

City of Escanaba

Master Planning Workshop

SWOT Analysis Summary

Strengths

Bonifas Fine Arts Center	waterfront	city facilities	small businesses
park system	engaged residents	accessibility	recreational facilities
fishing opportunities	city government	airport	positive reputation
Bay College	performing arts	people	friendly
churches	infrastructure	healthcare	slow pace
harbor	golf course	historic properties	parking availability
respect for city administration	downtown business group	community organizations	transparency practices
rich history	library	newspaper, radio	lighthouse
mature trees	schools	public transportation	historical museum
great place to raise children	Superior Trade Zone	minimal natural hazards	joint governmental meetings
safe	affordable housing	moral	clean
centrally located	county seat	neighborhood character	UP State Fair
social services	water access	mile-long downtown	

Weaknesses

Northshore underutilized	path connectivity	aging population	underemployment
rail transit	empty buildings	community involvement	growing drug problem
lack of demographic diversity	lack of economic diversity	environmental sustainability	poverty, dysfunctional families
lack of hotel convention center in downtown	lack of activities	narrow minded people	blight
sidewalks	aging infrastructure	unemployment	revenue cuts

Opportunities

Attracting residents from out of state	Status as a Redevelopment Ready Community
Utilize the Hannahville golf course as a means to absorb more special interest tourists	Community for a lifetime designation
Taking advantage of training, grants, technical assistance from State and Federal sources	Promotion of recreational opportunities (hunting, fishing, natural resources)
Create residential units in under-utilized buildings	Zoning
Charter flight and ferry services	U.P. State Fairgrounds
Better utilizing ports (vessel repair)	Historic preservation
Mixed use buildings	Vibrant downtown in evenings
More high-end housing	Better advertise winter opportunities

Threats

Economy	Aging community
Inmates from downstate	Resistance to change
Lack of employment diversity	Lack of regional transportation plan
Winter weather misconception	Costs shifted to local governments
Federal and State mandates	Dark stores
Risk of losing commercial service at airport	

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Group Strategy Brainstorming

Utilizing the Lakefront

Better utilizing the lakefront (by developing a conference center or hotel) has the potential to increase tourism, boating activity, and the local economy. It would also have a positive impact on park use, business traffic, and area walkability. The first step towards implementation would be addressing the current zoning situation. Then, with the support of the public, a Lakefront Development Master Plan can be created. The DDA, EDA, Chamber, City Administration, MEDC, CUPPAD, and investors would play a key role in seeing the plan through. Future barriers include resistance to change and lack of funding opportunities. With the development of the lakefront the community will hopefully see an increase in tourism, jobs, and a more vibrant downtown.

Encouraging Diversity

A lack of demographic diversity in the city has been identified as a current weakness. The group strategy that addresses this weakness is the creation of an "Ambassador Program" where city residents would act as ambassadors to the City of Escanaba when traveling. Willing participants would be trained on how to best promote the city in an effort to reach individuals that may otherwise not be aware of Escanaba's many assets.

A need for a full time employee to promote the city was also a topic of discussion.

Maintaining Historic Character

Escanaba's rich history was listed as an asset to the city. Maintaining the historic character of the city would improve neighborhood aesthetics, increase property values, strengthen the community's sense of place, and attract families and tourists to the area.

This can be done by taking advantage of facade grants, encouraging historic restorations, and offering incentives. Educating the public on importance of historic districts and increasing awareness of available programs will play an important role in maintaining the city's historical character. Having the schools participate in historic home tours was an educational opportunity that was identified.

Attracting Young Entrepreneurs

Escanaba has an aging population and because of this, attracting younger generations is a topic that is important to address. The promotion of the city's current assets on a national level was identified as a method to make the city a more attractive destination to live. Some of the assets that were discussed include highlighting of the existing high quality education system, affordable living, and quality of life (i.e. arts, recreation).

Implementation actions included promoting the development of a more green community and addressing the need for connected non-motorized transportation.

Recreation

A Non-motorized Master Plan for the county was identified as a means to ensure that existing recreational needs are being met.

Noted priority paths include:

Routes to schools & parks Bay College	Connector from south of airport to Portage Pt Connector to Wells & Gladstone And to other points of interest (such as grocery, hospital, scenic spots..)
Safe crossing for Lincoln Road	

Better utilization of the North Shore launch was another group recommendation. Perhaps more can be done to ensure that the launch is used year round. Sand Point and the Danforth Ski Hill were presented as potential sites for dog parks. City leadership and proper funding were identified important factors in completing these projects.

U.P. State Fairgrounds Use

The U.P. State Fairgrounds is a unique asset to the community that is often under utilized. Future development opportunities were taken into consideration by the focus group. Some recommendations given by the group are as listed:

1. Develop Highway Frontage and increase curb appeal
2. New parking lot- possibly on the county owned property to the south (behind K-mart)
3. Expanding the racetrack
4. Hosting a Christmas drive through the light show (winter skating opportunities as well)
5. Upgrade Exhibition Building for use as meeting/training/ business facility
6. Utilizing as a regular flea market location

Manufacturing Opportunities

Manufacturing is an important element of the U.P. economy and increasing the amount of manufacturing opportunities has the potential to diversify the current job market and have an overall positive impact on the community. Helping existing businesses grow with the assistance of the City, EDA, and DDA was a strategy that the focus group identified as a step towards increasing manufacturing opportunities. Some barriers that may stand in the way of such growth include declining population, limited pool of industrial workers, and lack of property for facilities.