

redevelopment ready
communities



Redevelopment Ready Communities®

Report of Findings



City of Battle Creek

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Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) is a certification program supporting community revitalization and the attraction and retention of businesses, entrepreneurs and talent throughout Michigan. RRC promotes communities to be development ready and competitive in today's economy by actively engaging stakeholders and proactively planning for the future — making them more attractive for projects that create places where people want to live, work and invest.

In 2014, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) announced the second open application round for communities interested in achieving RRC certification. MEDC received submissions from over forty communities across the state. Battle Creek's application scored in the top tier and was selected to receive a full RRC assessment. We applaud the city's efforts in working to achieve RRC certification. The foundation of the evaluation is the RRC best practices. Developed by experts in the public and private sector, the best practices are the standard to achieve certification and designed to create a predictable experience for investors, businesses and residents working within a community. Communities must demonstrate that all best practice evaluation criteria have been met to receive RRC certification.




Battle Creek is the 28th community to be evaluated under the statewide RRC program and is on its way to becoming redevelopment ready. With a history of proactive planning and strong community involvement, the city has positioned itself to strengthen local quality of life. Even with strengths such as a six-year capital improvements plan and packaged priority redevelopment sites, our evaluation encourages Battle Creek to reach further in order to receive RRC certification. In a time when businesses can locate anywhere in the world, a community that is dedicated to a proactive approach for redevelopment and straightforward procedures will stand out. While a spirit for redevelopment exists, the city needs to develop a comprehensive public participation plan formalizing the community engagement process, provide for enhanced landscaping standards in order to meet master plan goals, utilize a development process feedback mechanism and provide a coordinated community marketing strategy. The RRC certification is a statement to the private sector that Battle Creek's development process is streamlined, predictable and user-friendly and these steps will help ensure the city's competitiveness and secure RRC certification.

The basic assessment tool for evaluation is the RRC best practices. These six standards were developed in conjunction with public and private sector experts and address key elements of community and economic development. A community must demonstrate all of the RRC best practice components have been met to become RRC certified. Once received, certification is valid for three years.

Measurement of a community to the best practices is completed through the RRC team's research, observation and interviews, as well as the consulting advice and technical expertise of the RRC advisory council. The team analyzes a community's development materials, including, but not limited to: the master plan;

redevelopment strategy; capital improvements plan; budget; public participation plan; zoning regulations; development procedures; applications; economic development strategy; marketing strategies; and website. Researchers observe the meetings of the community's governing body, planning commission, zoning board of appeals and other committees as applicable. In confidential interviews, the team also records the input of local business owners and developers who have worked with the community.

A community's degree of attainment for each best practice criteria is visually represented in this report by the following:

	Green indicates the best practice component is currently being met by the community.
	Yellow indicates some of the best practice component may be in place, but additional action is required.
	Red indicates the best practice component is not present or outdated.

This report represents the findings of the evaluation of the city of Battle Creek's redevelopment processes and practices. All questions should be directed to the RRC team at RRC@michigan.org.

Best Practice 1.1—The plans

Best Practice 1.1 evaluates community planning and how the redevelopment vision is embedded in the Master Plan, downtown plan and capital improvements plan. The Master Plan sets expectations for those involved in new development and redevelopment, giving the public some degree of certainty about their vision for the future, while assisting the city in achieving its stated goals. Local plans can provide key stakeholders with a roadmap for navigating the redevelopment process in the context of market realities and community goals.

While the city of Battle Creek has recently begun a comprehensive review and update of the master plan, this evaluation will focus on the master plan that is currently in place. The request for proposals soliciting consultants to provide this master plan update included the need to incorporate RRC principles in the new planning document. Doing so will lay the groundwork for effective redevelopment-ready best practices in the city now and into the future.

Battle Creek's current master plan was written in 1997 and re-adopted most recently in 2010. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Public Act 33 of 2008, requires that the planning commission create and approve a master plan as a guide for development and review the master plan at least once every five years after adoption. While the plan is soon considered out of date, many of the goals in the current master plan may still be relevant. Though the master plan identifies numerous actions to take towards achieving the goals, it lacks timelines and responsible parties. These steps ensure accountability toward implementation of the community vision, as does annual reporting to the governing body on the status of the implementation steps.

Neighborhoods and commercial corridors are identified as priority redevelopment areas in the plan. An analysis of neighborhood characteristics and preservation strategies is provided, along with a recommendation

for the development of a sub-area or neighborhood plan to further refine concepts discussed in the Master plan. Corridor types/characteristics, and improvement strategies provide a roadmap for revitalization of the city's corridors, along with a recommendation to develop design guidelines for the different scales of commercial development. The master plan zoning plan provides a framework for translating the 20-year future vision into the day-to-day regulatory tool for guiding land use change. Of particular emphasis in this section is the need to carefully manage infrastructure and growth in the rural areas of the city.

Downtown Battle Creek is highlighted in the master plan vision as "The City Heart," the major center for community and business activity. The 2010 downtown transformation strategy drives downtown revitalization efforts. The strategy describes a plan to capitalize on food-related innovations and expansions as a means to incent further growth and investment in the downtown. Public investments that attract and retain talent play a key role in that growth, including infrastructure that enhances the pedestrian experience. Projects contained in the capital improvements plan (CIP) seek to continue implementation of strategies outlined in the downtown transformation strategy, including assisting downtown property owners to enhance buildings, property acquisition, and sidewalk, lighting and streetscape elements.

Dwindling resources and increasing costs put pressure on local governments to make limited budgets work more efficiently. Battle Creek has a comprehensive CIP spanning six years that is updated annually as required by the MPEA. The planning commission reviews the program annually to ensure consistency with the master plan. Projects within the CIP have estimated costs for each and are organized in order of priority. The 2016–2021 CIP can be found online within the fiscal year 2015–2016 budget document.

Best Practice 1.1—The plans *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add timelines and responsible parties to master plan goals and actions	9 months
	The governing body has adopted a downtown plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Make the downtown TIF and transformation strategy plans accessible online	3 months
N/A	The governing body has adopted a corridor plan.		
	The governing body has adopted a capital improvements plan.	✓	

Best Practice 1.2—Public participation

Best Practice 1.2 assesses how well the community identifies and engages its stakeholders on a continual basis. Public participation aims to prevent or minimize disputes by creating a process for resolving issues before they become an obstacle.

Battle Creek has used both traditional and proactive methods to engage stakeholders including stakeholder interviews, community conversation meetings, social media, announcements at council meetings, water bill attachments, flier postings, focus groups, individual mailings, cable notification, and others. Some of the outreach methods for the upcoming master plan update will include online surveys and community workshops. For the recently developed citizen participation plan in the Community Development Block Grant program,

community members shared their priorities and vision through stakeholder interviews, community-wide conversation meetings and social media. Battle Creek should formalize these outreach methods into a public participation strategy that is applicable to all planning processes. The strategy should include key stakeholders, the appropriate venue to use each method, and how stakeholder input should be communicated. Regular and timely engagement in planning and policy development is crucial to building consensus and obtaining buy-in. Once a strategy is developed, the community should track the success of each method used, use that information to determine if the target audience is being reached, and then adjust the outreach method as needed.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft a public participation strategy as outlined in Best Practice 1.2	12 months
	The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.	✓	
	The community shares outcomes of public participation processes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Track success of various outreach methods, incorporate ways of communicating community participation results as part of the public participation strategy	12 months

Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations

Best Practice 2.1 evaluates the city's zoning ordinance and assesses how well it regulates for and implements to the goals of the master plan. Zoning is a significant mechanism for achieving desired land use patterns and quality development. As the legal tool to implement the master plan, it is critical that zoning regulations align with the plan's recommendations for land use.

For the most part, Battle Creek's zoning ordinance regulates to the goals identified in the master plan. Goals identified in the plan regarding the downtown, industrial development, infrastructure, and transportation are reflected in the zoning ordinance. Another goal in the master plan emphasizes the need for visually attractive and distinct character throughout the city, for both new development and redevelopment. The zoning ordinance could better regulate to this goal by providing improved landscaping regulations, which serves to reduce the negative impacts of higher intensity land uses on less intense adjacent land uses, minimize erosion and disturbed lands through re-vegetation, conserve energy through the planting of trees, conserve water through planting of climate appropriate vegetation, improves the appearance of the built environment that is visible from the public rights of way, and reduce glare and heat buildup. Minimal requirements are included in the ordinance in the form of safety strips and berms between land uses.

The master plan envisions downtown as having a significant residential population and as an activity center for surrounding neighborhoods. This goal is reflected in the zoning ordinance which allows mixed use in the downtown C-4 district by right; mixed use is encouraged as a permitted use in the C-7 Street Level Retail District. Downtown is further enhanced through the provision of placemaking elements in the zoning ordinance including sidewalk cafés. The city encourages sidewalk cafes as they promote the use of land and buildings, promote the historic character and ambience of the downtown, and act as a visual amenity in relationship with the streetscape. Once the updated master plan is adopted, the city should consider form based code as another method to achieve the master plan goals. Form-based

codes emphasize building form with the goal of creating a “place” and primarily manage physical form with a lesser focus on land use than traditional zoning. The zoning ordinance also provides for a variety of housing types.

To preserve sensitive and significant historic features, the city reviews and approves changes to the exterior appearance of all buildings in the four historic districts: Old Advent Town, Central Business District, Old Maple Street, and Merritt's Woods. A local historic district in one of the best ways to ensure the protection of historic character of buildings, streetscapes and neighborhoods from inappropriate alternations, poorly conceived work, and demolition, which in turn means the look and feel of a place continues well into the future. Further protections for historic features are provided through the Historic Neighborhood Overlay and Prairieview Homes Overlay Districts.

Zoning is an essential tool for shaping inviting, walkable communities and flexible zoning regulations can encourage desired development. The special land use permit process is clearly defined in chapter 1,290. Applications are submitted through the planning and community development department to the planning commission. The planning commission makes a recommendation, the city commission then has the authority to approve the special use permit. Flexibility can also be found in the range of uses provided for in the city's industrial districts. In addition to some specific permitted uses, the I-1 Light Industrial District also allows any uses that are also permitted in many of the commercial districts, such as retail business, film, office, service establishments and art studios and galleries.

Offering flexible parking standards provides the opportunity to balance the needs of a developer or business owner with the broader goals and needs of the community, such as the preservation and reuse of older buildings. Battle Creek allows the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to waive or reduce parking and loading requirements in the multiple dwelling, commercial and industrial districts whenever the character or use of the building is such as to make unnecessary the full provision of parking, or when the regulations would

Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations *continued*

impose an unreasonable hardship upon the use of the lot. The ZBA may also waive or reduce the requirements of off-street parking whenever any property lies within a 300-foot radius of a publicly owned parking lot. While these provisions begin to move the city to a more flexible redevelopment-friendly process, the property owner must still apply to the ZBA for a waiver/reduction, thereby prolonging the development process and creating additional uncertainty.

In 2006 the city of Battle Creek developed a plan for both on road and off-road non-motorized facilities linking people, schools, businesses to each other and to adjacent communities and resources. The plan has served as a guide in considering; primary destinations within the community, maps and graphics showing planned locations for off-road trails and on-road bike lands, design considerations, road cross-sections, and implementation projects and strategies, including potential funding sources. The plan provides ordinance and policy recommendations, including bicycle standards and/or storage facilities in the zoning ordinance, non-motorized connections as a requirement of site plan review for all new developments and/or redevelopments, recognition of the latest AASHTO standards as the standard for non-motorized construction within the city, provisions for trail and/or lane maintenance, regulations and liability, and ordinances instructing bicyclist and pedestrian behaviors. While the site plan review process does reference the need to arrange public or common areas in ways that incorporate the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, there may be additional ordinance amendments that could further enhance the non-motorized user experience. Requirements are currently provided that regulate connectivity and the

provision of sidewalks within and around development. The downtown transformation strategy also references the need for implementation of walkability as a means of implementing the growth and investment the city desires.

Stormwater runoff is a major cause of water pollution in developed areas. Battle Creek specifications for stormwater runoff are described in the “Stormwater Management Technical Reference” manual, which is referenced in the zoning ordinance. The manual was developed by the Battle Creek Area Clean Water Partners, a consortium of government and educational partners dedicated to the protection of surface water and groundwater in the greater Battle Creek area. The manual provides explanation and case studies for the utilization of green infrastructure strategies such as wet swales, catch basins, green roofs and rain gardens, including how to incorporate with conventional stormwater retention and detention basins. The document is comprehensive and includes a flowchart explaining how to evaluate drainage systems for site-developed projects and a site development review checklist to assist applicants in submitting projects for review. Requirements for parking lot landscaping and street trees are minimal and should be evaluated and improved.

Battle Creek’s zoning ordinance and map are available online, allowing developers and other interested parties access to codes and regulations at any time, day or night. Paper copies are also available. To improve user-friendliness and understanding amongst all parties involved, the city should incorporate ways to easily view often-referenced data that is currently spread through the document, particularly permitted and special uses by district.

Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the current master plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide enhanced landscaping standards	12 months
	The zoning ordinance provides for areas of concentrated development in appropriate locations and encourages the type and form of development desired.	✓	
	The zoning ordinance includes flexible tools to encourage development and redevelopment.	✓	
	The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.	✓	
	The zoning ordinance includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.	✓	
	The zoning ordinance includes flexible parking standards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide flexible parking standards	12 months
	The zoning ordinance includes standards for green infrastructure.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide enhanced landscaping standards	12 months
	The zoning ordinance is user-friendly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add a use-matrix or other element to improve the user-friendliness	9 months

Best Practice 3.1—Development review policy and procedures

Best Practice 3.1 evaluates the city's development review policies and procedures, project tracking and internal/external communications. The purpose of the site plan review process is to ensure that plans for specific types of development comply with the zoning ordinance. An efficient site plan review process is integral to being redevelopment ready and can assist a community in attracting investment dollars. Battle Creek's process for site plan review is clearly documented in the zoning ordinance and applications for site plan approval are available at the planning department. Once complete, an application packet is filed with the inspections department, then the zoning administrator schedules a review. The joint site plan review team includes the planning department, inspections department and the Department of Public Works. Once all parties have reviewed, the zoning administrator is responsible for granting approval of site plan application. Appeals to site plan decisions may be made to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The planning department assists applicants throughout the development process, including maintaining contact with applicants, facilitating meetings and coordinating projects with permitting and inspection staff. Nearly all of the development applications note the opportunity for conceptual site plan review prior to submittal; this offer should also be incorporated into the site plan review application. Additionally, flowcharts of development processes should be added to the website to assist in understanding the development process.

Significant public opposition or concern can slow down the review and approval of a project and ultimately cost a developer time and money. Often, public concern

arises out of limited or incorrect understanding of a project. Battle Creek encourages applicants to attend local neighborhood planning council meetings prior to official application submission. This proactive practice should be incorporated as a part of the public participation strategy.

Excellent customer service is key to a redevelopment-friendly process as developers and business owners look to invest in communities where they can expect decisions and communications in a fair and timely manner. Stakeholder interviews indicated room for improvement in the permitting and inspections step of the development process. The city utilizes BS&A software to manage projects throughout the development process. Tracking development projects allows for increased transparency and efficiency, keeps staff well informed, provides clarification as to the status of a project and can assist in measuring the results of the approval process.

In addition to utilizing this software, the inspections department and the planning department must communicate and collaborate frequently in order to ensure projects are reviewed and acted upon in a timely manner. Moreover, to ensure continuous improvement, the city should develop a mechanism to obtain regular customer feedback of the site plan approval and permitting and inspections processes, and then integrate changes where applicable. The joint site plan review team, including permitting and inspections staff, should meet regularly to capture lessons learned and amend the process accordingly.

Best Practice 3.1—Development review policy and procedures *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	✓	
	The community has a qualified intake professional.	✓	
	The community defines and offers conceptual site plan review meetings for applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add the availability of conceptual plan review to the site plan application	3 months
	The community encourages a developer to seek input from neighboring residents and businesses at the onset of the application process.	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate neighborhood planning council outreach information into the public participation strategy	12 months
	The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.	✓	
	The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	✓	
	The community promptly acts on development requests.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add development review process flowcharts including timelines to the website	9 months
	The community has a method to track development projects.	✓	
	The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review and approval procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a formal mechanism to obtain customer feedback on both the site plan approval and permitting and inspections processes, and integrate changes where applicable	6 months

Best Practice 3.2—Guide to Development

Best Practice 3.2 evaluates the availability of the community's development information. Land use planning and development involve a wide range of stakeholders. For the process to work effectively, everyone involved must understand their roles and responsibilities. Development materials should be assembled to help citizens, developers and public officials gain a better understanding of how the development process works. Battle Creek's website contains relevant contact information, meeting schedules, conceptual meeting information, links to the zoning ordinance and map, development review applications and links to

the building department. Flowcharts of development processes should be added to the website, and a weblink to the fee schedule should be provided alongside the development review process information.

It is important that developers understand review and permitting costs at the start of the process, so there are no surprises later. Battle Creek's fee schedule is reviewed annually and is available on the city website on the city clerk's webpage. Credit cards are flexible methods of payment and have become more important as a widely expected method of financial transaction. Battle Creek does not currently accept credit card payment for fees.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community maintains an online guide to development that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add development process flowcharts and provide a weblink to fee schedule alongside the development review information	6 months
	The community annually reviews the fee schedule.	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept credit card payments for development fees	9 months

Best Practice 4.1—Recruitment and orientation

Best Practice 4.1 evaluates how a community conducts recruitment and orientation for newly appointed or elected officials. Numerous boards, commissions and committees advise city leaders on key policy decisions. An application for open board and commission seats is available online on the city homepage. The authorizing legislation, purpose, current membership and any special requirements of each are listed and described on the boards, committees and councils webpage.

Assisting newly elected officials and appointees

with learning basic information about the structure and processes of government and community and economic development is vital to them playing a part in the city achieving its goals and objectives. City board and commission members receive orientation materials when appointed or elected. Orientation for new planning commissioners is comprehensive and appointees receive copies of the zoning ordinance and map, master plan, board contact list, meeting schedule, bylaws, and a copy of each application and procedure.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.	✓	
	The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development related boards and commissions.	✓	

Best Practice 4.2—Education and training

Best Practice 4.2 assesses how a community encourages training and tracks education needs for appointed and elected officials and staff. Trainings provide officials and staff with an opportunity to expand their knowledge and ultimately make more informed decisions about land use and redevelopment issues.

Training needs are reviewed as part of the annual budget process and training is covered under a dedicated line item in the budget. As part of the budgeting process, the planning manager looks ahead to the next fiscal year to determine training needs as they relate to priority issues. The community utilizes a simple spreadsheet for logging individual training needs and attendance. Tracking is a useful way to identify future training needs by documenting education received, identifying gaps and determining what topics should be focused on in the future. Newly elected and appointed officials are

provided with pertinent training announcements via email and at meetings. Depending on board turnover, board members are provided an orientation refresher every 2–3 years.

Joint meetings between boards and commissions are essential to foster communication and effectively address development issues. The city commission and planning commission meet annually to discuss the capital improvements plan and related development issues. Additionally, the planning department prepares an annual report for the city commission that describes applications and activities related to the planning commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Historic District Commission. Training materials and related information is discussed at the end of each meeting agenda and is emailed directly to board members from staff.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.	✓	
	The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance of the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	✓	
	The community encourages the governing body, boards, commissions and staff to attend trainings.	✓	
	The community shares information between the governing body, boards, commissions, and staff.	✓	

Best Practice 5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®

Best Practice 5.1 assesses how a community identifies, visions for and markets their priority redevelopment sites. Communities must think strategically about the redevelopment of properties, and investments should be targeted in areas that have the potential for positive future development. Focusing on the redevelopment and reuse of a single property can catalyze further development around it. Restoring buildings without a vision for the surrounding area is often insufficient to generate lasting change.

Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU), the city of Battle Creek, and the downtown have each identified priority redevelopment sites. BCU's priority sites are located primarily in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, the downtown's priority sites are located in downtown Battle Creek, and additional priority sites have been

identified by the city. There is some cross-marketing of the priority sites through the “available sites and buildings” feature on the BCU website, a comprehensive, searchable, easy-to-use map and list of available sites and buildings in the Battle Creek area. Basic site information, development outcomes and criteria, community champions and visions have been gathered for the priority redevelopment sites identified by each of the three entities. Available development tools and financial incentives have been identified for the priority sites as well. The downtown and industrial sites are packaged for easy viewing on their respective websites.

Continuing a team, collaborative approach among the entities through regular meetings is useful to ensure coordinated identification and marketing of priority redevelopment sites.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community identifies and prioritizes redevelopment sites.	✓	
	The community gathers basic information for prioritized redevelopment sites.	✓	
	The community has development a vision for the priority redevelopment sites.	✓	
	The community identifies potential resources and incentives for prioritized redevelopment sites.	✓	
	A property information package for the prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	✓	
	Prioritized redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	✓	

Best Practice 6.1—Economic development strategy

Best Practice 6.1 evaluates what goals and actions a community has identified to assist in strengthening its overall economic health. Strategic economic development planning is critical to attract jobs and new investment in communities. The Battle Creek master plan outlines broad economic development goals, objectives and policies which are supported by the Battle Creek Vision, the downtown transformation strategy, and Battle Creek Unlimited.

BC Vision is an effort led by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Kellogg Company that, as a result of extensive community engagement, seeks to improve economic conditions in the Battle Creek area by increasing the number of jobs and ensuring Battle Creek residents have the skills to fill them, improving the talent pipeline by improving education readiness, and strengthening civic pride for the city and area. BC Vision has the involvement and commitment of many community leaders, and includes a framework of

short and long term actions to achieve the goals. Battle Creek Unlimited's focus areas for 2014–2015 include a healthy business climate, facilitating job creation, retention and capital investment, and establishing downtown Battle Creek as a vibrant, livable city center. The downtown transformation provides background on the challenges and opportunities facing downtown Battle Creek, and changes needed to entice investment and development in that area. The master plan goals can be found on the Battle Creek website; the objectives and policies should be accessible online as well, particularly the economic development objectives and policies. Additionally, timelines and responsible parties should be added to improve tracking and documentation of progress. Achievements and progress on the economic development strategy should be reported annually to the city commission, perhaps as part of the planning department annual report.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The governing body has approved an economic development strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add timelines and responsible parties to the goals and implementation steps of the economic development strategy	12 months
	The governing body annually reviews the economic development strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Annually review and update the economic development strategy	12 months

Best Practice 6.2—Marketing and promotion

Best Practice 6.2 evaluates how the community promotes and markets itself. Community marketing and promotion can take many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that rekindles community pride and improves consumer and investor confidence. Marketing and branding should frame what sets a community apart from others.

Multiple entities market and promote the Battle Creek community to prospective investors, residents and visitors. This includes the downtown economic development staff, Battle Creek Unlimited, Kellogg arena, city departments and others. A coordinated approach of these efforts is essential to ensuring all target audiences are being reached, messaging is consistent, priority development sites are marketed appropriately, and the skillset and strengths of each organization are well-matched to the implementation strategy and intended audience. A coordinated community marketing and branding approach should result in improved perception of the city thereby increasing growth and development. Just as important, it can assist in strengthening civic pride, unity and collaboration, which is a key pillar of

the BC Vision. Marketing and branding efforts and coordination should be ongoing, and should include partner organizations such as the CVB, chamber and other partners. Moreover, it should assist in sharing the vision, values and goals of the current and subsequently updated master plan, once it is completed.

Visitors to a community's website need to be able to find accurate information quickly and the importance of a user-friendly website cannot be overstated. Battle Creek's website is comprehensive without being overwhelming to the visitor, is easy to navigate, and includes most of the pertinent planning, zoning and economic development information in easy-to-find places. The full master plan, which includes the economic development strategy, should be posted online. Plans for downtown Battle Creek, such as the downtown transformation strategy and the downtown tax increment financing plan, should also be posted online to ensure understanding amongst all parties involved, particularly as responsibilities for downtown economic development have changed recently.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community has developed a marketing strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a coordinated marketing strategy as outlined in Best Practice 6.2	9 months
	The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add master plan and downtown plans to the city website	3 months

The RRC program assists communities in maximizing their economic potential by embracing effective redevelopment tools and best practices. The city must find a balance between removing unnecessary delays and hurdles, while preserving the integrity of the community's vision and goals, positioning the city for success. Battle Creek has exhibited a strong commitment to improving their redevelopment readiness and is working diligently to meet the remaining best practice criteria and achieve the Redevelopment Ready Certified Community® designation. Next steps for the city include

the governing body adopting a resolution of support to proceed with the RRC program. Battle Creek will need to continue to implement actions toward achieving certification. Staff has attended the RRC best practice trainings and is required to submit quarterly progress reports to inform the RRC team of progress made in terms of implementing the necessary steps to meet the RRC best practices. Upon meeting all of the best practice criteria, Battle Creek will be a certified Redevelopment Ready Community®.