Preparing Michigan's Workforce for the New Economy:

Recommendations of SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy

July 2007

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Mission

SEMCOG's mission is solving regional planning problems — improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's local governments as well as the quality of life in Southeast Michigan. Essential functions are:

- providing a forum for addressing issues which extend beyond individual governmental boundaries by fostering collaborative regional planning, and

- facilitating intergovernmental relations among local governments and state and federal agencies.

As a regional planning partnership in Southeast Michigan, SEMCOG is accountable to local governments who join as members. Membership is open to all counties, cities, villages, townships, intermediate school districts, community colleges and public universities in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

Responsibilities

SEMCOG's primary activities support local planning through use of SEMCOG's technical, data, and intergovernmental resources. In collaboration with local governments, SEMCOG has responsibility for adopting regionwide plans and policies for community and economic development, water and air quality, land use, and transportation, including approval of state and federal transportation projects. Funding for SEMCOG is provided by federal and state grants, contracts, and membership fees.

Policy decision making

All SEMCOG policy decisions are made by local elected officials, ensuring that regional policies reflect the interests of member communities. Participants serve on one or both of the policymaking bodies — the General Assembly and the Executive Committee.

Prior to policy adoption, technical advisory councils provide the structure for gaining input on transportation, environment, community and economic development, data analysis, and education. This deliberative process includes broad-based representation from local governments, the business community, environmental organizations, and other special interest and citizen groups.

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Abstract

SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy and its Education Advisory Council are working to help Southeast Michigan communities adjust to the new economic reality caused by changes in the region's economy. The recommendations in this report provide practical ideas and assistance to help address the consequences of the economic change and move the region forward in developing a knowledge-based economy.

SEMCOG

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Executive Summary

SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy was established in 2006 following a successful SEMCOG University on *Preparing Michigan's Workforce for the Future: Dialog between government, education, and business.*

Workforce development is one of the greatest economic challenges currently facing the region. The current problems are exacerbated by the demographic forecast for the region that shows aging of the population and a reduction in the number of working age people in the next 30 years. This has serious consequences for workforce development.

The task force and SEMCOG's Education Advisory Council are working to help Southeast Michigan communities adjust to the new economic reality caused by changes in the region's economy, and to provide practical ideas and assistance to help address the consequences of this change. Objectives are to:

- Raise awareness among SEMCOG members of the resources available for workforce development in the region,

- Advocate for policies that will help improve the economic conditions in the region by developing recommendations for governments, business, and education, and

- Provide technical assistance to create vibrant communities that attract people and investment, and create an inclusive region.

The recommendations fall into three areas — human capital, organizational development, and vibrant communities.

Human Capital

Human capital is the development of an educated and skilled workforce that will enable the region to compete with other regions and states for business investment. It requires collaboration between education, government, business, and community/nonprofits to raise educational standards, and awareness of the impact of education on quality of life and economic success. In addition, human capital development depends on ensuring that education is affordable; aligning curriculum skills with future workforce needs; and coordinating training programs so that students can build on previous educational experiences. The recommendations are:

1. Ensure coordination of all levels of education so that students can build upon previous educational experiences and prepare for lifelong learning,

2. Make education and training more affordable,

3. Align current curriculum skills with future workforce needs, and

4. Insist that early childhood education remains a priority.

Organizational Development

Organizational development recognizes the role of workforce development organizations (e.g., Michigan Works agencies and nonprofits) to effectively serve the needs of future employees and employers through training, job placement, supportive services, and testing and recruiting services. Success depends on employers, employees, and agencies coordinating the different functions and responsibilities. The recommendations are:

5. Encourage organizations (e.g., education, business, industry, government, social services, parents, faith-based groups) that support workforce development to work together,

6. Develop and coordinate the work of workforce development agencies, thereby increasing capacity and outreach,

7. Regularly survey employers to better understand and effectively implement necessary services,

8. Communicate the benefits of workforce development programs through stronger marketing and public education, and

9. Create a centralized resource for information on education and on workforce development needs and resources.

Vibrant Communities

The task force recognized vibrant communities as a strategy for creating the physical and social infrastructure to attract investment. This is an area where local governments have an important role, but success depends on collaboration with business and nonprofits to create and promote the assets of the community. Recommendations address the relationship between vibrant communities and workforce development. A national think tank called CEOs for Cities found that 70 percent of highly mobile 25-34 year olds with a college degree say they decide where to live first and then find a job. This presents a challenge to a region such as Southeast Michigan that has struggled to develop a regional identity for vibrant communities despite considerable cultural and quality of life assets. By enhancing or creating physical assets, developing human assets, marketing/promoting existing assets, and enhancing mobility within the region, the region can compete for educated, skilled, and entrepreneurial talent. The recommendations are:

10. Ensure community sustainability by redeveloping brownfields and promoting building re-use and rehabilitation,

11. Create communities that have unique character, enabling residents to feel a distinct sense of pride about their community, and that will attract future residents,

12. Develop a range of housing within a community to ensure long-term sustainability of communities as residents' housing needs change,

13. Focus on recreational opportunities that result in community safety, wellness, and reinvestment,

14. Promote citizen participation and volunteerism to create a sense of ownership and vested interest in community success,

15. Recognize diversity as an asset and encourage a diverse population (e.g., seniors, youths, immigrants), and

16. Support all modes of mobility.

Next Steps

While all of these recommendations are important to the region's future, SEMCOG will focus on implementing certain recommendations and work collaboratively with partner organizations to promote the others. SEMCOG will focus on:

- Working with the Education Advisory Council on promoting alignment of the education curriculum with business needs;

- Advocating for legislation on behalf of local governments and the education community to support these recommendations;

- Encouraging organizations (e.g., education, business, industry, government, social services, faith-based groups, and others) that support workforce development to work together by providing a forum for discussion at SEMCOG's Community and Economic Development Advisory Council meetings, and by promoting public/private partnerships;

- Actively developing planning tools and promoting best practices for creating vibrant communities; and

- Supporting efforts to improve the economic development infrastructure in Southeast Michigan such as increasing the capacity and outreach of workforce development agencies and supporting all modes of mobility.

Introduction

The economic challenges facing Michigan as a result of globalization and industrial restructuring are more pronounced than those facing many other states because of Michigan's profound dependency on the declining domestic auto industry. There is now an opportunity for government to partner with the private and education sectors to develop policies that address this new reality. Understanding that many factors are outside the control of any one sector, policies need to respond to the reality of the knowledge-based economy and move the state forward. There is general awareness of the need for change in education attainment, business support, and quality-of-life improvements in order to support the businesses that will provide jobs and sustain the changing economy.

SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy identifies some of the major changes that will enable Michigan to compete with other states for jobs and businesses. This task force was established in the summer of 2006, following a successful SEMCOG University on *Preparing Michigan's Workforce for the Future: Dialog between government, education, and business.* See www.semcog.org/RegPlan/CommEconDev/SEM_U_CED/SEM_U_WorkforceforFuture.htm for presentations from the event.

Workforce development is one of the greatest economic challenges currently facing the region. The current problems are exacerbated by the demographic forecast for the region that shows aging of the population and a reduction in the number of working-age people in the next 30 years. This has serious consequences for workforce development.

SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy is comprised of SEMCOG members (in both education and government) and representatives of the business and nonprofit sectors. Its goal is to identify the role of government, education, and business in creating the workforce and conditions that Michigan needs to compete in the new economy. While development of the workforce is the main outcome, the process for achieving this also requires changes in the environment and organizations that influence education and training, as well as creating vibrant communities where the workforce will want to live. The main objectives of the task force are to:

- Raise awareness among SEMCOG members of the resources available for workforce development in the region,
- Advocate for policies that will help improve the economic conditions in the region by developing recommendations for governments, business, and education, and
- Provide technical assistance to create vibrant communities that attract people and investment, and create an inclusive region.

The task force met five times between November 2006 and July 2007. Professionals in workforce development at the state and local government levels, nonprofit service/training providers, and business interests participated in the discussions. (Appendix A is a list of task force members.) At the same time, SEMCOG's Education Advisory Council also met on the issue of education and workforce development and helped develop recommendations for the task force.

The recommendations were developed by three workgroups set up to identify actions that will help position the region for successful economic development. (Appendix B is a list of the workgroup participants.)

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the knowledge-based economy is "directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information.…" It depends on an educated workforce that has technical sophistication, strong work ethic, and critical thinking abilities. Some progress has already been made in the state's education system, but more changes need to be made. While much of the emphasis is on increasing the number of people with four-year college degrees, some positions require job-related training that could be gained from two-year technical degrees or apprenticeship programs. For example, Focus: HOPE, a nonprofit agency in Detroit, offers education and training in three areas for positions in information technology, advanced manufacturing, and engineering, as well as basic skill enhancement courses, mainly for people with demonstrable financial need.

State government has an important role in ensuring that the economic development and workforce training assistance programs are able to channel resources appropriately to those that can make a difference to the economy. There are many resources to assist Michigan businesses and residents with workforce development issues. However, there is limited coordination between the resources and no central resource for information. In 1998, the federal government enacted the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to provide workforce investment activities through statewide and local workforce investment systems with the goal of increasing occupational skills, employment, job retention, and individual earnings, resulting in improved quality of the workforce, reduction of welfare dependency, and enhanced productivity and competitiveness of the nation. In Michigan, these funds are largely administered by the Department of Labor and Economic growth (DLEG), and the 25 regional Michigan Works Agencies. (www.michiganworks.org/).

State policies and programs such as Michigan Economic Development Corporation's *Transformation: A Strategic Plan for Michigan's Economy 2007-2010,* and the 21st Century Jobs Fund; the Department of Labor and Economic Growth's Regional Skills Alliances, and the Department of Education's new high school graduation requirements all contribute to developing the workforce needed by the state. However, there are still many challenges to be addressed. These include the increasing cost of education, the lack of alignment in the education sector with the needs of business, and the diminishing state budget for education despite the wide recognition that education is vital to economic success in the future.

Local government plays a vital role in creating the quality of life that workers in the new economy require. Whether creating a sense of place or encouraging a range of housing choices and recreation opportunities, vibrant communities are an essential tool for retaining and attracting an educated, mobile workforce. Locally, Oakland and Washtenaw Counties' countywide wireless Internet and Wayne County's Aerotropolis are developing and marketing local assets in partnership with the business community. These projects do much to attract business, but the education sector needs to ensure that the quality, skilled workforce required for sustaining these businesses is available. No single workforce development policy will work without collaboration between government, education, business, community organizations, and other stakeholders. Collaboration requires communication and partnerships to ensure that each organization buys into and works toward sustainable economic growth in Michigan that provides jobs, economic stability, and a quality of life that is second to none.

Robert Jones, President of Education and Workforce Policy LLC, recently wrote, "Michigan has all the resources and tools to continue its leadership role in the economy of the 21st century. It has the R&D and creative assets of one of the finest networks of research universities in the country.…The challenge is to change the educational expectations of the past century.…Michigan's success will depend on the public's awareness of the need for universal postsecondary education and on their willingness to support the financial and policy investments necessary to ensure the quality of life and standard of living that Michigan citizens have come to expect."

Recognizing the role and needs of government, business, and education in responding to the changing economy and workforce needs, recommendations of SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy are divided into three areas:

- Human Capital,
- Organizational Development, and
- Vibrant Communities.

Recommendations of SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy

Human Capital

Human Capital is the development of an educated and skilled workforce that will enable the region to compete with other areas for business investment. It requires collaboration between the education, government, business, and community sectors to raise educational standards and awareness of the impact of education on quality of life and economic success. In addition, as the region's population ages and experiences a loss of working age people, it will be imperative to train and include groups who have not been a part of the traditional workforce, such as people with disabilities, retirees, and those with limited access to training programs. The recommendations for human capital development depends on ensuring that education is affordable; aligning curriculum skills with future workforce needs; and coordinating education training programs so that students can build upon previous educational experiences. The recommendations are:

1. **Ensure coordination of all levels of education so that students can build upon previous educational experiences and prepare for lifelong learning**

   Coordination of all levels of education results in increased efficiencies and effectiveness of the education system. In the region, there are examples of schools partnering with neighboring districts or higher education institutions to produce some great success stories, but they are often limited to certain areas or programs. The University High School is a partnership between Ferndale Public Schools and Lawrence Technological University that has a rigorous college prep curriculum organized around career pathways in the auto industry. Connection to opportunities after K-12 provides increased career choice, increased involvement in post-secondary education, and more focused learning. Greater coordination allows students to carry forward ideas instilled earlier in their education throughout their careers. The ultimate goal is to create thinkers who appreciate the value of education and can use these skills in post-secondary education and beyond. The State of Michigan's new graduation requirements are an important step to raising education standards and expectations for high school students. This will better prepare students for post-secondary education and training.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Intermediate School Districts/K12 working in partnership with community colleges and universities.
- Nonprofit agencies can help prepare adults on basic employability/learning skills.
- Colleges and training institutions for retraining purposes.

Funding and other challenges

- Cost of specialized courses.
- Limited funding for certain types of basic skills training.
- Working adults who want to upgrade their skills need flexible classes, schedules, and locations.

- Some adults may not be able to attend regular classes because of childcare, transportation, housing, and other challenges.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Duplication and inefficient use of public resources.

- Lost opportunities to expand the workforce.

2. Make education and training more affordable

The cost of education — particularly higher education — is a barrier to economic development in the region. With an aging population and lack of skilled workers forecast for the next 30 years, increasing access to education/training is an important tool for economic development. Cuts in funding for public universities in Michigan over the last four years have resulted in a 37 percent increase in tuition rates, leaving many people unable to afford college education. Michigan cannot allow this to occur at a time when it is losing many of its skilled graduates. Increasing affordability through adequate funding is a long-term investment that will also make the region more inclusive by increasing access to education for low-income persons and minorities. Innovative education funding programs such as the *Kalamazoo Promise*, which provides graduates of the Kalamazoo Public School system with free college tuition at Michigan's public universities, should also be encouraged where possible. Affordable and accessible education will result in more workforce diversity, which is increasingly recognized as a regional asset.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Requires commitment by the state to adequately fund higher education.

Funding and other challenges

- State fiscal challenges and revenue shortages.

- Economic crisis in the state.

- Commitment by higher education sector to control tuition increases.

- Need for reprioritization of state budgets.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Unemployment of people without the necessary skills/education to participate in the workforce.

- Higher crime and incarceration levels.

- Inability of the region to attract businesses due to lack of skilled workforce.

- Higher taxes for working adults.

- Declining services due to lower revenues.

3. Align current curriculum skills with future workforce needs

Making sure that the workforce has the skills and education needed by business in the future is probably the most important tool for the region's economic success. Changes in Michigan's high school graduation requirements is a major improvement because it raises expectations and provides high school graduates with more relevant skills for the changing economy. The focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects will help make the state more competitive in the global economy. Organizations such as Detroit Renaissance and the Detroit Regional Chamber have been promoting STEM skills as part of their workforce strategies. Aligning the curriculum helps students make informed career choices, encourages increased involvement in post-secondary

education, and provides satisfaction and stability in employment. This recommendation requires active involvement of employers in working with agencies and education systems to convey their needs and help design appropriate training programs. In addition, the changing economy provides opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop in-demand products and services. The curriculum should also address the needs of this growing sector.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Education sector, business, and workforce/training agencies working in partnership.

Funding and other challenges

- Cost of educating business regarding their role.

- Cost of program development and curriculum changes.

- Cuts in training budgets for many businesses as a result of reduced profits.

- Reluctance by the education sector to change traditional curriculum or inability to implement changes mandated by new requirements.

- Lack of teaching personnel for certain subjects.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Economic decline due to lack of appropriate skilled workforce.

- Increased dependence of unemployed on limited government resources.

- Loss of college graduates to other regions — brain drain.

- Increased drop out rate.

4. Insist that early childhood education remains a priority

Research shows that children who enter the formal education system with skills gained in pre-kindergarten settings are more likely to be successful in their subsequent educational experiences. Research shows that a positive early education experience helps children develop the verbal, math, and basic life skills that increase the chances of success in later life. While there is an increased general understanding of the relationship between early childhood education and career success, some households have limited access to education and other social services, and subsequently do not engage in early childhood education.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Legislature for approving funding for early childhood programs.

- State Board of Education.

- Colleges in preparing early childhood teachers.

- Legislature (through appropriations process)

- Department of Education must prioritize.

Funding and other challenges

- Assistance with making private pre-school programs more affordable.

- Funding of Head Start programs.

- Limited resources for some families to afford these non-mandatory programs.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Children not prepared for elementary school.
- Difficulty catching up with other children.
- Disruptive effect on classroom.

Organizational Development

Organizational development recognizes the role of workforce development bodies (such as the Michigan Works agencies and nonprofits) to effectively serve the needs of future employees and employers through training, job placement, supportive services, testing, and recruitment services. Success depends on employers, employees, and agencies coordinating the different functions and responsibilities. While many of the services are offered to future employees, businesses also benefit from training resources created to assist them with training current employees. The recommendations of the workgroups emphasized collaboration with a goal to position workforce development agencies to address the challenges and needs of the workforce and the business community alike. The recommendations are:

5. Encourage organizations (e.g., education, business, industry, government, social services, parents, faith-based groups) that support workforce development to work together

Workforce development is a regional-level function because it affects the entire community in some respect. A solid workforce development system relies on the participation and commitment of all stakeholders, including the education sector, business/industry, government, social/workforce development agencies, parent groups, faith-based/community groups, and philanthropic organizations**.** By partnering on efforts, the system will reduce redundancy, increase stakeholder commitment, and have success in reducing the skills gap. The current system is disjointed; cross-organizational synchronization needs to increase.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- All stakeholders — with leadership from regional membership groups such as the Chamber, SEMCOG, and the school boards association.

Funding and other challenges

- Cost of developing an action plan involving all stakeholders.
- Cost of implementation the plan.
- Government funding issues.
- Cost to educate business on the benefits of partnerships.
- Encourage participation in collaboration.
- Raising capacity for collaboration and leadership development.
- Turf/trust issues between sectors.
- Change attitude of prospective employers.
- Educators often do not recognize interdependency with other stakeholders.

- Comfort level in the legacy of the way things have always been done.
- Partner organizations' willingness to relinquish some control for the sake of collaboration.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Continued stagnant region and state and an inability to compete with other states for businesses and residents.
- Lose ground to other regions.
- Lose graduates to other regions and states.
- Lose business.

6. Develop and coordinate the work of workforce development agencies, thereby increasing capacity and outreach

While it is recognized that workforce development resources are available from various agencies, some are underutilized and disjointed. There are opportunities for agencies to build capacity to expand their organizational reach and increase public access to their services. Partnerships with other providers afford workforce development agencies additional funding opportunities, improved efficiencies, and less redundancy.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation Responsibility

- Regional agencies can assist in facilitation of partnerships.
- Identify an umbrella organization that can provide an incentive/carrot for collaboration (e.g. regional skills alliance, WIRED).

Funding and other challenges

- It may be necessary to identify some monetary incentive for collaboration. The willingness to share attained resources is improbable.
- Some funding contingencies that WFD organizations must adhere to are very defined and inflexible, therefore creating potential compliance problems.
- Issues related to territorial concerns.
- Employability of target population.
- If partnering = less accountability, then it can diminish customer service.
- Trust building.
- Inter-agency competition for similar funding.
- Addressing duplication of services.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Employer/business sector will have poor perception of WFD agencies and less willingness to work with them.
- Service population/ workforce will be underserved due to inefficiencies and lack of efficacy.

7. Regularly survey employers to better understand and effectively implement necessary services

Workforce development agencies need a better understanding of employer needs.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Individual WFD agencies are responsible for communicating with businesses.

- Ideally, a partnership between a workforce development agency alliance and the American Society of Employers (ASE) can be formed to attain information already acquired by the ASE through survey (with a few survey question additions).

Funding and other challenges

- Necessary to identify/sell mutual benefit to ASE to avoid service charges.

- If feedback acquired by ASE differs from current workforce development programming, an advocacy campaign to change policy will need to occur to accommodate business needs.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Inability to adequately service employers and workforce.

8. Communicate the benefits of workforce development programs through stronger marketing and public education

Lack of awareness by the public about the skills needed for employment and the resources available. Lack of awareness by employers regarding the ability for workforce development agencies to assist in hiring and training qualified employees. A major public awareness campaign (similar to MEDC's *Pure Michigan* and the *Upper Hand*) should be implemented to inform the public of available workforce development resources.

Workforce Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Local WFD agencies and state government.

- Partnership with local chambers of commerce.

Funding and other challenges

- Budget constraints and revenue shortages.

- Partnerships may require additional funding for public awareness campaign.

- This is an immediate issue and needs to be addressed as soon as possible , but marketing campaigns take time to develop.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Underutilization of resources available.

- Continued mismatch of labor supply vs. labor demand.

- Increased difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled workforce and employers.

9. Create a centralized resource for information on education and workforce development needs and resources

While the federal Workforce Investment Act and state programs provide considerable resources for workforce development, many other organizations are also involved in filling the gaps left by these programs, or providing programs that are designed for specific or local conditions. Centralizing information on workforce development resources makes the system more efficient and effective by helping stakeholders identify where different assistance may be available.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Department of Labor and Economic Growth or a regional agency such as SEMCOG.

Funding and other challenges

- Would need additional funding to undertake this project.
- Needs commitment of all stakeholders to participate in developing the inventory.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Lack of efficiency in use of government resources.
- Duplication of resources.
- Limited effectiveness of programs.

Vibrant Communities

The task force recognized vibrant communities as a strategy for creating the environment to attract businesses and employees. Local governments have an important role here, but success depends on collaboration with business, education, and nonprofits to create and promote the assets of the community, which includes the quality of schools. The Vibrant Communities workgroup developed recommendations that address the relationship between vibrant communities and workforce development. CEOs for Cities, a national think tank, found that 70 percent of highly mobile 25-34 year olds with a college degree say they decide where to live first and then find a job. It is by enhancing/creating physical assets, developing human assets, marketing/promoting existing assets, and enhancing mobility that the region can compete for educated, skilled, and entrepreneurial talent.

10. Ensure community sustainability by redeveloping brownfields and promoting building reuse and rehabilitation

Preserving of historic buildings, reusing older buildings, and redeveloping contaminated or blighted land enables mature communities to protect historic assets, maximize use of existing infrastructure and ensure community sustainability. While reuse/rehabilitation may not be possible in every situation, there are several state and federal programs available to assist in redeveloping historical, blighted, and brownfield properties.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Collaborative effort of several entities, with local government providing a key role.
- SEMCOG assistance by continuing to identify best practice case studies and examples of intergovernmental cooperation.
- Local government needs to lead a multi-departmental effort.
- Necessary ordinances and ordinance contingencies.

Funding and other challenges

- Higher costs associated with redevelopment.
- Current market values.
- Perception of over-regulation

- Education/training end-users in utilizing the brownfield tool.

- Local governments could develop a competition between themselves.

- Need to evaluate from a regional or sub-regional perspective (e.g., CWW, DCC).

- Address from multi-faceted perspective: political, structural, emotional.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Unproductive use.

- More blight.

- Deterioration of historic assets.

11. Create communities that have unique character, enabling residents to feel a distinct sense of pride about their community, and that will attract future residents

Whether traditional downtowns or neighborhood commercial districts, a sense of place is increasingly important to young professionals. While a sense of place may mean something different to different people, economic developers generally focus on defining and building upon unique assets within a community, developing a central focal point, and creating the environment where communities can reinvent themselves to sustain vitality. Creating, enhancing, and marketing historic assets, developing modern amenities such as wireless Internet, and strengthening established downtowns and neighborhood commercial centers are all part of creating a unique experience for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Collaborative effort within community including the private and public sector, including: local government, real estate professionals, block/neighborhood organizations, schools.

- Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) working in partnership with local governments, businesses and resident volunteers.

- County government for wireless.

- SEMCOG can provide best practices from other communities.

- Local government (cities, villages, townships).

Funding and other challenges

- Volunteers can help with in-kind support.

- Fundraising efforts as effort grows.

- Cable television (local access) broadcasting efforts.

- Synchronizing stakeholder agenda collaboration issues.

- Need core group dedication.

- Buy-in from local community to encourage use of area.

- Traffic control.

- Marketing professionals for national versus local efforts.

- Newspaper media can help to promote.

- Critical core/research assets.

- Need to educate residents/local communities of benefits to gain community.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Lack of identity for community leading to lack of enthusiasm by targeted demographic draw.

- Lost opportunities to market vital assets.

- Lack of draw resulting in a stagnant community.

- Region not keeping current with technology trends.

12. Develop a range of housing within a community to ensure long-term sustainability of communities as residents' housing needs change

Housing choices lead to community stability. They provide opportunities for residents to remain in an area as their housing needs change. Single-family housing, condos, rental housing, lofts, assisted/supportive housing, and mixed-use developments appeal to people at different stages of their lives and, ultimately, strengthen a community. Currently, a statewide coalition of housing and community development advocates is promoting the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund, an effort to raise $100 million that "will allow Michigan cities and communities to compete for, attract and retain the brightest and best workers in the country. The program concentrates efforts in downtowns, neighborhoods, affordable housing and supportive housing" and recognizes that when you keep up neighborhoods and housing, you have a place that people want to be. In addition, there are several federal and state programs that support housing initiatives — the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership, and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) programs for homebuyers, homeowner assistance, and housing rehabilitation.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Builders, developers, planners, non-profits (CHDO).

- Market.

- Homebuilders association.

- Elected officials.

Funding and other challenges

- Affordability of establishing adequate infrastructure.

- Adequate infrastructure support for housing (need for development impact studies).

- Homeownership sustainability.

- Transitional housing options for young professionals, families, empty-nesters.

- Lack of workforce housing.

- Foreclosure rates and blight.

- Not-in-my-backyard attitudes (NIMBY).

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Gaps in housing options (e.g., insufficient housing for those employed in the service sectors).

- Unsustainable communities.

13. Focus on recreational opportunities that result in community safety, wellness, and reinvestment

Recreation is an important component of a community's quality of life. It can attract people who are looking for nature and walking trails, opportunities for active sports, and recreation centers. Recreation can connect families, reduce adult and juvenile crime, and build stable communities. Local governments face the dilemma of providing "essential" services such as public safety versus "desired" services such as recreation. As a result, several communities in Southeast Michigan are partnering with neighboring communities, the county, the education community, and the private sector to provide recreation opportunities more efficiently.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Counties and local communities.
- Governments partnering with the private sector.
- Counties.

Funding and other challenges

- Public funding challenges.
- The economy can affect the capacity of businesses to participate in recreation programs.
- Crossing jurisdictional boundaries.
- Involving all key stakeholders.
- Balancing the need to provide "essential" services compared to "desirable" services.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Loss of mobile young people, families, and seniors to communities with recreation programs.

14. Promote citizen participation and volunteerism to create a sense of ownership and vested interest in community success

Sustainable communities have strong participation by citizens. Communities that have unique assets, historic sites, and other community facilities that create pride are more likely to attract participation by community groups and residents.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Service organizations.
- Participation in local government boards and commissions.
- Community and neighborhood groups.
- Community development corporations.
- Volunteer Centers (United Way)

Funding and other challenges

- Perceived time commitment attached to volunteering.
- Potential lack of support/lack of interest.

- Governments, along with the public and private sectors, need to market potential opportunities for volunteers.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Lack of cohesion in the community.

- Limited progress on community projects.

15. Recognize diversity as an asset and encourage a diverse population (e.g., seniors, youths, immigrants)

SEMCOG's demographic forecast indicates that over the next 30 years, there will be major changes in the population structure of the region. In particular, there will be a doubling of the senior population and a decline in the working-age population as a result of smaller households and migration. The population will also be more diverse with increasing numbers of Hispanic and Asian immigrants. The changing demographics provide both challenges and opportunities for the region's economic development prospects. To make the region desirable to existing residents and attractive to immigrants that have the necessary skills, we must recognize diversity as an asset and provide for the needs of a diverse population. Tools available to address these goals include the Cool Cities and Michigan Main Street programs that help create vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods. Senior programs help support aging-in-place and housing options. Neighborhood-based programs help newcomers settle into their communities. Community arts festivals highlight diversity within communities.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- Collaborative effort of several entities.

- Federal level: HUD, Department of Commerce.

- State level: MSHDA, MEDC, DLEG.

- Local level; local governments, community groups, area agencies on aging.

Funding and other challenges

- State of the economy in Michigan.

- Validating the issues.

- Overcoming history of institutional racism.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Break down in support systems.

- Inability to maximize assets.

16. Support all modes of mobility

Transportation (both roads and public transit) is vital to the movement of people and goods and provides connectivity to places within and outside of the region. A variety of transportation options also increases a region's marketability. Transportation barriers that prevent people from getting to work is a major problem in parts of the region, because connecting workers to jobs is vital to the region's economic development. Alternative transportation programs such as employer-based shuttles, vanpools, and transit help some workers get to jobs, but many are localized or limited in scope. The region needs to increase the range of transportation options to help people get to jobs, as well as encourage movement within the region for work and recreation.

Workgroup Assertions
Implementation responsibility

- MDOT (with federal, state, local transportation funds).
- Transit providers.
- SEMCOG.
- Collaboration between local governments with DDAs, business groups, and county and state transportation departments for sidewalk improvements, road/street improvements.
- Employers.

Funding and other challenges

- State and federal budget constraints.
- Some grant dollars could be available.
- Costs associated with infrastructure.
- Diversity education.
- NIMBY attitudes around transit.
- Long and expensive process.
- Auto-dominated mentality.

Consequences of not addressing recommendation

- Not being attractive to workers and business.
- Increased auto traffic congestion.
- Limited access to jobs and workers.
- Could result in unhealthy communities/environment.

Conclusion

Workforce development is one of the greatest economic challenges currently facing the region. The current problems are exacerbated by the demographic forecast for the region that shows aging of the population and a reduction in the number of working age people in the next 30 years. This has serious consequences for workforce development.

SEMCOG's Task Force on Workforce Development in the Changing Economy and SEMCOG's Education Advisory Council are working to help Southeast Michigan communities adjust to the new economic reality caused by changes in the region's economy, and to provide practical ideas and assistance to help address the consequences of this change.

Objectives

- Raise awareness among SEMCOG members of the resources available for workforce development in the region,

- Advocate for policies that will help improve the economic conditions in the region by developing recommendations for governments, business, and education, and

- Provide technical assistance to create vibrant communities that attract people and investment, and create an inclusive region.

Recommendations

1. Ensure coordination of all levels of education so that students can build upon previous educational experiences and prepare for lifelong learning.

2. Make education and training more affordable.

3. Align current curriculum skills with future workforce needs.

4. Insist that early childhood education remains a priority.

5. Encourage organizations (e.g., education, business, industry, government, social services, parents, faith-based groups) that support workforce development to work together.

6. Develop and coordinate the work of workforce development agencies, thereby increasing capacity and outreach.

7. Regularly survey employers to better understand and effectively implement necessary services.

8. Communicate the benefits of workforce development programs through stronger marketing and public education.

9. Create a centralized resource for information on education and workforce development needs and resources.

10. Ensure community sustainability by redeveloping brownfields and promoting building re-use and rehabilitation

11. Create communities that have unique character, enabling residents to feel a distinct sense of pride about their community, and that will attract future residents.

12. Develop a range of housing within a community to ensure long-term sustainability of communities as residents' housing needs change.

13. Focus on recreational opportunities that result in community safety, wellness, and reinvestment.

14. Promote citizen participation and volunteerism to create a sense of ownership and vested interest in community success.

15. Recognize diversity as an asset and encourage a diverse population (e.g., seniors, youths, immigrants.

16. Support all modes of mobility.

Next Steps

- While all of these recommendations are important to the region's future, SEMCOG will focus on implementing certain recommendations and work collaboratively with partner organizations to promote the others. SEMCOG's main focus will be on:

- Working with its Education Advisory Council on promoting alignment of the education curriculum with business needs;

- Advocating for legislation on behalf of local governments and the education community to support these recommendations;

- Encouraging organizations (e.g., education, business, industry, government, social services, faith-based groups, and others) that support workforce development to work together by providing a forum for discussion at its Community and Economic Development Advisory Council meetings, and by promoting public/private partnerships;

- Actively developing planning tools and promoting best practices for creating vibrant communities; and

- Supporting efforts to improve the economic development infrastructure in Southeast Michigan such as increasing the capacity and outreach of workforce development agencies and supporting all modes of mobility.

Appendix A: Task Force Members

Bob Apczynski, Employment Svc. Coord.
Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Dev. Bd.

Eileen Bagley, Director
Southfield Career Center

Halyna Bialczyk, Consultant
Wayne RESA

Cynthia Bell
Detroit Workforce Development Department

Mary E. Blackmon, President
Wayne County RESA Board of Education

Barry Blauer
Oakland County School Board

Carol Churchill, President
Mid Michigan Community College
(Formerly of Macomb Community College)

Leslie Donovan
Cleary University

Joe Evans
The Guidance Center

Donald Fracassi, Councilman
City of Southfield

Pan Godchaux
Vice President/Board of Education, Oakland Schools

Janisse Green Stewart, Manager
City of Detroit Workforce Development Department

Ashini Harris, Government Affairs Specialist
Focus: HOPE

Graydon Krapohl, Project Manager
University of Michigan

Glenn Lapin, Director, Planning and Development
Detroit Renaissance

More Layen, Principal Program Planner
Detroit Workforce Development Department

Deborah Macon, Trustee
W. Bloomfield Twp.

Max McCullough, Vice President
Macomb ISD

*Kevin McNamara, Commissioner
Wayne County Commissioner
Task Force Chairperson

Lawrence Molnar, Director EDA
U of M Center/Econ Divers.

Don Morandini, Deputy Director
Macomb County Planning

Traci Odom, Community Development Liaison
Habitat for Humanity Detroit

Jack O'Reilly, Mayor
City of Dearborn
(former Executive Director of SEMCA)

James Pawlak, Director
Jewish Vocational Services

Charlotte Paquette, Admissions Representative
Cleary University

Sue Pilon, Planning Director
Downriver Community Conference

Dona Ponepinto, Vice President Resource Investment & Community Partnerships
United Way of Southeast Michigan

Chris Rayes, Director/Community Services
City of St. Clair Shores

Geri Rinschler
Oakland County School Board

Gregory Roberts, Director, Community & Faith-Based Initiatives
Governor's Southeast Michigan Office

Susan Rowe, Councilwoman
City of Wayne

Appendix B: Workgroup Participants

Bob Apczynski, Employment Svc. Coord.
Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board

Halyna Bialczyk, Consultant
Wayne County RESA Board of Education

Mary E. Blackmon, President
Wayne County RESA Board of Education

Joe Evans
The Guidance Center

Ashini Harris, Gov. Affairs Spec.
Focus: HOPE

Sujuan Johnson, Deputy Director
Governor's Office of Community and Faith Based Initiatives

Graydon Krapohl
University of Michigan

Deborah Macon, Trustee
W. Bloomfield Twp.

James Pawlak, Director
Jewish Vocational Services

Susan Rowe, Councilwoman
City of Wayne

Kara Schrader, Planner
St. Clair County MPC

Denise VanHee, Program Coordinator.
Southfield Michigan Works

Kathleen Kline Hudson,
Livingston County Planning Department

Appendix C: Speakers at Task Force Meetings

John Almstadt, Manager
Oakland County Workforce Development

Karla Campbell, Manager, Economic Development Job Training
Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Gregory Handel, Senior Director, Workforce Development
Detroit Regional Chamber

Ashini Harris, Govt. Affairs Specialist
Focus: HOPE

The Honorable Kim Meltzer
Michigan State Representative, District 33

Kurt Metzger, Research Director
United Way of Southeastern Michigan

Brenda Njiwaji, Director, Workforce Development
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth

Dona Ponepinto, Vice President, Resource Investment
United Way of Southeastern Michigan

James Rogers, Data Center Manager
SEMCOG