

redevelopment ready  
communities



Redevelopment Ready Communities®  
**Report of Findings**



**City of Manistee**

December 2014

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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 investments that create places where people want to live, work and play.

In January 2014, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) announced the second open application round for communities interested in achieving RRC certification. MEDC received submissions from 31 communities across the state. Manistee's application scored in the top 17 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. While the report of findings outlines recommended actions to meet each best practice criteria, the city may choose its own path of alternate strategies as long as the required criteria is being accomplished.

The city of Manistee is the 15th community to be evaluated under the state program and is well on their way to being redevelopment ready. The city has created a neighborhood revitalization action plan for the Manistee peninsula, works with the Alliance for Economic Success to help with marketing efforts, and is actively planning for economic development through the city's strategic plan. The city has also streamlined the site plan review process, allowing for small- and medium-size site plans to be reviewed administratively. Streamlining the site plan review process helps signal to the development community that there will be no unnecessary steps to develop in the city.

While the spirit of redevelopment exists in Manistee, the city has additional work to do to achieve certification as a Redevelopment Ready Community®. The city must update the master plan, last adopted in 2002, to be in compliance with state law and proactively package priority redevelopment sites. With the master plan being the basis for planning and zoning decisions in the city, having an updated master plan is critical to being redevelopment ready. Additionally, proactively packaging priority sites helps developers know the city is serious about redevelopment in priority areas and has worked to remove unnecessary barriers to getting development done.

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 seeking 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 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.

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 Manistee's redevelopment processes and practices. All questions should be directed to the RRC team at [RRC@michigan.org](mailto:RRC@michigan.org).

## Best Practice 1.1—The plans

Best Practice 1.1 evaluates community planning and how the redevelopment vision is embedded into the master plan, capital improvements plan (CIP), downtown development plan and corridor plan. The master plan sets expectations of 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.

The city of Manistee master plan was adopted in 2002 and serves as the foundation for all planning and zoning decisions. Understanding that the master plan was out of date, Manistee started the process of updating the plan in 2013 by holding a visioning session and conducting an online survey. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Public Act 33 of 2008 states “At least every five years after adoption of a master plan, a planning commission shall review the master plan and determine whether to commence the procedure to amend the master plan or adopt a new master plan.” The city should continue this process to be in compliance with state law, and work to engage residents and business owners.

Manistee created a neighborhood revitalization action plan for the Manistee peninsula in 2008. This plan identified the portion of downtown Manistee west of US-31 as an area in need of a strategy for redevelopment. The plan identifies a vision for the site with goals, implementation steps, and a timeline that identifies

responsible parties. While the plan meets all of the expectations of the criteria, it should be reviewed by the city to ensure that goals of 2008 are still current.

A comprehensive CIP is an essential tool for the planning and development of the social, physical, and economic wellbeing of a community. The CIP can be used as a tool to implement the master plan and provides a link between planning and budgeting for capital projects. Manistee has adopted a five-year CIP that identifies the needs of the city as they relate to the goals and priorities set forth in the strategic plan. While the document is comprehensive and aligns to the master plan, the MPEA requires a CIP to be a six-year plan. The city needs to include a sixth year to the plan to meet the criteria of this section and to be in compliance with state law.

Manistee adopted a downtown strategic plan in 2008. The plan is a vision for Manistee’s downtown for the years of 2008–2013, identifying responsible parties, timelines, and funding mechanisms. While this plan includes all elements set forth in the best practice, it is out of date. The city needs to update this document to ensure it is still the vision of the downtown and review the strategies to see if they are still relevant. This update also needs to take into account the upcoming revision of the DDA Tax Increment Financing Plan.

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"/> Update the city’s master plan as outlined in RRC Best Practice 1.1	12 months
	The master plan identifies a strategy for redevelopment or a redevelopment plan.	✓	
	The governing body has adopted a capital improvements plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add a sixth year to the five year city’s capital improvements plan as outlined in RRC Best Practice 1.1	12 months
	The governing body has adopted a downtown plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Update the city’s 2008–2013 downtown strategic plan as outlined in RRC Best Practice 1.1	12 months
N/A	The governing body has adopted a corridor plan.	N/A	

## Best Practice 1.2—Public participation

Best Practice 1.2 assesses how well the community identifies and engages its stakeholders on a continual basis. The foundation of all planning efforts is public participation, which aims to prevent or minimize disputes by creating a process for resolving issues before they become an obstacle. The foundation of all planning efforts is engaging residents through various techniques.

Manistee recently created a public participation plan to help guarantee consistency in gathering public input. The plan identifies key stakeholders, describes the different methods of collecting public input and identifies proactive practices for gathering public input.

The city of Manistee is in the process of updating their master plan and held a public visioning session to gather input. Using the results of the visioning session as baseline information, the city conducted an online survey to help reach a broader audience. Once the city gathered this information, they posted it on the city’s website. By following this process, residents and business owners can better understand the foundation in which the city is making decisions.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders in land use decisions.	✓	
	The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.	✓	
	The community shares outcomes of all public participation processes.	✓	

## Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations

Best Practice 2.1 evaluates the city’s zoning ordinance to determine how well it regulates and implements the goals of the master plan. Inflexible or obsolete zoning regulations can discourage redevelopment. Advances in technology and widespread availability of the Internet calls for communities to make their zoning ordinance and other codes available online for easier public access.

The city of Manistee’s zoning ordinance is user-friendly, accessible online, contains a use matrix and hyperlinks and utilizes graphics to portray definitions and requirements. Over the past few years, the city has worked to make the zoning ordinance more user-friendly by reducing the number of zoning designations from 19 down to 11. Doing so has made the zoning ordinance and zoning map much easier to use.

It is important for a community to provide appropriate locations for concentrated development. Manistee is accomplishing this by allowing upper story dwellings in the C-3 district and considering a form-based code in the peninsula zoning district. The city also allows for placemaking elements such as zero lot line development, ground floor signage standards, and outdoor dining.

Having flexible tools to encourage redevelopment is essential for any community working towards their redevelopment goals. To help encourage redevelopment, Manistee has identified key street segments within the zoning ordinance. These key street segments allow for additional uses to be permitted within the specific district. The city also has clearly defined special use permit guidelines to help any developer understand what is required of them.

To promote walkability throughout the city of Manistee, all medium size developments are required to

contain bicycle parking and all developments (excluding industrial) are required to connect to the existing sidewalk system.

The zoning ordinance also provides for flexible parking requirements. The city does not require parking for most developments within the C-3 district and allows for shared parking agreements in all other commercial districts.

A goal in the city’s master plan to encourage mixed use development states “While the mixing or integration of certain uses can result in conflict, the city has also discovered the positive opportunities to be achieved from well-planned and well-designed mixed-use developments. Opportunities for future mixed-use projects exist in several sectors of the city. The city supports well-planned and well-designed mixed-use projects that compliment the city’s other land uses.” This vision is also referenced throughout the zoning ordinance in multiple purpose and intent statements expressing interest in establishing a mixed use district. However, the majority of mixed-use developments currently require a special use permit which makes the process more time consuming and expensive for a developer. The city needs to review the goals and objectives during the master plan update and ensure that they are still relevant, and follow up with a zoning ordinance review to guarantee that it meets the intent of the updated master plan.

The city is lacking in green infrastructure standards. Currently the city requires landscaping in parking lots larger than 10 spaces. The city needs to review their green infrastructure standards to potentially include rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, pervious pavement, and various landscaping regulations as they see fit.

## 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"/> Review the master plan and zoning ordinance to ensure that the master plan recommendation and zoning district intent statements reflect the zoning ordinance as outlined in Best Practice 2.1	12 months
	The zoning ordinance is easy to read and accessible online.	✓	
	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 zoning 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 allows for flexible parking requirements.	✓	
	The zoning ordinance includes standards for green infrastructure.	<input type="checkbox"/> Update city ordinances to include green infrastructure standards as outlined in Best Practice 2.1	12 months

## Best Practice 3.1—Site plan review policy and procedures

Best Practice 3.1 evaluates the city’s site plan 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. Site plan review procedures and timelines should be communicated in a clear and concise manner to prospective developers and business owners. To do this, sound internal procedures need to be in place and followed.

Manistee’s site plan review process, as well as the responsibilities of staff and the planning commission, are clearly articulated in the city’s zoning ordinance. The city has a three tiered site plan review, with “basic” and “medium” site plans reviewed administratively and “detailed” site plans reviewed by the planning commission. Having the city’s processes outlined in the zoning ordinance helps developers and residents understand what is expected of them.

Manistee has a qualified intake professional and have recently documented their internal processes. Having

the city’s internal processes documented will help maintain consistency in the site plan review process regardless of staff.

Manistee engages in joint site plan review coordinating the planning, public works and engineering departments and utilizes BS&A to track development proposals through the process. Tracking developments through the site plan review process helps to ensure that there are no costly delays.

Manistee has streamlined the site plan review process so most site plans are administratively approved and only larger projects require planning commission approval. Having clearly spelled out the site plan review processes and procedures, most developments take minimal time to go through the process.

The city recently created a customer feedback brochure for their site plan review process. This brochure will help the city evaluate the site plan review process over time and make changes as necessary.

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.	✓	
	The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	✓	
	The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.	✓	
	The community has a method to track development projects.	✓	
	The community promptly acts on development requests.	✓	
	The community encourages a developer to seek input from neighboring residents and businesses at the onset of the application process.	✓	
	The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review and approval procedures.	✓	

## 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 is a process that involves a wide range of people. 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 in each community works. Planning and zoning approval processes, applications, checklists and other materials commonly required

should be readily available online. Documents should provide a general overview of development processes and steps necessary to obtain approvals. Documents providing contact information, specific instructions, application forms, checklists and submittal requirements are readily available on the city’s website.

The city of Manistee has a comprehensive website that encompasses all aspects of the development process and documents are user-friendly. The city also annually reviews their fee schedule through the budget process.

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.	✓	
	The community annually reviews the fee schedule.	✓	

## 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 and board members. Planning Commission members should be recruited based on requirements articulated in Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

Manistee recruits members for boards and commissions through advertisements in the newspaper and posting an application on their website. They have recently created a brochure to provide information to

potential candidates of the boards and commissions which identify the roles and duties of each position. Informing residents of the duties upfront helps to ensure the right candidates are chosen for the position.

Manistee also provides a comprehensive orientation packet to all members of development related boards and commissions and requires all members to sign a statement acknowledging they have received the information. This ensures all members to have the documents and tools needed to do their job.

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

## Best Practice 4.2—Training for elected officials, board members, and staff

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

Manistee has a dedicated source of funding for training of all boards and commissions. The city encourages planning commission and ZBA members to attend Citizen Planner and identifies training needs by working with MSU Extension. Once the city has identified the training needs of the community, they work with partner organizations to host the training locally.

The city also maintains a comprehensive list of trainings the boards and commission members attend. Identifying and tracking training is essential to ensure that the city has informed board and commission members and helps to identify any gaps.

Communication between the boards and commissions is critical for decision-making. While the city engages in large scale collaborative efforts like the Lakes to Land Initiative, they do not hold a joint meeting between city council, planning commission, ZBA and DDA. Holding an annual joint meeting can provide an opportunity for the city’s boards and commissions to discuss current successes, issues, goals and objectives. A joint meeting can also be a great opportunity to hold a training session.

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 board and commission members to attend trainings.	✓	
	The community shares information between the governing body, boards, commissions, and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a joint meeting with the city council, planning commission, zoning board of appeals and DDA as outlined in Best Practice 4.2	12 months

## Best Practice 5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®

Best Practice 5.1 assesses how a community identifies, visions and markets their priority redevelopment sites. It is important for a city to think strategically about the prime redevelopment opportunities

The city of Manistee compiles information packages for any parcel in the city upon request. These packages include the property assessment card, aerial photo of the property, zoning information, permit information, contact information and a business owner’s informational handout. While these packets are extremely valuable to residents and business owners developing in the city, Manistee needs to start identifying and prioritizing their priority redevelopment sites. Prioritizing prime

redevelopment opportunities, conducting visioning sessions, packaging and marketing each site proactively signals to the development community that the city is committed to redevelopment. Additionally, these actions can eliminate uncertainty in the development process and help identify champions for redevelopment in the city. While it is not possible to foresee all issues with a redevelopment site, informing potential developers of known issues upfront and providing information on the tools available to help offset costs are key to getting an underutilized site reactivated. The city will need to prioritize at least three sites and package one for certification.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community identifies and prioritizes individual redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize the city’s prime redevelopment sites as outlined in RRC Best Practice 5.1	3 months
	The community gathers preliminary development research for prioritized redevelopment sites.	✓	
	A public visioning session is held for the prioritized redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a vision for the prioritized redevelopment sites as outlined in RRC Best Practice 5.1	6 months
	Available resources for the prioritized redevelopment sites are identified.	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify available resources for prioritized redevelopment sites as outlined in RRC Best Practice 5.1	12 months
	A “Property Information Package” for the prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	<input type="checkbox"/> Assemble a property information package for identified prioritized redevelopment sites as outlined in RRC Best Practice 5.1	12 months
	Prioritized redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Market the identified redevelopment sites outlined in RRC Best Practice 5.1	12 months

## Best Practice 6.1—Economic development strategies

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 attracting jobs and investment in communities.

Planning for economic development can take many forms. While business development is a core value of economic development, a community needs to include community development and talent in the overall equation for economic success.

The Manistee city council creates an annual strategic plan that focuses on economic development and jobs, city infrastructure, beaches, parks, and recreational areas, financial stability and continuous improvement, intergovernmental relationships and housing, homelessness and senior citizens. The strategic plan is reviewed annually by the city council and contains goals and objectives to be accomplished over a three-year period.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The governing body has approved an economic development strategy.	✓	
	The governing body annually reviews the economic development strategy.	✓	

## 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. The city of Manistee is a member of the Manistee Alliance for Economic Success as well as the Chamber of Commerce which manages all marketing for the city. The city has recently prepared a marketing strategy that helps coordinate marketing efforts to prospective and new residents,

businesses and tourists. This strategy is a great resource that will help the city maintain a vision for the future.

Another effective way to market a city is through updating and maintaining a user-friendly website. The city of Manistee’s website is user-friendly, easy to navigate and contains much of the needed information for RRC certification. When the master plan and property information package become available, it is important that the city post them to their website so residents have access to them.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
	The community has developed a marketing strategy.	✓	
	The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.	✓	

The RRC program assists communities in maximizing their economic potential by embracing effective redevelopment tools and best practices. Manistee has exhibited a strong commitment towards improving their redevelopment readiness and is working diligently to meet the best practice criteria and achieve the redevelopment ready certified community designation. The city needs to update their master plan to help set a vision for Manistee. Once the master plan is updated, the city will need to review the zoning ordinance to ensure it regulates to the goals and objectives of the

updated master plan. Next steps for the city include the adoption of a resolution of support by the governing body to proceed with the RRC program, and continued implementation of necessary actions to achieve certification. Staff must submit quarterly progress reports to inform the RRC team of actions taken to implement necessary steps to meet the RRC Best Practices. Once Manistee has met all of the required best practice criteria, the city will be awarded certification and marketed as a Redevelopment Ready Community®.