glass as half full vs half empty.”

The group was equally optimistic, yet practical, as they energetically listed the things they would like to accomplish. They wanted to establish an engaging social media presence with tourism exposure for all generations. They wanted to build upon the natural assets by improving the dam walk area and developing outdoor events such as kayak and off-road vehicles (ORV) activities. They referenced the progress that the city of Newago has made in recent years – public/private partnerships that have yielded much needed senior services and housing – and speculated that if we could build workforce housing using a similar model, that we could attract small manufacturing or other types of business to the area to bring in new residents and keep our kids from moving away for other opportunities.

### **Focus Group #4 – Youth and Generational Residents**

When asked about challenges, things Hesperia isn’t doing right, the youth chorused “nothing for young kids to do.” The older kids go to the beach or other places where they can hang out and do activities. But the younger kids have nothing except the swimming hole that is (according to these folks) dirty and uninviting. As with other groups, drugs and drug activity was also discussed, along with generational poverty that created a cycle that kids can’t break out of without help that you can’t find in Hesperia. Also, they complained about the state of the dam area park saying that it was embarrassing to take visitors there because it is so worn down.

This group also applauded the local businesses saying that they supported the school and other community activities. They also observed that families have everything they need in a downtown area - their kids can safely ride to the library, watch the fish jump, get ice cream and then get



safely home. They also talked about the good quality school system, the parks and - another shout out to the Beautification Committee - they love the flowers in town.

Although the group didn't discuss how they might accomplish this, they wanted to develop mental health support for the youth and their families. They wanted to see more activities for kids such as a pool or tennis courts and things to do in the winter like an ice rink or hockey area. They also commented on the lack of communication – needing a trusted communication source to let folks know about the services and activities that do exist in the community.

### **Town Hall**

Town Hall was VERY well attended with approximately 58 attendees of varied backgrounds and ages. However diverse, they share several very fundamental characteristics. They are pragmatic about what could and should be done, they are hopeful about the future, and they love their small, rural community.

**Vision:** In the first portion of the meeting, the participants were asked to close their eyes and envision the very best Hesperia 5 years into the future. In summary, this is the ideal future for Hesperia they envisioned:

The ideal future for Hesperia will be a bustling, noisy downtown with a compelling mix of businesses filling all the restored storefronts. High speed internet will be available at a reasonable cost and when you look down at our cell phone you will actually have several bars! Both community members and tourists will be enjoying a variety of year-round activities and events. You will see them stepping off the newly renovated and expanded boardwalk and kayak launch to join their friends already splashing and laughing in kayaks in the river. In the winter you will see tracks in the snow where cross country skiers have followed the trail to the trail head and up to the warm cozy restaurants in the downtown. Hesperia will still be a small, safe, caring community, but one that seeks out and embraces opportunities to change for the better!

**Future Challenges:** There will always be threats to this ideal future. The Town Hall participants called them out – lack of an effective, reliable communication mechanism to get the word out across the community; the need for inspired leadership and consistent follow through to get things accomplished; and the need for investors/partners to help build a variety of housing types and price points to keep and/or attract our young people and to help our seniors to age in place.

**Want to Preserve:** Participants were assembled into small groups for the next portion of the agenda. They were asked to work together to produce a list of what they want to preserve about Hesperia, and then to report out the highlights. The most often mentioned thing to preserve was the small-town feel. They wanted their kids to continue to feel safe walking around in a community that cares about each other. They



wanted to preserve the river, the dam and other natural resources that surround Hesperia. They wanted to preserve family ownership of businesses and the high quality of the k – 12 school system – all on one campus.

**Want to Change:** Still in their small groups, participants were asked what they would like to be a part of changing in the community. They were cautioned that change will inevitably occur in Hesperia and reminded that as a community, they have the power to affect that change.

First, whole-community communication needs to change. Several groups suggested a community newsletter that would let folks know what is going on, whether it be activities or progress on certain projects. It would also get the word out to enlist volunteers for projects. Related to communication, they also specified the need for highspeed internet and cell phone service. Next the dam/river park was the focus for needed change. Many folks see the great potential of this spot and would be excited to help clean and improve it. Equally important to this audience was the need to affect change in the downtown – more focus on upgrading and filling storefronts and attracting more businesses.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

**Reliability:** As previously noted, Hesperia is a town of approximately 942 people. On a hot summer day and evening, with the focus groups and the Town Hall we heard from approximately 70 or 7.4 percent of Hesperia community residents. We heard from teachers and parents and grandparents and business owners and ministers and teens and retirees and elected and appointed officials. We feel confident that we heard from a representative cross section of Hesperia residents.

**Values:** The people of the Hesperia community VALUE their community. They value the small town feel and the close-knit nature of their community. They are both pragmatic and practical– they don't dream outlandish dreams. When they speak of what needs to be done to improve Hesperia, they also explain how it might be done and how they can help. They are optimistic and energetic and eager to get to work. As the work of addressing the priority areas moves forward, each step must be aligned with these values – preservation of the small-town feel, pragmatism, and practicality.

**The Bottom Line:** The hopes and dreams of Hesperia may be relatively humble, but they still need leadership and planning to successfully address the priority areas identified in this report. Several residents commented on the hard work of the Village staff and the new legitimacy and capacity of the Village Council, however not a single one of these staff and Council members is able to solely focus on improving the downtown, enhancing the river front or bringing high speed internet to the Village. Not one of these individuals would have the time or expertise to pursue complicated/multiple grant opportunities through state agencies. The Village desperately needs additional capacity. This might take the form of a collaboration/staff-sharing arrangement with another locality; or by combining funding from the Village with various grant sources; and/or perhaps a Community Development Fellowship (if the program continues in 2022/2023).

**Priority Areas:** Through the assessment process, five themes or priority areas emerged:

- **Downtown:** Although several private property owners have made considerable progress on several of the buildings downtown, there are still many vacant, dilapidated store fronts. There is no organized effort or strategy to rehabilitate the buildings or attract new businesses to fill them. There is not plan for attracting folks to the businesses and other community assets in and/or near the downtown.
- **Communication:** Communication is hampered in the community in several ways. First there is no affordable, dependable high-speed internet and the cell service is spotty or nonexistent; and second, there is no reliable, “go to” source for information about what is going on in the community.
- **Enhancements to natural spaces and expanding recreational opportunities:** When an outsider happens upon the community and sees the quaint little downtown, the lovely Village parks and riverfront, and sees the expansive beauty of the Manistee National Forrest, they have to wonder – “Am I in the village of missed opportunity?” There are no organized/convenient ways to market OR enjoy this beauty – no kayak or canoe launch; no trails system for hiking or cross-country skiing; no trails for biking or riding; no signage or marketing to attract people. There are so many creative opportunities to be explored that would benefit the entire community. And it could be done in an environmentally sustainable approach. As one person suggested, “Open up a few restaurants (downtown) that offer fresh fish from our river, fresh vegetables and fruits from our local farmers, and wild game from our woods.”
- **Attention to the needs of youth:** The problem of drug use was raised many times during the focus groups and the Town Hall. Understandably, no one had a solution to offer, however, simply publicly acknowledging the issue might be a first step. We also heard that there was nothing for elementary age kids to do outside of school, so an opportunity for drug use prevention could lie in focusing on developing more accessible programming/activities for this age group.
- **Varied Housing Types and Price Points:** The community wants many things that could be made possible by developing different housing types at varied price points. Community members want to attract some type of business/manufacturing that would pay a decent wage and offer career opportunities for their kids so they don’t leave town after graduation. They want to keep their seniors comfortable and safe. They want to attract new young families to populate their school, and to add an infusion of fresh enthusiasm and energy to community events and activities. These things can happen only if attainable housing is made available.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the assessment process was to gather feedback from a cross section of Hesperia stakeholders, summarize what we heard, share our observations, and make recommendations for areas of focus that the community, partnering with the Community Foundation for Oceana County, the Right Place, and the Oceana County Economic Alliance (and others) might pursue.

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
<p><b>DOWNTOWN</b></p>	<p>Consider using the Michigan Main Street Four-Point approach to initiate formation of committees of volunteers to plan, organize and implement improvements to the downtown. Each of the four points has its own action committee that creates a work plan and strategies for achieving the goals.</p>	<p>Village Council Business owners/leaders</p>	<p>The Michigan Main Street (<a href="#">Michigan Main Street (MMS)   MiPlace</a>) assists communities that are interested in revitalizing their downtowns. An initial one-day training is provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and can be completed online (<a href="#">MMS Online Training Series   MiPlace</a>).</p> <p>The Main Street Approach™ is a unique, historic preservation based economic development strategy that focuses on leveraging existing social, economic, physical and cultural assets to energize community revitalization efforts and help manage success for the long term. The approach leads to tangible outcomes that benefit the entire community through encouraging communities to enact long-term change while also implementing short-term, inexpensive and place-based activities that attract people to the commercial core and create a sense of enthusiasm about the community.</p> <p>The Four-Points® of the Michigan Main Street Program refer to proven techniques for community revitalization developed by the National Main Street Center. These techniques include Design, Economic Vitality, Promotion</p>



FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<p>and Organization, all working together with community collaborations and partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DESIGN</b> means capitalizing on the assets of the downtown's physical environment, such as historic buildings, and creating an inviting atmosphere through renovation and perhaps new construction, all the while developing sensitive design management systems and long-term planning for sustainability.</li> <li>• <b>ECONOMIC VITALITY</b> means strengthening a community's existing economic base by helping existing businesses and recruiting new ones, thereby converting unused space into productive property.</li> <li>• <b>PROMOTION</b> is the effort to market the downtown's unique characteristics to residents, visitors, investors and business owners through advertising, retail activities, events, and marketing campaigns.</li> <li>• <b>ORGANIZATION</b> refers to the effort to involve all the downtown's stakeholders to work toward a common goal, and driving a volunteer-based Main Street Program under the direction of a governing board and standing committees.</li> </ul>
	<p>Seek expert help to attract business and assist entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Village Council Julie Burrell Jodi Nichols</p>	<p><b>SCORE Muskegon</b> <a href="#">Muskegon   SCORE</a> SCORE is a national network comprised of volunteer business mentors that offer small business services and resources to new and established business owners. A recognized resource of the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE provides mentoring, webinars and courses, online resources, and hosts local events (Muskegon SCORE n.d.a).</p>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<p>The Muskegon SCORE chapter offers the following services to Muskegon, Mason, Newaygo, Oceana, and northern Ottawa Counties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Business mentoring:</b> Connecting business owners and entrepreneurs with a mentor who can help grow sales and earnings, identify and solve problems, develop business and marketing plans, integrate online and in-person business strategies, and provide access to resources</li> <li>• <b>Workshops:</b> Offering in-person and online trainings, and workshop topics are organized by business stage, topic, format, entrepreneur type, industry, and language</li> <li>• <b>Online resources:</b> Maintaining an online library of free resources, including documents, tools, and templates to help small-business owners start and grow their enterprise, as well as comprehensive guides on business models, general business resources, and starting a business</li> </ul>
	<p>Make a concerted effort to reach out to other small rural communities to learn more about how they support local leaders to plan and implement events and programs in their villages. Create an ad hoc “benchmarking” committee to contact and visit other villages to bring back ideas.</p>	<p>Village Council Business owners/leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Era is a community with a very active Chamber of Commerce that plans six different major events each year to highlight the community and the downtown. <a href="#">New Era Michigan   Chamber of Commerce and Village Council.</a></li> <li>• New Era also received assistance with their Master and Recreation plans from WMSRDC <a href="#">Planning Assistance to the Village of New Era « West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (wmsrdc.org)</a></li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scottville has Wi-Fi, heated pool, shuffle board, basketball, volleyball, horseshoe pits, playground, off-site boat ramp, marked hiking trails, quality trout and salmon fishing, and a disc golf course. <a href="#">Home - City of Scottville</a></li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	<p>Broadband Infrastructure: The WMSRDC is acting as convener for a collaborative approach to bringing broadband to the region, and Jodi Nichols is the point person for Newago and Julie Burrell the point person for Oceana. However, this is a long-term strategy.</p> <p>Meanwhile there are several, smaller steps that might be pursued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Oceana Co. outside of village limits, residents are encouraged to sign up on Great Lakes Energy / True Stream website to indicate they want service – this is how True Stream is expanding. <a href="#">Truestream Fiber - Internet and Voice Services - The Future is Here</a></li> <li>Locate WiFi hotspots using the following map: <a href="#">WiFi Hotspots (arcgis.com)</a></li> </ul>	Jodi Nichols Julie Burrell	<p>The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (<a href="#">West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (wmsrdc.org)</a>) is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. Their mission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments.</p> <p>While a lack of broadband availability and/or capacity has been a documented issue and a regional priority for many years, individual communities face varying degrees of broadband needs and hurdles.</p> <p>To help address this issue, WMSRDC has embarked upon an effort to facilitate information sharing, coordination, and project implementation of broadband initiatives across communities and sectors throughout the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first step is to connect with local-level focus groups to identify and discuss local broadband issues.</li> <li>The next step will be to aggregate local needs into a regional broadband profile.</li> <li>Subsequent steps will include coordination of infrastructure asset management and seek</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Churches, businesses, etc. can add their public WiFi hotspots to the map by filling out the following form: <a href="https://arcgis.com/forms/michigan-wifi-hotspot-locations-entry">Michigan WiFi Hotspot Locations Entry Form (arcgis.com)</a></li> <li>The Village might want to consider a public WiFi or hot spot(s) in common areas, such as a park area</li> </ul>		<p>funding and assistance to meet local broadband needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WMSRDC is able to undertake this essential task with federal CARES Act funds awarded through the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. <a href="#">WMSRDC Broadband Support « West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission</a></li> </ul>
	Community-wide, trusted communication mechanism	Village staff Village Council Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Develop a community website</b>– A logo for the website could be designed after a competition at the elementary or high school (or both). The site could be maintained by a volunteer. Functions of the website include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details of forthcoming events</li> <li>Holding photos and downloadable newsletters</li> <li>Inviting opinions and responses to consultation.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Establish a Village sponsored/sanctioned Friends of Hesperia group on Facebook.</b> The group’s fans would have regular access to updates on funding and campaigns, invitations to events, news and research, photos and a discussion board, to make the experience truly interactive.</li> </ul>
	Work to develop a single point of contact and/or easily accessed site to answer questions	Village staff Village Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that Village staff are familiar with procedures/processes and able to take on the responsibility of answering questions</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
	regarding getting things done in the village.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a “Frequently Asked Questions” page to the Village website</li> <li>• Explore search engine optimization so that helpful websites such as Chamber and the Village can easily be accessed.</li> </ul>
<b>NATURAL SPACES/RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Clean up /spruce up the dam and Ida Weaver Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a workgroup to assist the Village Council Parks Committee to develop a plan for cleaning up and improving the dam area</li> </ul>	Village Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Spaces, Community Places (PSCP): Designed by Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) in collaboration with the Michigan Municipal League, PSCP is a crowdgranting initiative that can provide matching grant funds for crowdfunded public space projects through Patronicity, an online, crowdfunding platform. Work with MEDC CATEam representative, Sue Devries to assess eligibility and feasibility <a href="mailto:devriess1@michigan.org">devriess1@michigan.org</a>.</li> <li>• See grants listing below for additional DNR grants that might assist.</li> </ul>
	Explore different opportunities to capitalize on the Hesperia community natural assets for outdoor recreation:  Create a workgroup including representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Right Place</li> <li>• Oceana County Economic Alliance</li> <li>• Village Council</li> <li>• MSU Extension Newago and/or Oceana County staff (<a href="#">Newago County Extension</a>)</li> </ul>	Village Council Local Economic Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Brad Garmon, (GarmonB@michigan.gov) director of the Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry for the State of Michigan. Invite him to visit Hesperia and tour its natural assets. Ask him to address the Natural Spaces workgroup about strategies to capitalize on the assets of the Hesperia community. <a href="#">DNR - Meet the Director (michigan.gov)</a></li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
	<p><a href="#">Office - Newaygo County (msu.edu)</a>; <a href="#">Oceana County Extension Office - Oceana County (msu.edu)</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White River Watershed Collaborative (<a href="#">White River - Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited (swmtu.org)</a>)</li> <li>• Ray Schinler, White River Watershed Partnership President <a href="http://www.whiteriverwp.org">www.whiteriverwp.org</a></li> </ul> <p>Develop a plan for fund raising, high priority areas to address, and marketing. Prioritize activities for youth of Hesperia.</p>		
	<p>Department of Natural Resources Grants: Applying for grants can be a difficult and time-consuming process. Hesperia would likely need additional capacity within Village government or the services of a professional grant writer in order to be successful. In addition, in order to be eligible to apply to Michigan Department of Natural Resources Hesperia must have an approved community 5-year recreation plan.</p>	<p>Village Council Local Economic Developers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan Lord, Manager of Grant Programs for Mi Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has expressed interest in being kept abreast of developments in Hesperia. He can be contacted at <a href="mailto:LordD1@michigan.gov">LordD1@michigan.gov</a></li> <li>• The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides matching grants to states and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. <a href="#">DNR - Land and Water Conservation Fund (michigan.gov)</a></li> <li>• ORV Trail Improvement Fund: This program provides funding for maintenance of established ORV trails and facilities as part of the designated statewide trail system. It also funds development of new trails and</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<p>facilities, and restoration of natural resources damaged by ORV use. <a href="#">DNR - ORV Trail Improvement Fund (michigan.gov)</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation Passport Grants: The objective for the program is to provide funding to local units for the development of public recreation facilities. This includes the development of new facilities and the renovation of old facilities. <a href="#">DNR - Recreation Passport Grants (michigan.gov)</a></li> <li>• Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants: The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) projects provide for natural resource protection and outdoor recreation. By law, no less than 25 percent of the Trust Fund amount available for annual appropriation can be used for acquisition of public land and no less than 25 percent of the Trust Fund can be used for development of public recreation facilities. Final grant recommendations are made by the MNRTF Board to the state legislature for final approval. <a href="#">DNR - Natural Resources Trust Fund (michigan.gov)</a></li> <li>• The Fisheries Habitat Grant supports a variety of activities to benefit fisheries, aquatic resources, and the public, including fish habitat conservation, dam removal and repair, and access to recreation. <a href="#">DNR - Fisheries Habitat Grant Program (michigan.gov)</a></li> <li>• ORV Safety Education Grants: The objective of the Off Road Vehicle Safety Education program is to promote safety in the use of off-road vehicles (ORV) through education. <a href="#">DNR - ORV Safety Education Grants (michigan.gov)</a></li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
<b>NEEDS OF THE YOUTH</b>	Develop opportunities for community youth to participate in planning and executing community improvement projects.	Village Council, Churches, Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a requirement or a certification/award for high school students who work a certain number of volunteer hours prior to graduation. For example, Fremont Union Highschool District Seniors receive a Community Service Award if they complete a minimum of 80 hours of voluntary service with a nonprofit community organization between June and May of their Senior year. <a href="https://www.fuhsd.org/students/community-service-award">https://www.fuhsd.org/students/community-service-award</a></li> </ul>
	Work to include Hesperia in the Headway Coalition Youth Prevention Councils	Village Council, Churches, Schools, local Department of Health and Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Newaygo County Community Collaborative is comprised of representatives from the fields of health care, human services, education, county government, courts, economic development, employment and training, the faith-based community, substance abuse, and other agencies concerned with the quality of life of Newaygo County residents. <a href="#">.About   NC3Collaborative (newaygocountycc.org)</a> Many years ago the Collaborative formed the The Headway Coalition which partners with members and community agencies to utilize the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) to garner positive change related to substance abuse. A large part of the coalitions work revolves around partnerships with Newaygo County local high schools in the development of Youth Prevention Coalitions. These youth-led (adult facilitated) meetings strive to build prevention ambassadors in each of the local districts using peer-to-peer education. Youth Prevention Coalitions work to impactfully identify and address substance related factors relevant to their peers and</li> </ul>



FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			community. <a href="http://www.nearnorthnow.com/living-well/headway-coalition-who-what-where-how-why">www.nearnorthnow.com/living-well/headway-coalition-who-what-where-how-why</a>
	Encourage Hesperia youth to participate in MSU Extension's 4-H	Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4-H is the largest youth development organization in Michigan. In fact, each year more than 200,000 young people, ages 5-19, explore what interests and excites them as they grow with Michigan 4-H. In program areas ranging from science and technology to clothing and textiles, and so much more, 4-H provides fun, educational opportunities that empower young people with skills to lead for a lifetime and become the foundation for future success. <a href="http://Oceana County (msu.edu)">Oceana County 4-H - Oceana County (msu.edu)</a>; <a href="http://Newaygo County 4-H - Newaygo County (msu.edu)">Newaygo County 4-H - Newaygo County (msu.edu)</a></li> </ul>
	Promote youth participation in Engage!	Schools, churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage, a TrueNorth community service, is an out-of-school program serving Hesperia. The program restores, reshapes and enriches the lives of young people through creative, community-based and diverse educational experiences during non-school hours. <a href="http://Out of School Time Programs (truenorthservices.org)">Out of School Time Programs (truenorthservices.org)</a></li> </ul>
	Work to include Hesperia teens in the Oceana Prevention Partnership for Change Youth Committee	Schools, local Department of Health and Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oceana Prevention Partnership for Change (TOPPC) Youth Committee: TOPPC is a group of high school students from Pentwater, Walkerville, Shelby and Hart High Schools and serves as the foundation for youth prevention in Oceana County. These youth are empowered to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent risky behaviors in the areas of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, suicide, bullying, nutrition, physical activity and more. They do this through community events, school education, social media, and word of mouth.</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
	<p>Make a concerted effort to get the word out about the many services provided by human services organizations in Oceana and Newago Counties.</p>	<p>Churches, schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muskegon/Oceana Community Action Agency  <a href="#">Welcome to Muskegon - Oceana Community Action Partnership Muskegon – Oceana Community Action Partnership (mocup1.org)</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Energy Assistance</li> <li>○ Food Assistance</li> <li>○ Rent Assistance and Water</li> <li>○ Homeowners/Homebuyers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• FIVECAP <a href="#">FIVECAP, INC. - Home</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Head Start</li> <li>○ Early Head Start</li> <li>○ Weatherization and Housing</li> <li>○ Nutrition</li> </ul> </li> <li>• TrueNorth Community Services  <a href="#">TrueNorth Community Services (truenorthservices.org)</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Family support</li> <li>○ Food Pantry</li> <li>○ Housing Support (Emergency Rental Assistance)</li> <li>○ Youth programming</li> <li>○ Homeless services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Oceana LEADS: Oceana County’s substance abuse prevention coalition, is a team of community members who want to help prevent youth substance abuse. Oceana Leads is an opportunity for multiple sectors to work together to keep youth safe and healthy. <a href="#">Oceana - TalkSooner</a></li> <li>• Newago LEADS: <a href="#">Newago - TalkSooner</a></li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
<p><b>ATTAINABLE HOUSING</b></p>	<p>Community members spoke of the need for senior housing, workforce housing and starter homes for young families. Although different types and price points, the common barriers to developing this housing in Hesperia include (but are not limited to): lack of development capacity; lack of funding; and lack of a strategy/ability to attract developers.</p> <p>First steps might include educating the Council Members on what it takes to attract and work with a developer. In addition, in order to get technical assistance and possibly even funding, the Village must become formally engaged in the Redevelopment Ready Communities program. Hesperia has taken preliminary steps, but needs to complete the process to become formally engaged.</p>		<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate case studies of small rural communities and housing development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Check out the Village of Middleville website page that advertises potential development sites <a href="https://www.villageofmiddleville.org/develop-redevelop-in-middleville/">https://www.villageofmiddleville.org/develop-redevelop-in-middleville/</a></li> <li>○ Or Shelby <a href="https://shelbyvillage.com/commercial-listings">https://shelbyvillage.com/commercial-listings</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Urge Council Members to attend conferences such as the Small Towns and Rural Development Conference (2022 conference website is not published yet) to learn about what other communities are doing in housing and economic development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Redevelopment Ready Certification: Formal Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEARN Attend <a href="#">Best Practices Trainings</a>—A community must complete training on all 6 best practices. RRC offers this training in several forms: <a href="#">online self-directed</a>, online live instructor (next cohort starts September 7 - <a href="#">click here</a> for more info) and, when conditions allow, in-person over two days.</li> <li>• APPROVE Pass a Resolution of Intent—The community’s governing body must pass a Resolution of Intent outlining the value the community sees in engaging in the process. <a href="#">Check out an example.</a></li> <li>• CONNECT Reach out to your <a href="#">RRC Planner</a>, Julia Turnbull 517.599.1752 <a href="mailto:turnbullj2@michigan.org">turnbullj2@michigan.org</a> notify them of</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITIES	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<p>your intended engagement in RRC, and attach the Resolution of Intent in the outreach email. Your RRC Planner will review training records and get the community formally engaged in RRC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMMIT</li> </ul> <p>The MEDC legal team will send an RRC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the community point of contact. The MOU should be signed by a municipal executive and sent back to the contact on the MEDC legal team.</p>

**Appendix 1**

**Hesperia Community Assessment 8/18/21  
Community Feedback**

<b>FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers</b>	<b>Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers</b>	<b>Residents, Youth</b>	<b>Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials</b>
<b>PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES</b>	<p><b>Internet/Phone Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broadband and telephone. The two most often asked questions are who has the best internet and the best cell service. There aren't that many options. So when we're talking about tourism or attracting new businesses this is definitely a challenge. Folks want to know if they're going to be able to get service on their cell phone.</li> <li>We worked with NCATS (a fixed broadband wireless out of Fremont). We had to put up towers, it was an expense, but we have it now- at some of the local businesses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Internet/Phone Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of high-speed internet. A big one! Huge! Some of our families who could get a job maybe working remotely or those types of things- just don't have the infrastructure to be able to provide that opportunity for those folks. Then the gap widens, kids miss school, no method to wire in. Our gap grew because of lack of high-speed internet.</li> <li>Landlines are very hard to come by. Tree density in most of the area eliminates access to satellite. Satellite though is very expensive. To get limited internet, it's \$170. Not worth it at that point. Have to bring children in to sit outside the library. Not very many</li> </ul>	<p><b>Nothing for kids to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Might lack a bit in having things for young kids to do. Nothing really in the summer other than the swimming hole that isn't taken care of. In the summer we leave Hesperia, to go to the beach.</li> <li>Elementary aged students have nothing to do in the summer and then end up in trouble. Have no guidance. The parents are either doing drugs or have to go to work, so there's no guidance or supervision for the kids.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empty buildings in town- where you went to an arcade, got your haircut, got new jeans for school,</li> </ul>	<p><b>Nothing for kids to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nothing for the kids to do to keep them out of trouble. They can enjoy the parks but that's all, but even in parks some amenities are now gone – like tennis courts, shuffleboard. Fair is also gone. There is the peddle tractor pull downtown to try to fill the gap.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No business, had a cottage on the river, remember attending 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities, lots of store activity, now only Ed's is still here and Daniels is gone</li> <li>Cross Variety Store – people used to come from all over, grew up here in 40-60's and at that time the village was</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES</b></p>	<p><b>Drugs/Substance Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think kind of a general thing in the community- drugs. I'm sure it's everywhere, but even in a little store downtown we find needles in the back from people doing drugs. Not all the time, but we have found them. Find them out back behind the store, from overnight.</li> <li>Not unique to us, but substance abuse problems, in lower income communities is definitely a problem. It's rampant.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of Planning/Vision from Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In terms of village/leadership- there's a lack of planning and vision. The last master plan that the village did was 15-20 years ago, maybe 2010. The village doesn't have a real group that does</li> </ul>	<p>parents have the capacity to do those kinds of things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We don't have cell service. Hesperia is basically a dead area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Drugs/Substance Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's a meth problem. No real local drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs. Arbor Circle does try to help- but we also need to keep this in mind.</li> <li>Across the board- kids are going home to parents who are using, cooking meth. You have a child abuse and neglect issue, a drug issue. It's a huge concern for our kiddos.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning. There's no one person in charge- with the capacity, knowledge, etc. who can help plan and make long terms steps and solutions. Village staff is</li> </ul>	<p>etc.- these things aren't here anymore.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No high paying jobs here, you'd have to drive somewhere for work, for an affordable wage.</li> </ul> <p><b>Drugs/Substance Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the citizens have drug related issues</li> <li>Definitely a drug issue here. If you drive through you don't see it. You have to have lived here and know people. Some people might not ever see that side, but it's here. See it working at the school, and going to the school</li> <li>There's generational poverty- the ones who have stayed here because their families are here- it starts with the school and the counselors, helping with college and breaking the cycle of poverty. The role</li> </ul>	<p>was booming, multiple grocery stores, car dealerships, so much change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People talk about what town doesn't have any more, but I would like to see development in surrounding areas/streets. Weekend warriors don't even see downtown. Opened business 2 years ago in downtown, but no foot traffic and needed to close it. Signage is not good, unless going to river. All the storefronts are empty</li> <li>Variety store used to be an anchor for downtown, building roof issues need to be fixed before opening weed store in that location</li> </ul> <p><b>Resistance to Change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classic Car show drew people downtown, tried activities to bring people in, resistance with business</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES</b></p>	<p>visioning for the future. The council has turned over a bit in the last couple years, and consistency in village leadership has been a huge issue. There are some people now ready to start moving in this direction, but they need support. They're volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No planning commission on the village level.</li> <li>• Roger Krauss had served on village council multiple times, served as council member under a different president, etc. But he explained this problem- they did water tower, softball diamond, etc. It felt like they did something. The other times, when this guy wasn't around- it seemed things like this didn't happen. They just maintain what is there but</li> </ul>	<p>made up of Police chief, DPW supervisor, and a clerk. No real leader with the time and capacity. Need someone whose sole responsibility is to move the village forward.</p> <p><b>Decreasing population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General population for the area is decreasing. Enrollment in schools is declining. Lost 25% of students in the last 9 years.</li> <li>• Part of the problem is not having all of the services that we'd like to have available. Population is a big part of that. No motivation for people to come here because we don't have the things to do.</li> <li>• Left in '85 because there was nothing to do. Generally people in the area are employed by some sort of anchor- like the school, grocery, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>that education can play in that is huge.</p> <p><b>Unmaintained Recreational Opportunities and Buildings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dirty swimming hole. People get swimmer's itch. There's also a stigma around it- because you see the "type" of people who go there. It has a reputation.</li> <li>• The park there is shoddy looking- some landscaping and lightening it up could go a long way. It could attract more people.</li> <li>• Over time it's (dam area) become so run down that you are embarrassed to encourage people to spend time here and hang out. You don't notice, until new people come through and bring your attention to the things that are run down.</li> </ul>	<p>owners, Council is resistant to changes. Showing success can change minds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car show – the issues that were raised had to do with the way they were parked (parked on an angle). Council members/businesses said it was taking away from their business, pedestrian traffic safety. Then we tried shutting down the road to address these issues but there was such resistance to change. People like the small atmosphere and no one wants a change. Dollar General is coming in and we are losing our unique businesses. Younger people don't have those feelings for the "former" community. <p><b>Other</b></p> </li></ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES</b></p>	<p>there’s no visioning or real improvements, things happening. This guy’s enjoyment was making things happen, not just paying the bills and going home. This type of leadership isn’t really here anymore.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Really passionate leadership is key- doesn’t have to be one person, but a community of folks working together is so, so important.</li> <li>• Attention spans are a problem too, like to have a vision of right now, and your goal is ten years from now- you lost sight of that. Need to communicate steps. Maybe in 6 months there’s this goal, 1 year this goal, have time frames so people can see them and the progress.</li> <li>• So few get involved, and then they burn out. Need</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lack of Affordable Housing, jobs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing, transportation big issues. Folks who would want a job, can’t get one because they don’t have the transportation to get there. Census poverty rate at 20%</li> <li>• Can’t even be a bedroom community because there is no housing available. Nothing between 150,000 and 300,000. For the incomes here, there is no housing. You can’t afford to work here and live here. Our gas station employees, teachers, they can’t afford that housing.</li> <li>• There’s a gap of bringing people in who can get a job and a place to live. A chicken and egg kind of thing- if you don’t have housing, you can’t attract</li> </ul>	<p>Have to really open your eyes and look. It’s embarrassing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The houses across from the library here, have meaning. But you couldn’t tell by looking at them. People drive through and see these dilapidated housing- that we don’t notice because we’re used to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No services for the old people – no places to live &amp; eat, no affordable housing</li> <li>• Opportunities are here now (Marijuana). Newfield Twp at \$100K. It’s here now, so let’s incorporate into our thinking. Let’s use it for the whole community. Opportunity for collaborative planning across local units of government.</li> <li>• Village of Hesperia part of MML. Working on RRC. MEDC eligibility for technical assistance &amp; possible grants must meet RRC model.</li> <li>• We don’t get the tax dollars to support services for the seniors like Oceana County Council on Aging, and the Medical Care Facility – nothing like that for the older people here</li> </ul>



FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES</b></p>	<p>to get more people involved.</p> <p><b>Lack of participation and Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silence. We don't have enough participation, in anything really. Communicating projects to people, and clearly- so that people understand all this stuff that happens at the school isn't free. We need volunteers to make everything happen.</li> <li>• Because of hostility in village council lately- if you're in the townships you feel like you don't have a voice in what happens in the village. You can't vote on things. Communication piece is broken- getting the information to everyone in a timely manner to allow them to participate is a little bit lacking.</li> </ul>	<p>any kind of small manufacturing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While housing sort of came up secondary- all group would still say it's a HUGE problem.</li> </ul> <p><b>Poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of residents are at or below the poverty level.</li> <li>• Getting education into levels of home, school, everything. It's hard for folks to change their situations. If we give handouts, we take care of the needs- but also need to educate them on prevention. Empowering folks. Need education in the homes</li> </ul>		

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<b>PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES</b>	<p><b>Collaboration with other townships/communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has there been any interest in inviting townships to come in? If we were to promote housing, they'd need to be involved</li> <li>• The three townships together did the fire dept. It was a joint venture that was very successful. The fire board has 2 members from each township and a rotating member. 25 years ago. So when it comes to parks, the river, and things- there's definitely possibilities to bring folks together and make things happen.</li> <li>• We have poor demographics. It seems like we either have people who work or people who don't work. The variety of people bringing in different experiences and knowledge</li> </ul>			

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
	to our community is low. We are small and that is a challenge (but not completely.			
<b>STRENGTHS/ ASSETS</b>	<p><b>Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would like to commend some of the businesses. Hardware store is top notch- not just for a small community, but overall- they're excellent. The grocery store, the pizza place- these are high quality businesses</li> <li>We have a lot of positive things going on downtown. Maybe there is an effort of someone driving it, but it seems like it's just happening organically. The downtown is moving forward, improving some old and blighted buildings.</li> <li>There's a lot of small business opportunities. You don't think about it until it's there. Such as the new car</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outdoor Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have the river. A huge plus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Businesses - Downtown</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post office is excellent. The services, staff. This is nice to have.</li> <li>I heard a dog grooming place is moving into town, this is good.</li> <li>The fact that the downtown area- you can see a doctor, hit the post office and a grocery store, stop at the pharmacy. I don't know if we're "doing it right"- but it's there. All within a couple of blocks.</li> <li>Guest speakers coming into church and in the past we didn't have anywhere for</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outdoor Recreation/Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The river</li> </ul> <p><b>Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local businesses, hardware, Hesperia house, Fatboys- Ed's grocery store. They do a lot for the school especially</li> <li>Antique store</li> <li>Campground with new owners, real popular and busy</li> <li>Campground on the west side of town, TCM- brings folks in from Grand Rapids, Hudsonville</li> <li>The sports shop</li> <li>Playgrounds and parks</li> </ul> <p><b>Educational Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Outdoor Recreation/Recreation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>River is our strongest asset</li> <li>Parks, especially by library, improved on maintenance on parks, signage, helps make a better image</li> <li>Great resources for those who like to do things outside, especially with the Sport Shop, blessed to have it as long as we have for visitors and residents alike. Sports shop is a great resource for weekend warriors</li> <li>Campgrounds are really nice, do not have some of the rest of the infrastructure needed</li> <li>We have 4 seasons sports - snowmobiling, hiking –</li> </ul> <p><b>New Residents</b></p>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<b>STRENGTHS/ ASSETS</b>	<p>wash, a dog grooming place is coming in, a mechanic- you don't really think about these things- but they're used often.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think of Lewis farm market- that place is hopping, busy all the time, it's all about the potential.</li> <li>• Our previous variety store brought people in. It was a destination since it was the last in the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Educational Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school is a good thing, something the community is proud of. Why folks raise their kids here. It is a small school, under one roof. Most of the staff live here, so you get to know them.</li> <li>• The library is a good asset, the library is amazing. In good shape.</li> </ul>	<p>them to stay. It's nice now having an Air BNB right here in town. We don't have to send those folks to Fremont anymore. There are new store fronts being developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People hold on to these properties and they just let them go to waste. When someone would be willing to come in and do something. 6 empty storefronts in the downtown that are not for sale- they're just sitting there.</li> <li>• A business that is coming in, whether we like it or not, is the marijuana business. It'd be nice if they could employ some of the local people</li> </ul> <p><b>Educational Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The library is definitely something we're doing right. Has 24hour access to wifi around the building,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is definitely a highlight of the town. Would send my kids there. Really good school</li> <li>• Library, now a daycare center!</li> </ul> <p><b>Flowers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They keep the flowers in town very nice, hear compliments on it all the time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone is really helpful and kind, the community comes together when kids at school have cancer or something going on.</li> <li>• Folks have everything they need in town. With our kids, we could ride bikes safely, can do library book runs, watch fish jump, get ice cream- there is a lot for families to do safely in town.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh blood, young families to the area, more active in the community, great to see</li> <li>• What is bringing them back: don't like the city, like the rural life, more independence, fresh air, tired of the hustle &amp; bustle, cost of living brings them back, homes are less expensive</li> </ul> <p><b>Flowers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sally Kralely doing a great job with flowers, beautification</li> </ul> <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People like the rural area living, small town, know your neighbor, you know everyone, good schools</li> <li>• Strong sense of community, ready to help out if you need it, good strength here</li> <li>• Retirees who see this as a great place to spend the rest of their lives, whether</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<b>STRENGTHS/ ASSETS</b>	<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The culture of the community. If you're on the side of the road with the hood up someone is going to stop in a matter of minutes and see what you need. Community members help each other. This community will wrap its arms around you if you let it.</li> <li>There were a lot of people who bought places in this area because it was affordable and with the idea that within 10 years or so they were going to retire. This brought people here.</li> <li>We are small and I feel this is an advantage. Being smaller it would take a lot less to accomplish something profound. It may appeal to a grant committee given that a lot could be accomplished here</li> </ul>	<p>we're getting hotspots- but with the lack of cell data, it can only help those with available cell service. Staff at the library is also wonderful and the director is great 😊</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always feel like the library is just the crown jewel of the community.</li> <li>We have a great school system. The administration, the teachers, it's more of a family. The kids have known all of these people their whole lives. There's so much caring in the school. There's a huge difference in this school and those around us. It's definitely a positive in our school. How they approach and treat the children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caring community members, not just within the school, but the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A safe town- in the school system we welcome families coming here because of the safety of the neighborhoods. Realtors tell us the same thing- it's very safe. It's everything I need.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a really good fourth of July turnout- have a parade and fireworks</li> </ul>	<p>on the lake or general area, welcoming place</p> <p><b>Village Management- Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great progress in police department</li> <li>Village leadership is growing, fresh people/opinions/</li> </ul> <p>Perspective</p> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West side of Oceana County huge tourism areas – let's not forget about it</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<b>STRENGTHS/ ASSETS</b>	<p>without costing as much as accomplishing the same thing in a larger community.</p> <p><b>Village Management – Staff and Volunteer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think the village is doing good at maintaining the village with the staff that they have. DPW is 1.5 full time people. The parks are well maintained, there’s not a lot of improving going on, but they’re usable. They’re not real rundown- a good job with what they have.</li> <li>There’s a volunteer beautification group that maintains all the flowers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tourism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...the summer traffic without the people coming to the cabins, cottages, etc. – without these folks we’d be challenged. The individuals that live here could probably sustain the</li> </ul>	<p>community at large. Who care about making this a better place to learn and grow.</p> <p><b>Cross Municipal Collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Levitt township, that’s where we see a lot of the poverty - Levitt has not traditionally seen value. You see what’s in front of your face- you see the need for food and shelter- hard to look out toward community level development. Getting involvement from this township would be very valuable. To get someone on board from each area.</li> <li>Would the village and townships be able to pool their resources for an area wide village planner!?</li> </ul>		

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
	<p>businesses, but it'd be tough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cabins, cottages, etc.- some of these businesses revolve completely around that. The hardware store especially, end of summer everyone has the chairs and stuff they need for the summer. Hitting an end of summer lull, then come September here come all the hunters. They keep us going. A big part of the economy.</li> <li>The general population doesn't complain about the tourism. These people end up at their own place - a cottage of cabin- so they're not taking up a ton of space.</li> </ul>			
<b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?</b>	<p><b>Retain Young and Senior Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We'd like to keep our seniors here, so they continue to walk to our</li> </ul>	<p><b>Retain Young Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through this process- just to create investment and buy-in in the next generation. The</li> </ul>	<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A bigger push for education- I don't think a lot of kids have support or a safe household. I don't</li> </ul>	<p><b>Retain Young Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are kicking our young people out. My son/wife left because more opportunity elsewhere. The</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?</b></p>	<p>businesses, continue to be in our town. We don't want these folks to have to go to Fremont or Hart.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We'd like to retain our youth. A lot of them go and they don't come back. We'd like to figure out how to bring them back. Have to have the housing, the internet and communication, need to be in the modern world for remote workers. <p><b>Business/Employer Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We want to attract employers, those who are going to provide jobs</li> <li>Water and sewer extension across the river. Even a small manufacturing facility on the other side of town would be great but they can't come in because these would be huge barriers for them.</li> </ul> </li></ul>	<p>beautification committee is a great example, need to ensure the next generation is ready to take it on. Our youth leave and go to another community, we age out, and that's it. Like the Lions Club!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Folks are aging out- our communities are not continuing. Kids are leaving once they graduate. They may come back- but how do we keep them here? How do we get them involved and interested?</li> </ul> <p><b>Provide community members with essential needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The church is going to be starting this in September - something to meet essential needs: soap, diapers, toilet paper, feminine products, etc. Starting a couple of essential boxes - similar to a free little library, but folks</li> </ul>	<p>know if a lot of kids feel safe in the community, with their parents or the support they're getting- they spend a lot of time at their friend's house.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The library has summer reading programs, there might be 4 kids participating</li> <li>Transportation is a problem though, how do the kids get to the library for reading programs. And how to reach the community. Communication is lacking. Some of the families are vacationing and camping and taking the kids to the other lakes and the parents and kids who can't afford it- part of it is transportation. If the parents can't get them there.</li> </ul>	<p>older people have driven young people out because they don't welcome them. I want my kids to stay here.</p> <p><b>Businesses/Employer Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need something to keep people here, no industry/major commerce, JOBS, fire department is short-handed. People who live here, chose to be here</li> <li>The weed business may present a great opportunity, they should build workforce housing – ( this is in a long term plan but only for their employees).</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbors can be resistant to attracting new folks because don't want traffic or the people coming</li> <li>In City of Newaygo 20 years ago looked different. They started looking towards private &amp; public</li> </ul>



FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The bridge property! A development along that- a dining spot, kayak spot, recreation spot. The ability to advertise that bridge property now- need some signage. But this takes volunteers, time - all of us have full time jobs and our own lives going on.</li> <li>Would like to see the community get on board with its natural resources. That means getting solar energy into our community, putting up Wind energy, taking advantage of the river and fishing seasons, getting our local farmers to grow crops that we could offer a variety at the local farmers market.</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing: Senior, Affordable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's space, there's room in the village to develop new housing, but nothing is being done with it. There</li> </ul>	<p>can come get their needs met. One in town, one outside of town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lots of food pantries, but we're throwing food away. If we could get the churches and the community pantries together to do a food market sort of thing- set up like a store where folks could actually get the thing they like and prefer. Want to bring dignity back- a market- volunteers that would work it, bring all the churches in- would love to see a collaborative effort.</li> </ul> <p><b>Connecting Folks to Our Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would love to see the school district, like some of the others, have a graduation requirement that requires volunteer hours. Not just a volunteer day. Not just from one organization but get these</li> </ul>	<p><b>Business Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community center, brewery, nice restaurant. Need to bring new life to Angelos</li> </ul> <p><b>Mentoring/Communication/ Supports for youth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of information! A lot of kids or young adults are stuck. Need someone to tell you what's out there, what's available, the scholarships that are available.</li> <li>Mental health of the kids in this area - no one to turn to for counseling. And these problems start right then, in childhood. Adds to the circle of poverty. Mental health supports are really lacking.</li> <li>With the literacy bus- we'd go knock on doors and the kids would still be sleeping. Parents let the kids stay up all night, then sleep all day.</li> </ul>	<p>partnerships and something that was going to become a parking lot is now a senior center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do people go for services. Most go to Big Rapids, Hart, Ludington. Walkerville, Leavitt, Colfax. If we had more services here they would come here.</li> <li>I want to stand up for the people who want to keep people out. People need a sponsor &amp; a green card! Don't want others crowding out others quality of life. Don't make the county an inner-city location. Don't want to live in Fremont. Love this small-town atmosphere, but we need upgrades. Need to find a happy medium – we will be a great community.</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?</b></p>	<p>are definitely plots of land in this community- but who's going to do it? If there's no incentive for an investor, how do we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The old variety store would be a great spot for a retirement home- within walking distance, park access, etc.</li> <li>Would like to see some work done, development of some housing. For various groups - seniors especially. Serious lack of places for seniors to go. Lived and worked on their farm all their lives, don't want to buy a new house because they don't want to maintain it- but there's no place to go.</li> <li>We also need other affordable housing, not single homes necessarily, but a housing development</li> </ul>	<p>kids out there volunteering. Fremont required like 100 hours across their 4 years. Pentwater maybe 10, and it's just their senior year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other organizations like the Mason's, Lioness, Eastern Star, the Rotary Club, everyone is searching for younger people. The next generation. At one point in time, it was a big social thing- you went to church, to the Lions Club, etc. to get your social atmosphere. Those needs for social connection don't really seem to be there anymore. Membership is down significantly. We are the last Masonic lodge in the surrounding area and it's unlikely that we'll last that much longer.</li> <li>One of the things is building a love for your community and the people there. See</li> </ul>	<p>Goes back to generational poverty, not sure how to break this. More support around graduation and what they will do after that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I knew my track from the beginning- going to get out of school and work- college wasn't an option. If I didn't have the career tech center- I probably wouldn't have graduated college.</li> <li>Have to move from the ground up, start with the kids.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Something I've been thinking about - I have a side-by-side, like a quad but for two people. There needs to be something to do with those. It's a huge following these days. Lots of people have them and want to do things with them- but there's nothing to do. Trails, shop, tracks - have to</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attract Tourists/Market the Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media presence and tourism exposure for all generations and advertise it outside of our community</li> <li>Oceana County parks just did a brochure with amenities, Hesperia not on the brochure because there are no county parks here – but we need this! White River on 192<sup>nd</sup> DNR talking about giving that property to make a County Park– making it a campground. Offered to Newfield Twp was offered it but didn't want it.</li> <li>Building blocks (parks better), how do you get the people here – kayak events, ORV activities (Newfield/Greenwood Township have opened up ORV traffic on roads, ordinance changes).</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?</b></p>	<p>would be a huge asset. Condos or duplexes, something like that that’s affordable for young families coming to town. Maybe you’re in the mobile home park and ready to move on from that. Looking for something in town so you’re close to school or close to shopping, close to the community. Now you have to go out of town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The old variety store would be a great spot for a retirement home- within walking distance, park access, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attract Tourists/Market the Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalize the crossroads and m20-120. We’re not drawing folks into the riverfront and the businesses. Folks driving by aren’t even aware of the proximity to the river here</li> </ul>	<p>some value in it. It’s okay to drive 45 minutes for a job, but find your community first. The people that you’re going to interact with. If we don’t have the jobs- sure you can drive to a job - but look at the schools, the community, the people in it.</p>	<p>travel outside of town in order to do something with those. So much potential.</p>	<p>Outdoor events that would bring in large groups (dragon trail – hiking &amp; biking – brings in new people). Get in that ad stream. Golf is a low price point here with nice courses. We could do canoe races over stretches of river. More opportunities. Get the building blocks in place/attract them. Get the word out outside of the area. There are so many outdoor assets. Horseback riding is a great opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sara &amp; Jackie are parks committee – working hard, dam walk/area need to be cleaned up – should be a shiny diamond. Want to get grants to help improve parks.</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?</b>	<p>when they're driving through. As you're coming up from Muskegon – with that type of signage you are understanding you can go a couple more feet and there's some nice businesses and a river front.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make Hesperia a destination rather than just a drive through. Give folks a reason to stop here.</li> <li>• There was talk at one point of doing something at the corner, an archway or something inviting. Advertising what we have downtown.</li> </ul>			
<b>IF YOU WERE GOING TO DO ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?</b>	<p><b>Village Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring additional staff at the village so things can actually happen</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recreational Improvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean up the river. Allow more river sports to happen- -kayaking, canoeing without any obstacles. We've seen this</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recreational/Amenity Improvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good place to get a bite to eat and just hang out</li> <li>• A community center- a rec center</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recreational Improvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIVER – make it a shining star, capitalize on it &amp; promote it</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>IF YOU WERE GOING TO DO ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?</b></p>	<p><b>Attract Tourists/Visitors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Something unique- don't care what! Something out of the ordinary that brings people in. Something out of the norm</li> <li>• The four-corner promotion, beautification, drawing people in - four corner development</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retirement community project- an asset</li> </ul> <p><b>Business and Downtown Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mixed-use development that starts on the west side of the Ed's Orchard store, goes all the way to the Vida Weaver park. A small RV, some retail space, and a restaurant looking out over the river</li> </ul>	<p>done really well with Muskegon River. I think this can be done here.</p> <p><b>Attract Tourists/Visitors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would love to see a multi-million-dollar ad campaign for Hesperia where people know what Hesperia is. It's all "up north" you have no idea what people actually do - anything west of Lansing or north of Flint, is all up north. You don't know how people live here, what types of jobs they might have. You think people can't make a living, they all must just be miserable. Then you get up here and you realize it's amazing. Decent house with a lower cost of living would definitely bring people up.</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing (Affordable)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pool or a tennis court- something for the kids to do- in summer or winter</li> <li>• Something for kids to do recreationally that is safe and clean- not like the dirty swimming hole</li> <li>• Side-by-side thing, trail, go-cart track- something like Aj's family fun center- park with prizes and games.</li> <li>• Things to do in the winter- an ice rink, hockey area,</li> <li>• Ice rink would go over so well in the winter here! Easy to take up and take down. Rent the skates for kids, this wouldn't be too expensive.</li> <li>• There's so many things if money wasn't an option- small movie theatre, bowling, shopping, drink after work, a restaurant, place for a beer</li> <li>• There is so much potential and beauty but the locals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revitalization of River park/boardwalk etc (DNR funding available for this)</li> <li>• Movie in the park – family night</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing (Affordable)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unique, affordable housing units but nice, not crappy apartments</li> <li>• Affordable housing/senior care center teen recreational center – make them feel like they are part of the community, so they don't get in trouble</li> <li>• Rental home maintenance, too many untouched places with opportunity</li> </ul> <p><b>Business and Downtown Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve storefronts</li> <li>• Grew up in outside area, didn't come into town, nothing in town now to draw me, go to Fremont –</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>IF YOU WERE GOING TO DO ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The village to give up usage of that little space that the DPW uses</li> <li>• More hungry entrepreneurs that would do stuff with the empty storefronts. Need people that are hungry and ambitious</li> <li>• Support the phone, the internet- going to be a necessity to anything!</li> <li>• Boardwalk area</li> <li>• Farmer’s market- music, picnic tables, little food trucks</li> <li>• Fix all existing buildings in town, set up solar panels and the roofs of those buildings and set up wind power generators on the high points surrounding our town. Build a riverfront hotel with cleaning stations for the fish and build a boardwalk around the high traffic fishing holes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing. Apartment complex for middle income.</li> <li>• We need 100 units of housing that cost 80,000.</li> <li>• Housing. Affordable. Could be duplex, tri-plex to drive the cost down but some sort of development in that 100-ish range.</li> <li>• Senior housing. We all know people in this community that are living in their homes longer than they should but there is nowhere for these people to go. There are no condos, no assisted living. We’ve lost a lot of very good retirees to other communities just for the simple fact that there’s nowhere for them to go. That would open up a churn in housing stock so people can get starter homes that an elderly person moved</li> </ul>	<p>just seem to forget about the river- it’s just “the river behind Eds”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No canoe rental anymore, so it’s almost just a pain to drop off a car where you get out and come back</li> <li>• Used to be a shuttle and rental – need that back</li> <li>• That area is really close to being nice, but it’s not. It’s dirty and paint is chipping, more places to sit are needed, no lighting</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a recycling center- school doesn’t even recycle and they go through so much</li> </ul>	<p>services are there, not here (roads are better, restaurants etc), no short-term rentals either to encourage folks to stay longer. Young people do move here, because they want to be in country, but need services.</p> <p>Revitalize downtown – need investments. We are a poor community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than one event, community wide (Salmon Festival – use natural resources)</li> </ul> <p><b>Internet</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is such a great place, wish there was more infrastructure (bad internet) broadly described</li> <li>• Industry &amp; Commerce – more JOBS with higher paying wages</li> <li>• Broadband &amp; housing needs, if people/kids can’t</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
<p><b>IF YOU WERE GOING TO DO ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run an ATV rental out to the extensive network of off-road trails. Open a few restaurants that offer quality food, fresh fish from our river, fresh vegetables and fruits from our local farmers and wild game from our woods. Show we can move into the future.</li> </ul>	<p>out of, then a new family can buy it, fix it up a bit, and the cycle continues.</p> <p><b>Business and Downtown Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bed and breakfast across the street (from library). It's a signature building of this community, everyone loves it. But it's going to fall down if nobody invests in it. Another would like to see that building turned into a historical building, a mini museum.</li> <li>Would love to see a community location in the old variety store. Any community group could meet, large or small, could have a kitchen, could rent it for weddings, - community orgs can use it- the food market can be out of there. It can be a community hub with groups and clubs.</li> </ul>		<p>work from home – value of home goes down. Could be a great, quaint town that you could stumble upon – they aren't big, but unique.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internet Access</li> <li>People can work from home, remote and live here</li> </ul>

FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
IF YOU WERE GOING TO DO ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?		<p><b>Internet</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadband internet across the whole community is number 1.</li> <li>• Internet is an obvious need- we HAVE to have it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Employment opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very large factory, corporation, an employer. Establish their base here. So that we have a large employer base that could happen here so they don't have to go to grand rapids. With decent paying jobs of course!</li> <li>• How do you get a google or something recognize Hesperia and move people here to work remotely. I would hate to see it really industrialized, destroy the ag type feeling, but we need some sort of a future. You can graduate from here, go to college, come back and get this job or</li> </ul>		



FOCUS GROUP	Business Owners, Community Economic Development Professionals, Chamber, Local Developers	Community Leaders – Nonprofits, Churches, Schools, Service Organizations, Library, Volunteers	Residents, Youth	Community and Government Employees and Elected/Appointed Officials
		<p>apprentice here at this local place. Jobs are the key! Keep people engaged here.</p> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate all the unincorporated townships into the library board and let them us the library. If I have money left- the library staff is all getting a raise and benefits.</li> </ul>		

### TOWN HALL

<p><b>IT'S 5 YEARS INTO THE FUTURE. WHAT DO YOU SEE, HEAR, FEEL? WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL FUTURE FOR HESPERIA?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Businesses</b> in every building downtown</li> <li><b>Senior housing, family housing, and new paint job</b> on every business downtown</li> <li>New windows, <b>no more plywood</b></li> <li><b>High speed, affordable internet</b></li> <li><b>Official village social media account</b>- to maintain communication on events, happenings, school things, etc. (Checking website after website doesn't work.)</li> <li><b>Sidewalks</b></li> <li><b>Cell service</b></li> <li><b>More community activities</b> such as fair, carnival, community things, street dances like when we were kids. More events that bring people from other areas into our town. More vibrancy.</li> <li>Some type of place where folks can rent to <b>host these events</b>, like a wedding reception, bridal show</li> </ul>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>rec center</b> for the kids</li> <li>• <b>Revitalize the parks, and the town</b> a little bit- the parks are gleaming and new. And safe!</li> <li>• We <b>hear people on the streets</b>, they're out doing things, shopping</li> <li>• <b>Enhancements to the river</b>- there's a boardwalk with handicap access and kayak access. People travelling to fish, somewhere to rent kayaks, canoes, tubes</li> <li>• <b>Improved roads</b></li> <li>• <b>More activities for kids</b>, like hunter's safety</li> <li>• <b>More flags</b>, in the downtown and on houses</li> <li>• Some sort of <b>employment industry</b> that keeps youth here, or makes them want to come back and work and stay in the community</li> <li>• <b>Trail heads, hiking trails, biking trails</b>, snowmobiles- trails for these folks to come in and get dinner. Capitalize on the <b>four-season recreation</b> opportunities</li> <li>• <b>Fill up the town's businesses</b></li> <li>• Some <b>concerts</b> down by the damn, baseball fields being used. Small feel of the town is comfortable- it's "us"</li> </ul>
<p><b>FUTURE CHALLENGES THAT COULD THREATEN THAT IDEAL FUTURE?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crime</b>- the younger kids are getting into drugs and troubles</li> <li>• <b>Financial struggles</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of communication</b>- communication of the events, what everyone is interested in. If we can't share the community events, we won't have highly attended events in the community</li> <li>• If you want people to come to this town, you'll want a <b>place for them to stay</b> but that whole thing- there's one hotel</li> <li>• Cost of renting or leasing buildings is awfully high for such a small town. <b>Parking</b> is also an issue- in the downtown. There needs to be a lot somewhere. More areas for people to park in order to get to some of these places and events.</li> <li>• <b>Follow through</b>- if these things are going to come to fruition, we need to see <b>good leaders</b> to carry these things through</li> <li>• Small communities have gone big and the <b>crime rate</b> has gone up- so the community has to understand the situation. Things can get rough when bigger orgs and such come into the community.</li> <li>• Can bring closer communities in, can collaborate with the neighbors, but <b>don't want to lose the small town feel</b> to it. Don't want to lose the walkability and safety that comes with the small community.</li> <li>• Instead of people moving in, moving population. We <b>don't want to lose what we already have</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Keeping our youth here</b> and having them raise their families. We're getting older, we need to retain our youth.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Need investors to build the senior housing, the affordable housing-</b> we need to have these together.</li> <li>• <b>Need to welcome diversity</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>WHAT ABOUT HESPERIA DO YOU WANT TO PRESERVE?</b></p>	<p><b>Small Town Feel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy, simple small-town feel (7 responses)</li> <li>• Keep the pride in our community, the quaintness</li> <li>• Preserve the small-town feel, the community events, get the younger ones involved and that’s what we need</li> <li>• Sense of community</li> <li>• Simple way of life, non-chain restaurants, no big box stores</li> <li>• Not the big box stores or restaurants, family friendly</li> <li>• Like the small town and community feel, people help each other out during hard times</li> <li>• Local ownership of restaurants, hardware, pharmacy</li> </ul> <p><b>River, Natural Areas, Dam, Parks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River and riverfront (six responses)</li> <li>• Dam preserved with updates (five responses)</li> <li>• Keep the trees in town, plant new ones</li> <li>• Access to the river</li> <li>• Keep the river preserved and maintained</li> <li>• Nature surrounding our town</li> <li>• Memorials in the park and the parks</li> <li>• Want to maintain that we’re a fishing destination</li> <li>• The variety and the number of parks we have</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the history of logging, that built the community</li> <li>• Historical pieces like in the park</li> <li>• Preserve history and heritage, the river brought people here and we don’t want to lose this feel</li> <li>• Historic buildings</li> <li>• Preserve some of the original houses in town with some bread and breakfasts</li> </ul> <p><b>Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique small shops</li> <li>• Preserve the originality, the grocery store, hardware, pharmacy, auto parts store and sports shop</li> </ul>

<p><b>WHAT ABOUT HESPERIA DO YOU WANT TO PRESERVE?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One stop shop town- have everything you need right there in town</li> <li>• Keep things compact, resist sprawl, preserve local business ownership</li> </ul> <p><b>Library and Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the k12 under 1 roof; the quality of our school system (five responses)</li> <li>• Keep the class sizes the way they are</li> <li>• The high-quality library</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police force, keep our own force</li> <li>• Walkability</li> <li>• Safety, ability to walk down the street at night</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the m20/120 crossing- we're a crossroads town</li> <li>• Keep the service organizations from closing like Masons</li> <li>• We like the preservation of the campground and expanding for more campgrounds</li> <li>• The July 4<sup>th</sup> festival here is so awesome, we'd like to keep it a 2-day event.</li> <li>• Lack of barriers to do things- we don't have to sign a bunch of different papers to use the park or pavilion.</li> <li>• Support the chamber and what they do with Christmas and fourth of July activities.</li> <li>• Farmer's Market (and expand it!)</li> <li>• The noon whistle</li> </ul>
<p><b>WHAT ABOUT HESPERIA DO YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGED (AND MAYBE PARTICIPATE IN CHANGING)</b></p>	<p><b>Internet/Cell Phone service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve service (3 responses)</li> </ul> <p><b>Festivals and Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring in more festivals – a canoe race, or rubber duck race – what festivals don't happen near us that we could do that would be original</li> <li>• Need more community events</li> <li>• Have downtown events like food trucks</li> </ul> <p><b>Downtown</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No empty buildings</li> <li>• Give the downtown a facelift; get more businesses down there</li> <li>• Get new lamp posts, benches, pocket park</li> </ul>

**WHAT ABOUT HESPERIA DO YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGED (AND MAYBE PARTICIPATE IN CHANGING)**

- Clean up and beautify the downtown with new sidewalk, trees, lighting and a little more interesting businesses and restaurants.
  - Want to see historical buildings renovated and preserved
  - Do something with huge blank walls on buildings downtown – maybe a mural contest
  - More benches around town for folks to sit on
  - Do a really cool entry to downtown like an archway (GVSU example) something really creative might bring folks downtown
- Improved Communication**
- Get the word out in a better way
  - More communication within the village – maybe a Facebook page that keeps us posted on community-wide events and activities
  - A community newsletter to get the word out around town
  - Need a central access point so families know how to access resources
  - Need a mechanism to let people know what’s going on so they can participate either in a festival or a clean up project
- River Projects**
- Update the river area with a river walk, new picnic tables, new paint
  - Tend to the health of the river
  - Make the route to the river as people come into town more appealing
  - Do a kayak or canoe livery
  - River clean up and improvement
  - Need a committee just for river projects – coordinate and plan
  - Dam upgrades, structural and beautification including a boardwalk and pavilion for social events
- Signage and Marketing**
- Need more appealing or welcoming corners, not just the 4 corners, to get people to come to river
  - More signage including wayfinding signs, safety signs for crossing the street
  - Social media or advertising campaign
- Parks**
- Updates to our parks and recreation areas (three responses)
  - Parks and gardens maintained by Village
  - Park enhancements like tennis, kickball, shuffleboard and dog park

<p><b>WHAT ABOUT HESPERIA DO YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGED (AND MAYBE PARTICIPATE IN CHANGING)</b></p>	<p><b>Local Governance/Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't know who the point person to get things done in town</li> <li>• Finding the ability to fund a full time, village manager for planning and coordination</li> <li>• Need more people involved and organized to get things done</li> <li>• Get high school kids involved</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More employment opportunities with a living wage</li> <li>• Churches and nonprofits working more closely together like a coalition</li> <li>• Make things handicap accessible</li> <li>• Find ways to clean up the drug problem</li> <li>• Coordination and expansion of our Farmer's Market with a pavilion dedicated to it</li> <li>• Bed and breakfast like in the Victorian home across on main street</li> <li>• Clean up junky houses</li> <li>• Need more things for kids to do to keep them out of trouble. Maybe Rec center/internet café</li> <li>• Bring our ambulance service back into town. In-town ambulance provides safety and security, both are important aspects of attracting people to our town.</li> </ul>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------