

redevelopment ready
communities®

Redevelopment Ready Communities®

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Village of Empire

December 2023

Executive Summary

Redevlopment Ready Communities® (RRC) is a voluntary technical assistance initiative offered through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to empower communities in shaping their future by building a strong foundation of planning, zoning, and economic development best practices. Our toolkit, developed by experts in the public and private sectors, encourages communities to streamline their development practices, with the goal of becoming “redevelopment ready.” Through active engagement of stakeholders and proactively planning, communities can become more attractive for development projects that create places where people want to live, work, and invest.

The basic assessment tool for evaluation are the [RRC Best Practices](#). These six (6) standards address key elements of community and economic development. To provide a





direct line of communication with the RRC community planner and to relay a community’s RRC standing, the free online project management platform, Trello is used for regular communication. Trello allows communities to upload items as they are completed and organize their RRC workload to fit their capacity. A community must demonstrate full alignment with the RRC Best Practice expectations to receive either RRC Essential or Certified designation. Once reached, Essential or Certified status is valid for five (5) years.

The following community snapshot provides an overview of the baseline evaluation conducted on the community’s Trello board. It reflects a snapshot in time, and it is recommended to review the community’s Trello board for exact RRC standing.


Evaluation Matrix


Village of Empire has chosen to work towards completing RRC Essentials designation and will be evaluated on the RRC Essential expectations only. Currently, Empire is fully aligned with 26% of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® expectations.

CURRENT RRC BEST PRACTICE STANDING					
1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2
2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6*	3.1	3.2
3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8
3.9*	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
4.6	4.7*	5.1*	5.2*	5.3*	


-  **Currently aligned** with RRC expectations
-  **Partially aligned** with RRC expectations
-  **Not currently aligned** with RRC expectations
-  *Certified pathway only


The following tables provide a snapshot into the recommendations provided on the community's Trello following the baseline evaluation.

 = Annual expectation


BEST PRACTICE 1: PLANS AND ENGAGEMENT		
		Essentials expectations
	1.1 Master Plan	While the plan identifies goals, objectives and actions, there is no timeline or responsible parties. An action-oriented plan that has timelines and responsible parties helps drive the implementation of the plan. This can be created using a separate document and reviewed annually.
	1.2 Downtown or Corridor Plan	N/A: The community does not have an active DDA (only for Certified designation)
	1.3 Capital Improvements Plan	A CIP is an essential tool for the planning and development of the physical and economic well-being of a community. It is 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. A six-year (current +5) capital improvements plan will need to be developed and updated annually. As mentioned earlier, projects identified should align with existing adopted plans. The capital improvements plan, when adopted, should be posted online.
	1.4 Public Participation Plan	Facilitating consistent future public engagement is important and the village should formalize an all-inclusive comprehensive public engagement plan. This plan can help 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 plan, the plan should identify goals and objectives, key stakeholders, methods of communication, strategies for outreach and how to communicate results to the public.

BEST PRACTICE 2: ZONING		
		Essentials expectations
	2.1 Alignment with Master Plan	Aligned
	2.2 Accessibility + User-friendliness	Aligned
	2.3 Concentrated Development	To meet this best practice a community's zoning ordinance should clearly allow mixed-use by-right. This means allowing for residential above commercial or even allowing a mix of residential and commercial on the first floor. Additionally, at least one placemaking provision should be incorporated into the zoning ordinance.
	2.4 Housing Diversity	The zoning code currently allows for accessory dwelling units by-right. To align with this best practice, one additional housing use by-right should be added. Addressing housing, a key priority for Michigan communities, involves enabling diverse housing options by-right, thereby effectively meeting the varied housing needs within these areas.
	2.5 Parking Flexibility	Aligned

 = Annual expectation

BEST PRACTICE 3: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW		
		Essentials expectations
	3.1 Defined Processes	Aligned
	3.2 Point of Contact	Aligned
	3.3 Conceptual Review Meetings	It is an expectation to advertise the availability of conceptual site plan review meetings for applicants. This helps to ensure all materials are turned in on time and gives the zoning administrator, or appropriate staff, and the applicant an opportunity to discuss any hurdles and how to address them. It is recommended that a conceptual site plan be offered and advertised online so it is known that this service exists for all types of uses. While the zoning ordinance states this tool, the intent is for it to be advertised online on the web page.
	3.4 Internal Review Process	It is important to have an internal document that tracks the site plan review process. This gives direction and tracks the flow of a site plan or special-use permit from submittal to approval
	3.5 Approval Authority	Aligned
	3.6 Fee Schedule	The fees associated with development should be reviewed annually through the budget cycle to help ensure that costs are fair and affordable for the customer and community. Once fees are reviewed, they should be posted online.
	3.7 Payment Methods	Clearly identifying methods of payment reduces uncertainty. Accepted methods of payment should be indicated on a community's website. Empire does not currently address accepted payment methods (cash, check, money order, credit, etc.) on its website.
	3.8 Access to Information	Having all development-related information in a single location can greatly increase the ability of an applicant to access what they need efficiently. Including this information online can also maximize capacity, as staff will spend less time answering questions when applicants can have these questions answered by the community's website.

BEST PRACTICE 4: BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS		
		Essentials expectations
	4.1 Recruitment Process	Currently, the board and commissions application is available online, which is targeted just for the planning commission applicants. An application for any development-related boards appointed positions should be made available online for all.
	4.2 Expectations + Interests	It's important to understand roles and responsibilities for boards and commissioners. Having this information online is essential to attracting potential new board members that are a good fit.

 = Annual expectation

BEST PRACTICE 4: BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS <i>continued</i>		
		Essentials expectations
4.3	Orientation	When new members join a board or commission it is important to ensure they are up-to-speed on responsibilities and relevant issues. The community should provide all the necessary information needed in order for a board member to be most effective in their position. Items included can be bylaws, minutes, contact info, and relevant handbooks.
4.4	Bylaws	Bylaws or rules of procedures are required under law for certain boards and commissions. They also provide predictability for board proceeds and, therefore, the development review experience. Making a board or commission's bylaws available online allows for ease in accessibility for potential or current members. Bylaws should be developed and made available online for all appointed development-related boards.
4.5	Annual Planning Commission Report	The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires a community to provide an annual planning commission report. This report highlights the activities that took place in the past year including approvals, activities, attendance, and trainings. Empire will need to develop a planning commission annual report and continue to provide one on a yearly basis.
4.6	Training Strategy	As part of Essentials, a training plan should be set up to support training. The plan should include identifying priority training, tracking attendance and ensuring officials are regularly reminded of training opportunities. It is important to note that training programs need not be expensive; if the village is concerned about budgetary constraints, a training plan could focus on webinars or other methods that are low cost or free. The plan should be updated bi-annually.

We are eager for Village of Empire to engage in the Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) initiative. Following receipt of the community snapshot, your community will work to address each of the [RRC Best Practice](#) expectations, integrating their intent seamlessly into your municipal processes. Going forward, we encourage communities to collaborate across municipal departments and development-related boards and commissions to strategize on how best to align with the RRC toolkit. We have found that communities successful in RRC are those that go beyond approaching the best practices as a “checklist” and rather, implement systems to facilitate successful community change.

RRC acknowledges that limitations due to capacity or resources may impact each community’s approach to RRC, therefore there is no expected timeline to meet RRC Essentials or Certified designation. At times, the RRC toolkit may be overwhelming, so our team highly

recommends maintaining regular communication with your community planner to best understand the RRC expectations and gain access to the plethora of resources our team offers. The community snapshot and community’s Trello board include specific recommendations for meeting each best practice. It is important to remember that RRC is a dynamic and flexible toolkit, aimed at supporting your community’s integration of the RRC expectations in a way that best suits your community.

Your community will now have access to a variety of RRC technical assistance tools, such as the [RRC online resource library](#), guidance from your [community planner](#), and [Technical Assistance Match Funding](#) for planning-related projects. Best of luck and we look forward to assisting your community in leveraging our toolkit to improve your community’s development processes and attract future investment!



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Dedicated to shared economic success, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation promotes the state's assets and opportunities that support business investment and community vitality. MEDC's programs and services connect companies with people, resources, partners, and access to capital.