

Florence County Advisory Committee Economic S.W.O.T Results

4/15/2009

Strengths

- Natural resources
- Water recreation
- Trail systems
- Public land
- Forestry
- Parks and recreation (trails...)
- Waterfalls
- Natural Resources (Timber restoration in the 1930's)
- Timber
- Forest land
- Rivers and lakes
- Timber industry – II
- Extensive timber resource to supply more value added woof businesses
- Large, beautiful tracts of public land for any type of outdoor recreation = tourism growth potential
- Big network of trails and roads for ATV's, snowmobile's, and silent sports
- Rural emphasis
- Affordable housing
- Low crime
- Good work ethic
- Hard working workforce and volunteers
- Low cost of living, safe, small community to raise a family
- Can draw our labor force from Michigan
- Good base of small business entrepreneurs o mentor new businesses
- Dedicated and organized EDC providing many new services and resources to small businesses
- Newly renamed, Chamber of Commerce with rising membership and new goals.
- Economic development coordinator
- Economic development area
- Industrial park
- Pine River Hydro Dam
- Florence utility and town of Florence equipment and crew
- Fire departments
- Rescue squad
- Schools finances have improved and image is slowly being addressed
- Nearby college system
- Regional economy fits almost all needs
- Florence downtown is much more attractive and walkable than it was
- St. Vincent Depaul store
- County HWY/State & Federal HWY, US 2, 70, 101
- County board willing to provide opportunities for new businesses

Weaknesses

- Transportation (long distance)
- Resistance to change
- High tax
- Reliance on state funded programs
- Declining family
- Limited customer base
- School maintenance, quality curriculum
- Maintaining volunteers (rescue squads, etc)
- Older housing
- Dilapidated commercial buildings
- Lack of industrial areas open to attract business
- Lack of hotel/motel to keep people here
- Inability to bring in outside labor
- Need to hire from outside the county
- Farming has been phased out
- Need more commercial development
- Not listening to the people when they vote No on referendums
- High taxes
- Residents use Iron Mountain/Kingsford for businesses (grocery stores, etc.)
- Many landowners are non-residents and do not use local businesses for half or more of the year.
- Need more small light industrial parks throughout the county
- Logging 95% of farms
- Expand sewer and water district
- Need year around class “A” roads in some areas
- No rail service
- Yeas of negative press from school issues (families won’t move here and some have left)
- Lack of business owner input on EDC, county and town boards
- Boards against change, won’t benchmark and learn from other areas
- Not enough funding for economic development and tourism efforts
- Too close to big box retailers in Iron Mountain, few people buy local
- Some business owners do poorly with customer service
- Young people have to mover away to find jobs and lifestyles they seek
- No more rail service, needed by some forest industry companies
- Tourism industry pay is low and seasonal
- Downtown Florence needs more buildings/retail – industrial park lots are not build ready
- Property taxes are very high
- “Good old boy”
- Diversity of industry
- Expanded grocery/retail
- Elderly services/housing
- Drug enforcement
- DA
- Sheriff

- Too much public land
- No rail system
- Too much dependency on wood industry
- Wilderness Area National Forest
- Distances from markets
- Shabby looking community
- Not all townships supportive of economic development

Opportunities

- More natural resources exposure
- More healthcare facilities / nursing homes
- Need pharmacy
- Better communication throughout all towns to county
- Pellet plant or bio-diesel plants
- Availability of certified wood (SFI/FSC)
- Expanding recreation trails
- Hotels/motels to lodge tourists using recreation trails
- Change the perception of the school system
- Return of the small family farm
- Release run-of-river status on all rivers with hydro electric dams and operate plants at maximum until alternative energy is developed, except during spawning season
- Green energy must be supported
- A youth center ages 14 to 18
- A roller rink
- Winter skating rink with a warming house
- Keep up on our parks at the lakes
- Internet businesses
- Florence industrial park
- State/Federal assistance for green industries
- Natural resources
- Near medical facilities
- Via TIF district formation attract a chain hotel developer (current lack of lodging)
- Work to develop build ready sites (1 large, 2 small) in industrial park
- Find additional funding for EDC's growing programs, services and efforts
- Target top 3 regional industries to grow associated suppliers or spin-offs
- Promote benefits of "work where you play" to seasonal home homeowners
- Perform targeted attraction of alumni who have been gone 10-20 years
- Form informal network of retired transplants with variety of expertise
- Target biofuel/biomass emerging industries for new company
- Develop Hillcrest school as multipurpose voc school/incubation/4k-2
- Support "home producers" networking for joint selling and promoting
- Assisted living
- Hotel once economy turns around
- Invent county festival to attract people
- County administrator

- Wood resources for related businesses
- Natural resource center strengthening programs and advertisement of recreational opportunities
- Establishment of Chamber of Commerce

Threats

- Invasive species
- Maintaining social programs (funding)
- Lack of timber harvesting on National Forests
- Invasive species on timber growth and recreational areas
- Too many hotels/motels in Iron Mountain (all recreation users stay there)
- Aging timber harvesting work force
- Lack of recreational coordinator in the county
- Too many retirement homes in the county
- Lack of stable school system (perception of school not good)
- Department of Natural Resources
- Removal of Pine River hydro dam
- Run-of-river on hydro dams throughout the region
- Drug problems
- School closing – maybe consolidate
- Aging population
- Deterioration of lakes
- Schools
- Young people moving out to get a job
- Local people not using local business
- Lost grocery store, so more people have to go to Iron Mountain. Cannot loose hardware store and other retail stores
- Many services to residents/businesses being “regionalized” out of the county
- Too few people with vision and skill to run for town/county boards
- Unfunded mandates from state put more burden on local taxes
- Small businesses struggling more and more with rising costs and government regulations
- Loss of young people hurts diversity in many areas
- Negative press campaigns by a few at school continue to hurt image
- Aging population equals fewer workers, larger demand on government and less tax money.
- Foreign dumping of paper and forest products hurting top industries
- Lack of any harvesting in National Forest has driven one sawmill and several loggers out of county
- Grocery store
- Declining school enrollment
- Negative image
- Aging street lights, Main Street appearance
- Loss of young people due to lack of employment opportunities
- Need to encourage locals to shop locally