



AGENDA 7g  
DATE 5-6-19  
Internal Memo

April 25, 2019

TO: Mark C. Meyers, City Administrator

FROM: Anthony Chandler, Director of Administrative Services

SUBJECT: Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) Baseline Report

Attached with this memo you will find the Baseline Report which serves as the formal review from the MEDC of the City's RRC self-evaluation submittal. According to the MEDC, "the Baseline Report completes a key step in the RRC process". The RRC program requires a resolution from Council approving the Baseline Report before a commitment to implementing the best practices and other recommendations listed therein can begin. Once the approval of the Baseline Report is complete, the next step in the process is the third and final phase and involves working to achieve the recommendations. The estimated timetable for the final phase is approximately 12 months to complete.

The resolution to approve the Baseline Report and continue on with the process is attached and I am requesting this item be placed on the City Council agenda for consideration at the May 6, 2019 meeting. The Memorandum from the MEDC requests that the resolution be passed within 30 days of receiving the memo and Baseline Report, which is dated April 4, 2019. As you know, we were prepared to have this on the April 16, 2019 agenda but decided to hold-off due to the large amount of items on that particular agenda. The MEDC granted us permission to extend the 30 day timeline to include the first City Council meeting in May.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Norton Shores has been a participant in the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Program since December 2017 including a Memorandum of Understanding with the MEDC followed by an evaluation of the City's baseline report; and

WHEREAS, the MEDC has established this program for the purpose of certifying Redevelopment Ready Communities and the City of Norton Shores is committed to achieving the certification by implementing best practices and recommended strategies for redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, the City of Norton Shores is in the process of formalizing a communications and marketing plan in addition to a Master Plan update, as these initiatives coincide with the recommendations set forth in the Redevelopment Ready Community Baseline Report; and

WHEREAS, following a review of the Redevelopment Ready Community Baseline Report, the City is willing to complete the recommended tasks as outlined in the aforementioned report.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Norton Shores City Council hereby authorizes implementation of the recommendations that are required to attain the Redevelopment Ready Communities Certification from the MEDC.

At a rescheduled meeting of the City Council of the City of Norton Shores, held at the Norton Shores Branch Library, 705 Seminole Road, on the 6th day of May, 2019, the foregoing resolution was moved for adoption by Council Member \_\_\_\_\_. The motion was supported by Council Member \_\_\_\_\_.

Ayes:

Nays:

---

Shelly Stibitz, City Clerk

**Memorandum**

TO: Norton Shores City Council

FROM: Pablo Majano, MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Planner

DATE: April 04, 2019

RE: **City of Norton Shores Baseline Report**

---

As the city of Norton Shores Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Planner, I am pleased to inform you that we have completed the city's formal RRC evaluation. The findings of our evaluation and recommended actions to assist the city in ultimately achieving RRC certification are included in the RRC Baseline Report. This briefing memo is intended to provide key highlights of the report and lay out the city's next steps in the RRC process.

**Redevelopment Ready Communities:** RRC is a free technical assistance program offered through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) which aims to help communities incorporate best practices in planning, zoning and economic development to encourage redevelopment and new investment. MEDC Community Development also uses RRC as a prioritization factor when determining investments through our programs (visit [www.miplace.org](http://www.miplace.org) for more information on those programs). Communities who fully align with the best practices can become RRC certified which come with its own set of benefits. Norton Shores has been formally engaged with RRC since December 2017. There are currently more than 250 communities across Michigan engaged in the program.

**Baseline Report:** The Baseline Report completes a key step in the RRC process. Using responses from Norton Shores self-evaluation, the RRC program took a deeper dive into the city's plans, zoning ordinance, site plan review process, priority development sites, training and more to make initial determinations regarding how well the city's existing practices align with the RRC best practices. Key findings include:

- The city's existing practices already align with 24% of the RRC best practices including:
  - Components of a proactive, development ready zoning ordinance; and
  - Proactive public engagement outreach efforts.
- The city is partially aligned with another 48% of the RRC best practices. Major areas of partial alignment include:
  - An active interest and foundation to support downtown development as a key economic driver for the city;
  - A streamlined development review process which could benefit from greater documentation to encourage predictability but overall is strong and development friendly;
  - Updates to the master plan in order to comply with RRC Best Practice criteria.

- Finally, the city has a handful of areas where we found little or no alignment with the best practice criteria. These include the lack of an economic development plan and marketing plan

**Reaching Certification:** With this Baseline Report in hand, the city is now ready to move into the third and final phase of the RRC process. During this final phase the city will work to address each of the best practice criteria identified as red or yellow. The report includes specific recommendations for each criterion; however, RRC is a dynamic program and is always willing to have open discussions if the city has a different idea for how to meet a best practice criterion. During this phase the city will have access to RRC technical assistance tools such as the RRC Online Library ([www.miplace.org/rrclibrary](http://www.miplace.org/rrclibrary)), guidance from your RRC Planner, and matching technical assistance funds to help with the cost of larger projects (if needed). There is no deadline for reaching certification and RRC understands that each community will approach this phase at their own pace given available resources at any given time.

**Next Steps:** The next formal step in the process is for the city to review the report and, if desired, pass a resolution to continue with RRC. Upon passage of that resolution the city can begin to access the aforementioned tools to assist with reaching full alignment (and therefore certification). *We ask that the resolution be passed within 30 days of receiving this memo.*

I look forward to working with the city as it seeks to align with the best practices. Michigan is experiencing a strong economic climate at this time and it is our hope that through the RRC best practices communities of all shapes and sizes will be a strong position to leverage the excitement around Michigan and attract additional redevelopment and investment. If you have any questions on RRC or this Baseline Report, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Pablo Majano



redevelopment ready  
communities®

# RRC Baseline Report

City of Norton Shores

February 2019

---

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

---

# Table of contents

Executive summary .....	3
Methodology .....	4
Evaluation snapshot.....	5
<b>Best Practice findings</b>	
<b>Best Practice One: Community plans and public outreach</b>	
1.1 The plans.....	6
1.2 Public participation .....	8
<b>Best Practice Two: Zoning regulations</b>	
2.1 Zoning regulations .....	10
<b>Best Practice Three: Development review process</b>	
3.1 Development review policy and procedures .....	12
3.2 Guide to Development.....	14
<b>Best Practice Four: Recruitment and education</b>	
4.1 Recruitment and orientation .....	15
4.2 Education and training .....	16
<b>Best Practice Five: Redevelopment Ready Sites®</b>	
5.1 Redevelopment Ready Sites®.....	17
<b>Best Practice Six: Community prosperity</b>	
6.1 Economic development strategy .....	18
6.2 Marketing and promotion .....	19
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>20</b>

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 projects that create places where people want to live, work and invest.

To become formally engaged in the RRC program, communities must complete the RRC self-evaluation and a community representative must attend all six best practice trainings. The governing body must also pass a resolution of intent, outlining the value the community sees in participating in the program. Representatives from City of Norton Shores' city staff submitted the self-evaluation in December 2017 and completed training in February 2017. In July 2017, city council passed a resolution of intent to participate in the program.

Through participation in the RRC certification process, Norton Shores will have the opportunity to strengthen its collaborative efforts with local partners and have the potential to both support existing talent and attract new talent to the city. Strengthening local partnerships with the planning commission, city council, tax increment finance authority, Muskegon Area First, real estate firms, property owners and residents can help the city share the workload to complete the RRC Best Practices. Developed by experts in the public and private sector, the RRC Best Practices are the standard to achieve certification. The best practices are designed to create

a predictable experience for investors, businesses and residents working within a community; communities must demonstrate that all best practice criteria have been met to receive RRC certification.

To reach certification, the city will need to continue its proactive efforts in planning and zoning and solidify impressive resources that are already available on the city's website. A capital improvements plan (CIP) will need to be developed in order to meet RRC criteria. The CIP is a crucial document to plan for future projects that will help propel Norton Shores forward. An economic development plan and marketing strategy will need to be developed. Developing a marketing strategy will help the city prioritize resources in order to best communicate with the public. An economic development plan will assist in identifying opportunities and challenges when it comes to economic development and outline how Norton Shores plans to tackle those barriers.

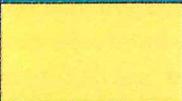
The RRC process is designed to help communities build capacity and improve their development-related practices. Ultimately, RRC is built on the idea that community development is a collaborative effort and is only successful when multiple stakeholders come to the table. With hard work and engaging with different stakeholders, Norton Shores will be well positioned to move forward in the RRC process.

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 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.

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 is significantly outdated.

This report represents the community's current status in meeting all the redevelopment ready processes and practices. This baseline establishes a foundation for the community's progress as it moves forward in the program. All questions should be directed to the RRC team at [RRC@michigan.org](mailto:RRC@michigan.org).

# Evaluation snapshot

City of Norton Shores has completed 24 percent of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® criteria and is in the process of completing another 48 percent.						
1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3 (N/A)	1.1.4	1.2.1	1.2.2	1.2.3
2.1.1	2.1.2	2.1.3	2.1.4	2.1.5	2.1.6	2.1.7
2.1.8	3.1.1	3.1.2	3.1.3	3.1.4	3.1.5	3.1.6
3.1.7	3.1.8	3.2.1	3.2.2	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.2.1
4.2.2	4.2.3	4.2.4	5.1.1	5.1.2	5.1.3	5.1.4
5.1.5	5.1.6	6.1.1	6.1.2	6.2.1	6.2.2	

## Best Practice 1.1—The plans

Best Practice 1.1 evaluates community planning and how the redevelopment vision is embedded in the master plan, downtown plan and capital improvements plan. The master plan sets expectations for those involved in new development and redevelopment, giving the public some degree of certainty about the community's vision for the future, while assisting the city in achieving its stated goals. Local plans can provide key stakeholders with a road map for navigating the redevelopment process in the context of market realities and community goals.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Public Act 33 of 2008, requires that the planning commission create and approve a master plan as a guide for development and review the master plan at least once every five years after adoption. City of Norton Shores last updated their master plan in 2014. Master plans project how cities are shaped based on public input. This document is the second update to the plan that was adopted in July 2000. The way the master plan is laid out online can be a bit confusing. The documents provided include the 2014 master plan update, the 2000 master plan update and the 2008 plan update, with different information on each document. For ease of use, all information should be found on a single document such as demographics, goals and objectives, maps and local planning efforts. Since the city is due for a master plan update, it is recommended that any amendment, update or new ordinance include all information in a single document for user-friendliness.

The 2014 master plan update includes complete streets elements, bicycle and pedestrian plan, updated zoning plan and future land-use supplement. The original 2000 master plan was a three-phase process achieved through a collaborative effort between community residents and public officials. The mayor and city council appointed a study team as the first phase toward the creation of the master plan. This team involved businesses owners, public officials, residents, school district officials, planning commissioners and city council members. Workshops were also held to gather general public input. The city's master plan truly embraces the community's desired direction for the future.

Chapter 7, "Goals and Objectives," hits on key subjects,

important to Norton Shores future progress. Each subject contains background information, key strengths, current issues and recommendations. Subjects include:

- Natural features preservation;
- Economic growth;
- Parks, recreation and community center;
- Planning, zoning and growth management;
- Public services and safety;
- Regional cooperation;
- Traffic and transportation;
- Housing, neighborhoods and community;
- Government, infrastructure and finance.

The master plan does a good job identifying strategies for priority redevelopment areas. This will need to be reaffirmed or amended in the next update to the plan. Strategies should focus on core areas of the community that will help transform and shape the future of development for the community. As noted in the most recent update to the master plan, there was an addition of complete streets. There is a commitment into ensuring that all thoroughfares that are planned, designed and constructed to incorporate safety for all motorized and non-motorized users.

The zoning plan is divided into thirteen zoning districts, ranging from residential to commercial. The master plan identifies opportunities for zoning changes in order to remain consistent with the community's vision for the future of Norton Shores. The zoning plan and its identification of opportunities provides a framework for how changes can be integrated into the zoning ordinance. It is recommended that the updated master plan include a more detailed section for implementation. This includes identifying priorities, responsible parties and timelines. The implementation section will need to outline how recommendations from goals identified in the master plan will be implemented. It will be important for the implementation table to be annually reviewed. This could be done at the annual review of the master plan's progress to the governing body.

The tax increment finance authority (TIFA) plan for Norton Shores was last updated in 2016. This document should be made available online. The plan supports projects in an area of concentrated development that

## Best Practice 1.1—The plans *continued*

will implement the community vision and implement good planning practices, especially when it comes to pedestrian oriented development elements. This area will support projects catalytic to the community and that have the potential to attract/retain talent in the community. Coordination between plans is essential, especially between the master plan and capital improvements plan, as the plans lay out the foundation for desired development of projects. The plan should include projects, estimated costs and timelines for project completion and ensure those projects, and timelines work cohesively with the master plan and capital improvements plan.

Over the years, as cities grow, infrastructure needs to adapt and pave the way for future growth. Infrastructure needs to consider new technology, transportation laws, building codes, building design and city layout. Therefore,

it will be important for Norton Shores to keep up with those changes. A comprehensive capital improvement plan (CIP) is an essential tool for the planning and development of the physical and economic well-being of a community. The CIP is a tool used to implement the vision and goals identified in other plans, including the master plan and downtown plan, and provides a link between planning and budgeting for capital projects. Located within the budget on page 155, there is a CIP projecting two-years out, beginning in 2017. The capital improvements plan will need to be updated in order to align with the RRC Best Practice and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008). Staff in all departments should review the CIP and work to prioritize infrastructure needs, ensuring close alignment between community-developed plans and implementation.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
1.1.1	The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt a master plan to align with RRC Best Practice criteria and MPEA guidelines	14 months
1.1.2	The governing body has adopted a downtown plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Post TIFA plan online <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure TIFA plan includes all items per RRC criteria	7 months
1.1.3	The governing body has adopted a corridor plan.	N/A	
1.1.4	The governing body has adopted a capital improvements plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt a six-year capital improvement plan	7 months

## Best Practice 1.2—Public participation

Best Practice 1.2 assesses how well the community identifies and engages its stakeholders on a continual basis. Public participation aims to prevent or minimize disputes by creating a process for resolving issues before they become an obstacle. Predictability and public support are essential to attract the right type of development to a community. Developers and city staff are not the only key stakeholders in what happens in the city, proactive public input is critical in creating a harmonious community.

Norton Shores currently uses the basic methods of communication by following the Open Meetings Act and newspaper postings. Additionally, the city uses proactive outreach tools including community workshops, newspaper postings, announcement at meetings and social networking. Staff and partners should consider adding additional proactive methods of engagement in order to ensure all efforts are being done to outreach to the public. Creating a straightforward process to ensure the voices of community members are heard helps create a sense of place, which has the potential to attract new community members to participate in the future of Norton Shores. In order to facilitate consistent future public engagement, the city should formalize a comprehensive public engagement strategy. This plan can help the city determine which methods of engagement it would like to pursue, identify when and how each method would be used, and establish ways to measure the effectiveness of each method. When formalizing the public participation strategy, the plan should identify goals and objectives, key stakeholders, methods of communication, strategies for outreach and how to communicate results to the public.

Once the plan is created, the public participation plan should identify local and regional economic

development, state and municipal partners. News and media outlets are another opportunity for partnerships in public participation in an effort to get news out on community events, meetings, or seeking public input. The plan can also be a chance for the city to engage stakeholders to identify opportunities for partnerships. The final component of any public participation strategy is to ensure that the results of public participation efforts are shared so stakeholders who were not able to attend can learn what happened and those who did attend can see the results of their efforts. Information like this should be highlighted via social media or be made available on the city website's homepage or the community newsletter. An explanation of how the city will share public input results should be included in the plan. When completed, it can be used as a guiding document for the creation of future plans.

Based on the information obtained during this evaluation, this report recommends the following to help the city reach RRC certification:

- Describe public participation methods and appropriate venues to use each method;
- Identify key stakeholders;
- Develop specific actions for meeting objectives;
- Be formatted to allow a third party to adhere to the public participation strategy if needed;
- Create a method to track and share success of various outreach methods;
- Establish a method to assist a developer in soliciting input on a proposal early in the site plan approval process.

With this information outlined in a plan, the city and its stakeholders will have a clear understanding of expectations for communicating in a consistent and transparent manner.

## Best Practice 1.2—Public participation *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
1.2.1	The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a formalized public participation plan	10 months
1.2.2	The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.	✓	
1.2.3	The community shares outcomes of public participation processes.	✓	

## Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations

Best Practice 2.1 evaluates the city's zoning ordinance and assesses how well it implements the goals of the master plan. Zoning is a significant mechanism for achieving desired land use patterns and quality development. Foundationally, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA), Public Act 110 of 2006, requires that a zoning ordinance be based on a plan to help guide zoning decisions. The zoning code for City of Norton Shores was last updated in October 2018. Information on the zoning ordinance can be found online in a program called MUNICODE. Chapter 48 of Norton Shores' zoning code provides a clear set of definitions in Article I, and requirements for each zoning district in Article VIII. The mayor appoints a building and zoning administrator who is charged with enforcing the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance will need to be reviewed to make sure roles and responsibilities are clearly documented. For instance, it states that the public works director may administratively approve a site plan without planning commission approval for certain items, the director is not mentioned elsewhere in the ordinance. The city could provide a visual aid, similar to how site plans are determined administrative or planning commission review, in order to describe uses allowed per district on one page. A graphic land-use matrix could also be developed to determine what uses are permitted by right or require a special land use. When it comes to flexible tools used to encourage development and redevelopment the city meets this criterion by clearly establishing special land use procedures are clearly defined under Article II of the zoning ordinance. While the ordinance allows for one new-economy type use, indoor recreation, there should be revisions to allow for more such as:

- Arts and crafts studios
- Breweries/distilleries
- Medical offices
- Catering services
- Film industry

A city's zoning ordinance is the regulatory tool used to enforce decisions based off guidance from the city's master plan. City of Norton Shores will need to update their master plan this coming year, this will require a review both the master plan and zoning plan in order

to determine the changes needed to be made to the zoning map and ordinance. Permitted uses are approved by the planning commission, special land-uses are approved by city council with a recommendation from planning commission. It is recommended that the zoning ordinance be reviewed to allow for mixed-used by right in core areas for redevelopment. Whether that be the C-3, Major Commercial District, or the C-2, General Retail District. When it comes to allowing for a variety of housing options the ordinance allows for accessory dwelling units, cluster housing, and attached single-family units.

It is a best practice for RRC communities to implement one or more of the following elements in areas of concentrated development:

- Built-to lines
- Open store fronts
- Outdoor dining
- Minimum ground floor transparency
- Streetscape elements (trees, seating, pedestrian-scale lighting and signage)

It is recommended that one or more of the elements be included in the chosen areas of concentrated development for Norton Shores. Additions of zero setbacks, requiring of a percentage of windows to be exposed along a major street, outdoor dining, or requirements of streetscape elements with new buildings are options that could be considered. Non-motorized standards should also be implemented to create more walkable pedestrian-friendly environments. RRC communities also have the ability to address both historical and environmental preservation. Environmental preservation efforts are established under Article V, "Environmental Regulations," and Article IX, "Land buffers, Greenbelts, and Berms." Norton Shores will need to include some language regarding historic preservation. Standard language on preserving historic structures, materials or character can be provided.

As seen in many cities, parking has become either overly burdensome or underused. For this reason is it important for cities to apply flexible parking standards. Norton Shores, under Article X, "Off Street Parking Requirements," provides joint parking opportunities

## Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations *continued*

with two or more buildings. It is recommended that an additional standard of flexible parking be implemented. The additional standard could be:

- Reduction or elimination of required parking when on-street parking is available;
- Parking maximums;
- Payment in lieu of parking;
- Parking waivers.

Norton Shores understands the benefits of green infrastructure, as the city encourages sustainable practices such as parking lot landscaping. For every parking lot with 10 or more parking spaces one tree shall be required per 10 parking spaces. The ordinance also requires that the parking lot site plan include bioretention swale or other low impact design solutions to utilize rainwater for on-site irrigation.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
2.1.1	The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the master plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Review zoning ordinance to align with updated master plan	12 months
2.1.2	The zoning ordinance provides for areas of concentrated development in appropriate locations and encourages the type and form of development desired.	✓	
2.1.3	The zoning ordinance includes flexible tools to encourage development and redevelopment.	✓	
2.1.4	The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.	✓	
2.1.5	The zoning ordinance includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.	✓	
2.1.6	The zoning ordinance includes flexible parking standards.	✓	
2.1.7	The zoning ordinance includes standards for green infrastructure.	<input type="checkbox"/> Include an additional green infrastructure standard	5 months
2.1.8	The zoning ordinance is user-friendly.	✓	

## Best Practice 3.1—Development review policy and procedures

Best Practice 3.1 evaluates the city's development review policies and procedures, project tracking and internal/external communications. An efficient site plan review process is integral to being redevelopment ready and can assist a community in attracting investment dollars while ensuring its zoning ordinance and other laws are followed.

Norton Shores site review process can be found in Division 3, Article II, of the zoning ordinance. When it comes to a site plan review it is unclear who is the point person to receive an application, as the ordinance states for a site plan review the developer will submit an application to the planning commission. Under a special land use an application can be submitted through the building and zoning administrator. As mentioned, under Best Practice 2, the zoning ordinance should be reviewed for clarity in order to better understand the process. Both processes include a detailed list of submittal procedures and site plan review procedures. Departments involved in the site plan review, that meet weekly are Zoning, Department of Public Works, Fire, Building and Economic Development Division.

RRC communities have the ability to provide pre-conceptual meetings open to the general public. Pre-conceptual meetings should be offered and advertised as much as possible. This will help to ensure all materials are being turned in on time and give the building and zoning administrator and applicant an opportunity to discuss any hurdles. This may lead to recommending the applicant to discuss projects with neighboring property owners or avoiding being delayed at planning commission review due to a missing item.

According to the zoning ordinance, notice

requirements are required for both site plans and special use permits. Special use permit hearings are held within 45 days of submittal; however, it is unclear when site plan review hearings are made. It is important to understand the process from day one of application submittal and know what to expect. This improves efficiency, transparency and predictability in a site plan review process. It is recommended that a flow chart is developed that outlines the site plan and special use permit process to include steps and timelines. This a perfect opportunity to advertise conceptual meetings. As an added observation, the community can expedite the site plan review process even more by not having to require notified public hearings for site plans that are permitted uses.

Based on the information obtained during this evaluation, this report recommends the following to help the city reach RRC certification:

- Outline pre-development meetings with staff and create a checklist of expectations to help ensure these meetings are as productive as possible for both city staff and the developer.
- Clearly identify who intakes planning applications
- Clearly document internal review process
- Develop an easy to follow flowchart of development processes that includes timelines.
- Create a feedback mechanism to gather input from applicants after they go through the process. This input should be reviewed by the site review team and planning commission to identify potential improvements to the process.
- Review ordinance to identify a clear review process.

## Best Practice 3.1—Development review policy and procedures *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
3.1.1	The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	<input type="checkbox"/> Review zoning ordinance to ensure content is up-to-date	5 months
3.1.2	The community has a qualified intake professional.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly identify who is responsible for intake of all applications	5 months
3.1.3	The community defines and offers pre-application site plan review meetings for applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/> Outline pre-development meetings with staff and create a checklist of expectations to help ensure these meetings are as productive as possible for both city staff and the developer	10 months
3.1.4	The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.	✓	
3.1.5	The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Document internal review process	6 months
3.1.6	The community promptly acts on development requests.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop an easy to follow flowchart of development processes that includes timelines	10 months
3.1.7	The community has a method to track development projects.	✓	
3.1.8	The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review and approval procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a feedback mechanism to gather input from applicants after they go through the process. This input should be reviewed by the site review team and planning commission to identify potential improvements to the process.	10 months

## Best Practice 3.2—Guide to Development

Best Practice 3.2 evaluates the availability of the community’s development information. All of the pertinent planning and zoning information a developer or applicant needs, can be found on the planning/zoning division web page of the city website. The webpage links to important documents such as:

- Master plan
- Zoning ordinance
- 2018 meeting schedule
- Zone change requests

In order to this to meet this best practice, additional information will need to be added. This includes:

- Fee schedule for all applications
- Building permits
- TIFA plan
- Any other document that will expedite the permitting process.

The more documents are available online the better.

This has the potential to increase efficiency and allow an investor or a local resident to go online and search for all the information they need. The building department web section is a good example of all data being available online, from checklist and fees to permits applications.

Once a flowchart is created to meet Best Practice 3.1.7, it should be included on the webpage ensuring that navigating the development process will be efficient and everyone involved will understand roles and responsibilities, even if the applicant is new to the development review process. It is essential that applicants understand review and permitting costs at the start of the process, so there are no surprises later. The fee schedule is reviewed annually during the budget process to ensure that costs are fair and affordable for their customer. The city accepts credit cards as a form of payment which provides customers with a convenient method to pay development fees.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
3.2.1	The community maintains an online guide to development that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Include all forms in one location online or develop a stand-alone developer resource guide	8 months
3.2.2	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. Such officials sit on the numerous boards, commissions and committees that advise city leaders on key policy decisions. Norton Shores does not provide information for boards and commissions online. Under the frequently asked questions section, there is a tab that states city council, boards and commissions. Information under this tab has information on how to get on a council agenda, when meetings take place and how to contact a city council member. It is recommended that a new tab be created for city council, boards and commission so it stands out online. An application should be made available, along side a set of expectations

and skill sets wanted or required. If a potential board member does not have Internet access to gain information on a board or commission a person can visit the volunteer services department for more information.

When new members join a board or commission it is important to ensure they are up-to-speed on their responsibilities and relevant issues. The city currently does not provide orientation packets to appointed or elected positions within the city. The comprehensive orientation packets should include bylaws, adopted plans, applicable state and city laws, rules of procedure, and roles in relation to other boards and Open Meetings Act information.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
4.1.1	The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create desired skill sets for development related boards and commissions <input type="checkbox"/> Have board application available online	5 months
4.1.2	The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development-related boards and commissions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a comprehensive packet for incoming board members and commissioners	5 months

Best Practice 4.2—Education and training

Best Practice 4.2 assesses how a community encourages training and tracks educational activities for appointed and elected officials and staff. Trainings provide officials and staff with an opportunity to expand their knowledge and ultimately make more informed decisions about land use and redevelopment issues which increases predictability for the development process overall. An effective training program includes four components: financial resources to support training, a plan to identify priority topics and track attendance, consistent encouragement to attend trainings and sharing of information between boards and commissions to maximize the return on investment for the community.

Norton Shores will need to demonstrate how the city budgets funds to support training for staff and elected officials. It is recommended that a method to track attendance of trainings through a spreadsheet or other system be developed. A training tracker, versus recording through minutes, will help identify who attended what training and could target beneficial trainings for staff and elected officials in one location. This process is very important to have a record of trainings that will support staff, board and commissions with information that can greatly benefit the community. Information sharing is another key component to this process, so those who were not able to attend the training can have an idea of any

valuable lessons learned that will benefit the community.

A valuable resource the city has is its website and social media. Norton Shores does a good job advertising any news and even notices on trainings and planning meetings. It is noted that the city administrator sends weekly information updates to elected officials and staff. This is the perfect opportunity to update on any upcoming trainings during that update. Norton Shores can find many training opportunities through the Michigan Association of Planning, American Planning Association, MSU Extension, as well as visiting the MEDC community development website ([www.miplace.org](http://www.miplace.org)).

The RRC Best Practices recommend that the city establish, at a minimum, a joint annual meeting between the city council, TIFA and planning commission as the foundation of information sharing. This could also be a great opportunity for joint training. The planning commission should also prepare an annual report (as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act), in order to ensure all ideas and opportunities for improvement are being discussed and possibly implemented. Finally, to ensure information sharing occurs, time should be made on agendas for training attendees to share what they learned with those who were not at trainings.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
4.2.1	The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate how funding is allocated toward trainings for staff boards, commissions or elected officials	5 months
4.2.2	The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance of the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a method of tracking trainings attended	6 months
4.2.3	The community encourages the governing body, boards, commissions and staff to attend trainings.	✓	
4.2.4	The community shares information between the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare an annual report for the governing body	6 months

## Best Practice 5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®

Best Practice 5.1 assesses how a community identifies, visions for, and markets their priority redevelopment sites. Communities must think strategically about the redevelopment of properties and investments and should be targeted in areas that can catalyze further development around it. Instead of waiting for developers to propose projects, redevelopment ready communities identify priority sites and prepare information to assist developers in finding opportunities that match the city’s vision.

“Seminole Road and Henry Street Place Plan” is a document that is focused on a study area along US-31. The plan identifies multiple redevelopment site opportunities, design options, a market study, site advantages and a housing analysis. Norton Shores has the opportunity to pull information from sites that are already identified and as part of the RRC process the community should gather additional basic information for the sites to be housed in a different document. This includes:

- Owner contact information;
- Community contact information;
- Utilities on site;
- State equalized value;
- Wired broadband infrastructure: DSL, cable, fiber.

At least one site should be developed further into a complete property information package (PIP) which includes an expanded list of more technical items (as applicable) such as environmental conditions, incentives, traffic studies, etc. Finally, the sites should be actively marketed via the city and its economic development partners, which are identified in the economic development strategy. The PIP should carry the Norton Shores brand along with a very detailed vision, site information. There should be strong ties with the marketing strategy when developing the property information package so there is consistency between documents and how the property is being marketed. The site should have the ability to tie in with other adopted plans such as the master plan and TIFA plan, in order to ensure the community is meeting its goals on development opportunities. Creating spaces that will entice a pedestrian-oriented friendly environment and attract users to spaces of concentrated development.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
5.1.1	The community identifies and prioritizes redevelopment sites.	✓	
5.1.2	The community gathers basic information for prioritized redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather basic information for prioritized sites as outlined in the RRC Best Practices	5 months
5.1.3	The community has development a vision for the priority redevelopment sites.	✓	
5.1.4	The community identifies potential resources and incentives for prioritized redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify financial or other incentives for each site(s)	6 months
5.1.5	A property information package for the prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete at least one property information package	8 months
5.1.6	Prioritized redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Market the complete property information package online	12 months

**Best Practice 6.1—Economic development strategy**

Best Practice 6.1 evaluates goals and actions identified by the community to assist in strengthening its overall economic health. Strategic economic development planning is critical to attract jobs and new investment in communities; therefore, it is critical for Norton Shores to adopt a comprehensive economic development strategy. An effective economic development strategy will articulate a clear vision and strategy, drive regional and local efforts to the area in attracting the types of jobs, residents and visitors Norton Shores wants to see. A huge benefit to the community is the opportunity to partner with neighboring communities and incorporating regional economic development elements into a plan.

An economic development strategy can be incorporated into the master plan or a stand-alone document. Local economic development such as Muskegon Area First partners is a great resource Norton Shores can use to formulate an economic development strategy and assist the strategy in tying into the regional efforts.

The economic development strategy should have goals, actions, timelines and responsible parties to implement economic development efforts. RRC is a perfect opportunity to identify economic challenges and opportunities, coordinate with all stakeholders, focus on implementation, and develop a process to review actionable items annually.

Goals should tie back developed plans in the community and showcase what steps Norton Shores will take to implement a pedestrian-friendly environment, support and attract small business, and increase economic opportunity for residents and businesses. Once complete, the plan should be reviewed at least annually. The city is encouraged to continue monthly updates in the city manager report as well.

RRC has developed an excellent resource library of examples of different communities and their economic development strategies that Norton Shores could review to get an idea of how to get started.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
6.1.1	The community has approved an economic development strategy.	✓	12 months
6.1.2	The community annually reviews the economic development strategy.	✓	12 months

## Best Practice 6.2—Marketing and promotion

Best Practice 6.2 evaluates how the community promotes and markets itself. Marketing and branding are essential tools in the promotion of a community’s assets and unique attributes. People are attracted to places that evoke positive feelings and to communities that take pride in their town and their history.

It is recommended that Norton Shores activate stakeholders and work together to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy. The marketing strategy should identify opportunities in the community and outline steps to attract businesses, consumers and real estate development. Items from the economic development strategy should be identified in the marketing strategy, as well as marketing priority redevelopment sites. Key stakeholders for formulating a marketing strategy could include city council, planning commission, local business owners, neighboring municipalities, residents, and property owners. Coordinating marketing efforts with other local, regional and state partners extends the marketing message to a wider audience, providing more opportunities for prospective businesses, consumers and real estate

investors to learn about what the community has to offer. The marketing strategy should build upon the vision, values and goals outlined in locally adopted planning documents, including the master plan and economic development strategy. The RRC process is a perfect opportunity for Norton Shores to challenge themselves on developing a marketing a message to the outside community of why someone would want to live, work or explore in the community. Summarize what makes Norton Shores unique, identify who target audiences are, and develop a brand for the community.

A city’s website is often the first point of interaction between a city and its residents, businesses, potential developers and even tourists. As such, having an up-to-date and easy to navigate website is essential for any redevelopment ready community. Developers in particular will visit the website in an effort to learn more about the development process, fees, community activities and more. The city’s current website is simple to navigate and has a clean layout. As documents are completed, they should be made available online for the public or future investors to read.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
6.2.1	The community has developed a marketing strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a unified marketing strategy as outlined in Best Practice 6.2	8 months
6.2.2	The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add missing items to website as completed	12 months

## Conclusion

The RRC program assists communities in maximizing their economic potential by embracing effective redevelopment tools and best practices. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, Norton Shores is at a perfect place to take full advantage of RRC by using the best practices to ensure the processes and development-friendly atmosphere currently in place continues well into the future.

Next steps for Norton Shores include reviewing this

report of findings and determining whether these actions (and RRC certification in general) fit within the city's vision for the future. If so, the governing body should a resolution of support to proceed with the RRC program and continue efforts to complete the missing criteria. During that time, RRC will be in regular contact with the city to follow its progress and offer support and assistance as needed. Once all criteria are met, the city will be certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community®!