

BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release

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WMSA Celebrates 10 Years in 2010

WEST MICHIGAN—April 27, 2010—The West Michigan Strategic (WMSA) was formally established in 2000 with the mission to be a catalyst for regional collaboration. In 2002, WMSA published “The Common Framework” to provide a view of West Michigan from a global perspective and to identify challenges to address.

Over the past decade, WMSA has brought together thousands of people to work toward the shared vision of West Michigan as a best place to live, learn, work and play. WMSA serves an eight-county region of: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Ottawa.

WMSA’s work is focused on six Priorities for Regional Collaboration:

- Create a Regional Mindset
- Foster a Prosperous Economy
- Strengthen Community through Diversity
- Ensure a Sustainable Environment
- Revitalize Our Urban Centers
- Develop a Tri-plex Growth Strategy

The Priorities for Regional Collaboration turned into specific initiatives:

- Regional Indicators Initiative—an effort to compare West Michigan to 26 comparable regions of the United States and to set goals for improving the quality of life on economic, environmental and social indicators. This initiative produces the annual “Vital Signs” reports, which started in 2007.
- West Michigan Internship Initiative—an effort to create 3,000 additional internships by the end of 2011. The initiative is a response to employers identifying recruiting and retaining talented employees as a primary issue.
- Green Infrastructure Initiative—an effort to identify and protect West Michigan’s environmental assets. Specifically, this initiative seeks to:

- o Protect Shoreline and Dune Ecosystems
 - o Encourage Watershed Management and Planning
 - o Promote a Regional Trails and Greenways Network
 - o Promote Regional Farmland Preservation
 - o Protect Critical Areas of Biodiversity
 - o Integrate Green Infrastructure into Developed and Urban Settings
- West Michigan Sustainable Manufacturing Initiative—a partnership with The Right Place, Inc. and Sustainable Research Group to help small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the region stay competitive by integrating sustainable principles into their new product designs and manufacturing operations.
 - Clean Cities Coalition Initiative--In partnership with Sustainable Research Group as Technical Coordinator, WMSA launched the West Michigan Clean Cities Coalition (WMC3) in 2007. Clean Cities is a program of the U.S. Department of EnergyThis initiative consisting of public/private partners is expanding local markets for alternative fuels and vehicles, increasing the number of refueling/recharging sites and promoting clean vehicle technologies and fuel efficiency strategies.
 - WIRED (Workforce in Regional Economic Development)-- In 2006, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration awarded West Michigan a three-year, \$15 million grant—one of 13 regions in the country to receive one. The work of this initiative resulted in a series of “Innovations” designed to have a lasting impact on workforce development in the region. (For detailed information, see the final WIRED reports posted on WMSA website at www.wm-alliance.org/publications).

(More details on these initiatives and other WMSA work can be found in the 2009-2010 Action Report available online: www.wm-alliance.org under publications).

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