

THE ELK RAPIDS REGION

STRATEGIC VISION



OUR STORY

The history of our community is almost as old as the country itself. What began as a port became a designed resort community. The location and growth of industries grew the population to almost 3,000 by 1900. The village served as the commercial center, with people from across the region drawn to the hotels and shops lining River Street. Unfortunately, by 1916 industry operations ceased and by the Great Depression the population had decreased to less than 600 residents. But that wasn't the end of our community. Investments in a new marina and US 31 caused a tourism boom as visitors became residents, and once again our community thrived with energy and new businesses. At the turn of the millennium our community was once again facing challenges as main street businesses closed and buildings became dilapidated. Our community has faced many ups and downs throughout its history.

Today, people who love and believe in our community have generated new investments and volunteers lead events that have once again made our community attractive and desirable. Our harbor, vibrant businesses, and natural beauty draw visitors from land and water to enjoy all we have to offer. People come for the lakes, the climate, and the walkability of our safe and caring neighborhoods. But our diverse medical amenities and high-quality education system also attract people of all ages and backgrounds who now want to call our community home. More and more are going to come as they seek places that offer economic opportunity, environmental security, prosperity and quality of life, and we must be ready to take advantage while ensuring healthy aquatic and land ecosystems now and for the future.

We want to become a truly sustainable community that stops riding these waves of growth and despair. We have water capacity to accommodate growth, but we need to address housing affordability to attract a workforce that diversifies our population and our businesses' needs. Yet, we have limited land for development within the village. We need to address access to daycare for that growing workforce, we need affordable high-speed internet for the new businesses and people, and we need a better array of businesses that go beyond only those related to tourism. These needs and issues don't stop at the municipal boundary. The entire region is dealing with these issues, which means we must work together on the solutions. We will capitalize on, and secure, our natural and built assets while working with our regional neighbors, to ensure the long-term prosperity of current and future, rural and urban residents alike.

OUR VISION

Elk Rapids region is a year round community offering prosperity and an amazing quality of life for all.

WHAT WE VALUE

Communications and Engagement – Listening is a crucial part of success. As is communicating with intention and visibility. The Elk Rapids region believes in simple and clear communication through a variety of mediums to ensure all residents are included in decisions and conversations for their community's future.

Inclusive Community –The Elk Rapids region is building an inclusive and diverse future to ensure long-term success. Through housing affordability, asset planning and engagement; Elk Rapids region is committed to building an abundant community for families, seasonal workers, professionals, seniors and semi-retirees, and visitors alike.

Community Investment – Committed to attracting the right investment for the region. Investments that are aligned with intentional direction and growth for a prosperous future. A sustainable community with enduring success for our businesses, school systems, and the region

Collaboration – Elk Rapids region success depends on collaboration and pooling resources. Whether it is labor, housing, water, recreation, economic prosperity, or environmental challenges are best addressed by working together to find long-term solutions that ensure the prosperity of the citizens and businesses in the region.

ACTIONS AND MILESTONES

Communications and Engagement

1. Develop a central site to communicate information that will keep residents informed and allow them to ask questions and get appropriate information in a timely manner.
 - a. On this site, explain the rules of engagement. Ex: when can a resident expect to hear a response to their comment or question?
 - b. Ensure there is a question box at the bottom of the page.
 - c. Remove all dated and non-relevant communication points.
2. Create a communications chart that will ensure maximum reach to all residents for the right content (facebook, newspaper, newsletter, social media, etc).
3. Create regular joint sessions of critically important official organizations in order to share key objectives and activities for improved understanding, coordination, and implementation.

Inclusive and Diverse Community

1. Create a DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) Strategy that engages new and existing residents in the community that includes: age, ethnicity, culture, income, thought/education, and so on.
2. Learn the gaps of the urban and rural workforce needs in the region for a sustainable community in the future.
3. Identify land availability for diverse housing development opportunities.
4. Identify federal and state programs supporting or complimenting private sector investments in housing that can support the DEI strategy.

Community Investment

1. Create a regional economic development organization/entity.
2. Create a marketing and communication strategy with tasks and tactics to attract the missing demographics needed for the sustainability of the Elk Rapids region.
3. Develop a business gap analysis to support a four-season community.

Collaboration

1. Regular quarterly joint sessions between municipalities (the village, townships and county) to build relationships and create a common ground document.
2. Create a regional housing strategy complete with land bank and identified housing development zones.