

## **SHELBY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

Conducted by Julie Hales-Smith and Jamie Schriener, CEDAM  
Sponsored by Community Foundation for Oceana County  
and  
CMF Rural Economic Development Cohort Team  
August 29, 2018

The Community Foundation for Oceana County (CFOC) was selected by the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) to participate in the Rural Economic Development Cohort initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to: build community leadership capabilities to support economic development; assist community foundations to engage with other local actors working on economic development; to complete a community assessment; and receive expert guidance to turn results into action. This report is the product of the community assessment where a cross-section of community leaders and residents shared their thoughts, feelings and aspirations about Shelby. Consultants from Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM), under contract with CMF, produced this report after receiving, summarizing and analyzing community feedback. It provides observations and suggestions, and identifies recommended focus areas.

### **BACKGROUND**

Per the 2010 US Census, there were an estimated 2,065 people, 689 households, and 496 families residing in the village of Shelby. The village is very diverse with a high percentage of people (42.9%), identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Per the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, the Village has approximately 796 housing units, 91.3% of which are occupied units. Of the occupied units, 55.9% are owner occupied and 44.1% are renter occupied. Contributing to blight are 8.7% or 69 units of vacant housing in the village. The housing stock is relatively old in the village with 65.3% of all housing units having been built before 1979. This would indicate that there is a high need for lead paint and other hazard reduction measures, in addition to general upgrades and maintenance to this housing. Zero new construction housing units were built between 2014-2016 and only 10.1% of the total housing units were constructed between 2000-2013. Single family/1 unit dwellings make up 76.1% of all units. The remaining units are made up of 9.4% multi-unit buildings and 14.5% mobile homes or other housing.

Although market statistics for the Village of Shelby specifically were not available, on September 10, 2018, Trulia.com ([https://www.trulia.com/real\\_estate/49455-Shelby/](https://www.trulia.com/real_estate/49455-Shelby/)) listed 90 homes for sale in the 49455 zip code, which includes the Village of Shelby. Also per Trulia.com, based upon 12 home sales between June 6 and September 5, 2018, the median home sales price in the zip code 49455 was \$70,000 which is an increase from Trulia's estimated median home sales price of \$66,000 5 years ago in the same zip code.

## THE TOUR

The assessment kicked off with a tour of Shelby and surrounding areas conducted by Tammy Carey, Executive Director, CFOC; and Rob Widigan, Village Administrator. They ushered Julie Hales-Smith, Jamie Schriener of CEDAM, and Tiffany King of Michigan State Housing Development Authority to the outskirts of the village to see the new transitional housing recently developed by Peterson Farms, a large scale farming and fruit processing corporation. The company, which employs 800 at peak season, felt so strongly about attracting, supporting and maintaining quality labor that it developed its own housing near the facility. This was needed because historically there has been a lack of safe, decent, affordable housing in the area.

The group then headed back toward town and saw the school complex, conveniently integrated with the downtown. The schools appear in relatively good shape, although the high school is in need of upgrades. Apparently two recent attempts to raise the millage to improve the school have not been supported. Getty Park, adjacent to the campus, is in desperate need of repair and updating, and fortunately a grant application to the Department of Natural Resources is in process.

Heading into downtown, we saw the continued evidence of a \$750,000 Michigan Department of Transportation road project, which has been detouring traffic to downtown most of the summer. The buildings in downtown are mixed – several older majestic multi-story buildings still exist but sprinkled in between are single story, “modern” storefronts. Although small, the downtown area still has good architectural bones that could be capitalized upon. Several business owners have made recent, impressive façade improvements. These are a good reminder that with a focused plan, the downtown could be very attractive.

Turning into the street that runs along the back of the downtown is another story. The backs of these downtown buildings are the structures that line the newly updated Hart-Montague Trail that stretches for 22 miles from Hart to Montague. From the back side the view is abysmal. This is not unusual; often the backs of the buildings are seen as lower priority because of visibility. However, in Shelby, the first (and possibly ONLY) view that a bicyclist or runner or walker might get is of these shabby structures. They do not serve as an invitation to downtown Shelby.

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

### **Focus Group #1: Business owners, banks, developers, and anchor institutions**

When asked about the biggest challenges in the Shelby community, three issue areas dominated: lack of skilled workforce; lack of decent, affordable housing; and a disturbing undercurrent of bias among some of the governmental leadership. The workforce issue is exacerbated, according to participants, but several things. First, it is hard to nurture indigenous talent due to lack of post-secondary and/or trades education opportunities. And second, it is hard to attract talent because of the housing problem and lack of varied amenities in the community. The housing that exists for sale is either on the high end (summer homes of wealthy seasonal residents) or the extremely low end where the rehabilitation costs are higher than the selling price. The rental housing is mostly overpriced and in bad repair.

There was considerable discussion regarding governmental leadership. Some voiced concern that leaders are not open to a new direction for the community – one that not only embraces all people but celebrates their cultures; one that does more than adjust; it is visionary and dynamic.

When asked about what they would like to see accomplished, the topic that garnered the most support was revitalizing the downtown. This would speak to the lack of amenities and could, if second floors were redeveloped, also add quality rental units to the mix. The group wanted to see façade and streetscape improvements and a wider variety of retail in the storefronts.

### **Focus Group #2: Community Leaders – churches, schools, service organizations, library, volunteers**

The responses (not surprisingly) of this group came from a social services perspective. In terms of challenges, generational poverty and often related social issues such as lack of parenting skills and drug addiction were mentioned. But they also touched on the themes from Group #1, need for safe, decent, affordable housing, need to revitalize the downtown, and lack of good paying jobs. They also echoed the sentiments of the prior group in their sense that the Hispanic population and culture is not integrated into the community as well as it could be, and that was a missed opportunity for everyone.

When asked what they would like to see accomplished in Shelby, two areas rose directly to the top – better and more variety of housing choices, and a downtown that is vibrant, intentional and attractive. Overarching is the need for a plan – for both housing and the downtown.

### **Focus Group #3: Elected and Appointed Officials**

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

This group also identified housing and overall economic development (including revitalization of the downtown) as top challenges. There was lengthy discussion of how to attract additional industry, with the recognition that without decent, affordable housing in the area the new employees would have nowhere to live! They acknowledged that in addition to lack of housing, lack of decent retail and other amenities make it very difficult to attract talent to Shelby.

These folks uniquely understood the value of participating in the Redevelopment Ready Certification program and Main Street program, saying that they want to make the process of attracting and assisting re-development efforts in the Village as easy and transparent as possible. They even talked about ways to incentivize developers and small business owners to come to Shelby.

#### **Focus Group #4: Seasonal Residents, Young Adults, Lifelong Residents, Shelby Roars program**

The first “challenge” that was identified by this group was the lack of integration of the Hispanic and Anglo communities. Many in the group concurred that it was a loss for both to remain so divided. One participant said that if you go to the schools it’s obvious that the kids have this integration thing figured out – why can’t the adults? (Good question!)

The group also concurred on the blight problem in the community. Neglect is evident in many of the rental units and other buildings throughout the community.

Not surprisingly, this was the only group that talked specifically about what the youth in the community might want – a place to hang out that is comfortable, all season and non-intrusive.

When asked about their “dream project” almost everyone had a dream for the downtown – revitalized, buildings full of prosperous business and bustling with shoppers and activity. They talked about how important it is for the many caring, passionate folks who are doing great things in Shelby to create a plan and collaborate on improving the downtown.

#### **Town Hall**

The Town Hall meeting was held at the Ladder, a wonderful venue! Almost 30 people attended and they represented a wide cross-section of Shelby residents. Their “vision” for Shelby included a more inclusive community, with a beautiful downtown that is connected to the trail. There would be a variety of attractive and affordable housing options, high paying jobs, and lots of things for kids to do.

They generated MANY, varied projects and initiatives to help move them toward that vision. The list and, more importantly, the people who volunteered to shepherd these projects, can be found attached, in Appendix 1.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

The focus groups and Town Hall were extremely well attended. This level of community engagement is unprecedented in such a small community. This is a signal that people are interested and ready to do the work necessary to improve the quality of life in Shelby.

Four interrelated themes emerged: housing, the downtown, attracting and retaining quality jobs, and creating a more integrated, inclusive community.

**Housing:** The village has a high renter vs homeowner rate, and many of the rental properties are substandard. The affordable single family homes that are available, which are very few, are in need of repair.

**Downtown:** The downtown is not “coherent”. The business mix is not conducive to attracting customers, quality of facades is spotty, and some buildings are in need of total renovation (especially in the rear of the building). The street scape needs to be updated and beautified.

**Quality Jobs:** The area is predominantly agricultural and there is not a diverse business mix. Many of the existing jobs are low paying.

**Inclusive Community:** The Hispanic community is not represented in village government. Across the broader community, there appears to be some fear or lack of understanding of the value of sharing and learning cross-cultures.

Considering these themes, the basic tenets of Placemaking come to mind:

**Business needs talent.** The key to their success is attracting and retaining talented workers with necessary skills.

**Talent wants place.** “Talent” will choose where they want to live based on opportunities to live/work/play/learn in a region. They’re looking for a variety of housing, entertainment, recreation, education and cultural options. They are also looking for places that are inclusive and welcoming to all.

**Place needs business.** Quality places that offer a variety of housing choices, are walkable and full of amenities attract and retain businesses which are what make a community, especially their downtowns, thrive.



Yes, this makes sense. The community can't thrive economically until it has higher paying jobs, which means it must attract more business and industry; but business won't come to Shelby unless it can attract the talent businesses need to be successful and Shelby can't attract talent until it has better housing, better amenities, a better downtown and is more inclusive.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of the assessment process was to gather feedback from a cross section of Shelby stakeholders, summarize what we heard, share our observations, and make recommendations for areas of focus that the community, partnering with the Community Foundation, might pursue.

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
<b>Downtown</b>	Seriously examine and pursue creation of a DDA or other assessment district to support and organize the downtown.	Village government; working with interested business owners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learn more about assessment districts through your Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Community Assistance Team representative, Sue Devries at devriess1@michigan.org The MEDC Community Guide with more information about creating a DDA is found here <a href="http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/development-assistance/#section1-1">http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/development-assistance/#section1-1</a></li> <li>2. MML Fact Sheet on Economic Development Tools—Downtown Development Authority <a href="http://www.mml.org/resources/publications/one_pagers/FS%20Econo">http://www.mml.org/resources/publications/one_pagers/FS%20Econo</a></li> </ol>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<a href="#">mic%20Development%20Tools%20DDAs.pdf</a>
	Host a meeting with a Michigan Main Street Program staff person to learn more about the program; invite downtown business and property owners and elected/appointed officials. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is interest after learning more, create a steering committee to start working the steps required to apply to the program.</li> </ul>	Community Foundation as neutral convener; transition Shelby Roars into Main Street planning and execution committee	3. Michigan Main Street Program, Laura Krizov at krizovl1@michigan.org <a href="https://www.miplace.org/communities/mms/">https://www.miplace.org/communities/mms/</a>
	Create a façade grant program – both for building fronts, and backs that face the rail trail	Village Administrator	4. Work with Shelby State Bank to develop a revolving, low interest loan fund for façade improvements in the downtown. See an example of Cadillac’s program <a href="https://www.mml.org/pdf/dda/15facadeimprovementprogramcadillac.pdf">https://www.mml.org/pdf/dda/15facadeimprovementprogramcadillac.pdf</a> 5. Contact your MEDC CATEam representative for more information about direct assistance to Michigan businesses through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) resources. Sue Devries at <a href="mailto:devriess1@michigan.org">devriess1@michigan.org</a>
<b>Housing</b>	Create a housing committee. Consider inviting representatives from: Muskegon Oceana	Community Foundation	6. Musk/Oceana Affordable Housing Initiatives: <a href="https://mocup1.org/program/home-ownershome-buyers/">https://mocup1.org/program/home-ownershome-buyers/</a> 7. Oceana’s Home Partnership <a href="http://www.oceanashome.org">www.oceanashome.org</a>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
	Affordable Housing Initiatives, Oceana’s Home Partnership and other interested parties: churches, Love Inc, Peterson Farms, El Centro		8. Reach out to Pennies from Heaven Foundation director, Monica Schuyler ( <a href="mailto:monica.schuyler@pfhf.org">monica.schuyler@pfhf.org</a> ) to learn about the Housing Committee she spearheaded in Ludington
	Create a step by step strategy to address housing issues in Shelby: improve existing housing stock; develop a variety of new types of housing; encourage and support homeownership.	Housing Committee	9. MSHDA is exploring the feasibility of modular housing for affordable homeownership. Contact Tiffany King at <a href="mailto:KingT12@michigan.gov">KingT12@michigan.gov</a> 10. 8CAP – Weatherization funding: <a href="https://www.8cap.org/weatherization">https://www.8cap.org/weatherization</a> 11. USDA RD – Aileen Waldron <a href="mailto:aileen.waldron@mi.usda.gov">aileen.waldron@mi.usda.gov</a> USDA Rural Development Single Family Home Repair Loans and Grants can help very low income applicants remove health and safety hazards, make essential repairs or make accessible for residents with disabilities. Learn about all the USDA RD programs here. <a href="http://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-housing-service">http://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-housing-service</a> . 12. Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis programs: In partnership with their members, FHLBI offers three grant programs designed to address the affordable housing needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Homeownership Opportunities Program (HOP) to help first-time homebuyers with down payment</li> <li>• assistance;</li> <li>• the Neighborhood Impact Program (NIP) to assist low-income homeowners with home repairs;</li> <li>• and the Accessibility Modifications Program (AMP) to aid seniors and households with disabled family members with home improvements that will allow them to remain in their current homes. <a href="https://www.fhlbi.com/products-services/communities-and-housing">https://www.fhlbi.com/products-services/communities-and-housing</a></li> </ul>
	Address blight and vacancy with a Vacant Property Registration ordinance and	Village Administrator; Police Department;	13. Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO) can be designed to serve a number of purposes related to vacant property issues. Chiefly, a VPRO provides a way for the Village to gather current, local contact



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	a rental registration ordinance.	Dept of Public Works	<p>information for the owners of vacant properties. This contact information is then used to communicate with owners when there is a property maintenance issue that needs to be resolved. Some VPROs also require owners to provide a plan for repair and re-occupancy with their registration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find more information on VPROs: <a href="http://www.communityprogress.net/tool-1--vacant-property-registrationordinances--pages-257.php">http://www.communityprogress.net/tool-1--vacant-property-registrationordinances--pages-257.php</a></li> </ul> <p>14. MML also offers a sample of ordinances from across the state, which can be found: <a href="http://www.mml.org/resources/sample_docs/ordinances/index.html">http://www.mml.org/resources/sample_docs/ordinances/index.html</a></p> <p>15. The City of Muskegon Heights, for example, outlines a VPRO with an escalating fee of \$0 if the structure is vacant for less than six months to more than \$5,000 if the structure is vacant for more than 10 years. <a href="http://www.muskegon-mi.gov/cresources/vacant_building_FAQ.pdf">http://www.muskegon-mi.gov/cresources/vacant_building_FAQ.pdf</a></p> <p>16. A rental registration ordinance would hold landlords accountable for keeping their properties in good condition and meeting property standards. The city of Ludington instituted a rental ordinance about 3 years ago and it has been very successful. Learn more about their ordinance at <a href="https://www.ludington.mi.us/397/Rental-Inspection-Department">https://www.ludington.mi.us/397/Rental-Inspection-Department</a></p>
	Explore rental rehabilitation for upper story units in the downtown.	Village Administrator with business/property owners in the downtown	<p>17. MEDC offers Community Development Block Grant resources for Rental Rehabilitation, a program that partners with landlords to provide safe, decent affordable rental housing. Contact Sue Devries <a href="mailto:devriess1@michigan.org">devriess1@michigan.org</a> <a href="http://www.michiganbusiness.org/cm/files/fact-sheets/cdbg.pdf">http://www.michiganbusiness.org/cm/files/fact-sheets/cdbg.pdf</a></p>
QUALITY	Attract new and diverse	Village	18. Set up a meeting with MEDC (Sue Devries <a href="mailto:devriess1@michigan.org">devriess1@michigan.org</a> and

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
JOBS	business/industry ; grow existing	Administrator, representatives from business/industry, elected/appointed officials	<p>others?) to discuss various programs offered by MEDC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Commercial Redevelopment Act</b>            The Commercial Redevelopment program encourages the replacement, restoration and new construction of eligible commercial property by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 12 years.         </li> <li> <b>Commercial Rehabilitation Act</b>            The Commercial Rehabilitation program encourages rehabilitation of eligible commercial property 15 years or older by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 10 years.         </li> <li> <b>Local Development Financing Act:</b>            LDFA allows eligible entities to establish area boundaries, create and implement a development plan, acquire and dispose of interests in real and personal property, issue bonds and use tax increment financing to fund public infrastructure improvements for eligible property. The tool is designed to promote economic growth and job creation. Communities across Michigan have used this tool to support companies in manufacturing, agricultural processing, and high technology operations.         </li> </ul>
			<p>19. USDA Rural Development Business &amp; Industry loans and grants for communities, businesses and nonprofits. Contact Joanna Dunn at joanna.dunn@mi.usda.gov  <a href="http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-businesses">http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-businesses</a>            For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advanced Biofuel Payment Program</li> <li>Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Product Manufacturing Assistance Program</li> <li>Business &amp; Industry Loan Guarantees</li> <li>Community Connect Grants</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	RESOURCES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance Learning &amp; Telemedicine Grants</li> <li>• Distributed Generation Energy Project Financing</li> <li>• Energy Resource Conservation</li> <li>• Intermediary Relending Program</li> <li>• Repowering Assistance Program</li> <li>• Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee</li> <li>• Rural Business Investment Program</li> <li>• Rural Economic Development Loan &amp; Grant Program</li> <li>• Rural Energy for America Program Renewable Energy Systems &amp; Energy Efficiency Improvement Loans &amp; Grants</li> <li>• Rural Micro-entrepreneur Assistance Program</li> <li>• Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant</li> <li>• Strategic Economic and Community Development</li> <li>• Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans &amp; Loan Guarantees</li> <li>• Value Added Producer Grants</li> </ul>
	Create a pipeline of talent for business and industry	Community Foundation with business partners	20. Talent 2025 serves 13 counties in West Michigan, embracing the industries, businesses, and educational institutions of each county. They convene stakeholders from each of these sectors and facilitate an efficient collaboration that integrates resources, streamlines processes, and leverages energies to address the talent demand needs of each sector. Learn more <a href="http://www.talent2025.org/">http://www.talent2025.org/</a> . Or find out more about a local effort that partners the community foundation with the Chamber of Commerce, Branch Co Talent 2025 (as described in the August 25 CMF Cohort Webinar) by contacting Bonnie Gettys at <a href="mailto:bonnie@barrycf.org">bonnie@barrycf.org</a>
<b>Inclusive Community</b>	Engage the Hispanic community	All	21. Continue to make a concerted effort to include the Hispanic community in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and execution of community events</li> <li>• Elected/appointed roles within local government</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	Explore implementing a	School system	22. Big Brothers Big Sisters' community-based mentoring program matches

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	bonafide Big Brothers Big Sisters program	leadership; PTO; Community Foundation might play a role in funding	youths age 6-18, predominantly from low-income, single-parent households, with adult volunteer mentors who are typically young (20-34) and well-educated (the majority are college graduates). Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America: <a href="http://www.bbbs.org/">http://www.bbbs.org/</a>