



2021: Edition 2

Planning & Performance Improvement

Project updates



plan@miottawa.org



Featured Projects

Performance Improvement Projects

COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy: The Performance Improvement division worked with Public Health staff for a couple months to create a COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy which was first released on March 24. Department staff continue to assist Public Health with weekly updates to this living document.

Food Club: The Performance Improvement division continues to work with Community Action House (CAH) staff to refine the evaluation plan and design a data collection plan for the Food Club that is slated to open this fall. Over the last few months, staff researched national and local sources to determine the best ones to use as benchmarks for the Food Club. Staff also reviewed and documented reputable survey and data collection instruments that are reliable and valid to provide options for the Food Club to utilize. The data collection plan and data collection tools will be refined over the summer to ensure solid data is obtained for evaluation purposes while balancing the need to respect the time of food club members.



As members of the West Michigan Evaluators Network, department staff were asked to present at the Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance workshop 'Using Evaluation: Build Capacity, Improve Performance, Enhance Public Value'. Staff presented with CAH on a joint case study about the evaluation efforts currently underway for the Food Club.

Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance: The Performance Improvement division continue to assist LNA with requests for salary and fringe benefit information for local nonprofits that are looking to fill a vacant Executive Director position. Department staff complete these requests using data collected during the first Nonprofit Community Assessment that was completed on behalf of LNA in 2019. In the next few months, department staff will be assisting LNA by updating their post-event participant surveys.

Power BI: The Performance Improvement division purchased Power BI licenses and learned how to utilize the application over the past couple months. Power BI is a great tool that will allow staff to connect to and visualize data for program evaluations, reporting and dashboards. To-date, staff have created Power BI reports for the department's BRA, the Step It Up program, and the Suicide Prevention Blue Envelope initiative.



Step It Up: The Performance Improvement division continues to work with Parks and Public Health staff to evaluate the Step It Up program, a free 8-week challenge offered each Spring to get people active and visiting new parks. This year's program launched May 10, with department staff working to update the participant survey questions prior to launch. Each week of the challenge the department assists with reviewing participant physical activity data in order to award a random group for their efforts. Department staff also presented on the Step It Up program at a Regional Interpretive Workshop held in March.

Suicide Prevention Coalition: The Performance Improvement division assisted Public Health staff with reporting 2020-2021 school year data for the Blue Envelope initiative. Spectrum Health and representatives from eight Ottawa County schools and the Ottawa County Public Health Department joined forces and created School Blue Envelope so every school employee—from teachers to coaches and bus drivers—would know how to respond to a student who may express thoughts of suicide. Department staff used their newly acquired



Featured Projects continued

Power BI skills to create a report of all of the Blue Envelope incidents and associated data, with the reports to be shared with members of the Coalition and school districts. Department staff also continue to assist Public Health staff with reporting changes in knowledge as school districts continue to train staff in the Blue Envelope initiative.

Ottawa Food: The Performance Improvement division continues to work with Public Health staff on several Ottawa Food initiatives. During the last couple months, department staff reviewed survey questions and provided guidance on adjustments to surveys that are currently underway. The results of the surveys will be used to help guide Ottawa Food strategic planning for the next 3 years.

Parks/Public Health Diversity Initiative: The Performance Improvement division continues to work with Parks and Public Health staff to roll out this initiative that aims to increase diversity at Ottawa County parks and get underserved populations physically active. This year's focus is on promoting the availability of free parks passes for bridge card holders. Current partners helping to sign up their Ottawa County clients include MDHHS and the Food Bank Council of Michigan. The initiative is expected to grow this summer when registration will be offered at park entrance booths and through a new partnership with the Ottawa County Treasurer's Office.



Land Use Planning Projects

Housing Commission: Following the Housing Commission's request for a parking policy document to share with business leaders and chambers of commerce, staff completed "*Parking Management Strategies for Vibrant Business Districts*". This document outlines how parking can be managed to create new opportunities for housing and local businesses in downtown business districts. Staff continue to work with Good Samaritan Ministries staff in developing an outline of the county's eviction diversion program to study the need for a long-term program post-pandemic. As part of the Ready For School initiative, staff are also developing a position paper observing housing's impact in early childhood development.

Ottawa Area On-Staff Planners Meeting: Staff hosted the Ottawa Area Planners Meeting on April 28. Planners from across the county shared how their projects are proceeding and the unique challenges facing their communities. Staff provided updates of county land use planning projects to the group.

Spoonville Trail: Staff attended a final walk-through of the trail on May 13. A few landscaping maintenance items will be completed through 2022 and the trail is already experiencing use from cyclists and runners. Staff will coordinate with Crockery Township on trail maintenance as well as research erecting a netting system abutting the golf course driving range to protect trail users.

Groundwater Policy: The Department is working with local units of government and other departments to create policies for managing our groundwater resources. An initial component of this will be educational information that will automatically get distributed to persons looking to develop land or dig wells in areas of concern. Later efforts will take a more in-depth look at the whole development process as it relates to groundwater.



Cyclists enjoying the newly finished Spoonville Trail

Farmland Preservation Program: This program is very active this time of year. The Ag Preservation Board received 13 Purchase of Development Rights applications totaling over 1,315 acres. The Board selected the top ranking Thomas Holstege property for preservation. The operation raises 32 acres of beef cattle and field crops in Zeeland Township.

Preparations are under way for the fifth annual Farms are the Tapas event scheduled for Thursday, September 30, 2021 at beautiful Terra Square in Hudsonville MI. This legacy fundraising event offers a chef competition and wonderful locally sourced auction items. All proceeds go toward protection critical farmland in Ottawa County from being lost to development.



Economic Development Projects

Comprehensive Digital Inclusion Strategy website is live: Previewed in the last digest, the new web page explaining the Comprehensive Digital Inclusion Strategy was completed and went live on March 17. At miOttawa.org/Broadband, the public can explore the four-phase



Featured Projects continued

plan to improve high-speed internet access in depth. Through a series of tabs, visitors can review past initiatives, walk through each phase of the strategy, and connect with resources.

County selects partner, begins Phase I of Digital Inclusion Strategy: Following a thorough interview process with multiple organizations that responded to a Request for Proposal, on April 27 Ottawa County officially partnered with [Merit Network](#) to launch Phase I of the Comprehensive Digital Inclusion Strategy, which involves careful data collection to construct an accurate picture of Ottawa County's broadband internet landscape. Through its Michigan Moonshot Initiative, Merit has built up a surveying, mapping, and evaluation playbook to accomplish this. Guiding this effort is the newly formed Ottawa County Data Collection Steering Committee, a group of local stakeholders representing the government, education, medical, business, and nonprofit sectors.

Work on Phase I has already begun in earnest:

- Bilingual marketing materials, prepared by Merit, are being provided to partners and the County
- Starting June 7, a variety of surveys for those served by fixed internet, unserved by fixed internet (hotspot use), text message (for those without data), and printed (for those without any access) will be made available to the general public and be heavily promoted by both the County and project partners. The survey, as well as information about the effort, will be available online starting June 1 at michiganmoonshot.org/ottawa.

Once the survey is officially launched, Planning & Performance Improvement staff will act as a local 'help desk' to answer common questions the public may have and address technical difficulties with the survey.

Stay tuned as this important data collection effort continues!

MiFarmLink Project: A new initiative launched this year to both assist young farmers looking to gain a foothold in the agriculture business and experienced farmers plan for succession, continues to grow. Staff worked with website builder [BizStream](#), staff to fine-tune language, navigation, graphics, and media for the recently launched MiFarmLink.org. The next phases of the project include collecting [land listings](#) to post on the website, planning for an in-person event scheduled for November 10, and general promotion of the project and its offerings.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP): RCPP is offered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. Planning Department staff collaborated with the Ottawa Conservation District to prepare a winning application to receive funding through the program. The \$3.4 million dollar award will be targeted to natural resource concerns to improve water quality and quantity and protect critical farmland by creating agricultural easements.





Featured Projects continued

MiCareerQuest 2021 marked the first year that the West Michigan version of this event had a dedicated space for agribusiness, and it was a hit! By the numbers, the virtual ag sector booths had 21,742 visits from 11,099 students and they viewed 14,304 videos that were posted in those booths. That is a lot student exposure to the ag industry and the careers it offers! Planning staff assisted in the planning and execution of this event. For more info visit micareerquest.org.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE): PACE Programs are economic development tools that helps developers to secure long term financing for renewable energy and energy efficient technologies on eligible property. The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing on June 8 regarding the establishment of such a program here in Ottawa County, then they will vote on a Resolution to Establish a PACE program. If the resolution passes, more information will be made available at www.miottawa.org/PACE.

Brownfield Redevelopment continues to be the cornerstone of the Economic Development Division of the County. In addition to managing projects funded by the USEPA 2020 grant, the Brownfield Incentive program, and Brownfield Tax Increment Financing Plans, staff assists local units prepare for 2021 tax capture, generates the data need for required tax increment finance reporting to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, explored potential collaborations with the Land Bank Authority to address attainable housing shortages, and improving brownfield inventories and dashboard tools. Three new board members have been welcomed to the Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Board of Directors in 2021 – Rebecca Hopp, Garry Post, and James Bleicher.

Other Collaborations include assisting a UM grad student recruit participants for a noise exposure evaluation for farmers, recruiting farmer participants for the Ottawa Food strategic planning process, judging Future Farmers of America skills contests, participating in the Ottawa County Farm Bureau legislative Breakfast, serving on the steering committee for the National Agricultural Land Network, assisting Emergency Management staff with critical asset identification, and providing support for an ACRE AgTech Accelerator program graduate.



Events, News, and Notable Statistics



Events

Save the Date! Two upcoming events:

- **Farms are the Tapas:** Thursday, September 30
- **Cultivating Connections:** Wednesday, November 10



News & Stats

GIS Summer Internship: Staff welcomed Jake Golding, GVSU graduate in Natural Resource Management, as the department's summer intern. Jake will primarily be creating maps as well as collecting aerial imagery for use in future department applications, specifically pertaining to groundwater, suburban sprawl, and dune mapping initiatives.

County Statistics: The Performance Improvement Division is constantly updating various County statistics. Some examples of these statistics that are currently being worked on are unemployment stats, building permits, home foreclosures, millage rates, plats, and tax reverted properties. Some of these statistics are featured on the Planning and Performance Improvement's [webpage](#) while others are available upon request.



Jake Golding